



City of Seattle Seattle Planning Commission

Linda Amato, Chair
Barbara Wilson, Executive Director

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION NOVEMBER 13, 2008 APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

COMMISSIONERS IN ATTENDANCE

Chair Linda Amato, Jerry Finrow, Chris Fiori, Colie Hough Beck, Martin Kaplan, Kay Knapton, Amalia Leighton, M. Michelle Mattox, Kevin McDonald, Leslie Miller

COMMISSION STAFF

Barbara Wilson-Director, Robin Magonegil-Administrative Assistant, Katie Sheehy-Planning Analyst, Diana Canzoneri-Demographer, Cheryl Sizov-Senior Urban Planner, Lee Roberts-Intern

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT

Josh Brower, Tom Eanes, Mark Johnson, Tony To

GUESTS

Ray Gastil, Lyle Bicknell, Tom Hauger, David Goldberg, Vanessa Miller, DPD; Brian Surratt, OED; Sebhat Tenna, DON; Michelle Zeidman

IN ATTENDANCE

Rebecca Herzfeld, Council Central Staff; Bob Corwin

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 Linda Amato called the meeting to order at 3:02 pm.

COMMISSION BUSINESS

- Minutes approval

ACTION: Commissioner Kay Knapton moved to approve the October 23, 2008 minutes. Commissioner Kevin McDonald seconded the motion. The motion to approve the minutes passed unanimously.

- Chair's Report

Chair Amato noted the upcoming meetings: next Tuesday, November 18 will be the Executive Committee meeting; next Thursday, November 20 is the Commission roundtable discussion with

key elected officials and department staff about Seattle's Transit Communities; Tuesday, December 9 will be the next Housing, Neighborhoods and Urban Centers committee meeting; the Thursday, December 11 will be the next Full Commission meeting; and December 18 will be the next Land Use and Transportation committee meeting. She added that the Alaskan Way Viaduct ad hoc committee will also need to meet again in early December and asked that the Commissioners please coordinate with Cheryl Sizov regarding their availability. Chair Amato noted that there is a 2009 schedule of Planning Commission meetings in your folder and begin adding the meetings to your calendar. She called attention to the fact that the committee meetings will be in room 4096 again rather than 4070 and that there is also a parking permit form for 2009 that should be returned to Robin as soon as possible.

Chair Amato noted that Lee Roberts last day interning with the Commission will be on December 4.

Chair Amato reported that the Commission is currently recruiting four new commissioners to replace Kirsten Pennington, who moved to Portland; Tony To, whose term expires after six years; Tom Eanes, who is leaving after five years; and Michelle Mattox, who is leaving after three. She added that their terms technically end on January 15 and that we hope to have the positions filled by that time. Chair Amato stated that the Commission needs volunteers to help review applications and conduct interviews. Ms. Wilson stated that two Commissioners have already volunteered and that she will contact others. She asked Commissioners to forward the press release along to colleagues particularly architects and/or women and people of color.

Ms. Wilson provided a brief update and reminder about the Seattle's Transit Communities roundtable that will be held on November 20. She informed Commissioners that City staff would provide an update about the proposed incentive zoning ordinance at the Executive Committee meeting next week. She noted that the 2008 Comprehensive Plan amendments were passed and that Mark Troxel with DPD sends his thanks to the Commissioners for all of their work on the amendments. Ms. Wilson stated that the Commission's Backyard Cottage User Guide will be published by the end of the year.

UPDATES & DISCUSSION

▪ Industrial Jobs Initiative

- Briefing with Tom Hauger, DPD and Brian Surratt, OED

Recusal & Disclosure:

- Commissioner Hough Beck disclosed that her firm, HBB, works with the Port of Seattle, which is a major owner of industrial land.
- Commissioner Leighton disclosed that her firm, SvR, is currently working on the Burke Gillman trail, which runs through industrial areas.

Mr. Surratt stated that OED's work on the Industrial Jobs Initiative focuses on five areas: creating and leading the Industrial Assistance Action Team; analyzing the economic impact of industry in Seattle; training people for Green jobs; holding the Seattle Green Industry Expo; and commercializing clean technology research. Their work started in earnest this summer and since then they have confirmed that there is quite a robust level of activity in the industrial sector,

especially for business expansion, which refutes the perception that industry is stagnant. Many of Seattle's industrial businesses are relatively small, 25-50 employees, and specialized.

