

COMMENTS ON 8-18-16 PLANNING COMMISSION CHANGES TO COMPACT COMMUNITY-HYBRID MAP
TOM POITRAS 9-9-16

Because it had been decided to move the station north of its previous location, the Planning Commission decided to up zone to MUR-70 the area between 5th and 6th Ave from 152 St to 155th St to make up for the MUR-70 lost. I would like to point out why I think that choice has some problems and to suggest a different choice.

First I would like to mention some of the problems with this location:

1. The MUR-70 lost was within 1 block of the station, but the replacement MUR-70 is about 7 blocks from the station at 155th St. and about 4 blocks from the station at 152nd St. It is a standard principle of TOD that the density should be closest to the station, not 7 blocks away. This is reflected in the fact that real estate values rise significantly the closer they are to the station. In this case, ideal real estate for high density TOD was replaced by less desirable real estate. Theoretically, the raison d'être for light rail in the Seattle area is to create walkable dense communities as close to the stations as possible, as soon as possible, to reduce car traffic and sprawl now. If developers want to build an MUR-70 building close to the station right away, why not let them? A better choice would be to replace the lost area with area as close to the station as was lost.
2. It would not be aesthetically pleasing for 155th St to be lined with parks, single family homes, MUR-35, and MUR-45 from 15th Ave to Aurora, but with MUR-70 jutting up just for one block between 5th and 6th Ave.
3. It is likely that special traffic problems would be created by an MUR-70 building being located at that intersection.
4. Also, not that much is gained by putting MUR-70 there and it does nothing to synergistically encourage good development at the station.

There are much better choices, depending on how much MUR-70 you want and how desirable you want it to be. A much better choice would be to up zone to MUR-70 the area between 6th and 8th Ave from 145th St to 148th St. There are many reasons for this:

1. It is just a block or two from the station, an ideal TOD location.
2. It abuts 145th St, which provides opportunities because of the redevelopment of 145th St. Also, tall residential buildings there may have beautiful views of the golf course.
3. Adding MUR-70 there would encourage commercial activity very close to the station and speed the day when residents there can purchase all their daily needs within walking distance of their home.
4. The total area of this location is almost one acre larger than the total area of the location on 155th St chosen by the Planning Commission. This area is 5.53 acres or 241,127 sq. ft. The Planning Commission location on 155th St is 4.68 acres or 203,959 sq. ft.
5. It would be easier to bundle properties of a size suitable for high density development at this location. In this area 12 of the 14 lots on 8th Ave are 10,141 sq. ft. each and about 175 ft. deep. On 6th Ave for 12 out of 14 lots, the lot size is 7,440 sq. ft. and about 125 ft. deep. On 8th St, only two lots would have to be bundled to create a lot over 20,000 Sq. ft., which has been suggested is desirable for MUR-70 buildings. Also, the 175 ft. depth of these lots would provide more

building design opportunities. The Planning Commission choice on 155th St. would require at least three lots to get over 20,000 Sq. ft. since all of its lots are 7,440 Sq. ft. or less.

6. There are property owners in this area who have already communicated with City Council, indicating that they want MUR -70 there, and that they have already started to talk to their neighbors about bundling their property hoping to sell to developers. The prices that developers would pay for property this close to the station obviously should facilitate that process.
7. This area was originally designated MUR-85 in the Compact Community option, and therefore should have been studied in the EIS.

Other options:

1. I am not advocating for this because I don't know how much density you want in this subarea, but because of its proximity to the station, MUR-70 could possibly be extended between 6th and 8th Ave up to about the 150th St level in addition to the proposal above.
2. Also, if the area chosen to be up zoned to MUR-70 by the Planning Commission between 5th and 6th Ave had MUR-70 only up to about the 154th St level and continued north of 154th St with MUR-45, then it would match the MUR-45 zoning on the west of 5th Ave. Then the aesthetic and traffic problems on 155th St. mentioned above would be diminished without the one block MUR-70 anomaly there.

With all of these possibilities for increasing density close to the station, using good TOD standards, and meeting Sound Transit's professed density goals, as Liz and I have said in the past, I do not think it is justified, nor does it make sense to rezone 5th Ave from its current R6 above 157th St. Therefore, I hope you will leave 5th Ave R6 above 157th St. I also hope you will not rezone other R6 areas within the original subarea or just outside of it that are distant from the station. Rezoning should be kept as close to the station as is possible. Thank you.