



City of Seattle Seattle Planning Commission

Josh Brower, Chair
Barbara Wilson, Executive Director

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION MARCH 11, 2010 APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

COMMISSIONERS IN ATTENDANCE

Vice Chair – Leslie Miller, Catherine Benotto, David Cutler, , Chris Fiori, Colie Hough-Beck, Mark Johnson, Kay Knapton, Amalia Leighton, Kevin McDonald, Matt Roewe, Amanda Sparr

COMMISSION STAFF

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT

Chair – Josh Brower, Marty Kaplan, Christopher Persons

GUESTS

Councilmember Mike O'Brien

IN ATTENDANCE

Barbara Gray, SDOIT; Rebecca Herzfeld, Council Central Staff

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

Vice Chair Leslie Miller called the meeting to order at 3:04 p.m.

COMMISSION BUSINESS

- Minutes approval

ACTION: Commissioner Kay Knapton moved to approve the February 25 minutes; Commissioner Catherine Benotto seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

- **Chair's Report**

Vice Chair Miller provided a brief update about the process for selecting new Planning Commissioners and expressed hope that the Mayor and City Council would be able to appoint the new members before the end of the month.

Vice Chair Miller asked the Commissioners to 'save the date' of May 13 for the Commission's annual retreat.

Vice Chair Miller noted the upcoming meetings: the next Executive Committee meeting will take place on Tuesday, March 16; the next LUT Committee meeting will take place on Thursday, March 18; and the next Full Commission meeting will take place on the morning of Thursday, March 25.

- **BRIEFING AND APPROVAL: Seattle Transit Communities**

- Commissioners Colie Hough-Beck and Kevin McDonald, LUT Co-Chairs

Recusals and Disclosures

- Commissioner Hough-Beck disclosed that her firm, HBB, has worked on transit projects in the past and may again in the future.

Commissioner McDonald presented a slide show [see link on SPC website] that provided an introduction to the DRAFT Seattle Transit Communities report. He explained that the action item for the meeting would be to approve the concept of the first two sections of the report – the introduction and typologies. He indicated that the other two sections would address funding and implementation strategies and the Commission's recommendations.

Commissioners discussed the differences between the typologies. Density of jobs in particular distinguishes between Mixed Use Centers and Mixed Use Neighborhoods, where the former have a high concentration of jobs and the latter has a lower concentration of jobs in businesses that generally serve people who live within the neighborhood. It was noted that there is not a direct correlation between the transit community typologies and the Urban Village designations. Commissioner Leighton noted that the typologies could apply to some corridors and Ms. Sheehy noted that many urban centers and villages are comprised of smaller neighborhoods. Mixed Use Centers are also likely to have higher levels of transit service to other neighborhoods, while Mixed Use Neighborhoods are more likely to have the most reliable service to downtown and less service to other neighborhoods.

Commissioner Fiori suggested that the report clarify which tools and strategies within the typologies are already being used and those that are not being used in Seattle.

Commissioners McDonald and Hough-Beck clarified that the purpose of the report is not to make recommendations about where to increase levels of transit service, but to articulate strategies related to land use and the built environment around existing and planned transit investments.

Commissioners Sparr and Johnson suggested that the report could be used in the future to help guide updates to the Comprehensive Plan as well as other City plans and policies.

Commissioner Hough-Beck asked Ms. Gray if she had anything to add. Ms. Gray noted that the Transit Master Plan is likely to be updated. She also suggested that the Commission should be very clear about the component pieces of neighborhood amenities, such as bicycle tracks and bike-sharing. Ms. Gray explained that updates to the Urban Village Transit Network, which will be renamed, will distinguish among neighborhoods and corridors based on level of transit service. She also noted that the City has more data available in GIS and is using that information to inform decisions about capital investments as well as other types of projects. Ms. Gray also noted that the term ‘amenities’ implies things that are nice to have but not necessarily vital to creating successful transit communities; she suggested the report use a different term. Commissioners thanked Ms. Gray for her very helpful suggestions and asked staff to continue working with SDOT.

Commissioner Johnson noted that while there are a few places in the Seattle where it really is easier to get around without a car, in most places it is still easier to drive than walk, bike, or use transit, and that a paradigm shift is necessary to make it easier for people to choose not to drive.

Vice Chair Miller suggested moving the examples to the end of the typology descriptions so that people do not focus too much on the listed neighborhoods. Commissioner Hough-Beck agreed that it would be helpful to move the examples to the end of the descriptions.

