Council President González & Seattle City Council

City of Seattle

600 4th Ave

Seattle, WA 98102

President González and Seattle City Councilmembers:

**RE: Comment on emergency CB 119769 pertaining to permitting, design review, and special district review during the COVID-19 Outbreak**

Thank you for your leadership in tackling COVID-19, one of the greatest public health challenges our city has ever faced and taking the necessary steps to mitigate its spread. As an association, our members have been partners to the city, working on the front lines of the COVID-19 and housing crises in every part of our King County region.

HDC is a non-profit membership association representing 180 cross-sector, affordable housing developers, human service providers, public housing authorities, architects, general contractors and community-based organizations dedicated to the vision that all people should have a safe, healthy, and affordable home. We support the proposed CB 119769, making temporary changes to design review, permitting, and special district review that allow the housing development process to continue while avoiding public health risks. The proposal to exempt affordable housing from administrative design review if they apply for their building permits within the 6months timeframe of the legislation is an innovative strategy that we commend. We also urge you to consider specific amendments that tailor-make the bill to effectively support affordable housing construction during this difficult time. Please consider the following amendments.

1. **Exemption of affordable housing projects from administrative design review (ADR)** **if they apply for their building permits with the 6months timeframe of the legislation**.

We recognize that the Growth Management Act requires compliance of emergency legislation to the six-month timeline and encourage you to include language that indicates willingness to review the legislation at sunset if the pandemic continues to present uncertainty.

We also recommend that you proactively provide clarified language and guidelines on implementation of the legislation as it relates to Section **23.41.004 Applicability,** subsection 23.41.004.D. Below is an extract from the **proposed bill for your reference.**

The proposed bill states that the provisions of subsection 23.41.004.D apply from the effective date of the ordinance until the earlier of:

(a) 180 days after the effective date of this ordinance.

(b) the date when the Department places in operation a system, consistent with applicable statutory requirements, for holding meetings of the Design Review Board that do not involve in-person 13 contact: or

(c) the date when the Design Review Board resumes meetings involving in-person contact consistent with applicable statutory and public health requirements.

Beyond the clarified language, HDC urges you to also consider re-prioritizing the guidelines and criteria considered for the actual Administrative Design Review (ADR) process. Amid these difficult times, there are already layers that slow many processes, we propose that the ADR process prioritizes only a handful of guidelines without compromising quality and efficiency.

1. **Landmark Process**

**25.12.420 - Board meeting on approval of designation**

We appreciate the proposal that while this ordinance is in effect, the Historic Preservation Officer shall be responsible for review and approval of applications for certificates of approval for certain items as set forth in Title 25. However, this will not support some of our member projects that are in between nomination and designation.

An example is our member, Capitol Hill Housing’s project that would provide nearly 100 apartments to low and very low-income individuals as a part of the Youth Care Opportunity Center aimed at providing support and housing to homeless teens.

We request that you add a section in the legislation that would allow the City Historic Preservation Officer to either

A) designate the property and enter controls and incentives negotiations and then decide on those or

B) not designate the property.

Below is language that we suggest should be included in **Section 25.12.420** - on approval of designation

A. Notwithstanding any contrary provision in subsection 25.12.420 or Title 25, while this ordinance is in effect, if the owner and the Board staff reach written agreement as to designation, the City Historic Preservation Officer shall approve or disapprove the designation, without the need for action of the Board or a public meeting.

(Ord. 118012 § 83, 1996: Ord. 106348 § 6.01, 1977)

1. **Allowing electronic or digital platforms for Early Community Outreach.**

Our members are moving forward with outreach in successful ways. We are happy to share some promising practices as learned from those who are already implementing this virtual outreach.

1. **Other coalition ideas support**

We support our coalition partners, Seattle for everyone recommendation that this exemption be expanded to include all projects that make MHA payments. This can not only encourage program utilization, but these payments will fund the ongoing affordable housing response.

Again, we are deeply grateful for your bold leadership and commitment to ensuring that all people have access to safe, healthy and affordable homes, always. We look forward to working with you on future long term design review reform legislation as we work to ensure that the affordable housing community weathers this crisis and comes out the other end ready to build more housing to meet the surging demand.

Sincerely,

Marty Kooistra, Housing Development Consortium of Seattle King County

Patience Malaba, Housing Development Consortium of Seattle King County

Brain Llyod, Beacon Development

Susan Boyd, Bellwether Housing

Chris Persons, Capitol Hill Housing

Bill Rumpf, Mercy Housing NW

Terry Galiney, Seattle Housing Authority

Chris Jowell, Catholic Community Services Southwest Washington