



City of Seattle
Seattle Planning Commission

Michael Austin, Chair
Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION

Thursday, October 08, 2020
Final Revised Meeting Minutes

Commissioners Present:	Michael Austin, David Goldberg, Katherine Idziorek, Grace Kim, Patience Malaba, Rick Mohler, Julio Sanchez, Amy Shumann, Lauren Squires, Jamie Stroble, Rian Watt, Patti Wilma
Commissioners Absent:	Kelly Rider
Commission Staff:	Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director; John Hoey, Senior Policy Analyst; Connie Combs, Policy Analyst; Robin Magonegil, Commission Coordinator
Guests:	Geoff Wentlandt and Jim Holmes, Office of Planning and Community Development

Seattle Planning Commission meeting minutes are not an exact transcript and represent key points and the basis of discussion.

Referenced Documents discussed at the meeting can be viewed here:

<http://www.seattle.gov/planningcommission/when-we-meet/minutes-and-agendas>

Chair's Report & Minutes Approval

Chair Michael Austin called the meeting to order at 3:10 pm and recognized that we are on indigenous land, the traditional and current territories of the Coast Salish people. Land acknowledgement is a traditional custom dating back centuries for many Native communities and nations. For non-Indigenous communities, land acknowledgement is a powerful way of showing respect and honoring the Indigenous Peoples of the land on which we work and live. Acknowledgement is a simple way of resisting the erasure of Indigenous histories and working towards honoring and inviting the truth. Chair Austin asked fellow Commissioners to review the Color Brave Space norms and asked for any additions or amendments to those norms before stating the expectation that everyone practice those norms.

Announcements

Vanessa Murdock, Seattle Planning Commission Executive Director, provided a brief review of the format for the online meeting, and noted that due to the online format, public comment must be submitted in writing at least 8 hours before the start of the Commission meeting.

Update and Working Session: Industrial and Maritime Strategy

Geoff Wentlandt and Jim Holmes, Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD)

Project Overview

Mr. Wentlandt provided an overview and update on the Industrial and Maritime Strategy. He stated that OPCD staff is working with the Office of Economic Development (OED), the Mayor's Office, and the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) on this effort. Mayor Durkan convened stakeholder groups in Fall 2019 to guide development of strategies to ensure a strong industrial and maritime sector. The stakeholder groups include a citywide advisory group and four neighborhood-specific sub-groups. All are comprised of stakeholders from a range of backgrounds including unions, the Port of Seattle, professional sports, education, and others. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the advisory groups had been meeting and identified what they saw as top issues, key challenges, and opportunities to address. Data collection, market research, and analysis was provided by a consultant. The process was scheduled to deliver a strategy by the end of this year. However, the pandemic required the process to take a long pause. This summer the advisory groups were asked how to proceed and there was general interest in continuing the process. Some stakeholders thought it was more important than ever to proceed, with an added focus on racial equity and integration of perspectives from the Black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) communities.

Mr. Wentlandt shared the Industrial and Maritime Strategy's revised principles which are centered around strengthening and growing the industrial and maritime sectors. The project team recently discussed the process re-boot with the advisory groups. The next phase will occur between now and February 2021. The project team recognizes that input from a broad range of stakeholders, not just the advisory groups, is needed. In addition to briefing the Planning Commission, the team will be coordinating with Sound Transit and the Duwamish Valley Action Plan. Sarah Scherer from OED has co-created a plan for BIPOC youth engagement including focus groups and surveys. Staff have drafted tables with recommendations for top issue topic areas including land use, transportation, environment, and workforce development. At a meeting in June, stakeholders reiterated the need to better integrate race and social justice into the process. The team recently provided a Restorative Economics training by Nwamaka Agbo for the advisory group members. Stakeholders are encouraged to reflect on that information as they consider recommendations moving forward.

Mr. Wentlandt summarized the next steps for the process. The advisory groups will have a listening session on November 6. The project team will be asking the advisory group members for written comments on the draft strategies. The neighborhood sub-groups will continue to meet. The draft strategies will be reviewed and revised to create a second draft that is expected to be finished in January 2021. The project team will then have one-on-one discussions to check in with the stakeholders. The final recommendations are anticipated to be completed in late January with a goal of eighty percent consensus. The final recommendations will include a series of actionable, implementable strategies. This timeline to complete the project by February 2021 is driven by the Mayor's interest in adding Comprehensive Plan amendment proposals before adoption of the 2020/2021 amendments. This will not include any Future Land Use Map (FLUM) or zoning changes but will lay the foundation for potential future FLUM or zoning changes. The final recommendations will not only be shared with the advisory groups, but the project team will return to the Planning Commission to receive input on the same information.

