

Stadium District Study
Stakeholder Advisory Group Meeting 2
March 26, 2013
4:00PM – 6:00PM Seattle Municipal Tower Room 4050



Attending Advisory Group Members or Representatives:

Ryan Smith
Fred Mendoza
Judd Marquardt
Charley Royer
Josh Brower
Lance Lopes
Susan Ranf
Henry Liebman
Jack McCullough
Tom McQuaid
Leslie Smith
Don Blakeney
Jeffrey Long
Laura Bachman

Welcome and Introductions

Gary Johnson welcomed the Advisory Group members. All advisory group members and other meeting attendees introduced themselves. Gary provided a brief recap of the discussion during the first meeting. Gary updated the group on progress to hire a consultant team to assist with the project. He updated the group on discussions with the City of Seattle’s Office of Sustainability and Environment (OSE) to convene a charrette session among the three stadium entities and topical experts on April 5 to explore possible district sustainability strategies. Gary reminded the group of the end goals for the project: to inform possible Comprehensive Plan amendments; potential zoning changes; and streetscape concept plans. Gary previewed the agenda for the meeting, which focuses on a land use vision.

Garry Papers, design review planner for the proposed arena project, gave an update on the status of the arena proposal’s Design Review. Garry stated that the Design Review Board (DRB) has given Early Design Guidance approval of the project, and that the project may now proceed towards submitting Master Use Permit (MUP) application. The DRB will continue to review the project before giving final Design Review approval. Garry reiterated that the EIS study of the arena is expected to be released in June of 2013. He reported that the Design Commission process to begin reviewing the proposed street vacation of Occidental Ave. will be proceeding in the next few months.

Existing Land Use Review

Geoff Wentlandt provided a brief presentation summarizing existing land uses in the area. The presentation showed images of each block in the study area, and identified the type of uses and activities currently occurring in the blocks. The presentation also summarized the types of businesses present in the area using survey data, and the number of employees in existing businesses.

Gary Johnson touched on potential catalyst site opportunities. This included slides of the WOSCA site, with approximate site size and dimensions that will be available after completion of the SR99 tunnel. A review of past studies of construction over the BNSF railway tracks was provided in order to demonstrate potential improved physical connection between the Chinatown / ID and the stadium district area.

Stakeholder Group Discussion

The stakeholder advisory group was encouraged to engage in a visioning discussion of what the preferred mix of future land uses in the district should be. General questions to discuss included:

- Strengths: What is successful about land use in the area now?
- Opportunities: What land uses are missing from the area now?
- Event times vs. non-event times
- Relationship to adjacent neighborhoods
- Where are the major opportunity sites

The following is a summary of points and comments made by stakeholder group members:

- The 2012 proposed Stadium District Concept Plan did a lot of work on this very topic. Will this work be used as a starting point, or are we beginning from square one with this project?
 - *Gary Johnson responded that the Stadium District Concept Plan will be strongly considered, but that the City also needs to broaden the discussion to include a larger more public audience, and a variety of stakeholders, before a new land use vision could be formally adopted as a City policy or plan.*
- This area is changing rapidly, and has changed a lot since the stadiums were located. This study has to consider the current users of the area including residents nearby.
- Remember that the Mariners and other teams draw from a very large area, and the Mariners in particular have a family demographic. There needs to be spaces and facilities to accommodate a family audience with a broad range of ages, such as an open space area to enjoy before/after events. There should be fan oriented land uses and activities to bring visitors in for a day or evening, not just the event.

- A real useable open space is missing from the area. The WOSCA site should have some open space and not just buildings.
- Pioneer Square stakeholders have done some work on retail recruitment. One finding was that in the broader area there was actually an over abundance of retail space. To some extent retail needs to be concentrated to be effective. Seattle has created very successful neighborhood business districts, like Ballard and Capitol Hill, so there is not a strong reason for neighborhood residents to come to a place like the stadium area just to shop.
- Pioneer Square businesses find that by and large, gameday visitors do very little shopping at all. Visitors may stop to get some food before the game in the neighborhood, but they do almost no retail shopping.
- We need to look at ways to better connect neighborhoods to the stadium district, in particular the Chinatown / ID. These connections could be physical, and also economic and programmatic. Perhaps the stadiums and teams could increase efforts and strategies to help support Pioneer Square and Chinatown / ID in the future.
- The physical connections and pathways from transit to the stadiums need improvement. For example the stadium LRT station is hard to walk from to the event. It is easier to go up to King St. for many. Jackson Street is a very difficult street to walk along but is very important for connecting the neighborhoods and the stadium area.
- Some other cities, including those studied in the Stadium District Concept Plan have done a lot of work building character neighborhoods around their stadiums. There are some good ideas out there that we can learn from.
- Some studies are showing that the American consumer is tapped out. Residential is needed to support a broader range of businesses in the area. Businesses can't survive on event time surges alone. A problem is that there aren't enough sites for development in the area that could accommodate residential. More area including land stretching south along 1st Ave. to Starbucks should be considered for future residential.
- Five or six other cities in the US at least have focused on creating density nearby stadium areas. The density and some residential provides the broader demographic that can support more businesses.
- Pioneer Square recently did a study finding that about 19,000 employees come to work in Pioneer Square every day. Employment in Pioneer Square is strengthening.
- We also need to be cautious about adding residential however, because event day surges and noise, as well as freight movement and traffic can make it a really tough location to successfully site places for people to live.
- Developers of the proposed Stadium Lofts project have found that the loudest noise event at their site is the crowd roar during a positive play at CenturyLink Field. There's no way this noise impact can be eliminated in a residential building, but it is something a resident would expect in choosing to live there. Industrial and Port related noises are not a factor when compared with the event noise.
- The Edgar Martinez / SR519 improvements have not solved the traffic problem there at all. Traffic and Level of Service continue to be very poor.

