



City of Seattle

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor

Department of Planning and Development

Diane M. Sugimura, Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: Councilmember Sally Clark, Chair, PLUNC
Councilmember Tim Burgess
Councilmember Tom Rasmussen

FROM: Diane M. Sugimura, DPD
Stella Chao, DON

DATE: June 10, 2008

SUBJECT: Committee Briefing: Proposed Neighborhood Plan Update Process

Following further discussions with Councilmember Clark, we have developed the attached proposal for the Neighborhood Plan Update process. We look forward to a lively discussion.

Thank you.

Attachment



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A Proposal: Updating Neighborhood Plans

Revised June 2008

The Executive requested and the Council approved resources in the 2008 budget to develop an approach to assess and update Neighborhood Plans that were prepared 10 years ago. In late 2007 and into 2008, the Department of Neighborhoods (DON) and Department of Planning and Development (DPD) have sought community comments regarding such an approach and an approach to update plans on a sector basis.

In April 2008, DON published a Community Feedback Report, summarizing input from over 50 diverse community groups. In addition, the UW's Evans School of Public Affairs held a workshop and published a report on the need for updating Neighborhood Plans and about the planning process. A number of questions were raised about the need for such updates.

Based on these comments, questions about a sector approach, and an immediate extraordinary opportunity to capture additional public benefit and development opportunities at light rail stations in Southeast Seattle, the following concept is being proposed. DON will conduct outreach to gather community input on the revised proposal.

Neighborhood Plan Advisory Group

A citywide Neighborhood Plan Advisory Group will be established to provide oversight of the citywide Neighborhood Assessment, which will start in July 2008 and conclude in mid 2009. The Neighborhood Plan Advisory Group will be representative of citywide community interests. We will continue to work with Councilmember Clark on the composition of the Advisory Group.

Neighborhood Outreach Process

The Neighborhood Advisory Group will advise on the final outreach process. Recognizing that this part of the process is to conduct an assessment (previously referred to as the almanac), not a planning process per se, we suggest the following basic concept:

Broad Public Open Houses: These would be conducted in approximately six areas of the city, covering several Neighborhood Plan areas with each open house. The Neighborhood Advisory Group in conjunction with the Planning Commission would host these workshops. A discussion "table" – an opportunity to share information with Planning Commissioners, Advisory Group members and City staff – would be set-up for each neighborhood plan area.

- The initial open house would be to explain the assessment process and seek input on the key issues for individual neighborhoods
- A report-back open house would be scheduled once the data has been gathered for the purpose of reviewing the information, discussing gaps in information, and again identifying key neighborhood issues.

Outreach to Under-represented Communities: DON would conduct additional outreach sessions for the more difficult to reach communities to help ensure that a broad cross-section of the city has an opportunity to participate. The purpose of these meetings would be similar to that of the open houses, but would be tailored to the needs of the community.

Neighborhood Assessment

The City will work with the Neighborhood Advisory Group to determine the type of information to be included in the Assessment, and to collect information on emerging and unanticipated issues. The information will be compiled, gaps in service or infrastructure will be identified, new or emergent issues will be defined, and changed circumstances in each Neighborhood Plan area will be confirmed by working with the neighborhood.

Scope of the Neighborhood Assessment will focus on the following factors:

- Housing and employment growth
- Qualitative description of growth – locational relationships to services, types of projects (e.g., mixed-use v. townhouses), etc.
- Demographics
- Recent or planned public investments including transportation infrastructure
- Zoning and development capacity
- City services/facilities consistency with anticipated and unanticipated growth
- NP implementation – status of plan implementation
- Development activity (#, type, location) since adoption of NP, 1998
- Applicable policies and plans adopted since NP adopted
- Relationship to adjacent neighborhoods with regard to transportation, open space, environment, etc. and to transportation corridors connecting many neighborhoods.

Neighborhoods that have been the subject of recent extensive planning initiatives, would not be included in the update process, such as the following:

- Duwamish MIC and BINMIC, due to ongoing industrial jobs work program
- Denny Triangle, Commercial Core, due to recent Downtown zoning work
- Pioneer Square/Chinatown/ID, due to current South Downtown Work
- South Lake Union, due to ongoing planning
- Northgate, due to ongoing planning
- South Park, due to recent neighborhood action agenda

Upon Completion of Neighborhood Assessment

The City will publish a “State of the Neighborhoods” Report, including an assessment for each neighborhood plan area.

If there is sufficient evidence to suggest that a neighborhood is experiencing growth that is outpacing infrastructure, or is exceeding expectations of the current plan, or is confronting unanticipated issues that warrant revisiting the neighborhood plan in a timely manner, a plan update may be warranted.

