

Save a cultural hub in SeaTac

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[Letters editor](#)

The Seattle Times

Re: [“Immigrant-owned businesses in SeaTac face displacement”](#):

The City of SeaTac is repeating the misdeeds of 1950s urban renewal, or “black removal.” The Bakaro Mall is an American success story of immigrants working very hard to save and start a business. City of SeaTac actions threaten to wipe out their investments and, as well, a cultural hub upon which East Africans immigrants depend.

SeaTac ignores what generations of urban planners learned from urbanist and activist Jane Jacobs. So that we not destroy the social capital and the street life of communities, she cautioned that we “respect — in the deepest sense — strips of chaos that have a weird wisdom of their own not yet encompassed in our concept of urban order.”

SeaTac is rapidly running out of options to redirect its redevelopment plans. The project needs to be reconfigured as a multicultural commercial hub that supports a diverse and vibrant immigrant community. SeaTac is a rare case where there is so much to gain and, tragically, so much to lose. Creative minds and a committed regional community can turn this project around, but time is short.

Steve Claggett, Seattle

Testimony May 23, 2019 in favor of not issuing a letter of Consolidated Plan Consistency at this time to Inland Development, Spokane for its SeaTac Project until the displacement of the East African immigrant/refugee commercial/cultural center is resolved. (Since a consistency letter has already been issued, we ask that a revised letter be sent finding the project inconsistent until additional steps are taken to avoid the loss of a vitally important East African Immigrant/Refugee commercial and cultural resource.)

This testimony is submitted by:

- Puget Sound Sage
- MLK Working Families Party
- One America
- SeaTac Community Coalition
- Seattle Indivisible
- Faith Action Network

Development is coming to areas of South King County that have been underinvested for many years. The combination of light rail and historic levels of economic growth in the region is a game changer. But there is an open question of who will benefit from that development, that is critical for this consortium - who will benefit?

Think about 20 years ago when light rail was planned to go through the Rainier Valley. At the time, many community leaders were desperate for investment - both housing and jobs - and welcomed the light rail. Now, they are desperate to stay as they watch their community disappear around them.

Gentrification and displacement require a different planning strategy than the era of urban renewal. We have to balance the need for affordable housing and economic growth with preserving what the immigrant and refugee communities have built over the last 20 years in cities like Tukwila and SeaTac. They have built thriving commercial and retail activities, strong communities centered around religious institutions, and are providing a critical workforce to the region's growth engines.

As you consider who to invest CDBG funding and give support to redevelopment, we urge you to make anti-displacement a high priority. The first goal of any use of funding to fight poverty should be to do no harm - and supporting redevelopment that destroys businesses and community fabric is incredibly harmful.

There are three over-arching goals of the Consolidated Plan. Here is the third:

Goal Three:Community Development - Provide assistance to jurisdictions, community agencies, and communities to establish and maintain a suitable living environment with economic opportunities for low-income members of the community, including communities with disparities in health, income, and quality of life where efforts can be targeted to improve the well-being of residents and the vibrancy of the community. (Clagett added the underlining.)

Consolidated Plan – Page 64

For King County Housing and Community Development, an important strategy in pursuing Equity and Social Justice is support and funding for Microenterprise programs in South King County. The Microenterprise programs have specific non-English speaking and immigrant outreach components designed to meet the entrepreneurial needs of King County's most diverse area.

Consolidated Plan – Page 96

MA-45 Non-Housing Community Development Assets – 91.410, 91.210(f)

Introduction

King County enjoys a robust economy and strong job growth. While the region is experiencing rapid growth and a rising housing market, there are a number of communities in King County with large disparities in the built environment that present barriers to individuals in reaching their full potential.

Consolidated Plan – Page 100

While our region is experiencing extremely rapid growth and a soaring housing market, community friendly infrastructure development has not been equitable in the region, and there are a number of communities in King County with large disparities in the built environment that are barriers to individuals in those communities reaching their full potential. Such infrastructure issues include lack of safe and well-lit places to walk and make connections to businesses, services and leisure activities, including exercise, lack of cohesion and place-making in the business district and between the business district and residential neighborhoods, lack of well-designed open space to complement a "coherent sense of place" and lack of active transportation connections for cyclists, joggers, walkers, etc.

