



City of Seattle Seattle Planning Commission

Tony To, Chair
Barbara Wilson, Executive Director

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION APRIL 10, 2008 APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

Commissioners in Attendance

Tony To - Chair; Josh Brower, Tom Eanes, Jerry Finrow, Chris Fiori, Mark Johnson, Kay Knapton, Amalia Leighton, Chelsea Levy, Michelle Mattox, Kevin McDonald, Leslie Miller, Kirsten Pennington

Commission Staff

Barbara Wilson-Director, Casey Mills-Planning Analyst, Robin Magonegil-Administrative Specialist

Commissioners Absent

Linda Amato, Colie Hough-Beck, Martin Kaplan

Guests

Robert Nellums, Layne Cubell, Seattle Center; Ryan Curran, Evans School

In Attendance

George McDonald, Nathan Barfield, Anna Markee, Housing Development Consortium; David Yeaworth, Councilmember Sally Clark's Office

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 Tony To was not yet present so Commissioner Jerry Finrow called the meeting to order at 3:07 pm.

COMMISSION BUSINESS

▪ Minutes Approval

ACTION: Commissioner M. Michelle Mattox moved to approve the March 27, 2008 minutes. Commissioner Leslie Miller seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

▪ **Chairs Report**

Commissioner Jerry Finrow reported that Commissioner Chelsea Levy would be leaving the Commission. Chair Finrow stated that this will be the last meeting for Commissioner Chelsea Levy who has served as our Get Engaged member since last September. He noted that Commissioner Levy has just recently graduated with double master's degree from the UW and has subsequently accepted a job offer in Tacoma. Chair Finrow thanked her on behalf of the Commission for her service and dedication in her time serving as a Commissioner.

Commissioner Levy described her new position. She noted that she will be working for the Chamber of Commerce in Tacoma, primarily on development and transportation issues. She added that she was very excited about the new position.

Chair To arrived and replaced Commissioner Finrow. Chair To noted the upcoming meetings. He noted that Tuesday, April 15 will be the Executive Committee meeting. Chair To stated that the next Land Use and Transportation Committee meeting will be Thursday, April 22 and that the Commission will get an update on the Industrial Lands work that was proposed in the Council Resolution from the Department of Planning and Development and the Office of Economic Development. Chair To reported that the next Housing, Neighborhoods and Urban Centers Committee Meeting, will be Tuesday, May 6 and that the Committee will continue to work on the next steps of the Affordable Housing Action Agenda.

Chair To discussed the upcoming annual retreat. He noted that the retreat will begin at 7:30 am on April 24th. Commissioner To noted that all Commissioners are expected to attend. He added that the Executive Committee and staff have planned a fun and productive day for Commissioners and it looks to be a very interesting retreat. Ms. Wilson added that there will be a discussion of Blue Sky ideas, a State of City panel with various department directors and a regional panel discussion with members of various Planning Commissions in King County.

COMMISSION DISCUSSION

- **Report and Discussion: Affordable Housing Action Agenda**
 - Comprehensive Plan Amendments (Commissioners Finrow and Johnson)
 - Addendum to report (Casey Mills)

Chair To called for any recusals or disclosures.

Recusal & Disclosures: Chair Tony To disclosed that he works for a non-profit housing developer, Homesight. Commissioner Chris Fiori disclosed that he works for Heartland and they are involved in multifamily developments. Commissioner Tom Eanes disclosed that he works for Hewitt Architects and they are also involved with multifamily developments. Commissioner M. Michelle Mattox disclosed that her firm, Chiles & Company, has a client that is a multifamily developer. Commissioner Josh Brower disclosed that he is an attorney who represents multifamily developers working on projects in Seattle.

Casey Mills discussed the background of the amendments. He stated that Councilmember Sally Clark put a placeholder on the docket for Commission amendments to the Comp Plan related to the Affordable Housing Action Agenda. Mr. Mills noted that the Commissioners decided to move forward some amendments this year and that the Commissioners Finrow and Johnson from the HNUC Committee will present their suggested amendments. He added that staff will discuss these amendments with stakeholders and bring them back to the Full Commission for final approval on May 8, 2008.