Neighborhood Plan Updates will be prioritized to focus first on those neighborhoods that are anticipated to experience opportunities for neighborhood growth and development as a result of substantial public investment in transportation infrastructure. Additionally, neighborhoods will be prioritized where growth may be exceeding infrastructure or for which the City and neighborhood may be wholly unprepared to address the consequences of such growth. This would allow neighborhoods and the City to take advantage of opportunities for leveraging light rail investments in revitalizing existing communities and creating vibrant new communities where people can live and work without relying on an automobile, and promote ridership goals for the regional line.

Station Area Planning Updates: 2008

Recognizing the substantial public transportation investment that Sound Transit has made in Southeast Seattle and the tremendous opportunity for capturing additional public benefit and development opportunities, the City would like to focus 2008 planning efforts on light rail station areas and on updating existing station area plans.

What We Want to Create

A well-designed, compact Neighborhood Center – A Place for People.

Our Objective

To meet our social, economic, environmental and cultural needs – the quadruple bottom line.

Creating –

- A place where all people can feel comfortable – a mix of ages, incomes, interests and lifestyles
- A convenient place to live, work, shop, recreate, building off the value of a transit rich environment
- A place that is green, clean, safe and healthy where daily needs can be met without use of a car
- A vibrant, creative and active place that reflects the diversity of the community
- A community in which local investment and character is protected and enhanced
- A neighborhood model of urban sustainability climate-neutral, transit-oriented, community-focused, pedestrian-friendly, and sustainably designed helping to meet the City's and State's goals for greenhouse gas emissions and reduced vehicle miles traveled

Start with a Community Vision ... the Framework

Work with the community, charrette-style event, to establish the vision for –

- A complete community featuring a mix of housing, offices, shops and services, community facilities, arts and culture, and entertainment
- A broad array of transportation options that are integrated into the community, which might include buses, street cars, light rail, bicycles, walking; the car will be minimized
- A pedestrian-friendly environment with walkable design; buildings and uses in those buildings focus on the public realm
- A high quality public realm, community centers, recreational programs, public art, and a sustainable green public infrastructure
- A range of housing types and affordability
- A range of businesses serving the cultural richness
- High density, high quality development within a 10 minute walk of the station area
- Accessibility and visitability
- Open spaces, parks, greenery ... creating places where people enjoy walking through, and to ... a place to pause, enjoy, hang out

How to Achieve That Vision

- Work with community partners – neighbors and developer/property owners
- Work with OED for potential financial incentives
- Work with DON, SDOT, Parks, OH, HSD, SPU, City Light
- Work with City Green Team to conduct an eco-charrette to encourage sustainable community principles and goals
- Develop a public process that is concise, concentrated, with clear objectives, a beginning and end, and with opportunity for a real “hands on” experience

Public Outreach and Engagement Process

The public outreach and engagement plan will lay the foundation for engaging as broad and diverse a cross-section of neighborhood stakeholders as is possible during the station area planning process. The following principles and lessons learned from previous station area planning processes will guide public engagement:

- Focus on “relationship-building” with neighborhood organizations, neighborhood councils, business groups, stewardship groups, immigrant and refugee groups, interested individuals etc.
- Reach out to under-represented and unrepresented groups in the neighborhood.
- Make extensive use of the City’s website to post information in advance of, and after, public meetings or project milestones.
- Make use of communications structures appropriate for immigrant and refugee communities.
- Produce materials in languages reflective of the community and in the interest of spurring the interest and participation of communities that have not participated in past city-sponsored planning activities.
- Use an extensive zip code mailing to establish broad interest; thereafter rely on participation at public and organization meetings and via website- to gauge interest.
- Use innovative outreach and engagement activities that allows and encourages the diverse participation of the community while respecting local customs and traditions.
- Convene public meetings, at strategic points in the development of SAP recommendations. Try to have meetings on their turf, making use of already established meetings in the community, and convening City meetings when necessary, particularly to accommodate hard to reach or underrepresented communities.
- Structure first couple of rounds of City meetings to be very interactive—workshops and small group discussions, to identify issues/opportunities presented through analysis of background conditions and to obtain feedback on City-generated concepts for each station area.
- Later round of public meetings will be less interactive in order to focus on presenting staff conclusions to obtain feedback on specific recommendations for each station area/corridor within the sub-area framework.
- Consciously strive to make progress at each round of meetings, to set reasonable expectations, and be clear about City’s role vs. community’s role—thus minimizing the need to “revisit” issues in subsequent meetings.
- Provide summaries of comments received at each meeting.
- Compile “themes” heard during public comment process.
- Organize reporting for both the station-specific interests as well as those interested in the broader effort and process.