Consolidated Plan – Page 101

Testimony of Steve Clagett May 23, 2019 to the Joint Recommendations Committee Requesting a Finding of Inconsistency with the Consolidated Plan for Inland Development's SeaTac Project Until Adequate Provisions are in Place for the 50 East African Immigrant Businesses in the Commercial/Cultural Center Facing Displacement

As discussed throughout this plan, and particularly in Section SP-80, Anti-Poverty Strategy, King County has set a clear path through our transformation work to move our investments much further upstream so that every person in King County has the opportunity to reach their full potential and to thrive economically. To this end we will be working with multiple partners, including the Consortium jurisdictions, the Puget Sound Regional Council, and many others across the County to achieve common transformative goals.

Consolidated Plan – Page 102

- Develop policies to support a robust tourism industry in the region.

Consolidated Plan – Page 10

For King County, specific economic development policies and strategies are contained in the King County Comprehensive Plan, last adopted in 2012, and in the early phases of being updated by the end of 2016. Sections covered in the Comprehensive Plan include general economic development policies, business development, workforce development, infrastructure development, sustainable development in the private sector, and the rural economy. Related to the strategies in the Comprehensive Plan, King County has adopted the Health and Human Services Transformation Vision, and is currently working on a number of Transformation initiatives, including place-based community strategies that will address transformational economic development strategies as one aspect of the work. This is also discussed in section SP-80 of this plan, the *Anti-Poverty Strategy*.

Consolidated Plan – Page 106 re:

Are there areas where households with multiple housing problems are concentrated?

Are there any community assets in these areas/neighborhoods?

Yes, these communities have great cultural assets and a cultural richness. There is potential for improved transportation with Rapid Ride bus routes and a new light rail corridor that will be built and an existing conventional train, and transit centers.

Are there other strategic opportunities in any of these areas?

King County, working with local jurisdictions, will be identifying Communities of Opportunity and with the Seattle Foundation will be working to create greater health, social, economic, and racial equality in these communities. See SP-70 Anti-Poverty Strategy for more information.

Consolidated Plan -- Strategic Plan Overview Page 107

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Values: We invest in projects that predominantly serve households at or below 50% AMI; mixed-income projects that serve a portion of households at or below 30% AMI; projects that are inclusive of homeless households and people with special needs; projects that reduce their screening barriers and consider mitigating information in order to reflect values of equity and social justice; projects that embrace evidence-based best practices; projects that are located and designed thoughtfully, considering connectivity, health and access to transit; affordable housing in transit-oriented developments.

.....

The Consortium's desired outcomes for each goal are impacted by many factors, especially the larger economy, the health of other federal programs, such as the Section 8 program, and other funding streams that we don't control, and are far beyond the capability of the Consortium's strategies to accomplish single-handedly. For that reason it is particularly important that we work across sectors towards shared outcomes that will help us all make progress towards our goals. While our goals and outcome statements may exceed our reach, it is only by making the reach that we can hope to influence them. Annual output goals for each of the strategies in this plan are dependent upon the continuation of the applicable fund sources.

Consolidated Plan – Criteria for Allocation of Resources – Page 114

King County and the Consortium also consider other plans and initiatives in making allocation decisions, such as climate change, transit oriented development, equity and social justice, and Health & Human Services Transformation Initiatives. Examples of intersections with such initiatives and plans are included below.

Consolidated Plan – Page 114 (Though this seems to favor Affordable Housing, the Economic Development equity piece appears to be a complete failure arguing against affordable housing until inequities are addressed.)

Housing and Community Development near High Capacity Transit Nodes

Following upon the Consortium's work on the regional Growing Transit Communities grant, the Consortium will prioritize investments in affordable housing and eligible community development projects near high capacity transit, including high capacity bus routes, bus rapid transit and light rail. Future light rail lines will be completed by 2023 serving East King County, North King County, and South King County. The Consortium has been a partner in creating an acquisition fund to acquire land for affordable housing and community development near high capacity transit nodes before the land is too expensive to acquire. That fund is the Regional Equitable Development Initiative (REDI) Fund, and has geographic targets. Access to good regional transportation for low to moderate-income households is key to opening up opportunities to thrive.