Mr. Surratt explained that the interdepartmental team supports industrial and maritime business retention and expansion. The team includes staff from DPD, SDOT, [Seattle First](#), [Enterprise Seattle](#), and [ECOSS](#) (the Environmental Coalition of South Seattle). They are currently assisting 73 industrial businesses in a variety of ways including:

- new location or expansion,
- environmental services,
- permitting assistance, and
- financial assistance.

He shared their recent work with [Alpha Cine](#), a film production studio, as an example where they helped the firm find a new location in Rainer Valley.

Mr. Surratt stated that OED has hired a consultant to conduct economic impact analysis for basic industries and maritime businesses, which is still underway. A group reviewed the methodologies prior to the start of the analysis; it included PSRC, UW, Council Central Staff, industrial business owners, and Vice Chair Fiori. Mr. Surratt indicated that he would be glad to come back and provide the Commission with more information once the studies are completed.

Mr. Surratt also noted that the green economy plays an important role in the future of manufacturing and industry in Seattle. OED has been very involved in creating a training program at South Seattle Community College that focuses on green jobs, predominately for low income, low skilled workers. The program plans to recruit at least 45 people and begin training in 2009. This will be the first energy efficiency training program in the state and will provide a reliable career pathway for students.

Mr. Surratt spoke about the first annual Seattle Green Industry Expo, which encouraged businesses to think about their role in the next generation of manufacturing and industrial activity in Seattle. There were 400 participants and the Commission will be invited to attend next year.

Mr. Surratt stated that OED has also received a \$100,000 federal grant to implement a strategy to increase use of clean technology. He indicated that this is an ongoing effort and he looks forward to coming back to the Commission with updates.

Mr. Hauger began by noting that last year when City Council adopted new size of use limits in industrial zoned areas; they also instructed DPD to research the impacts of other industrial land regulations. He indicated that much of this work is still in progress and includes review of:

- definitions in the land use code (e.g. research and development, manufacturing);
- floor area ratio (FAR) used by industrial businesses;
- potential transfer of development rights (TDR) program;
- potential for adaptive reuse of buildings;
- existing development capacity; and
- how other cities regulate industry.

Mr. Hauger stated that outreach to community groups has indicated that the existing definitions in the land use code are adequate and at this point there does not seem to be a need for change.

Mr. Hauger went on to summarize DPD's FAR analysis. Currently, 2.5 is the FAR maximum outside of Industrial Commercial zones, which have a higher FAR. Most industrial businesses have lower than a 2.5 FAR and it does not appear that there is a need to change. Similarly, Mr. Hauger noted that while DPD is still evaluating the potential for a TDR program, it is not clear how such a program could benefit industrial businesses. He also indicated that DPD is still studying adaptive reuse opportunities and what might be appropriate to include in a program.

Mr. Hauger explained some of DPD's recent outreach. They worked with the BINMIC Advisory Committee and Georgetown Community Council, among others and learned that Georgetown residents are particularly interested in creating adequate buffers between industrial and residential uses. DPD also met with biotech firms and learned that traditional industrial areas are not ideal locations because of potential noise and vibrations that can disrupt their experiments. They also learned that locations close to the University of Washington are preferable because of the synergy of collocation.

Mr. Hauger then went on to speak about the inventory work, conducted by two graduate students from UW. They looked at every parcel of industrially zoned land in the city they could access. They recorded primary and other uses at each location into a GIS database.

Vice Chair Fiori asked if there are any obvious clusters of industrial businesses. Mr. Hauger stated that they have not analyzed the data yet in that way. He also noted that some of the industrial business owners have indicated that the classification terms for uses might not be quite right, so DPD staff is exploring how to update those in order to better identify clusters. Mr. Hauger stated that they have also asked business owner to correct any errors the graduate students might have made when collecting the original data.

Ms. Canzoneri asked if the data is linked to annual business license renewals. Mr. Hauger stated that because that data is not geographic, they have not been able to match the two datasets. Mr. Surratt noted that there are also other complications in managing the datasets.

Mr. Hauger stated that while 77 percent of industrially zoned land is used by industrial businesses, only 11 percent of the land is occupied by non-industrial uses. The parcels are either vacant, open space or used for parking. He noted that all of the FAR is calculated using King County Assessor's data. On average, industrial uses have a .68 FAR and non-industrial uses have a .87 FAR. Commissioner Knapton asked if they have information about how many businesses are in each category. Mr. Hauger stated that they have not extracted that from the database yet. Mr. Surratt also indicated that OED and DPD are coordinating their efforts related to the data analysis.

Ms. Zeidman asked if the parcel sizes vary much between different types of uses. Mr. Hauger stated that they have yet to look at the data that way, but that it was a very good question.

