



City of Seattle Seattle Planning Commission

Tony To, Chair
Barbara Wilson, Executive Director

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION DECEMBER 13, 2007 APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

Commissioners in Attendance

Linda Amato, Vice- Chair; Mahlon Clements, Tom Eanes, Jerry Finrow, Colie Hough Beck, Mark Johnson, Martin Kaplan, Kay Knapton, Chelsea Levy, M. Michelle Mattox, Kevin McDonald, Leslie Miller

Commission Staff

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

Commissioners Absent

Chris Fiori, Kirsten Pennington, Steve Sheehy, Tony To

Guests

Amalia Leighton, Planning Commission (Ex-Officio); Scott Dvorak, DPD; Heather Johnston, Samantha Beadel, Place Architects; Diane Sugimura, Director, DPD; Nathan Torgelson, Mayor's Office

In Attendance

Rebecca Herzfeld, Council Central Staff; Nathan Barfield, Samuel Yohannes, Robert Scully, DPD;

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

The meeting was called to order at 3:03 pm.

COMMISSION BUSINESS

- Minutes Approval

ACTION: Commissioner Kay Knapton moved to approve the November 8, 2007 minutes. Commissioner Leslie Miller seconded the motion. The minutes passed unanimously.

▪ **Chairs Report**

Vice-Chair Linda Amato noted the upcoming meetings and events for the rest of December and the first part of January.

COMMISSION DISCUSSION

- **ACTION: Multifamily Code Rewrite (Discussion & Possible Vote)**
- SPC Multifamily Code Rewrite subcommittee report
(Commissioners Eanes, Kaplan, Johnson)

Recusal & Disclosures:

- **Commissioner Leslie Miller disclosed that she was the chair of the Southeast District Council and that the District Council may provide feedback, review or take a position on the code rewrite.**
- **Commissioner Tom Eanes disclosed that his firm, Hewitt Architects, does work in multifamily areas.**
- **Commissioner Mahlon Clements disclosed that his firm, Bumgardner, does work in multifamily zones.**
- **Commissioner Colie Hough-Beck disclosed that her firm, Hough-Beck & Baird, did landscape architecture work in multifamily areas.**
- **Commissioner M. Michelle Mattox disclosed that her firm, Chiles & Company, has clients in multifamily zones.**

Executive Director Barbara Wilson recommended that the Commission was not take action today on their recommendations to DPD on the multifamily code update. She noted that a small group of the Commissioners met with Department of Planning & Development (DPD) staff to discuss the updates to the code. Ms. Wilson noted that the HNUC committee also reviewed the matter. Based on those two work sessions, Commission staff prepared a letter detailing some of the Commissioners thoughts. She noted that there are still many points that need to be vetted and more fully developed and some points which still require more effort at consensus. Ms. Wilson stated that DPD staff said they would need something by the end of the year, as they were planning to submit legislation to Council early next year.

Ms. Wilson went over the letter that had been prepared by Commission staff. She noted that the first two points discuss the Commission's support of restoring height limits in multifamily zones and reducing the parking ratios in certain areas of the city. She added that further comments discuss some of the Commission's concerns. Ms. Wilson stated that these include discussion about the requirement that 11% of the total # of units to be dedicated as affordable units as part of the incentive zoning program and the possibility that 11% might be too small of a number. She added that it was also stated that affordable units might be too small and that there should be a minimum unit size, as well as concern about the enforcement of maintaining the affordability of the units. Ms. Wilson mentioned that there were concerns raised about the Green Area Factor, including factoring in the location, density and size of the building into its potential environmental benefit; the possibility that the .75 ratio might not be achievable in mid-rise zones; the potential challenges of constructing green roofs on wood-frame construction; and enforcement issues. She added that other comments included potential loopholes regarding fence height, townhouse development sizes, and introducing minimum densities.

Commissioner Tom Eanes stated that the first page of the letter should be reserved for a forthcoming letter to Council on the subject, as it primarily voices support for elements of the rewrite. He added that he didn't feel the rewrite had simplified the code but that that is probably okay. Commissioner Eanes noted that the benefits of the bonus program may have been overstated, as many of the sources of funds for leveraging the dollars from the bonus program have been tapped lately. He suggested that more study be done regarding how the Green Factor could be applied. Commissioner Eanes shared his concern that bulk and depth regulations could be eliminated so townhouses could be better situated on sites. He continued that an extra five feet of height could potentially be allowed for shed roofs if they incorporated day lighting or electricity generation.

Commission Mark Johnson agreed with the comments regarding bulk, depth regulations and shed roofs.

