



**SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION
FEBRUARY 10, 2005
FINAL MEETING MINUTES**

Commissioners in Attendance: Hilda Blanco, George Blomberg, Mahlon Clements, Tom Eanes, Jerry Finrow, Martin Kaplan, Valerie Kinast, John Owen, Joe Quintana, Steve Sheehy, Mimi Sheridan

Commissioners Absent: Anjali Bhagat, Chris Fiori, Matthew Kitchen, Lyn Krizanich, Tony To

Commission Staff: Barbara Wilson, Director; Elizabeth Martin, Analyst; Robin Magonegil, Administrative Assistant

Guests: Scott Dvorak, DPD; Tiffany Mojarab, Justin McCaffree, Christina Locke, Amy Chapman, University of Washington

Call to Order

Chair George Blomberg called the meeting to order at 3:00 pm.

Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Mimi Sheridan moved and Commissioner Tom Eanes seconded to approve the January 27, 2005 Commission minutes. The minutes were unanimously approved.

COMMISSION BUSINESS

CHAIR'S REPORT

▪ **Upcoming Activities**

Chair Blomberg announced a number of upcoming events. Special attention was given to the upcoming SPC retreat on March 10, 2005. He noted that the retreat will take place at the Port of Seattle in the conference room from 1 – 5:30 pm. The invited guest speaker has not been determined but there have been various suggestions. Executive Director Barbara Wilson passed out a draft retreat agenda for the Commissioners to review.

Chair Blomberg then congratulated the three new Commissioners on their approval by the Mayor and City Council. Chair Blomberg then asked the rest of the meeting attendees to introduce

themselves. Chair Blomberg noted that the March retreat will be a great time to integrate the new Commissioners. The new Commissioners were asked to give a more detailed introduction.

New Commissioner Martin Henry Kaplan introduced himself. He is the principal architect at Martin Henry Architects. He is looking forward to serving on the Commission.

New Commissioner Valerie Kinast introduced herself. She is a planner with the City of Renton. Previously she lived in Hamburg, Germany and worked in Historic Preservation and coordinated urban design competitions.

New Commissioner Hilda Blanco introduced herself. She is professor and chair of the Urban Planning Department at the University of Washington.

Commissioner Steve Sheehy mentioned how pleased he was with how smoothly the appointment process went. He applauded the strength of the Commissioner applicant pool and the outstanding qualifications of the new Commissioners.

COMMISSIONER SPOTLIGHT: MAHLON CLEMENTS

This month's spotlight focused on Commissioner Mahlon Clements. Commissioner Clements shared information about himself that included his professional and personal background.

COMMISSION DISCUSSION

COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS – NEIGHBORHOOD BUSINESS DISTRICT STRATEGY (NBDS)

Neighborhood Business District Strategy (NBDS)

Ms. Wilson asked that Commissioners review the draft NBDS letter. She noted that there were still a few outstanding items that needed more discussion before final approval of the letter. Commissioner Sheehy offered some tone and style comments noting this letter was going to staff rather than elected officials so a more informal tone might be warranted. His other suggestion was to make the sentences shorter and more to the point. Commissioner Sheehy volunteered to assist with tone and style revisions. Chair Blomberg suggested it would be useful to close this out today. He asked if the Commission could return to the points that Ms. Wilson identified. Commissioner Joe Quintana stated that the proposed changes to the points that were identified in the new draft made sense and suggested they be accepted with a few minor revisions. There was consensus to make a few revisions to the draft letter.

Commissioner Eanes responded that there are two concerns; the first being that the mapping is not completed. He also noted there may be other concerns regarding NC2 and implementation. Commissioner Owen agreed and stated that he had a question about NC3. He thought the NC3 had the same problem that the NC2 did. He suggested that the letter say NC instead of NC2 or 3.