Commissioner Finrow asked if the County maps industrially-zoned businesses in the same way throughout the Duwamish. Mr. Hauger indicated that the County focuses more on the economic land value than specific uses and that they do not update the data frequently. Commissioner Finrow noted that the City limits create an artificial barrier within the Duwamish industrial area and that the

cost of land could have important implications for this analysis. He further noted that it could be helpful to distinguish between public and private ownership. Mr. Hauger indicated that approximately 40 percent of the land is publicly owned. Commissioner Finrow then asked if this will form baseline data for future zoning adjustments. Mr. Hauger noted that the City is always concerned about changes to zoning in industrial areas and how that might ultimately impact jobs and the economy. He also indicated that this is the first time in at least 25 years that this type of survey has been done and that the data will likely be the baseline for a long time. Commissioner Finrow asked if the data will be updated as uses and assessed values change. Mr. Hauger stated that it is something they want to monitor, particularly in terms of cycles that drive up the cost of land. Commissioner Finrow commended DPD for their study.

Commissioner Hough-Beck also commended DPD and OED for their work. She asked Mr. Surratt how they integrate the work of the different departments. Mr. Surratt indicated that it is a relatively new effort and that the departments are working more closely than they have in the past. As a specific example, he noted that when permit reviewers work with owners of industrial land, they ask if there is any assistance from OED that might help them.

Commissioner Leighton asked how business dependency on rail and waterways are being analyzed. Mr. Surratt stated that it is part of the quantitative analysis being conducted by OED's consultant. He indicated that they are trying to identify which firms are located where they are because of access to rail or water and whether or not they are willing to pay a premium for that location. Commissioner Leighton asked if this information could be connected to the mapping data. Mr. Surratt indicate that he does not know; he and Mr. Hauger both indicated that they will need to see the results of the analysis prior to determining how the results could be incorporated with the mapping database.

Commissioner McDonald asked whether the vacancy rates seem to be chronic or cyclical and if any types of clustering have been located. Mr. Hauger stated the vacancy rates appear to be cyclical and chronic, with the chronic vacancies located around steep slopes and other areas that have never been developed. He also noted that some of the vacancies are parcels that are currently under construction and will be updated once the use is indicated through the MUP process. He stated that approximately 40 percent of the vacant areas have never been developed and the other areas are more cyclically vacant.

Commissioner Kaplan asked whether vacancy was tracked simply by vacant parcels or if vacant buildings are included. Mr. Hauger confirmed that if it appeared that nothing was going on in a building that was categorized as vacant.

Commissioner Finrow asked how open space is defined in the survey. Mr. Hauger stated that parcels accessible by the public, such as Georgetown Community Playfield and areas owned by the Port of Seattle that have been converted to public open space, are defined as open space.

Chair Amato thanked Mr. Hauger and Mr. Surratt for their time.

- **Neighborhood Plan Updates**
 - Briefing with Ray Gastil and Lyle Bicknell, DPD

Recusal & Disclosure:

- Commissioner Knapton disclosed that she is a member of the Neighborhood Plan Advisory Council.
- Commissioner Miller disclosed that she is a voting member of the Southeast District Council, a member of the Rainier Othello Safety Association and a member of the Othello Station Community Advisory Team.
- Commissioner Kaplan disclosed that he is a member of the Queen Anne Community Council and worked with Mr. Bicknell on the Queen Anne Design Guidelines.

Chair Amato welcomed Mr. Gastil and Mr. Bicknell and turned the floor over to them.

Mr. Gastil noted that he and Mr. Bicknell met with some of the Commissioners who live in southeast Seattle and had a very productive conversation about how move forward with the neighborhood plan updates. He also noted that a number of staff in different departments are working on the neighborhood status reports, including Mr. Hauger with DPD and Ms. Canzoneri, the Commission's demographer.

Mr. Bicknell introduced member of the core team – David Goldberg and Vanessa Miller with DPD, Sebat Tenna with DON will manage the NPAC process. He also noted that Nora Liu, with OED will also work closely with the core team. In addition, there are about 30 other staff who will be involved. Mr. Bicknell noted that Commissioners Knapton and Brower will represent the Commission on the NPAC, with Commissioner Leighton serving as an alternate.

Mr. Bicknell stated the two main goals of the update process: (1) prepare status reports for all neighborhoods, except those such as Northgate, South Downtown and South Lake Union, which already have significant planning efforts underway; (2) neighborhood plan updates starting with three areas around light rail stations. He noted that each of these three neighborhoods, Beacon Hill, Mt. Baker, and Othello have different types of stations and that planning will focus on a establishing a node around the station. He indicated that Mt. Baker has perhaps the greatest development opportunities. Mr. Bicknell stated that the initial station area planning work that was done about 10 years ago provides a good context for the current work.

