



City of Seattle Seattle Planning Commission

Josh Brower, Chair
Barbara Wilson, Executive Director

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION OCTOBER 8, 2009 APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

COMMISSIONERS IN ATTENDANCE

Chair - Josh Brower, Vice-Chair Leslie Miller, Catherine Benotto, Jerry Finrow, Chris Fiori, Mark Johnson, Marty Kaplan, Kay Knapton, Amalia Leighton, Matt Roewe, Amanda Sparr

COMMISSION STAFF

Barbara Wilson - Director, Katie Sheehy - Planning Analyst, Robin Magonegil - Administrative Specialist, Diana Canzoneri - Demographer, Michael Pickford - intern

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT

Linda Amato, David Cutler, Colie Hough-Beck, Kevin McDonald, Christopher Persons

GUESTS

Ray Gastil, Lyle Bicknell, Tom Hauger, Kristian Kofoed, DPD

IN ATTENDANCE

Christa Valles, Council Central Staff; Eric Nusbaum, Northwesthub.org

Please Note: Seattle Planning Commission meeting minutes are not an exact transcript but instead represent key points and the basis of the discussion.

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Josh Brower called the meeting to order at 3:04 pm.

COMMISSION BUSINESS

- Minutes approval

ACTION: Commissioner Kay Knapton moved to approve the minutes; Vice Chair Leslie Miller seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

- Chair's Report - Commission Chair Brower

Chair Josh Brower noted the upcoming meetings: the Executive Committee will meet Tuesday, October 13; the LUT Committee will meet Thursday, October 15; the Full Commission will meet again on Thursday, October 22 and the HNUC Committee will meet on Tuesday, November 10. He also reminded Commissioners to RSVP for meetings so that staff could provide enough materials. Chair Brower informed the Commission that the second round of status report meetings would be held on November 5, 10 and 12.

Ms. Wilson asked Commissioners to let her know their availability for the meetings and described the proposed format. Chair Brower also noted that the 2011 Comprehensive Plan Update kick-off would take place on Tuesday, November 17 and that former Mayor Norm Rice would be the keynote speaker.

Chair Brower provided a brief update about recent activities including: a Commission-hosted discussion about the Green Factor attended by Commissioners Finrow and Leighton, local landscape architects, and DPD and Council Central Staff; and a follow up letter regarding Backyard Cottages that was sent to Council. Ms. Wilson noted that Commissioner Cutler was testifying to PLUNC in support of the proposed legislation. Chair Brower noted that the neighborhood Status Check documents would be published next week.

DISCUSSION & REPORT

- **Approve Multifamily Code - SPC 'Discussion Papers'**
 - Commissioners

Recusal & Disclosure:

- Commissioner Marty Kaplan disclosed that his firm, Martin Henry Kaplan Architects, works on projects in multifamily zones.
- Commissioner Matt Roewe disclosed that his firm, VIA Architecture, works on projects in multifamily zones.
- Chair Josh Brower disclosed that his firm, Tupper Mack Brower, has clients who own property and designs projects in multifamily zones.
- Commissioner Amalia Leighton disclosed that her firm, SvR, works on projects in multifamily zones.
- Commissioner Catherine Benotto disclosed that her firm, Weber + Thompson, works on projects in multifamily zones.

Commissioner Roewe made a friendly amendment to the discussion paper on the highrise zone that would call for allowing two towers per block rather than three. He also noted that the proposed discussion paper recommends an incentive height limit of 350 feet rather than 300 feet. Commissioner Benotto made a friendly amendment to clarify the section about FAR exemptions at grade in the parking discussion paper. Commissioner Johnson also noted that the Executive Committee decided to remove the section about RPZs because PLUNC does not review legislation related to parking zones. Ms. Wilson explained that the Executive Committee had decided to hold the discussion paper related to building bulk and combine it with the forthcoming paper on townhouses and unit lot subdivision.

ACTION: Commissioner Jerry Finrow moved to approve the discussion papers; Commissioner Kay Knapton seconded the motion. The discussion papers were approved unanimously with friendly amendments from Commissioners Catherine Benotto and Matt Roewe.

- **Briefing: Neighborhood Planning - Southeast Plan Updates**
 - Ray Gastil, Planning Director, DPD & Lyle Bicknell, Neighborhood Plan Manager, DPD

Recusal & Disclosure:

- Commissioner Marty Kaplan disclosed that he is a board member of the Queen Anne Community Council.
- Commissioner Matt Roewe disclosed that he is an advisor for the Great City initiative.