Communities of Opportunity Initiative (Health & Human Services Transformation)

Communities of Opportunity (COO) is a place-based initiative that aims to improve race, health and socio-economic equity in King County by working in co-design through a collective impact model with local communities that have the greatest disparities in health, housing and socio-economic outcomes. The Consortium anticipates that one or two Neighborhood Revitalization Strategies targeting COO communities will be submitted under this Consolidated Plan over the next five years. COO is working in the 20 percent of census tracts (highlighted in the two darkest shades of green) that rank lowest on an index of the ten measures in the table below. There are almost 400 census tracts in King County, each with an approximate population size of 5,000. The following table contains health, housing and economic measures.

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KING COUNTY HEALTH, HOUSING AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY MEASURES

Legend

— City Boundaries

Ranking



Population Measures

Life expectancy

Lowest ranked
74 years

Highest ranked
87 years

Health, broadly defined:

Adverse childhood experiences

20%

9%

Frequent mental distress

14%

4%

Smoking

20%

5%

Obesity

33%

14%

Diabetes

13%

5%

Preventable hospitalizations

1.0%

0.4%

Housing:

Poor housing condition

8%

0%

Economic opportunity:

Income below 200% poverty

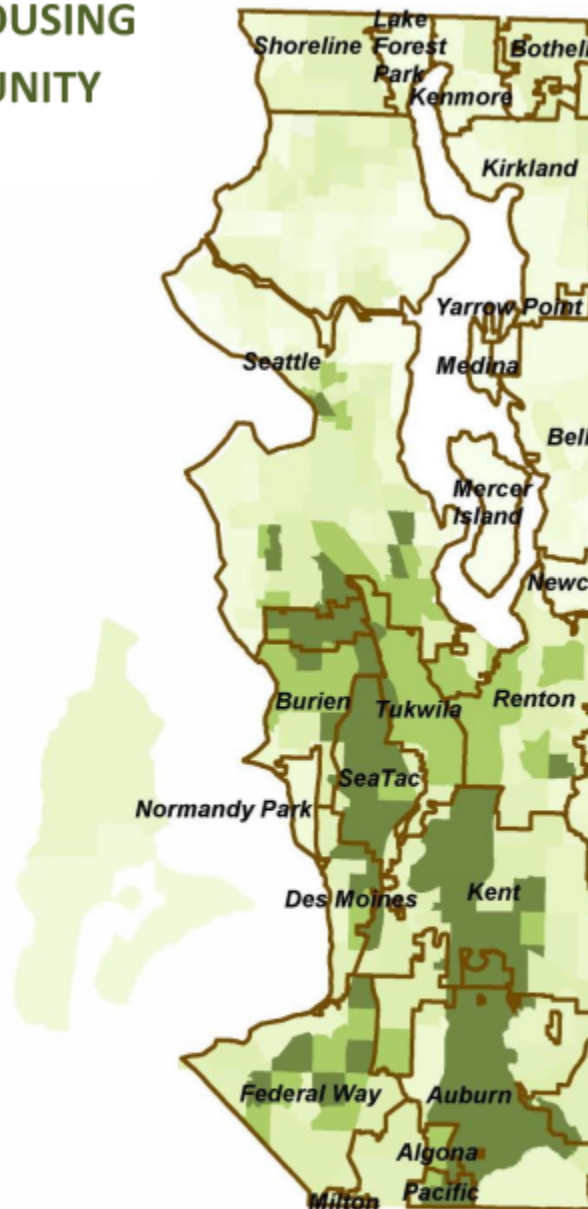
54%

6%

Unemployment

13%

3%



Consolidated Plan – Page 117 (Note here that the plan says “equitable development” not solely “equitable housing development”. Note supporting language, as well, in the second box.)

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	Description	The Consortium will engage in other housing activities, collaborations and partnerships to enhance opportunities for equitable development and the creation/preservation of affordable housing. During the course of the Consolidated Plan, funding may be prioritized for coordination with the intended Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area (s) in the South Sub-region, as identified through the Communities of Opportunity Initiative. The Consortium will plan for and support fair housing strategies and initiatives designed to affirmatively further fair housing choice and to increase access to housing and housing programs. Fair housing will be reported on annually.
	Basis for Relative Priority	Our region will have an adequate supply of affordable housing so that each sub-region of the County can meet the housing needs of low to moderate-income population. We invest in projects that predominantly serve households at or below 50 percent AMI; mixed-income projects that serve a portion of households at or below 30 percent AMI; projects that are inclusive of homeless households and people with special needs; projects that reduce their screening barriers and consider mitigating information in order to reflect values of equity and social justice; projects that embrace evidence-based best practices; projects that are located and designed thoughtfully, considering connectivity, health and access to transit; and affordable housing in transit-oriented developments.