Mr. Bicknell stated that the current schedule provides just over a year to complete all of the work and that the biggest challenge will be how to conduct the public outreach, which will begin in January and February. Mr. Gastil noted that the team is diligently working to make sure that outreach will be successful and that they plan to spend a lot of time going out to the neighborhood. He also noted that a consultant will be hired to help manage this process.

Mr. Goldberg stated that the status reports will act as a snapshot of mostly quantitative information about the 27 neighborhoods, though there will be some qualitative information as well. He noted that DPD will work with the NPAC on the scope, content and format of the reports. Mr. Goldberg noted that there will be a series of public meetings related to these reports, half to present the draft status reports to each of the six sectors of the city and the other half to present the final reports. He also indicated that the format of the reports, while yet to be determine, will be readily understandable for a broad audience. Mr. Bicknell also noted that technology, particularly the internet, will likely play a large role in public outreach.

Ms. Canzoneri asked how the reports are expected to be translated. Mr. Bicknell stated that there are eight languages that the reports will be translated into and that it does present a challenge. He indicated that the message of the reports will need to be clear and concise so that they can be easily translated. He also noted that the reports will probably use a lot of graphics and images rather than text.

Commissioner Hough-Beck asked for more clarification about the process. Mr. Bicknell noted that each neighborhood status report will consider the broader neighborhood area and issues than just the urban village boundaries. He noted that the reports will not go through the traditional environmental review process. Mr. Goldberg stated that the previous neighborhood plans underwent SEPA checklists and that they might be done again prior to any Council action, but that no action is planned before next year. Mr. Gastil noted that these really are updates to the existing plans, which provide key reference points. He reiterated that each of the 27 neighborhoods will get a status report and the three areas around light rail stations will also receive updates to their plans. He further stated that over the next year or two it will be determined the next series of neighborhoods to receive plan updates in 2010.

Commissioner Kaplan noted that some community members fear that the plan updates will be driven by what planners think is appropriate rather than what communities want. Mr. Bicknell noted that successful neighborhoods include a good center, regardless of whether or not there is a light rail station.

Vice Chair Fiori asked if there would have to be a consensus among residents in order for land use changes to move forward. Mr. Bicknell noted that land use changes are being considered and that neighborhood consensus about those changes would definitely make them more likely. Vice Chair Fiori noted that, from a market perspective, Beacon Hill has the most potential for redevelopment. Mr. Bicknell agreed that that is a good point and that it is part of the team's considerations.

Commissioner Miller asked about the composition of the NPAC. Mr. Bicknell stated that it includes representatives from across the city, some with a long history of working on neighborhood plans and some who are newer to the process. Ms. Wilson noted that the group is comprised of two planning commissioners, one representative from each of the 13 district councils, the chair of the CNC's neighborhood planning committee, four individuals appointed by Council and four appointed by the Mayor. Commissioner Miller asked what a successful outreach program would look like. Mr. Bicknell noted that it will be a challenge and that the City has been really effective in reaching a certain group of people; they are going to try very hard to bring other people into the discussion. He also noted that the team is still working on the process. Mr. Goldberg stated that they are working to integrate a broader array of people. Mr. Bicknell noted that it is about more than outreach; the issue is about how to make the process more meaningful to the communities.

Commissioner Finrow stated that he is concerned about using a process that evolved in the '90s to structure future planning. He asked how this process might look beyond existing, conventional neighborhoods. Mr. Gastil confirmed that the current process will focus on neighborhood centers. Commissioner Finrow urged the team to push the boundaries of the planning process beyond the vested interest groups. Mr. Bicknell confirmed that the team is not devoted exclusively to the previous plans.

Commissioner Leighton noted that the urban village boundaries are typically different than the neighborhood plan boundaries. Mr. Goldberg noted that the planning areas for this process are not specifically limited to the urban village boundaries and that the larger neighborhoods will be considered.

Ms. Zeidman asked if the City is considering allocating new growth targets as part of this process. Mr. Gastil noted while updates to the growth targets will begin in 2011, potential changes will be considered during the neighborhood plan updates; prospective zoning changes would not be formally tied to new growth targets as this phase.

Chair Amato noted the Commission will continue to discuss this topic at future meetings and thanked Mr. Gastil, Mr. Bicknell, Mr. Goldberg, Ms. Miller and Mr. Tenna for their time.