Commissioner Johnson then read the amendments from the Action Agenda the Committee wanted to put forward. These amendments are:

1. Strengthen language to include concept of transit corridors rather than just transit hubs. *(Strategy 1)*
2. Encourage linking of incentive zoning programs with TOD. *(Strategy 1)*
3. Add “opportunities to provide affordable housing” to all rezone evaluation criteria. *(Strategy 4)*
4. Introduce principle ensuring that those that work in the city should be able to afford to live in the city, and introduce goal of providing housing to Seattle’s workers who have been priced out of the market. *(Strategy 5)*
5. Encourage any significant upzones include a funding and subarea plan for developing transportation strategies or infrastructure, open space and other public amenities. *(Strategy 9)*

Commissioner Finrow stated that he wanted to recognize that this was the first time the Commission would be proposing amendments, and that it was probably not something the Commission would do on a regular basis. He added that the HNUC Committee believes that, there is such a crisis right now concerning affordable housing, it requires action. Commissioner Finrow noted that there might be a risk proposing these amendments, for example if the amendments were not approved, it could erode Commission credibility.

Commissioner Eanes stated that he was not concerned about the amendments getting shot down, because what he really hopes occurs is that they stimulate debate, and help people recognize that change needs to be made.

Commissioner Miller noted that it was Councilmember Clark who was actually sponsoring the amendments.

Commissioner McDonald questioned why transit corridors were given less status in the proposed amendment than transit hubs. Commissioner Johnson replied that, while transit hubs were well defined, corridors were not. He added that the hope was to raise the issue of increased density on corridors as something to consider.

Commissioner Fiori stated that defining certain modes as high capacity had problems, as it is possible a bus line might be more high capacity than a transit line. He noted that perhaps level of service would be a better definition instead of high capacity.

Commissioner Pennington stated that level of service was a very complex issue with a variety of opinions on how to define it, and, in her opinion, the Commission should shy away from such a definition.

Commissioner McDonald suggested removing the first sentence in the proposed new amendment LU8. Commissioner Brower stated he agreed. Commissioners Johnson and Finrow also agreed.

Commissioner Fiori stated that he felt the proposed HG12 amendment was very broad, but there were problems with definition. He noted, for example, workers should be able to afford what – a shelter bed or a large single family home?

Commissioner Eanes stated the HNUC Committee asked the exact same question and what they concluded is that they really want to stimulate debate, particularly like the question Commissioner Fiori just asked. He added that it is deliberately vague to spark discussion.

Commissioner Knapton asked if it would be possible to couple incentive zoning with pedestrian improvements as well as affordable housing.

Commissioner Finrow responded that they wanted to encourage the city to develop and invest in the pedestrian environment, not necessarily developers. He stated that incentive zoning generates limited funds, and should be used sparingly to increase its impact. Commissioner Brower stated that the cost of pedestrian improvements are so high, incentive zoning funds would do little to make the improvements necessary, and so developers would have to amortize the cost of improvements back into the cost of the units, thereby defeating the original purpose of creating more affordable housing.

Commissioner Fiori stated that the Commission should include other tactics besides incentive zoning to increase affordable housing in transit oriented areas.

Commissioner Johnson stated that the Affordable Housing Action Agenda states 'link incentive zoning with TOD,' and that the Committee was trying to carry out the language in the report.

Commissioner To noted that the goal today was to move forward the amendments as general statements, and that the exact language would be approved at a later date.

ACTION: Commissioner Jerry Finrow moved to approve the amendments. Commissioner Tom Eanes seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Mills discussed the addendum to the Affordable Housing Action Agenda. He stated that the addendum is an attempt to document all the different suggestions provided to the Commission during the outreach process while creating the Action Agenda, comments made at the release event, and comments provided to the Commission via phone or email. Mr. Mills added that the Commissioners have suggested developing a response matrix to the addendum, which they will provide their comments on each suggestion to. He continued that the addendum will be published online along with the Action Agenda.

Commissioner Pennington stated that it would be a good idea to provide a disclaimer on the document that these were not direct quotes of their ideas.

- **Presentation: Seattle Center Century 21 Master Plan**
 - Robert Nellums, Director, Seattle Center
 - Layne Cubell, Strategic Advisor, Seattle Center

Chair Tony To welcomed Robert Nellums and Layne Cubell to the meeting. He thanked them for coming back to brief the Commission after they were bumped from the previous meeting of the Commission.

Chair To called for recusals and disclosures.

Recusal & Disclosures: Commissioner Chris Fiori disclosed stated that he works for Heartland, which is representing Seattle Public Schools on the stadium property.

Chair To noted that Mr. Nellums and Ms. Cubell are presenting the Seattle Center Master Plan and that City Council has asked the Commission for its thoughts on this matter. He noted that the presenters will talk about the City's process and decision agenda to help guide the Commission if we decide we will provide formal comment to Council.

Mr. Nellums gave a power point presentation and provided the Commission with handouts.

