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FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Sarajane Siegfriedt, Seattle Fair Growth, sarajane3h@comcast.net 206-440-5829

Toby Thaler, Seattle Fair Growth, toby@louploup.net 206-697-4043

Twenty-four Community Groups Join to Appeal the MHA Grand Bargain Environmental Impact Statement

Neighborhood, housing and homeless advocacy, small business and environmental groups from around Seattle are holding a **press conference at 12:15 Monday in the City Hall foyer** to announce that they have formed an MHA EIS appeal coalition. Also Monday they are filing an appeal to the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) to the Seattle Hearing Examiner for citywide upzones known as the Grand Bargain.

The coalition is called Seattle Coalition for Affordability, Livability and Equity.

Jon Lisbin, small business owner and president of Seattle Fair Growth said, "We are worried about affordability and displacement. Our neighborhoods are so different that one-size-fits-all upzones don't work well for residents or small businesses. The Final EIS completely neglects the differences between neighborhoods that are ripe for multifamily development such as Lake City and Northgate, and other racially diverse neighborhoods, such as South Park and Beacon Hill, that are mainly of older single-family homes owned or rented by lower-income families. The city is leaving low- and middle-income families with no place to go."

Said David Ward, a Ravenna renter and president of the coalition, "It will make Seattle far more unaffordable and also make it more difficult to live here due to more traffic, not enough schools, more pollution, fewer trees, and a loss of the diversity of residents we currently have."

"I'm worried about moving out from my parents' home because I know it'll be hard to find an apartment I can afford," said Beacon Hill Council Member and UW student Cacima Lee. "And the idea of buying a home in Seattle is almost a joke."

"Instead of invalidating all neighborhood plans, the city needs to support and celebrate differences while maintaining intact communities," Christy Tobin-Presser of the West Seattle Junction Neighborhood Coalition added. "These upzones are not needed to accommodate the growth that's planned. The city already has the more than twice the capacity in multi-family zoning to accommodate all the growth that's coming, so who's driving this land-grab?"

Wallingford resident Susanna Lin states: "We have a school capacity crisis and the City is planning upzones without coordinating with the School District on a plan to build more schools. In addition, trees are disappearing at an alarming rate. What kind of future is this for our children?"

The Grand Bargain, or Mandatory Housing Affordability-Residential (MHA-R), is a one-size-fits-all proposal by former Mayor Ed Murray and City planners that would give developers increased height limits and profitability in exchange for either building affordable units in their projects or contributing a fee in lieu of including them. In fact, according to the City, most developers have said they will decline to include rent-restricted units in their projects. They prefer to pay the fee.

According to Lake City homeowner and affordable housing advocate Sarajane Siegfriedt, the City Office of Housing then leverages the fees 3:1 mostly with federal, state and city tax funds to build low-income housing in other parts of Seattle. Most of the required affordable housing will be built in locations with cheap land, not in the neighborhoods where builders maximize profits by replacing older houses with costly new market-rate housing. Then there's the delay. It takes four or so years for a nonprofit to receive City and state grants, assemble the rest of the funding, and construct a building, assuming they already have the land."

"We share the City's goal of affordable housing for those earning less than 60% of Area Median Income, but it is simply not achieved by these upzones," Siegfriedt said. "That's why we are filing an appeal. The real impacts that destroy and gentrify our low- and moderate-income neighborhoods are loss of affordability, community and livability."

Said West Seattle's Tobin-Presser, "The purpose of an Environmental Impact Statement, required by the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA), is to provide two or more alternatives to the proposed changes, to analyze as thoroughly as possible the impacts of the alternatives and to propose mitigation for those impacts.

The FEIS appeal coalition asserts that the proposed upzones won't provide affordability, that the alternatives studied in the FEIS are completely inadequate, and that the impacts and mitigation must be analyzed neighborhood by neighborhood.

Members of Seattle Coalition for Affordability, Livability and Equity:

Baker Street Community Group • Beacon Hill Council of Seattle • Cherry Hill Community Council • Citizens for Architectural Diversity • Eastlake Community Council • Fremont Neighborhood Council • Friends of the North Rainier Neighborhood Plan • Friends of Ravenna-Cowen • Georgetown, Duwamish Valley Neighborhood Preservation Coalition • Jackson Place Community Council • Madison-Miller Park Community • Magnolia Community Council • Morgan Community Association (MoCA) • Save Madison Valley • Seattle Displacement Coalition • Seattle Fair Growth • Seniors United for Neighborhoods • South Park, Duwamish Valley Neighborhood Preservation Coalition • TreePAC • U District Small Businesses • University District Community Council • Wallingford Community Council • West Seattle Junction Junction Neighborhood Organization (JuNO) • Westwood Roxhill Arbor Heights Community Coalition

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