- **Affordable Housing Action Agenda**
 - [2008 Accomplishments](#)
 - 2009 Goals

Ms. Wilson provided a brief update of the work that has been done in the past year to implement the Commission's Affordable Housing Action Agenda. She also stated that the HNUC Committee has been discussing what could be part of next year's work plan. She noted that strategies 1 and 9 will partly be address by the Commission's Seattle's Transit Communities project. Ms. Wilson indicated that Commission staff will meet with the stakeholders who assisted in developing the Action Agenda and determine how the current financial crisis has shifted implementation priorities. After this outreach, Commission staff will send out a progress report, in the first quarter of 2009, which makes note of changes in the marketplace and outlines the Commission's goals for upcoming year. Ms. Wilson noted that these goals could include new Comprehensive Plan amendments as well as other work plan projects. She encouraged Commissioners to think about what they would like to accomplish in the next year and share their thoughts with staff and HNUC Committee members.

Commissioner Finrow noted that the HNUC Committee also discussed Ms. Canzoneri's work with the Office of Housing related to the Consolidated Plan, which starts to define the parameters of the specific problems related to housing affordability in Seattle. He reiterated that the financial crisis has had a dramatic impact on the housing market in the past four months and that the HNUC Committee agreed to get stakeholder perspective about what new issues have arisen. Ms. Canzoneri noted that she could send out the information she presented at the HNUC Committee to the whole Commission. She also stated that while the data can be very useful, it does have a lag that does not account for the most current market changes. She also noted that she will be working with the Commission to produce annual trends reports, the first of which will address housing affordability.

Commissioner McDonald reiterated that the Seattle's Transit Communities project will provide some insight about how to implement aspects of strategies 1 and 9. He noted that there is considerable overlap between the two projects. Commissioner Kaplan reiterated that these strategies also relate to the neighborhood plan updates.

Chair Amato stated that PSRC is developing a study that will create affordable housing toolkits for local jurisdictions. She noted that it is a six-month project that her firm is involved with, and that

Commissioner To is part of the consultant team too. She indicated that it will most likely be an on-line resource.

Commissioner Leighton indicated that she is really interested in addressing strategy 4. She asked if it would be possible to get a map of which areas within the urban villages have been recently rezoned. She also asked if it might be necessary to reevaluate urban village boundaries. Ms. Canzoneri noted that Jennifer Pettyjohn, with DPD, has that information in a series of fact sheets. Commissioner Leighton noted that there has been a lot of new development within urban villages, and that some have already exceeded their growth targets. She also asked if it would be possible to indicate how many parcels would be required to meet growth targets; for example, she stated, Lake City has already met most of the neighborhood's growth target, yet parking is not an issue.

Vice Chair Fiori asked what the discrete work component of the Seattle's Transit Communities project would address housing affordability. He noted that smaller units are more affordable and that reduced dependence on automobiles is also more affordable. Commissioner Finrow affirmed that it would be good for the Committee to discuss. Ms. Wilson noted that the handout does not indicate everything that will be addressed through the Seattle's Transit Communities project.

Commissioner Finrow expressed concern about the incentive zoning legislation given the number of development projects that are on hold. Ms. Wilson noted that DPD is trying to get a sense of how many projects have stopped and that there are still a lot of permits being issued. Commissioner Finrow asked if this information could be presented to the Commission. He also speculated that this might be an opportunity for the City to purchase some of the projects that are not likely to move forward and then perhaps use them to create affordable homes. Ms. Canzoneri suggested that perhaps Habitat for Humanity could finish some of the projects. Commissioner Kaplan agreed that a lot of housing units are not being sold. Vice Chair Fiori indicated that the current permit activity might be from projects that have already received pre-financing.

Ms. Zeidman asked if unit size is taken into consideration when calculating affordability, particularly because smaller units are not suitable for families. She noted that if the City could purchase foreclosed houses it might be a relatively inexpensive way to create housing that is affordable for families. Ms. Wilson noted that the HNUC committee discussed how the mega-house zoning legislation that was recently passed might present a problem for multi-generational housing.

Commissioner Kaplan asked how the Commission plans to address the incentive zoning legislation. Ms. Wilson indicated that next Tuesday, at the Executive Committee meeting, Rick Hooper with the Office of Housing and Ketil Freeman with Council Central Staff will present information about the proposed legislation currently being reviewed by Council. Commissioner Kaplan noted that it will be critically important for the Commission to weigh in on this topic. Ms. Wilson stated that next week will be an appropriate time to determine how the Commission can provide the most useful feedback.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Amato adjourned the meeting at 5:30 pm.