



**SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION
September 9, 2004
MEETING MINUTES**

Commissioners in Attendance

George Blomberg, Chair; Anjali Bhagat, Angela Brooks, Mahlon Clements, Chris Fiori, Lyn Krizanich, John Owen, Joe Quintana, Paul Tomita.

Commissioners Absent

Tom Eanes, Jerry Finrow, Matthew Kitchen, Jeanne Krikawa, Steve Sheehy, Mimi Sheridan, Tony To.

Commission Staff

Elizabeth Martin, Analyst

Guests

John Rahaim, DPD; Tom Hauger, DPD; Jim Holmes, DPD; Barbara Gray, SDOT

Call to Order

In the absence of the chair and vice chair, chair emeritus John Owen called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Quintana moved and Commissioner Krizanich seconded to approve the July 22, 2004 Commission minutes as written. The motion was approved unanimously.

COMMISSION BUSINESS

Chair's Report

Upcoming and Recent Activities

Commissioner Owen noted the following upcoming events and activities:

- On Monday, September 13 - the Monorail Review Panel will tour the Green Line with Station Area Planners from the City staff.
- On Tuesday, September 14 - the Urban Land Institute will make a presentation entitled Vital Urban Centers. This event is part of the Center City Presentation series.
- Reminder that on Tuesday, September 14, 7:30 – 9:00 am - there is an SPC Executive Committee Meeting in Seattle Municipal Tower, room 4096.
- The Center City Open House and kickoff will be held Monday, September 20, 5:00 – 7:30 pm, at City Hall Bertha Landes Room. The SPC will make its Center City recommendations available at this event.
- Wednesday, September 22 - Waterfront Advisory Meeting, City Hall, Bertha Landes Room.
- There will be two Public Meetings on the Neighborhood Business District Strategy, Wednesday, September 29, 7:00 – 9:00 pm, City Hall, Bertha Landes Room and a morning meeting on Thursday, September 30, 7:00 – 9:00 am, Neighborhood Business District Strategy Public Meeting, City Hall, Bertha Landes Room.
- In October there will be a recommended action plan for the Monorail.
- The Light Rail Review Panel is discussing the Northgate station and is considering straddling 103rd Avenue to link to the Northgate Mall.

COMMISSION DISCUSSION

PLANNING DIRECTOR REPORT

John Rahaim, Planning Director of DPD, gave a report on current activities in City Planning. Mr. Rahaim strongly encouraged Planning Commissioners to attend Center City Open House on September 20th noting that there will be a presentation from Diane Sugimura, Mayor Nickels and keynote speaker Bruce Katz from the Brookings Institution.

Mr. Rahaim then shared with the Commission City Planning's Priorities for 2004-2005 noting that for the remainder of 2004 City Planning would be focused on the following projects; the Comprehensive Plan; Neighborhood Commercial Strategy; Monorail Station Area Planning; and Downtown height and density work which should be finished by early November.

He also noted that in October there will be a public meeting on the Environmental Critical Areas. He stated that Environmental Critical Areas work is under the same state law as the Comp Plan; the Growth Management Act, and is therefore under the same timelines. These Critical Areas include everything from wetlands to heron habitat. He stated the City is required to use the best available science. He pointed out that the challenge is (to use the best available science in an urban area) balancing best available science with urban issues. He expects staff recommendations to be completed in late October.

Also in 2004 the Center City Strategy work will be a high priority and City Planning will focus analysis on downtown zoning and south downtown, the International

District, Pioneer Square. He stated the goal is to make these areas more attractive for housing.

Mr. Rahaim then outlined City Planning priorities for 2005 which include; Larger implementation of the Commercial Code work to include remapping to reflect pedestrian overlays; Code simplification work focused on the Multi-family code and discussion of issues of multi-family development and the Institutional code, Master Plans including some "small" institutions that are getting quite large. He noted that Master plans are not required of these small institutions or larger private institutions so these projects may not even undergo design review.

He also noted that Industrial Lands review will be a big priority. The City will look at Industrial Lands in a larger context. He noted that several things are influencing this need such as the Port's interest in Interbay, Mayoral concern about losing industrial zones, interest surrounding Terminal 46, activity in South Wallingford which is a long-standing industrial area. Many are interested in a change of zoning along Lake Union, and finally North Duwamish to the stadium to Massachusetts, there is the question as to whether this area will be industrial or not.