Clarifying Questions

- Commissioners asked if the original principles were revised to reflect updated stakeholder input at some point during the process. Mr. Wentlandt stated that the principles were revisited and revised during the June advisory group meeting to reflect both COVID-19 and other issues.

- Commissioners recognized that the project team is made up of all white staff and asked for more information on the outreach strategy to secure meaningful input from BIPOC voices. Mr. Wentlandt stated that Sarah Scherer is co-creating an outreach strategy with the Urban League, Seattle Goodwill, and other organizations whose leadership is not white. Those organizations have positive relationships with BIPOC youth. Commissioners encouraged the project team to ensure that any feedback received is meaningfully incorporated into the strategy.

Land Use Concepts

Mr. Holmes provided an update on the draft land use concepts that were presented to the Commission earlier this year. These include the following three land use concepts that may eventually be incorporated into the FLUM and zoning code:

- Maritime + Manufacturing + Logistics: Strengthen established economic clusters and expand equitable access to jobs
- Industry + Innovation: Support economic innovation and capitalize on emerging opportunities
- Makerspace: Foster vibrant districts that support a mix of local manufacturing production and sense of place

The Land Use Concepts presentation can be viewed here:

<http://www.seattle.gov/planningcommission/when-we-meet/minutes-and-agendas>

Clarifying Questions

- Commissioners asked whether there are examples of where these land use concepts will be applied on maps. Mr. Holmes stated that these are only draft concepts at this point and no geographic areas have been discussed for application of the concepts. The project team will come back to the Commission with specific map concepts at a later time.
- Commissioners inquired if these land use concepts are representative of the type of information that the Mayor hopes to include in future Comprehensive Plan amendments. Mr. Holmes stated that these concepts make up a draft land use framework that would be carried forward through the amendment process.

Small Group Discussions

The Commissioners separated into two small groups to have more focused discussions on the draft strategies. Below are summaries of each of the small group discussions.

Group A

Land Use:

- Commissioners requested clarification on the statement "Strengthen policies that prioritize long-term vibrancy of maritime, manufacturing, and logistics clusters." Mr. Wentlandt stated that this includes Comprehensive Plan policies, procedures, zoning code, and potential changes to criteria for Comprehensive Plan amendment docketing.
- Commissioners asked if the proposed land use types would be new zoning designations. Mr. Wentlandt answered that yes, these could eventually be considered for amended zones, but that would depend on whether consensus is reached.
- Commissioners recommended interim land use actions to close existing loopholes in the zoning code until major changes or new categories are in place. Examples of these loopholes include

allowed new storage facilities and big box stores in Interbay, as well as new surface parking lots. Mr. Wentlandt stated that the hope is the new zoning categories would close any existing loopholes. These are draft land use concepts at this point for feedback.

- Commissioners recognized that the existing Comprehensive Plan did not include any new changes to industrial lands policies. The Planning Commission has not had the opportunity to review new industrial lands policies in several years.
- Commissioners acknowledged that traditional depictions of industrial workers such as rugged fisherman or union workers do not accurately depict the history of minorities working in industrial jobs, including Filipinos, Native Americans, and other people of color. Tourists see one Seattle, but there is another other Seattle that includes a working waterfront and other vital industrial activities.
- Commissioners commented that the Industry + Innovation concept represents the future of industry. Industrial places now encourage driving; workers are not able to take transit or walk around when they are at work. This land use concept takes into consideration the needs of both workers and delivery trucks.
- Commissioners stated that it is still necessary to remind the public that some areas are not good for building housing. The Commission has seen Comprehensive Plan amendment applications requesting changes to industrial designations to allow other uses including housing.
- Mr. Wentlandt stated that the draft land use strategies included some potential approaches to housing. The Makerspace concept includes a possibility to consider areas that are close to urban villages or significant concentrations of residential populations for limited amounts of affordable workforce housing within targeted industrial areas. Commissioners suggested locating housing in neighborhood commercial zones in adjacent urban villages rather than in industrial lands. Locating both makerspaces and housing in the same zone could create a wedge that could lead to further encroachment into industrial lands.
- Commissioners noted that there are also environmental impacts associated with housing in the makerspace land use concept, as people could be living very close to freight traffic, noxious fumes, and noise. South Park and Interbay will experience sea level rise. Housing should not be built in these locations based on future impacts.
- Commissioners suggested that the opportunities for housing in or near industrial lands are very geographic- and context-specific. Ballard and Interbay will have access to high capacity transit, but Georgetown will not. Isolated areas would need to look at multi-modal connections.
- Mr. Wentlandt stated that there will be a policy discussion on this subject. A clear stance from the Planning Commission is helpful.