Mr. Nellums stated that the Seattle Center is a unique resource, 74 acres in the center of the city, and should be honored and valued. He noted that the Century 21 Committee attempted to figure out how to get the most bang for the buck in improving it. Mr. Nellums added that this effort was to create a rich and varied community at the center and enhance the large investment already made in the Center.

Mr. Nellums stated that the number one thing the Committee heard from the public was that there should be more open space. He added that they sought to achieve that and that the first effort was to turn Memorial Stadium into more open space. He noted that discussions with the Seattle School District have resulted in negotiations that have produced a win-win solution. Mr. Nellums reported that replacing the fun forest creates more open space, and turning the old armory into an improved open Center House also increases connections within the center and thus, draws people to the center.

Mr. Nellums reported that, near the Space Needle, there will be a reflective pool which can turn into a stage and a botanical garden. He added that there will also be a new play area, which is still under development, but has a lot of potential. Mr. Nellums stated that ideas include a jungle gym, a splash area that can turn into a skating rink, and an area to show movies in the evening. He continued that the Center House will provide views from inside it to the needle.

Ms. Cubell stated that she wanted to discuss two things in relation to the plan – sustainability and transportation. She stated that the transformation of the armory, while retaining the original structure, was a very sustainable effort. Ms. Cubell noted that there are also efforts to include rain gardens, storm water detention, and swales. She added that the new buildings will attempt to achieve LEED Silver and in regards to transportation, she noted, that there will be a potential BRT line along the edge of the

Center, the consolidation of a variety of functions with a new parking garage, and pedestrian connections throughout.

Ms. Wilson stated that the Commission will discuss it further at its LUT Committee meeting. She stated that City Council has asked the Commission to look at the Master Plan and provide recommendations, and will determine how to best do that in the near future.

Ms. Cubell stated that the Seattle Center is continuing to brief a variety of groups, and hopes to issue an FEIS soon.

▪ **Report and Discussion: Neighborhood Planning Evans School Program**

- Ryan Curran, Evans School
- Report from Commissioners in attendance (Knapton, Levy, To)
- Discussion of Commission follow up

Chair To stated that on March 1, the Evans School of Public Affairs hosted an all day forum on Neighborhood Planning and several Commissioners participated in this event. He added that the Commission has invited Ryan Curran from the Evans School to join us today to give a report on the event. Chair To noted that he has asked the Commissioners that attended to give their thoughts about the forum. He added that the Commission will discuss any follow up or next steps that they may want to consider coming out of this effort.

Chair To called for recusals and disclosures.

Recusal & Disclosures: Commissioner Leslie Miller disclosed that she was a member of an Othello Station planning group and a member of their steering committee. Chair Tony To stated he is a Board Member of the Rainer Chamber of Commerce, and a representative of the Southeast District Council. Commissioner Mark Johnson stated he was on the Land Use Committee of the Central Neighborhood Association.

Ryan Curran stated that the event was meant to reflect on the past neighborhood planning process and to take a pulse of the current concerns regarding the proposed update process. He noted that they performed targeted outreach to get an even geographic distribution of participants, a proportional representation of ethnicities, and equal representation of those who had been involved in the previous effort and those that were new to the process.

Mr. Curran stated that there were 10 themes discussed at the forum. He added that the first 5 were discussed by all the breakout groups at the event and that the second five were not discussed by all the groups, but were discussed at length by a significant number of people at the event.

Mr. Curran noted that these themes were:

Theme 1: Trust and Mutual Accountability

He noted that participants communicated the need for city government to rebuild trust among the neighborhoods by showing a commitment to partnership and implementation of the plans.

Theme 2: Implementation of Plans

Mr. Curran stated that implementation of current plans received criticism from participants. He added that most viewed the city's attempt at implementing the plans as a failure and that a few recounted success stories, but most spoke of their plans being neglected by the city with projects being implemented that were in direct opposition the neighborhood plans.

Theme 3: Managing Neighborhood Expectations

Mr. Curran noted that participants agreed setting realistic expectations of what neighborhood plans could accomplish was critical to their impressions of "success" and "failure" in the planning process. He added that they agreed providing a road map to planning would help manage their expectations

Theme 4: Communication and Education

Mr. Curran noted that better communication between the city and neighborhoods was identified as a crucial element to rebuilding trust. He added that, throughout the deliberations, participants described their frustration with insufficient communication between the neighborhoods and the city during the original planning process. Mr. Curran continued that the most common frustrations were with unclear definitions of terms, decision-making processes, roles, and responsibilities.