- Vice Chair Leslie Miller disclosed that she is a voting member of the SEDC, steering committee member of OSCAT, represent ROSA on South Precinct Advisory Committee, and am steering committee member of Othello Park Now!

Before the presentation began, Commissioner Finrow asked for clarification about the Commission's role in the neighborhood plan update process. Ms. Wilson pointed out Councilmember Clark's letter from October 6 asking for the Commission's input. She also noted that the proposed Comprehensive Plan amendments for this year include placeholders for the three neighborhood plan updates currently underway.

Mr. Gastil briefly outlined the planning work currently underway and introduced Mr. Bicknell, who presented the attached [powerpoint](#). Mr. Bicknell began by explaining that the focus of his presentation would be the three neighborhoods with newly opened light rail stations that are receiving neighborhood plan updates:

- North Beacon Hill:
http://seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Neighborhood_Planning/NeighborhoodPlanUpdates/NorthBeaconHill/default.asp
- North Rainier (aka Mount Baker):
http://seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Neighborhood_Planning/NeighborhoodPlanUpdates/NorthRainier/default.asp
- Othello (aka MLK at Holly Street):
http://seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Neighborhood_Planning/NeighborhoodPlanUpdates/MLKatHollyStreet/default.asp

Mr. Bicknell made clear that outreach to under-represented communities has been a significant aspect of the planning process. Using the "POL" (planning outreach liaison) model, more than 1,500 people have participated in almost 70 workshops. Mr. Bicknell noted that all of the comments that had been received have been translated and are available at the neighborhood plan update websites [listed above].

Mr. Gastil maintained that the neighborhood plan updates are about more than just land use and that the final reports will include that information. He also indicated that the goal is still to provide recommendations to Council by the end of the year. The tentative process and timeline would be for the draft recommendations to be discussed at a series of community meetings held toward the end of October and for final recommendations to be submitted to Council as a series of resolutions and Comprehensive Plan amendments. The Planning Commission's role will be to review the amendments and submit their recommendations to Council.

Vice Chair Miller asked how the City proposes to balance amenities and density in the planning areas, particularly related to preserving affordable retail space within the Othello station area. Mr. Bicknell replied that the Office of Economic Development has been working on a Southeast Retail Study during the past year to address this very question. He noted that the report, which will be released before the end of the year, will provide meaningful suggestions for the how to strengthen the business districts throughout southeast Seattle. Mr. Bicknell also noted that crime has been a major concern in these neighborhoods and that they have been working with the Seattle Police Department to help improve public safety in these neighborhoods.

Commissioner Finrow asked about the broader city-wide perspective and how housing capacity was factored into the draft goals and strategies. Mr. Gastil noted that while they were not working toward specific growth targets, housing capacity was being considered within the broader context of the Urban Village Strategy and Comprehensive Plan goals to reduce vehicle miles traveled. Mr. Bicknell noted that

there is not a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach for each neighborhood and that, for example, as a hub urban village, the North Rainier neighborhood could accommodate more employment than other neighborhoods. Mr. Gastil reiterated the point that there will need to be a balance between increases in density and City investments in neighborhood amenities.

Commissioner Roewe asked about residents’ attitudes toward increasing density in their neighborhoods. Mr. Bicknell replied that there had been a spectrum of responses from opposing growth to welcoming it. He suggested that recent immigrants, particularly those from places with densities higher than Seattle, understand the opportunities that come with increased density. Mr. Gastil indicated that they have been working on helping residents understand how achieving a critical mass of residents can support healthy business districts.

Commissioner Fiori asked whether the urban design framework in Northgate would serve as a model for these plan updates; in particular he wanted to know what rezone process would be used. Mr. Gastil replied that they are not using Northgate as a specific model and that legislative rezones would be most likely.

Commissioner Finrow asked about the location of the East Link light rail station in the North Rainier neighborhood. Mr. Bicknell replied that the station would be located under I-90 [see <http://soundtransit.org/x12328.xml#sea> for more information].

Chair Brower thanked Mr. Gastil and Mr. Bicknell for their time and commended them on their outreach efforts for the neighborhood plan updates.

- **Briefing & Discussion: 2011 Comprehensive Plan Update**
 - Tom Hauger & Kristian Koefed, Long Range Planning, DPD

Chair Brower welcomed Mr. Hauger and Mr. Koefed. Mr. Hauger began by providing background information about the update process for the Comprehensive Plan, which includes new growth targets. He claimed that significant changes in how people think about sustainability have taken place since the last major update in 2004, especially with regard to how cities interact with the natural environment. He noted that Vision 2040, our regional growth strategy, was adopted last year and included a huge increase in the number of people who are expected to move here. Additionally, the GMA was amended to require that the cities of Seattle and Tacoma prepare new Comp Plan elements for their parts.