Environment:

- Commissioners suggested strategies such as electrifying vehicle fleets, incentivizing car share programs, and providing electric bikes.
- Commissioners endorsed the following strategies: "Assess opportunities for increasing green infrastructure in the Duwamish Valley industrial zones." "Increase and/or improve parks, open space, trees, and green landscaping in and near M/ICs." Commissioners also suggested using the right-of-way for more open space and transportation.
- Commissioners noted that use of industrial land for open space guidelines could be challenging given the potential costs of remediation. These costs could create economic impacts on landowners. One potential solution is an organization such as a local improvement district to absorb some of the costs.

- Commissioners stated that the new stormwater code requires onsite stormwater management for commercial buildings and suggested that industrial property owners should be required to do the same. This would lead to more green roofs and similar green infrastructure.

Transportation:

- Commissioners suggested that the City may need to prioritize the need for sidewalks, bikeshare, last mile connections in specific places within industrial areas, especially considering proximity to transit stations. It may be useful to identify where the highest priority last mile connections are.
- Commissioners stated that an equity perspective should be applied to a prioritization, as some communities do not have sufficient infrastructure or resources. Commissioners suggested that some infrastructure investments should be made by the development community.
- Commissioners recommended transportation demand management strategies and involvement by business associations in providing alternatives to single-occupancy vehicle use. This could include bikes, scooters, and other mobility options.

Workforce:

- Commissioners suggested that employers could pool resources for job readiness training and specialized equipment. An organization such as a local improvement district, or community-based organization could participate in workforce training in addition to other duties.
- Commissioners stated that an equity strategy should provide access to creative jobs. Makerspaces do not always reflect a representative spectrum of the community.

Group B

Land Use:

- Mr. Holmes introduced the concept of housing in industrial areas. Affordable housing is important for the workforce of industrial areas. There are some that support housing in industrial areas to reduce commutes, while others believe there should not be residential uses in industrial zones.
- Commissioners noted that these land use strategies are addressing some longstanding problems such as closing loopholes and adopting extremely stringent criteria for land use changes. Commissioners suggested that enforcement of stringent criteria for industrial land may be difficult.
- Commissioners stated that predictability is key for these lands. It is very disappointing to see land along transit lines being used for storage facilities or car dealerships. With the \$60 billion investment in light rail in our region, we need to recognize that industrial lands in close proximity to the light rail are different than those that are not.
- Commissioners endorsed a separate process for updating Comprehensive Plan policies related to industrial lands. A separate public process would be more inclusive than the traditional Comprehensive Plan amendment process. However, Commissioners recognized the challenges of conducting public outreach during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Commissioners asked about the relationship between this project and the future of the Armory property. Mr. Holmes stated that an advisory group commissioned by the State issued its final recommendation in 2019. The State is required to coordinate with the City on plans for the property. This framework will help that conversation and will also be relevant for the future of SODO, the Stadium District, Smith Cove, and other places.
- Commissioners inquired about the best way to protect the historic and cultural elements of industrial maritime districts and encourage future industrial uses. Mr. Holmes stated that this

project anticipates rezones, especially around transit station areas. This question is something to keep in mind moving forward.

- Commissioners asked what can be done to ensure a diversity of businesses in industrial lands among an increasing demand for distribution centers. Mr. Holmes stated that there are many policy considerations and opportunities to make policy changes that might help.
- Commissioners noted that new construction is expensive and asked whether a market analysis will be conducted to ensure that these policies can achieve their intended results. Mr. Holmes stated that the project team has conducted a preliminary market analysis and will conduct another survey.
- Commissioners suggested looking at other locations for makerspaces throughout the city, in addition to industrial lands. Mr. Holmes stated that this project is solely focused on the industrial areas, but this is something to look into. He acknowledged that one potential area for makerspaces is in mixed zones. However, mixed zone land is very expensive.
- Commissioners suggested that housing and makerspaces could be located in mixed use development in urban villages. A “Maker’s Village” concept could bring light industrial uses into residential areas, rather than opening industrial areas to housing. Mr. Holmes noted the potential for live/work units.
- Commissioners expressed concern about the affordability of makerspaces and suggested an incentive system to leverage housing development to make those industrial spaces more affordable.
- Commissioners expressed concern with locating housing in heavy industrial areas. Family-sized housing should not be located where heavy industry would conflict with children’s safety. Active industrial sites also have poor air quality. We don’t want to repeat mistakes of the past by adding housing to areas with negative health impacts rather than in high-quality neighborhoods.