Theme 5: City-Led Process vs. Neighborhood-Led Process

Mr. Curran reported that the question of who should drive the planning process was discussed to varying degrees in every room and that the majority of participants said neighborhood planning should be a process driven primarily by the neighborhoods and voiced concerns about centralizing the process.

Theme 6: Outreach Strategies

Mr. Curran noted that outreach addresses the issues of inclusiveness, diversity, and social equity. He added that not all of the small groups discussed specific outreach strategies, but it was agreed among all of the groups that the original planning process had generated a significant amount of outreach.

Theme 7: Definition of Values

Mr. Curran reported that the small groups discussed the definition of values being used in both the original planning process (social equity, economic opportunity, environmental stewardship, and diversity) and the current planning process (sustainability and inclusiveness).

Theme 8: Elements of a Neighborhood Plan

Mr. Curran stated that the majority of small group discussions were centered on the idea that neighborhoods should develop plans around elements set forth by the city. He noted that participants said these elements would be a list of things each plan should have so that the neighborhoods could generate plans that satisfy the requirements of the Comprehensive Plan while maintaining their uniqueness.

Theme 9: Sector Approach vs. Neighborhood Approach

Mr. Curran noted that the majority of groups did not come to a clear consensus about whether or not planning at the sector level is preferable to planning at the neighborhood level. He added that participants said they needed clearer definitions on the criteria the city will use to determine which regions are updated first.

Theme 10: Relationship Between Current Plans and Updates

Mr. Curran stated that this was another area where participants felt clearer definitions were needed. He noted that participants were confused when trying to develop distinctions between updated plans and entirely new plans. d for guiding the update process.

Mr. Curran stated the Evans School made a variety of conclusions about the event. These were:

Rebuilding trust: Create a structured relationship of mutual accountability; and honor the existing plans during the update process

Making a commitment to resources: Make a commitment to implementing plan recommendations; and make a commitment of resources to the process.

Communication and outreach: Improve the lines of communications; Manage neighborhood's expectations appropriately; and engage a diverse and representative group of neighborhood residents.

Chair To asked Commissioners Knapton and Levy to start the discussion by giving us their impressions of the event.

Commissioner Knapton stated that there was a Keynote Speaker, Carmen Sirianni, Professor of Sociology and Public Policy from Brandeis University, who outlined four main points to achieve good neighborhood plans: Invest in Democracy, (i.e. train participants -staff and citizens), perform outreach to the marginalized; Build Relationships, (i.e. work with whole neighborhood); Accountability; and Transform Agency Culture, (ie. citizens today are very knowledgeable), and can bring insights from their specialties to the process.

Commissioner Knapton stated that, during the breakout sessions, she heard the following themes: A very vocal distrust of DPD, feeling they are defensive and not flexible and that they should be used as resource, but neighborhoods should be free to decide what goes into their plan; A triage approach to planning was suggested; (i.e. divide plans into three categories: good, working plans in need of little or no change; those that need some help; and those not working or non-existent and in need lots of help); fear that current plans are not being respected, and new plans might not be necessary in some places; and implementation of plans can be facilitated by making grants easier.

Commission Knapton recommended that the City (Mayor and Council) should allocate sufficient funds to the neighborhood plan update effort to assure that future neighborhood planning efforts achieve the same quality as the initial effort. She added that the time period needs to be shortened to two, or no more than three, years.

Commissioner Levy stated that there was a lot of uncertainty about the city and its planning process. She noted that expectations needed to be set and that one idea that came up a lot was to provide a handbook to all involved with information about planning in the city and the neighborhood planning

process. Commissioner Levy noted that the Commission could play a very important role in the education element of the neighborhood planning process.

Commissioner Miller stated that nothing that people had said today surprised her, as it has been the general sentiment for quite some time among neighborhoods. She stated her concern that DPD's current proposal for performing the updates was in direct opposition to the principals outlined in the Evans School's report.

Commissioner Johnson stated there was a wide variety of anecdotal evidence about what had and hadn't been achieved. He noted that when he lived in Wallingford, the city implemented a lot of projects in their neighborhood plan. Commissioner Johnson stated that he was interested in how much the city has actually accomplished.

Commissioner Brower asked what the Commission was being asked to do. Ms. Wilson responded that they were being asked by Council to help generally with the update process. She added that there were a variety of potential roles the Commission could play, and the Commission would need to decide how they wanted to be involved in the coming months.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

There was no public comment.

ADJOURNMENT: Chair To adjourned the meeting at 9:04 am.