Mr. Rahaim noted that Shoreline Improvement Plan is another major area of focus for City planning in 05. He stated that the Shoreline Improvement Plan requires habitat-related environmental mitigation. The City is considering having property owners contribute to a fund and pool these funds to apply them to projects that can provide the most environmental benefit. He noted that this is similar to Seattle Public Utilities' approach. This could dovetail into the Shoreline Master Program. Commissioner Owen suggested that it would be prudent to discuss this with the DOE to get their support early on. He suggested improvements to shoreline will require the development of an improvement plan and environmental mitigation.

Mr. Rahaim stated the City's Integrating the Monorail Team will continue working on Station Area Planning and work will begin with the DBOM contractor once a contract is negotiated. Commissioners Clements asked what is happening on 2nd Avenue now and how many lanes will be lost. Mr. Rahaim stated that there will be 3 lanes, one bus lane. and two travel lanes.

Commissioner Clements commented on the multi-family code. He recommended that a "shorter" code would be better and suggested cleaning it up and making it clearer.

Tacoma was cited as a good example of a successful approach to changing the multi-family code.

Commissioner Owen thanked Mr. Rahaim for sharing the City Planning 04-05 priorities noting it will be useful as the Planning Commission prepares its 2005 work plan.

CENTER CITY PLANNING

Commissioner Owen then invited Mr. Rahaim to join in the Commissions discussion and follow up on the SPC's Center City work. Mr. Rahaim shared that planners will be looking at SODO to include the areas from Pioneer Square, the International District, and south to the Duwamish (north of I-90) and noted DPD staff is working with SDOT and Parks in this effort.

Chair Owen referred Commissioners to the Planning Commission Center City recommendations noting they are based on the work of the Planning Commissions analysis with input from the August 26th Center City Roundtable. He walked the Commissioner through the documents and opened up the discussion for comments on the letter and the recommendations. Commissioners offered the following recommendations and discussed contents of the Center City Strategy letter:

Commissioner Quintana stated that he is not a big believer in "vision statements". He would rather see 'strategic objectives', such as "to increase mobility, decrease congestion, increase housing, etc." He felt the objectives should be more pertinent and measurable. It was suggested that there is a need to work with the neighborhoods to ensure mobility and quality of life.

Commissioner Krizanich asked that the Second Draft of the Recommendations Developed from the Round Table Discussions (Sept. 7, 2004), under the heading Center City Strategy Contents - "Quality of Life" be revised to read as follows: "The strategy should be about building community and not just about the necessary metrics of height and density and Economic Development"

There was a question raised as to what is "bold" in terms of a Center City strategy. Commissioner Owen stated that for him, "bold" was the chance to get the different branches of government working together.

Other key ideas and suggestions from the Commission included;

- Mixed-use, residential around stations
- Building on mobility (rail)
- Work-force housing along rail line, middle range of housing.
- Raising tax revenues.
- Areas of distinction/identities
- Eliminating "no man's land" areas, and knitting neighborhoods together.
- Think about connections – transit
- Clarify objectives
- Capital/Infrastructure needs –

Commissioner Owen asked the Commissioner to consider the next steps in their efforts. Commissioner Quintana recommended that the Planning Commission not communicate too soon. He raised the concern that neighborhoods may not want to be part of the "Center City". There is the perception that the center core is spreading and encroaching on adjacent neighborhoods. He noted there is a need to clarify and articulate how the Center City strategy trying to knit neighborhoods

together. He also noted there is a semantics issue involving what it means to be part of "Center City". He noted it could be perceived as the core is spreading outward.

Mr. Rahaim responded that the ten neighborhoods involved have met for the last two years on an average of about every two months. "Center City" is not a new term but there is an issue about how it is defined.

Commissioner Quintana reiterated that there is confusion about the term "center city" and concurred that it needs to be clearly articulated. If the term 'strategy' needs to be explained then it is not ready for mass communication.

There was discussion about the need for research; a draft vision that builds on earlier work; and increased clarity in Center City objectives with an emphasis on connections and measurable, strategic objectives.

COMP PLAN 10-YEAR UPDATE

Tom Hauger, DPD staff, gave the commissioners an update of the work on the 10-year Comprehensive Plan revisions. He noted there will be a community Brown Bag in mid-October organized by Councilmember Steinbrueck, but no date is set as of yet.

Mr. Hauger stated that if the Planning Commission would like to issue a comment letter to City Council, the deadline is September 22nd. There will probably be preliminary votes at that meeting. The GMA states that any changes need new public meeting/comment.

Commissioner Krizanich attended the September 7th public hearing. A few concerns were expressed regarding parking requirements, the loss of jobs downtown over the past 10 years, the need for defining vague terms, and the preference for the use of targets vs. estimates for better accountability. There was mention of support of the Precautionary Principle and increasing housing. In summary, Commissioner Krizanich stated there wasn't much controversy.