Workforce:

- Commissioners suggested coordinating with the Green New Deal workforce development efforts.
- Commissioners recommended that BIPOC communities are strongly represented, are able to design these programs, have success in starting businesses, and contributing to their communities.

Transportation:

- Commissioners noted that different types of industrial land uses, such as heavy industry, will have conflicts between freight traffic, pedestrians, and bikes. Areas around light rail should be considered differently. Transit will take cars off the street and improve freight efficiencies.
- Commissioners recognized that King County Metro’s recently published mobility framework uses the data point “POC travel time to jobs.” This metric could be used to think about how to reduce travel times for low-income workers.

Environment:

- Commissioners recognized the potential impacts of sea level rise on transportation and freight mobility. Many of the predictions for sea level rise are conservative. BNSF may have to reroute their lines along the coast.
- Commissioners noted that Sound Transit has not provided a definitive response about the vulnerability of its future stations to sea level rise. This needs more consideration when we look at the long-term life of our investments.

- Commissioners expressed interest in seeing maps showing how recent sea level projections may affect key industrial and maritime areas. Sea level rise may release toxins from remediation sites that were never supposed to be exposed to water.
- Commissioners stated that the industrial sector will have to play an important role in a transition to a carbon-neutral economy. This will require potentially large changes, maybe even to land use.
- Commissioners stated that consideration should be given to protection of water quality for supporting the health of our fisheries.

Report Out

Group A summarized their discussion as follows:

- Make sure to pay careful attention to policy details, as the Comprehensive Plan did not address industrial lands the last time it was updated.
- Consider interim solutions to close regulatory loopholes.
- There was enthusiasm about the Industry + Innovation concept; make areas livable and walkable; housing is not appropriate in industrial areas because of environmental impacts; land use concepts should be geographic- and context-specific.
- The conversation touched on housing, environmental considerations, public-private partnerships, community development corporations, green infrastructure and right-of-way space as potential requirements for new development, especially around transit stations.
- This effort needs a strong focus on equity. Consider the environmental impacts on people of color. Understand cultural history when celebrating industrial workers. This is an opportunity for connecting the past industrial landscape with providing BIPOC communities access to creative jobs and entrepreneurship.
- We are living in dynamic times when we must think of climate change, sea level rise, and COVID. There is a need for innovation and also a need to preserve the existing nature of industrial lands. We do not support encroachment in industrial lands from housing. We recognize the need for walking, taking transit, and a healthy environment in industrial areas.
- An organization such as a local improvement district or public development authority could address transportation and green infrastructure investments and equitable workforce development.
- Identifying and prioritizing what the development community might be required to do would be a good next step

Group B summarized their discussion as follows:

- The group was generally excited about how the draft strategies clearly articulate an aspiration to learn from processes that have caused previous heartburn.
- These cohesive strategies will enable a constructive conversation with the state on future of the Armory property.
- Discussion about housing included a theme of not necessarily fitting everything in the MICs and emphasized the importance of protecting land around shorelines and rails. Creative enterprises and makerspaces can expand into single family areas and urban villages.
- The discussion included what type of industry/land use is compatible in transit areas, especially the consideration of potential conflicts between pedestrians and heavy freight traffic. Maker spaces are less intense and can be located around transit. The discussion should identify fundamental conflicts and what uses are compatible. Options like live/work units provide options for mixing and matching.

- Transportation is an opportunity to explore areas of compatible mutual interest. People are currently driving along critical freight networks. As we build out high capacity transit, transportation demand management and commute trip reduction should be required.
- The MICs are water-oriented; sea level rise estimates may be conservative; the MICs should be compared with sea level rise maps. BNSF rail lines may be vulnerable.
- BIPOC communities should benefit most from workforce development strategies. The Green New Deal may bring a transition of industrial practices to lower-impact practices. We should be open to exploring how that might change land use depending where technology goes in the future.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:28 pm.