Commissioner Sheehy reiterated the importance of completing the neighborhood mapping as stated in the letter. Commissioner Sheehy suggested that the letter state very clearly that mapping is critical. Commissioner Quintana stated that while the mapping is critical it is important to keep

this project moving forward. He added that it seems fair to express that the Commission would like to review the completed map before final comment. Ms. Wilson asked to clarify if the “we” wanting to review the map is the Commission or should the “we” include review from communities and neighborhoods as well. Commissioners agreed that for the purpose of their letter they mean only to request that the Planning Commission review the mapping in order to be able to fulfill their reviewing duties with all the necessary information

Commissioner Kaplan stated that he wondered if there was a way to broaden the purview of either the design review board or even community design review boards to interface into this somehow. Commissioner Owen stated articulated some concerns about opening up too much of the code to design review. Commissioners agreed that the point they would suggest that the development standards for street-level residential use could be both simplified and strengthened. And that for instance, the standards could require that the residential use either (a) have a floor level a minimum of four feet above sidewalk grade, or (b) be set back a minimum of ten feet from the property line. They noted that this simple standard can be supplemented by design guidelines to be implemented through Design Review.

ACTION: Commissioner Eanes made a motion to accept the Planning Commission letter and recommendations to Department of Planning & Development director, Diane Sugimura regarding the Neighborhood Business District Strategy and the proposed changes to the commercial zoning code be accepted with the agreed upon changes . He further motioned that the draft be circulated to all Planning Commissioner by Monday morning, February 14 for a final look and that the Commission give authority to the Executive Committee to approve it at the February 15 Planning Commission Executive Committee meeting. Commissioner Sheehy seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

DOWNTOWN ZONING CHANGES - HOUSING BONUS PROGRAM

Chair Blomberg welcomed guests, Rick Hooper from the Office of Housing and Paul Lambros from the Plymouth Housing Group. He invited them to brief the Commission on the Downtown Zoning Changes and Housing Bonus Program.

Mr. Rick Hooper opened with some background information. He stated that two key objectives of the Preferred Alternative for the Downtown Zoning Changes relate strongly to housing. The first objective aims to enhance opportunities for housing development downtown and the second aims to accommodate a broad range of household incomes. He noted that the Office of Housing is a strong supporter of the changes to the downtown zoning code due to the incentives that they offer for housing downtown. Mr. Hooper primarily wanted to touch on the affordability of downtown housing that the TDR and bonus program make possible. Floor area above the base floor area ratio (FAR) ratio is earned through a 75% to 25% split of housing TDR and/or housing-childcare bonus (75%) to open space and other public amenities (25%). He concluded that the Preferred Alternative extends the bonus program concept to residential

buildings. He explained that currently it applies only to commercial structures but the proposal is that it would extend to residential towers downtown above a certain base.

Mr. Paul Lambros explained that the affordable housing providers and the downtown for-profit developers had a series of meetings on the Downtown Zoning Changes to reach consensus. He added that this worked very well for housing interests as the two groups will be advocating for the 75/25 split with the 75% devoted solely to housing. Mr. Lambros stated that the 75/25 ratio is one of the biggest issues. Another important issue is locating sites downtown with the other for affordable housing. He explained that in one of the DMC zones there is the option for site swapping where they would provide another site or sell off another site and transfer it that way. He noted that the bonus program is really targeting work force housing downtown.

Commissioner Sheridan asked how workforce housing is defined. Mr. Lambros answered that right now it is 50%-80% of median income and they are going to be looking at revisiting that and possibly lowering it. Commissioner Sheridan asked about the possibility of increasing the definition of workforce housing to be closer to the median income level. Mr. Hooper answered that there are a couple of issues that need to be looked at with the issue of the median being one of those. He added that the definition of the downtown area is another question and that it might make sense to consider extending the area for affordable housing to include the Center City area.

Commissioner Owen asked if he were a downtown developer, what would make him choose a bonus program or a TDR program. Mr. Hooper responded that the Washington Mutual building did both and that he felt that larger building developers will choose both. He stated that he thought the bonus program cost to developers is about \$22 per sq/ft with the TDR costing slightly less.

Commissioner Owen stated that it seems to him that the bonus program adds value to the redeveloped property and he wondered if that had made any difference. Mr. Hooper answered that when they talk about the 75/25 bonus they are really talking beyond the kinds of things they can do to get a bonus for. (?)

Chair Blomberg asked what the Planning Commission's role is in this. Commissioner Jerry Finrow expressed his thought that the role of the Planning Commission would be to look at the overarching issues that would make the downtown livable and to advise the City about what it needs to do to make sure that the Center City Strategy ends up with livable sites. Commissioner Finrow went further to state that the next issue would be how to fund it.

