

CNC Neighborhood Planning Committee January 17, 2008 Meeting
6:30 - 9:00 pm West Precinct Community Room

Attendees: Irene Wall, Dennis Ross, Dennis Saxman, Chris Leman, Cindi Barker, Stephen Lundgren, Ed Potthurst (DON) Ed Potthurst attended our meeting to represent DON since Ted Devina could not attend.

General Discussion on status of neighborhood plan update. Cindy has been in contact with CM Clark's office and they report that it will be a few more weeks (2?) until they expect to get final work program from Executive. Committee discussed purpose and motive for plan updates. Recognition that goal is to remain focused on implementation of actionable items in the existing Adoption/Approval matrices. This was a clear message in the recent City Auditor's report. Suggestion was made that any update to the existing plans take the form of an addendum, rather than a replacement of the current documents. This respects the value of the original planning process and recommendations in the plans. This could also ensure that the specific policies or unique nature of the plans not get lost in any update process.

There was discussion about alleged requirements imposed on neighborhood plans by the Growth Management Act. Dennis Saxman explained that there is no such requirement but there was general recognition that the policies stated in neighborhoods plans should be consistent with the overall Seattle Comprehensive Plan. However, this should not be interpreted to mean all the plans must be limited to few mandated topical areas (e.g., transportation, land use, utilities) or otherwise homogenized.

What will motivate "original" plan stakeholders and newcomers to engage in a plan update process? In some cases major changes in assumptions like having a monorail station or citywide zoning changes make for a clear need to update a plan. In other cases performance (plus or minus) toward household and job growth targets suggest the need to review the plan including balance of growth inside and outside urban villages. Cindi Barker requested and received from DPD a spreadsheet showing household and job change statistics for each urban village. This will be emailed to the committee members so they see if the stats match their experience on the ground.

The goal of putting some "teeth" into the plans was discussed. The plans themselves are advisory and in most cases did not address zoning changes or incorporate policy statements which could affect SEPA decisions or alter any citywide regulations or carve out exceptions based on any unique conditions or goals of any particular neighborhood. The success of neighborhood specific design guidelines was also discussed in light of recent hearing examiner challenge based on appellant's claim that DPD approved a permit for a project in Capitol Hill which did not meet the guidelines.

Ed Potthurst reported that new positions at DPD related to n'hood planning have been posted and hiring process is underway. Reported that Kadie Bell is a relatively new hire in DON who will be keeping the database up to date that tracks plan implementation.

2008 Committee Work Program. The following were identified (not in priority order):

Neighborhood Planning Update

- Continue to monitor and advise on final work plan when released by DPD/DON
- Send second letter to Mayor's office requesting reply to 8/10/07 letter.
- Communicate with Planning Commission on recommendations

SEPA Threshold Changes

- Track progress of this legislation and comment before Council

Multi-Family Zoning Code Changes

- Track progress of this legislation and comment before Council
- Coordinate reviews of legislation with other interested citizen groups

Pedestrian Zone Overlays and Single Purpose Residential

- Track legislation and DPD work to finish mapping P-zones

Clarify effect of overlay regulations on vesting projects and projects on arterials streets
Track legislation on DADUs

Megahouse Ordinance

Track progress of legislation to amend code to discourage out of scale SF homes on small lots.

Major Institutions

Sponsor workshop to explore the impact of institutions on neighborhoods
Evaluate the adequacy of current regulations
Should uses be added to major institution category?

Comprehensive Plan Amendments (2008/9)

Request extension of deadline for submitting amendment until first workday in March (get CNC approval for this request)
Work with CM Clark on guidelines for securing Council sponsorship of amendments in 2008 (since deadline has passed for submittals). Explore need for amendment to strengthen neighborhood design guidelines.
Investigate legislation to amend the Growth Management Act relative to requirements for density in response to global warming. What is effect on local regulations and neighborhood plans?

Design Review and Neighborhood Design Guidelines

Sponsor workshop to explore experience using these guidelines in different neighborhoods
Do Design Review Boards use them effectively?
Are they useful in preserving the unique character of different neighborhoods?
Is the neighborhood design review process addressing citizens' overall concerns about quality of life, preservation of character, privacy and safety in their neighborhoods?
Should the SEPA process be connected to design review?
Is deference to unanimous findings of a design review board recommendation appropriate in all circumstances?
Should some public projects be subject to neighborhood design review in addition to or instead of review by the Design Commission?

Other Topics of Discussion.

There was a brief discussion of a seeming trend in Seattle to have private groups take the lead in various planning efforts which might be usurping the official role/responsibility of the city. Examples were planning in South Lake Union (park, streetcar); Bands of Green Plan, Woodland Park Zoo Long Range Plan, Allied Arts Waterfront Plan. A question was raised about the quality of private planning efforts, sufficiency of public involvement, priority given to projects. This will be topic for future discussion, perhaps with the next Planning Director to decide if this is a significant new trend or the usual work of competing advocacy groups to shape the city.

Stephan Lundgren reported that the Libraries for All CIRP is planning to submit a Comp Plan amendment to create a policy about adequate funding of library operations and collections, a sort of "cultural concurrency" requirement.

Dennis Saxman reported on attending a "design form" charrette related to South Lake Union future upzoning. He expressed concern that the process was not sufficiently open and suggested the committee be alert to this kind of event spreading to other neighborhoods.

Irene Wall suggested that we need to coordinate with the CNC Transportation Committee on proposed changes in regulating street parking in neighborhoods.

Adjournment and Next Meeting

Meeting adjourned at 9:15 pm. Next meeting is Feb 19th at 6:30 West Precinct Community Room