Mr. Hauger indicated that Seattle’s growth targets are likely to be announced either this year or next and that the draft target is 70,000 households for the next twenty years, which would be a sharp increase from our current targets. The new target translates to about 3500 households per year, which would be an increase from the average growth of 2500-3000 households per year over the last ten years, but in-line with the peak numbers seen in two of those years. Mr. Hauger noted that Seattle’s target would also represent a greater share of King County’s growth than has been assigned in the past. He went on to explain that the goals for the Comp Plan update include making the plan more accessible and minimizing redundancy.

Commissioner Leighton noted that most utilities have their own sort of comprehensive plan. Mr. Hauger agreed and indicated that the City is working on how best to coordinate the efforts of each department in accordance with Comprehensive Plan goals and policies.

Mr. Hauger reiterated that the kick-off meeting will be on Tuesday, November 17 and that the intent will be to get people thinking about the overall vision for Seattle’s future. He noted that this would be a contrast to the 2004 update, which was more technical in nature. He indicated that the Comp Plan team wants to have a lot of public involvement and get the City departments involved in a meaningful way.

Mr. Koefed briefly reviewed the tentative schedule, which would have Council adopt the updated Comprehensive Plan by December 2011. He said that it would be helpful for the Commission to provide advice about how to get younger people engaged in the update process.

Chair Brower opened the floor for discussion.

Commissioner Knapton asked if it would be useful to look at other cities' plans for comparison. Mr. Hauger replied that they are looking at plans around the region and country, but noted that the GMA does constrain the plan relative to what has been done in other states.

Commissioner Johnson asked about reframing the plan to look at a period longer than 20 years. Mr. Koefed concurred that it could be useful to envision what Seattle would look like 100 years from now.

Commissioner Sparr asked about the public feedback from the 2004 update process. Mr. Hauger replied that the City Neighborhood Council offered to co-sponsor some meetings and helped shape the agenda.

Commissioner Kaplan noted that while we have a Comprehensive Plan for growth, we do not have a strategic plan to address our future. He suggested that framing the conversation to be about how Seattle moves into the future and achieves a broader vision for a livable city might be helpful. Mr. Koefed replied that individual departments do have strategic plans and that one goal of the update would be to create a family tree illustrating how all the different plans relate to each other, the goal being to make them easier for the public to understand and use.

Vice Chair Miller agreed that it will be important to get younger people interested in the Comprehensive Plan through new social media tools such as blogs and Facebook and noted that it can be challenging to get people to participate if there is not a tangible reward at the end. Mr. Koefed replied that this is THE opportunity to create the vision of what Seattle will be like in 2050. Mr. Hauger agreed with Commissioner Miller that outreach is a challenge because the Plan is about broad policies rather than specific, discrete projects.

Commissioner Finrow asked about the requirement to add a Port element to the plan. Mr. Hauger replied that the Governor appointed a task force related to the state's largest ports and that it recommended the new elements be created. Chair Brower and Commissioner Finrow agreed that it would be very useful to find out more about the task force's recommendations.

Chair Brower suggested that the Commission establish a sub-committee to work with City staff on the update process. Mr. Hauger agreed that it would be helpful to work with a smaller committee of Commissioners.

Commissioner Fiori noted that some cities have done a good job of using their comprehensive plans to articulate long-range visions. Mr. Hauger replied that the GMA places constraints on what can be included in the Comp Plan. For example, it requires that implementation be concurrent with the policies identified in the plan, which limits the ability to use the plan to identify a long-term vision.

Commissioner Knapton suggested that it might be useful to use the Seattle 2000 report from the 1970's as a starting point for the discussion.

Commissioner Leighton noted that searching through the plan can be cumbersome and suggested that it might be helpful to make the Comp Plan more of a web-based tool like the Right of Way Improvement Manual.

Commissioner Finrow asked how Seattle coordinates with other cities. Mr. Hauger replied that there are regular venues where staff from cities throughout the region can discuss coordination of comprehensive plans. He also noted that most jurisdictions would begin to update their plans early next year and that the PSRC would review local plans for consistency with Vision 2040.

Chair Brower thanked Mr. Hauger and Mr. Koefed.

Commissioner Cutler provided a brief update about PLUNC's decision about backyard cottage legislation, which was recently voted out of committee. He said that they voted to eliminate the cap of 50 permits per year and revised the height limit to 22 feet (23 feet on larger lots and lots with alleys). There was much rejoicing by all.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Josh Brower adjourned at 5:30 pm.