▪ **WELCOME: Councilmember Mike O’Brien**

Vice Chair Miller welcomed Councilmember Mike O’Brien and noted that, collectively, the Commission volunteers about 3,000 hours per year.

Councilmember O’Brien thanked the Commission for their time and for inviting him to the meeting. He indicated that he is looking forward to working with the Commission and relying on their expertise.

Councilmember O’Brien identified three major goals that he intends to address in the Seattle Public Utilities and Neighborhoods Committee during 2010: (1) carbon neutrality; (2) Seattle Public Utility’s zero waste strategy; and (3) neighborhood plans. He suggested that the most important aspect of trying to achieve carbon neutrality would be that Seattle could act as an international leader and demonstrate that the goal can be realized. He also indicated that neighborhood planning will play a significant role in helping the city become carbon neutral. He noted that the details regarding which Council committees review the various components of neighborhood plans are still being finalized.

Commissioner Fiori asked how the goal of carbon neutrality could be reached within the context of the Growth Management Act. Councilmember O’Brien acknowledged that it is a daunting challenge and indicated that carbon offsets would not be a useful policy in this context. He indicated that a lot of options will have to be explored such as trying to imagine how to create a transportation fleet that does not use fossil fuel.

Commissioner Roewe asked about the role of economic development at the City. Councilmember O’Brien replied that he thinks the role of government is to help create an environment where good things can happen rather than trying to directly subsidize business development. He said that a great school system, arts culture, the built environment, and public amenities all play a role in attracting

people to the city. He suggested that creating incentives, such as subsidized energy audits that encourage people to make their homes and offices more energy-efficient, could help correct market inefficiencies related to environmental sustainability.

Commissioner Johnson suggested that our energy dependence is like an ‘iron curtain’ and that we have to act as if it is not there. Councilmember O’Brien said that that is a great point and noted that a positive frame of mind can help keep people inspired to achieve their goals.

- **BRIEFING: Multifamily Code Update – lowrise zones**
 - Commissioners Mark Johnson and Amalia Leighton, HNUC Co-Chairs

Recusals and Disclosures

- Commissioner Hough-Beck disclosed that her firm, HBB, works on projects in lowrise zones.
- Commissioner Benotto disclosed that her firm, Weber Thompson, works on projects in lowrise zones.
- Commissioner David Cutler disclosed that his firm, GGLO, works on projects in lowrise zones.

Commissioner Johnson provided a brief overview of the Commission’s work on the Multifamily Code Update, which began with a series of focus groups that identified key issues to be considered. He noted that draft legislation was sent to Council last year and that updates to the midrise and highrise zones were approved, while final recommendations for the lowrise zones are currently being considered. Commissioner Johnson indicated that the Commission needs to approve recommendations about the broad policy changes quickly and would continue to work with DPD and Council staff to identify specific development standards.

Commissioner Johnson identified two key changes that would impact the lowrise zones:

- (1) Development standards would be regulated by five housing types: cottage housing, townhouses, auto-court townhouses, rowhouses and apartments.
- (2) The zones would be consolidated from five to three: LDT would become LR1; L1 and L2 would be combined into LR2; and L3 and L4 would be combined into LR3.

Commissioner Johnson then spoke about the other changes including restoration of the 30 foot height limits in LR1 and LR2 zones and using the Shoreline method of height measurement. He explained that Council is considering raising the height limit in the LR3 zone and establishing different limits for townhouses and apartments. He noted that the Commission has yet to agree on the specific height limits in the LR3 zone and would continue to work with DPD and Council staff.

Commissioner Johnson briefly touched on proposed changes to allow alley access to parking in lowrise zones adjacent to single family zones, where it is currently prohibited, and reductions to parking requirements in urban villages and other locations with good access to transit. Commissioner Leighton noted that the HNUC Committee is in favor of supporting these changes.

Commissioner Johnson explained that Council is considering replacing density limits with FAR. He noted that minimum parking requirements function as density limits and that the Commission will continue to explore the appropriate development standards, including green factor, and guidelines based on housing type.

Commissioner Johnson indicated that concerns were raised about Administrative Design Review creating another layer of bureaucracy and that the proposed shift to development standards based on housing type might be enough to address design concerns. He noted that Unit Lot Subdivision is still being discussed and that Council is considering whether or not to use incentive zoning in the LR3 zone.

Ms. Wilson reiterated Commissioner Leighton's point that HNUC supports the overall direction of the code update and that the Executive Committee will continue to discuss the issue next week with the goal of sending out a letter shortly thereafter.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments.

ADJOURNMENT

Vice Chair Miller adjourned the meeting at 5:29.