- On lands along Occidental and 1st Ave, bedrock is about 80' deep. In order to build in this area pilings into the bedrock need to go down 85' – 90' and this is expensive. Roughly 300 pilings were needed to support the new Home Plate Center development. Adequate density and height needs to be allowed in new development to balance for the sunk cost of construction.
- Housing around and outside of the stadium district study area needs to be considered, not just in the area. There will be 250+ events so housing a little removed from the actual stadium facilities will be needed.
- LA Live in Los Angeles has added 4 new hotels in the immediate vicinity of stadiums. They are also adding residential and mixed use right across the street from stadiums and event centers.
- This sounds a lot like half of the conversation, and the other voice – particularly of industrial users and advocates – is missing. The stadium transition overlay district had considerations for providing a buffer from the new stadiums to the Duwamish manufacturing and industrial center.
- Parts of industrial areas can transition and change over time. In San Diego for example the Convention Center was located on formerly industrial lands. Businesses and activities can be interconnected and interdependent. Industrial uses and a broader mix of land uses can coexist.
- There needs to be space preserved for industry and manufacturing. The MIC is doing a lot to preserve training opportunities for workers in the next generation of manufacturing. There is some return of manufacturing to the US now.
- The Planning Commission is an independent, volunteer group that is the steward of the city's Comprehensive Plan. The Commission has for quite some time advocated for preservation of industrial lands, and prepared an industrial lands report in 2009. One of the findings was a broader mix of uses can impact and displace industrial lands and this is not good for the city as a whole. The Port activities in particular are essential to the economy of Seattle and bring in a massive amount of revenue and resources to this area.
- A lot of the industrial lands appear to be underused, and some industrial and manufacturing uses have left the area. It was asserted that there isn't a strong demand for industrial uses here anymore, and that demand for retail and office uses is stronger.
- In contrast to the statement above, others point out that industrial lands in the area have a very low vacancy rate (5% or less); which is far lower compared to office and retail (which surged near 20% vacancy during the recent downturn).
- By restricting the land use to just industrial you can hurt the economic prospects for industrial businesses, because a lot of these are longstanding family owned companies. When they decide to cease operation they want to capitalize on the reuse of their land, and if you restrict the use to non-viable activities they can't reap that reward.
- There are so many big important projects in the pipeline: Arena, waterfront, SR99 portal etc. There will be radical changes. What's missing is a coordinated plan. We need to be thinking about not only the district, but also about broader connections in the vicinity. Holgate for example is an edge but it is also a key link east up to Beacon Hill. Connections to the south include access to West Seattle. These connections won't be the same in 10 years so we need to anticipate and have a plan for them.
- This conversation may get easier when we do some ground truthing and look at specific sites in more detail. This boils down to wanting to get more people hanging around more of the time,

and to attract capital investment both public and private. But clearly there are limits in this area and for possible sites. So I encourage us to move on to the specifics and this discussion should become clearer.

- If you look at the Duwamish for how much land is in public ownership it is very high.
- 40 years ago voters approved the King Dome in industrial lands. That footprint encroached on industry, but this is the same footprint occupied by the two existing stadiums today. Why in 40 years there hasn't been any meaningful activation to make a viable neighborhood? Pioneer Square has had ups and downs, but has never fully revitalized. Things have evolved without a lot of help. This is a uniquely Seattle opportunity to do more to create a great opportunity here in the stadium district.
- The new zoning in Pioneer Square has really helped. Having the additional height and density allowance has helped make development projects pencil.
- The 4th Ave. trestle needs to be seismically brought up to snuff. This is a big opportunity to improve Jackson Street and the connection between neighborhoods.
- The stadiums have made more than \$1.5 Billion in investments (including the funds that could potentially be invested to create the proposed basketball arena). This creates unbelievable opportunity, and is an economic stimulus for the area. There needs to be a more proactive approach to support and build momentum in the district.
- This is an important moment in Pioneer Square's history with the Stadium Place development and other major revitalization steps. We should capitalize on it.

Other Public Comment

- Other factors to keep in mind for the area are climate change and the long term possibility of sea level rise. Also the water table in this area is very high, which is a challenge to building anything below grade.
- The connection north to downtown is important. The district should be oriented to the north, and begin to set a harder line to the south at Holgate.
- It should be noted that a lot of the big industrial users aren't going anywhere. For example, King County Metro has no plan to move it's Atlantic base, the Port facilities aren't going anywhere because massive investments in infrastructure are in place, and the railroad and railyards aren't going anywhere.

Wrap-Up and Next Steps

Gary Johnson concluded the discussion and reminded the group that the next meeting is on April 16th at 4:00PM. The focus of the next meeting is mobility and streetscape.

Gary announced that a Feet First walking tour is being planned for the evening of May 8th, and that more information would be forthcoming for the group on the Walk and Talk.