Commissioner Martin Kaplan stated that changing the depth regulations could create consequences for single-family neighborhoods in transition, including potentially placing large walls that would be adjacent to single-family homes. He added that he believed it would be a lot less expensive for a private developer to build an affordable unit on site than to give money to a non-profit developer to build it elsewhere. Commissioner Kaplan noted that the benefits of the Green Factor might all go towards improvements that would not benefit the public and that this should be reexamined. He added that the changes to parking requirements would likely adversely affect neighborhoods and this should be considered.

Commissioner Jerry Finrow stated that he would like the Green Factor to appear on a future Commission meeting agenda so that it can be examined more comprehensively.

Commissioner Miller stated that point number one of the letter is similar to a market suggestion to DPD regarding changing the height limits. She suggested that point number two, regarding parking requirements, also be written in the same fashion, as there will likely be significant concern from neighborhoods about the change.

Ms. Wilson stated that the Executive Committee will discuss the letter further next week, and hopefully the Commission can complete something before the end of the year.

▪ **Reports & Updates:**

- Emerald City Task Force (Amalia Leighton)
- Yesler Terrace Advisory Committee (Commissioner M. Michelle Mattox)
- Light Rail review Panel (McDonald, Pennington, and Clements)

Vice-Chair Amato asked former Commissioner Amalia Leighton to discuss her work representing the Commission on the Emerald City Task Force.

Ms. Leighton stated that the group was tasked with looking at rules and regulations related to trees and to discuss potential improvements. She added that the city is working to increase its tree canopy significantly in coming years, with a goal of planting almost 650,000 trees citywide. Ms. Leighton reported that the task force discovered there was no penalty for taking a tree down on private property, and examined potential goals, incentives, regulations and enforcements related to the effort. She stated that one of the group's stakeholders, the Master Builders Association, was very much opposed to penalties for cutting trees down. Ms. Leighton noted that arborists instead suggested an itemized list from developers of what trees were cut down when a development happens.

Commissioner Finrow asked if there was much discussion of the Green Factor. Ms. Leighton responded that there was not. Commissioner Finrow requested that Ms. Leighton bring this issue to the final meeting of the task force, and to ask the city to follow up on landscaping that developers commit to do in the development process. He added that one suggestion for this would be to create a bond for trees.

Vice-Chair Amato asked Commissioner Michelle Mattox to discuss her work representing the Commission on the Yesler Terrace Advisory Committee.

Commissioner Mattox stated the group was made up of community stakeholders, residents of Yesler Terrace, affordable housing advocates, and others. She added that Former Mayor Norm Rice was the chair of the group. Commissioner Mattox noted that the group took a tour of the units, and she stated many were in very bad conditions, including flooding problems and an unsafe playground. She stated she was frustrated at the beginning of the process, as it was very difficult to develop guiding principles when there were 20 people on the committee and the members came from such diverse backgrounds. Commissioner Mattox reported that the residents' main concern was being displaced, and wanted to ensure there would be one for one replacement of units. She added that SHA Director, Tom Tierney, stated that there would be. Commissioner Mattox continued that a minority report was issued at the end of the process, as well as a formal report from the rest of the committee and that the SHA Board recently adopted the formal report.

Commissioner Kevin McDonald asked if there was discussion of creating more mixed-use type development at the site during the redevelopment. Commissioner Mattox replied that she pushed this quite a bit. She added that many residents are already operating businesses from their houses and wanted to provide opportunities for this to continue.

Vice-Chair Amato asked Commissioner McDonald to discuss his work representing the Commission on the Light Rail Review Panel along with Commissioners Clements and Pennington. Commissioner McDonald stated that the most recent meeting concerned the station being built near UW's Husky Stadium. He added that much of the discussion involved the pedestrian bridge being built and the fact that some felt the bridge was not very remarkable in its design, particularly the view of the bridge while driving down Montlake Blvd. Commissioner McDonald stated that they suggested defining the touchdown points of the bridge better and advised that the bridge be more of an architectural statement, especially because the station itself will not be a statement.

Commissioner Mahlon Clements noted that the group tried to look at the bridge both from a visual perspective as well as a safety and security perspective. He added that the Commission suggested escalators in certain areas to increase use of the pedestrian bridge.

Commissioner McDonald reported that there could be better pedestrian connections to all the major destinations in the vicinity of the station. He added that the group has two more meetings in which they will review both the University station and the Capitol Hill station at 60% design.