Mr. Hauger informed the Commission that on December 8 the City Council will meet again on the Comp Plan. The Council is scheduled to vote on the Plan in the first week of December.

Mr. Hauger discussed the connection between the Neighborhood Business District Strategy and the Comprehensive Plan NC zones which are pedestrian-oriented. He noted that the language of the Comprehensive Plan policy is set out in the code, and gives a general direction in the Comp Plan. He stated that it is not changing the overall goals and that there is not the same level of detail in the Comprehensive Plan and there is the in the Neighborhood Business District Strategy.

Mr. Hauger noted that staff is working with a graphics consultant and including a Reader's Guide and graphical introduction. He noted they will possibly put an interactive online document on the web.

Mr. Hauger also stated that the Northgate (NACP) in the Comp Plan remains single family based on locational criteria. Mr. Hauger mentioned that Councilmember Steinbrueck opted for a slightly more flexible description of single-family housing that would allow for future evaluation to assess that the zoning remains single-family.

TRANSPORTATION STRATEGIC PLAN

Barbara Gray from SDOT presented an update on the Transportation Strategic Plan. She noted that it is a twenty year plan. She reminded Commissioners that there was an early draft issued on August 9th which many Commissioners have had an opportunity to review at the Commission Housing neighborhoods Urban Center committee and the Transportation Committee meetings. She stressed that the current draft is not a complete draft noting it is missing a few things that have already been discussed by the Planning Commission, such as existing conditions, etc.

Ms Gray noted that The Transportation Strategic Plan is tied to the CIP and budget and projects lead to performance measures. She informed the Commission that the next draft will be issued on September 30th. The TSP is a functional plan and does not carry the same requirements as the Comp Plan. The Comp Plan and development regulations demand that the City be accountable to mitigate based on level of service standards. Both the Comp Plan and development regulations have the force of state law behind them.

She noted that the TSP will have six chapters: an introduction, existing conditions, modal plans (e.g. walking, biking, freight); implementation elements (e.g. environment and operations and maintenance) and a funding chapter. Appendices will include links to the CIP and general fund budget for transportation projects. Each plan element will begin with the Comprehensive Plan goals and policies.

She discussed the Level-of-Service standards and acknowledging the need to establish other performance measures.

Commissioner Quintana raised the issue of employer viability. Ms. Gray replied that freight and transportation are included in the TSP and that there are a range of projects and strategies in the plan that address economic development and the access needs of business communities.

Commissioner Owen asked if the TSP would help make decisions about projects such as the Light Rail at Montlake and whether the TSP is a tool that enables the City to establish priorities. Ms. Gray responded that the strategies in the TSP will help establish priorities, and that some set priorities for items such as use of curb space and street design. She also noted that the TSP does not establish specific

project priorities because it is a citywide plan. The sub area transportation plans that exist for a number of neighborhoods get to that level of detail.

Commissioners suggested that SDOT staff be thoughtful about the language used in the plan. For example, if the plan states that the goal is to “decrease car ownership in the city”, be careful that that is exactly what is meant. There has been some ambiguous use of language used in earlier drafts. The plan deserves some careful wordsmithing. It is important to understand what point is being made.

Commissioners asked what the criteria was for determining what was included in the TSP vs. the Comp Plan. Ms. Gray answered that the level of specificity determined whether something was included in the Comp Plan or if it belonged in the TSP. SDOT worked with DPD to make sure that the Comp Plan included the broader goals and policies for transportation. The TSP refines the broad direction in the Comp Plan with specific strategies, projects and programs.

Ms. Gray then discussed the Street classifications and Bike route classifications noting that SDOT is trying to get more rigors in bike trail classifications; such as bike streets, and urban trails. Ms. Gray agreed that the level of authority of the TSP is not the same as the Comprehensive Plan, but that the TSP will be a functional work program for SDOT and have a high level of transparency about how decisions get made. Commissioner Owen gave 520 as an example. He noted the Comp Plan has the and suggested more rigorous level of service standard.

Ms. Gray stated that the TSP will include more a set of Street Types that define how a street should be designed to be consistent with its classification and adjacent land uses. She also mentioned the Transit Plan, which is being developed concurrently with the TSP, and part of which will be in the TSP Transit section, will have very measurable performance criteria. Ms. Gray said she could come back after the draft is released on Sept. 30th. Council approval is expected in the first quarter.

Adjournment

Chair Blomberg adjourned the meeting at 5:10 p.m.