Consolidated Plan – Page 119 (Note last item on this list.)

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3	Priority Need Name	Community and Economic Development
	Priority Level	High
	Population	Extremely Low Income, Low Income, and Moderate Income Large Families Families with Children Elderly Rural Chronic Homelessness Individuals Families with Children Mentally Ill Chronic Substance Abuse veterans Victims of Domestic Violence Unaccompanied Youth Elderly Frail Elderly Persons with Mental Disabilities Persons with Physical Disabilities Persons with Developmental Disabilities Persons with Alcohol or Other Addictions Victims of Domestic Violence Non-housing Community Development

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	Geographic Areas Affected	Consortium-wide, North/East sub-region, South sub-region, and potential Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Areas
	Associated Goals	Community and Economic Development
	Description	Establish and maintain a suitable living environment and expand economic opportunities for low-and moderate-income people. Our investments across the Consortium in low-income communities, and for the benefit of low-income people, help to ensure equitable opportunities for good health, happiness, safety, self-reliance and connection to community. Specific strategies include: 1) improve the ability of health and human services agencies to serve our low to moderate-income residents safely and effectively, 2) improve the living environment in low to moderate-income neighborhoods and communities; and 3) expand economic opportunities for low to moderate-income residents of the Consortium.
	Basis for Relative Priority	Our investments in new developments in eligible communities are designed to promote a healthy lifestyle, reflect the range of income levels in our region, and have accessible connectivity with amenities, services and opportunities. We invest capital in projects that serve eligible low-income persons at or below 80 percent of AMI, and eligible low-income communities, that improve the livability for such persons and communities, and emphasize environmental stewardship, and the health and well-being of the persons that will access the projects.

Narrative (Optional)

The Consortium's desired outcomes for each goal are impacted by many factors, especially the larger economy, the health of other federal programs, such as the Section 8 program, and other funding streams that we don't control, and are far beyond the capability of the Consortium's strategies to accomplish single-handedly. For that reason it is particularly important that we work across sectors towards shared outcomes that will help us all make progress towards our goals. While our goals and outcome statements may exceed our reach, it is only by making the reach that we can hope to influence them. Annual output goals for each of the strategies in this plan are dependent upon the continuation of the applicable fund sources.

Consolidated Plan – Page 135

3	Goal Name	Community and Economic Development
	Goal Description	Our investments across the Consortium in low-income communities, and for the benefit of low-income people, help to ensure equitable opportunities for good health, happiness, safety, self-reliance and connection to community. Our investments in new developments in eligible communities are designed to promote a healthy lifestyle, reflect the range of income levels in our region, and have accessible connectivity with amenities, services and opportunities.

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Consolidated Plan -- Page 137 (Notice that a goal of the King County Consortium to help low-income residents in "starting a business".

Activities to Increase Resident Involvements

Both KCHA and RHA have numerous activities to increase resident involvement including extensive school programs, the Family Self-Sufficiency program to help residents reach financial independence, and work toward long-term goals such as training for a job, education, starting a business and buying a home.

Consolidated Plan -- Page 142

- Communities of Opportunity -- King County is partnering with the Seattle Foundation for the Communities of Opportunities initiative with the ambitious goal of creating greater health, social, economic and racial equity in King County so that all people thrive and prosper.

Consolidate Plan -- Page 144

The Consortium supports activities under Goal Three: Establish and Maintain a Suitable Living Environment and Economic Opportunities for low-and moderate-income persons in order to assist small business owners, including minority owned businesses, with technical assistance, access to business opportunities and loans. An important strategy in pursuing Equity and Social Justice work is support and funding for Microenterprise programs in South King County. Microenterprise programs have specific non-English speaking and immigrant outreach components designed to meet the entrepreneurial needs of King County's most diverse area.

Note that in 2014, SeaTac was considered a top candidate for a Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area ("NRSA") designation. It doesn't seem to have happened. Instead, White Center and Federal Way seem to have become NRSA's.

SP-10 Geographic Priorities -- 91.415, 91.215(a)(1)

General Allocation Priorities

CDBG, ESG, and HOME funds are allocated throughout King County. King County has two target areas: SeaTac and Skyway. Both are potential areas for a Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area. More target areas may be added during the period of this plan.