- **Presentation & Discussion: Detached Accessory Dwelling Unit User Guide**
 - Barbara Wilson, SPC Director & Scott Dvorak, DPD Planner - Overview & Background
 - Andrea Clinkscales, SPC Staff - Presentation of the User Guide
 - Heather Johnston & Samantha Beadel, Place Architects - Architectural Renderings

Ms. Wilson started the discussion by noting that Diane Sugimura, Director of DPD and Nathan Torgelson, Mayor's Office had joined the Commission at the table and would take part in the discussion and review of the document.

Ms. Wilson stated that the Commission had been involved in this issue since the Housing Choices Initiative, which included in addition to detached accessory dwelling units, cottage housing and low-rise zones in multifamily zones and involved several forums and focus groups. She added that the Commission put out a report recommending allowing DADUs or 'backyard cottages' throughout single family zones and that the report suggested developing a user guide for 'backyard cottages'. Ms. Wilson noted that the proposal for citywide DADUs got push back, but the Southeast District Council included a request for DADUs in their neighborhood plan, and in September 2006 they were allowed in Southeast Seattle. She added that so far 11 units have been permitted. Ms. Wilson noted that the Commission pushed for resources to go towards the guide and to use the Santa Cruz guide as a template for moving forward. She added that the Commission also was creative in getting funding for the project, including architectural renderings for it, and that Ms. Sugimura was helpful in getting this funding.

Scott Dvorak stated that he helped gather a group together to develop the guide, including DPD staffers Mike Podowski and Thor Peterson and Office of Housing (OH) staffer Mark Ellerbrook. He noted that they discussed outreach and resources as well as political sensitivities in the Southeast to the issue of 'backyard cottages'. Mr. Dvorak added that the group decided to pull together information for the document despite a lack of resources, and that the Commission's intern, Andrea Clinkscales, transformed the Santa Cruz document into something relevant to Seattle. He stated that the idea was to create an 'exploded' Client Assistance Memo that would inspire people to build 'backyard cottages'.

Ms. Clinkscales reviewed a draft of the document, which included elements on site planning, design, financing, building the 'backyard cottages', permitting, and renting out a 'backyard cottages'.

Ms. Wilson stated the document would likely be jointly released between the Commission and DPD in February or March. She stated that Commissioners should submit their comments by the first week of January.

Vice-Chair Amato invited representatives from Place Architects, Heather Johnston and Samantha Beadel, to give a presentation on their work thus far on renderings for the document. Ms. Johnston and Ms. Beadel gave a brief background of their organization, including their work on an ADU guide and noted and reviewed examples of DADU developments they were working on. They noted that each example had a modern and classic architectural vocabulary, elevations, and site plans and that each example was meant to work on certain types of sites, including small, medium or large sites and sloping or flat sites.

Commissioner Finrow stated that he appreciated their work and believed it to be a great start. He suggested that they view the document as helping to win over those that were against 'backyard cottages' and that the images will establish a precedent for what those who do not like against 'backyard cottages' believe they will bring. Commissioner Finrow suggested that we make sure all designs conform to land use code restrictions that apply to 'backyard cottages' and that to also try to address community concerns about the effect of 'backyard cottages'. For instance, one of the concerns was the impact of 'backyard cottages' on surrounding properties and one of the designs should show neighboring lots and how trees and other tools could ensure privacy for others. He added that there should be a section on landscaping with a list of plants that could be used and how open space and

yards for both the primary residence and the backyard cottage residences could be provided. Commissioner Finrow continued that the architectural vocabulary of the primary residence should also be provided.

Commissioner Johnson stated that it would be important to connect the cost estimates in the guide with the examples of development provided in the renderings. Ms. Beadel responded that there would be low, medium and high cost options for the materials used in each design.

Commissioner Martin Kaplan questioned why cost estimates were included in the guide at all, because construction costs change so rapidly and would likely be outdated eight months after the guide was released. He added that the modern designs might create some animosity in the neighborhoods. Commissioner Kaplan noted that some designs show the DADUs as larger than the primary residence, which would concern some neighborhoods. He added that it might also be worthwhile to show a block plan in which everyone has a DADU to show how this might affect the neighborhood.

Ms. Wilson stated that the lot size should probably be included. She added that she appreciated the fact that they showed which designs were more likely to be used as a rental unit and also examples of designs where they are intended to house an extended family where you may want stronger connections between the primary house and the backyard cottage.

Commissioner Chelsea Levy stated that she wanted to ensure that complaints or feedback from previous work on DADUs had been incorporated into the guide and the design.

PUBLIC COMMENT: There was no public comment.

ADJOURNMENT: Vice-Chair Amato adjourned the meeting at 5:31 pm.