Mr. Hooper responded that he considers the Downtown Zoning Changes to be a good package. He expressed that Office of Housing would be glad to come back and further share their ideas with the Planning Commission. He agreed with Commissioner Finrow that they could spend more time outlining the full range of objectives that they want for the Center City area. He felt that there would be resource gaps and questioned how to keep the focus on those gaps. Commissioner Owen stated that it is important to consider if the program is fair and equitable. Commissioner Eanes stated that he felt that it was important to keep communication open. Commissioner Finrow asked what the workforce housing goal is in the Center City and how the

City can fashion policies in order to achieve this goal. Mr. Hooper responded there have been some numerical targets for a long time in downtown and that it has been pretty straightforward in where the money is going to come from for this. He added that the reality is that we need to come up with every strategy we can think of to promote affordable housing.

Commissioner Finrow expressed that one of the things that the Commission can do is to advise the Mayor's Office and City Council on such matters Commissioner Quintana stated that one possibility is to take a broader view of what downtown is rather to include City Center when the City looks at downtown workforce housing

Chair Blomberg and the Commission thanked Mr. Hooper and Mr. Lambros for the briefing and discussion. Chair Blomberg then invited Elizabeth Martin, Planning Commission staff, and Tom Hauger, DPD to brief the Commission on Industrial Lands.

ACTION: The Planning Commission is generally supportive of the changes in the proposed downtown zoning changes and notes that the analysis is thorough and the logic is well thought out and articulated. The Commission will review the changes TDR and the Housing Bonus program again in its Housing, Neighborhoods and Urban Center Committee meeting. That Committee will make a recommendation to the Full Commission in March.

INDUSTRIAL LANDS

Chair Blomberg invited Elizabeth Martin, Planning Commission Analyst and Tom Hauger, DPD staff to brief the Commission on Industrial Lands Policy issues. Elizabeth Martin described the context for SPC involvement in Industrial Lands. She referred to the request from Deputy Mayor Tim Ceis to assist with formulating the City's approach to industrial lands. She also mentioned that in the Comprehensive Plan Update process the SPC had recommended that amendments relating to industrial lands be deferred until the City develops an industrial lands strategy. She then shared with the Commission some general background information about industrial lands in the City and the region as well as some policy questions that the Commission might consider.

Tom Hauger focused the discussion on a potential industrial lands strategy. He asked for input from the Commission what the objectives of an industrial lands strategy would be, what geographic areas it might include, and what the strategy should contain. Lastly, he asked what the information gaps are that need to be filled in to be able to effectively formulate an industrial lands strategy and to generate industrial lands recommendations.

Commissioner Eanes asked about how the current low vacancy rate of industrial lands related to pressure on the urban growth boundary. Mr. Hauger responded that if there is high demand for industrial lands within the urban growth boundary that are not being met, there may be pressure to locate industrial uses outside of the urban growth boundary.

Commissioner Quintana pointed out that it is important to consider what are allowable land uses in industrially-zoned areas. He added that the focus should be on what the current job base is

and what the desired job base is. He also added that another policy question for consideration would be to ask what the threats are to the manufacturing and maritime industries.

Commissioner Owen mentioned the importance of the functional interconnectivity of industrial uses on a regional scale. He added that environmental concerns may play a large role in future land use decisions, particularly along the shorelines.

Commissioner Finrow asked where it might be appropriate to convert the land use from an industrial use to another use. Other Commissioners stressed the need for additional information about the health of the industrial sector and future projections for the industrial sector and economy. There was also the request for more information about the regional context of industrial lands and how Seattle fits into this broader area.

Chair Blomberg thanked Ms. Martin and Mr. Hauger for the industrial lands briefing and discussion.

ACTION: The Planning Commission will continue to review the City's Industrial lands policy and will consider its role as well as what products, actions and activities will be beneficial in assisting the City in considering upcoming decisions in context of broad long term framework policy decisions.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Blomberg asked for Public Comment. There was none.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Blomberg adjourned the meeting at 5:30 p.m.