



February 2, 2026

TO: Seattle Office of Planning and Community Development

CC: Tiernan Martin

**RE: Lid I-5 comment on the draft Downtown Seattle Regional Center Plan**

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To the Seattle Office of Planning and Community Development,

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the draft Downtown Seattle Regional Center Plan. The overall plan is a great direction for Downtown.

We appreciate that the I-5 Lid project is strongly endorsed throughout the draft plan. The plan demonstrates this was driven by supportive public input, and the community enthusiasm affirms our own experience with engaging thousands of people over many years of volunteer work. This plan will be an important part of unlocking additional funding and completing the next steps in project development.

We see some room for improvement, and have several recommendations listed below. Text in *blue italics* is quotes copied from the plan.

**Maps and graphics.** The I-5 Lid project is large and transformative, and is well-suited to being explained by maps and graphics. Other than the repeating Big Ideas map, there are no supporting illustrations in the draft plan. We invite you to use any of the conceptual renderings, sketches, aerial photographs, and other graphics available on our website, [www.lidi5.org](http://www.lidi5.org). We are happy to provide original files and source attribution as needed.

**Big Ideas for Downtown #7 (page 27 and throughout):** *“Continue to support community-led conversations about the feasibility of the long-term improvement of connectivity”*. This is vague and hesitant for a project decades in the making with majority public support, an affirmative technical feasibility study completed, and the Washington State Department of Transportation working on an I-5 Master Plan. It mentions the opportunity for connections but not the other benefits of adding public land, reducing noise and air pollution, and improving the local economy.

We suggest a more proactive and constructive description that reflects the current project status: “Continue moving the project towards construction-readiness by investing in urban design, planning, and engineering in consultation with community and government stakeholders.”

The map on page 26 should show the current study area between Thomas Street and S. Main Street.

**Focus on parks and streets (throughout).** While it is accurate that the I-5 Lid project will likely add new public park space and street connections, the draft plan does not acknowledge other possible uses of the new space. As demonstrated by other freeway lids around the country and the globe, the project could conceptually facilitate new residential and commercial development and civic amenities such as culture, recreation, education, and public safety facilities. It could

also support infrastructure resiliency, such as capacity for stormwater management. This wide variety of opportunities should be reflected in the above policies and page 22 of the Environment and Climate Change Technical Report.

**Plan themes and policies (pages 54-139).** We appreciate that lidding I-5 is strongly endorsed by multiple policies. We have a few observations.

*Downtown is Home (DH) policy DH 2.1.7: “Create a strategy under the City’s Equitable Development Initiative (EDI) program to prevent displacement and support equitable development in communities affected by the lid I-5 project.”* No change.

*Safe and Welcoming (SW) policy SW 3.1.2: “Complete the I-5 Lid feasibility study.”* A study was already completed in 2020. This could be broadened to reflect multiple ongoing and near-future efforts: “Complete I-5 Lid feasibility studies to support the next stage of design and engineering.”

*SW policy 3.1.3: “Develop a community vision plan that defines goals and urban design priorities for freeway lids in the project area.”* No change.

*SW policy 3.1.4: “Partner with Friends of Lid I-5 Steering Committee to explore short-term improvement opportunities.”* We agree and look forward to those explorations! We suggest hinting at the general scope of potential improvements, such as enhanced pedestrian connections and public space, traffic calming, public art, and landscaping upgrades. Note that our current name is simply “Lid I-5 Steering Committee”.

*SW policy 3.1.5: “Expand the Downtown I-5 lid project area to include I-5 and all adjacent blocks from Thomas St to S Dearborn St.”* While Thomas Street is accurate for the northern extent of current grant funding, S. Dearborn Street is more south than currently being studied and the Chinatown-International District is mostly impacted by an elevated (rather than sunken) freeway. The impacts to the CID should still be addressed. We suggest adding detail to this policy: “Expand the Downtown I-5 lid project area to include I-5 and all adjacent blocks from Thomas St to S. Main Street, and study freeway mitigation options in the adjacent section through the Chinatown-International District up to S. Dearborn Street.”

*SW policy 3.1.6: “Engage a diverse group of community members, business owners, and local leaders in a visioning process for new freeway lids and integrated structures, such as parks, pavilions, and buildings.”* No change.

*SW policy 4.1.6: “Continue planning for and allocating resources to the Lid-5 project.”* No change, except “Lid I-5” is misspelled.

*Find Our Way (FW) policy 6.1.1: “Stitch neighborhood divides through ground floor activations, re-design of spaces under I-5, enhanced crossings over I-5, and potential lidding of I-5 and BNSF railway tracks.”* No change.

**Downtown Seattle Project List #1: “Duplicate I-5 crossings project from First/Hill Capital Hill Plan (Denny Way to Yesler Way).”** This is the only project missing a description and we are curious to learn more. Capitol Hill is misspelled.

Sincerely,

**Lid I-5 Steering Committee**

Scott Bonjukian, co-chair  
Jim Castanes  
John Feit, co-chair  
Bruno Lambert  
Yinan Liu

Rob Eason  
Paul Owen  
Kevin Clement  
Jessica Lotz

**Lid I-5 Coalition Partner Organizations**

Allied Arts  
American Institute of Architects Seattle  
American Society of Landscape Architects Washington  
Bellwether Housing  
Capitol Hill Ecodistrict  
Central Seattle Greenways  
Community Roots Housing  
Downtown Seattle Association  
Elektra Condominium Homeowners Association  
First Hill Improvement Association  
Futurewise  
Freeway Park Association  
Greater Seattle Business Association  
Martin Luther King, Jr. County Labor Council  
Melrose Promenade  
Meridian Condominium Homeowners Association  
Northwest Progressive Institute  
Parents for a Better Downtown Seattle  
Pike/Pine Urban Neighborhood Council  
REI Co-Op  
Seattle Building & Construction Trades Council  
Seattle Convention Center  
Seattle Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce  
Seattle Parks Foundation (fiscal sponsor)  
Seattle YIMBY  
The Urbanist  
Urban Land Institute Northwest