

Center City Strategy Recommendations From August 26, 2004 Roundtable Discussion



Prepared by
Seattle Planning Commission
Ad hoc Center City Planning Committee

Second Draft: September 7, 2004



City of Seattle Seattle Planning Commission

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor
Barbara Wilson, Acting Director

September 16, 2004

Mayor Gregory Nickels
City of Seattle
600 Fourth Avenue
Seattle, WA 98124

Seattle City Council
City Hall, 600 Fourth Avenue
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Dear Mayor Nickels and Seattle City Council,

Last spring at the Planning Commissions annual retreat Deputy Mayor Tim Ceis described the Mayor's Office plan to undertake an ambitious redevelopment strategy for Seattle's Center City. During the discussion, he invited the Commission to think creatively and provide advice regarding what such a strategy might look like and how it could best be undertaken. Several commission members found this an especially intriguing challenge and during the past summer, conducted a number of internal work sessions to explore these issues. A Commission White Paper summarizing the results of these sessions was circulated to departments in the City in August 2004.

On August 26, the Commission hosted a roundtable discussion with department representatives to assist City staff in better defining the Center City Strategy and what should be done to move it forward. At the round table commission members presented a brief summary of the Planning Commission's recommendations to date and facilitated a discussion regarding the Center City Strategy's 1) areas of focus, 2) definition and elements, 3) principles and ideas and 4) next steps.

Commission members were very pleased that close to 30 City staff and key Department heads participated in a lively discussion during which several fundamental ideas arose. Commission members and staff summarized the round table results, discussed them with Diane Sugimura and John Rahaim in DPD, and prepared this packet which we are pleased to submit to you. The materials in this packet include:

- a. Recommendations from the August 26 roundtable.
- b. A White Paper that details earlier work by the SPC in preparation for the roundtable containing a number of suggestions and ideas that may be useful as the process proceeds.
- c. Unedited notes and list of participants from roundtable.

Generally, the Commission found that the results of the roundtable were remarkably consistent with its earlier work. The SPC concurs with the recommendations from the roundtable, but would like to add a few additional recommendations that are particularly important.

1. Integrate Council and/or Council staff in the process throughout. Given the complexity and extent of the effort, it will be important to achieve consensus among all participants as the process moves along.
2. Before moving forward substantially, identify the project's vision in terms of strategic objectives and identify a means to measure those objectives. While impressionistic descriptions of desired future conditions are helpful in painting a visual picture, objective criteria for evaluating alternate actions and measuring success are essential to clarify both the process and substance of the strategy.
3. Before engaging the public, articulate the reason to prepare a strategy and identify current City policies and activities. (Note that the Sept 20 event will be before any substantive public interaction.) Planning should first identify what is and is not already being accomplished. This will help participants to better understand the intent and context of the effort and to participate more effectively. Emphasize that there is the need to tie the various efforts together into a cohesive and understandable strategy.
4. Step back and think comprehensively. Given the magnitude and importance of these efforts, it is imperative that the City step back and think comprehensively and strategically about the role, functions and objectives set for the city's heart.
5. Conduct research where necessary to verify assumptions or check the implications of proposed actions. Expend resources to provide the technical work necessary to evaluate new solutions to issues such as circulation, economic market response, coordination with regional planning, equitable and effective development incentives and requirements, and a phased fiscal strategy.
6. Emphasize the benefits of connecting the various Center City districts together. The plan should maximize the advantages of each area by building on earlier neighborhood planning and treating each district or area as a unified and cohesive unit. For each district, the plan should identify the key characteristics. At the same time the plan should identify the interrelationships between the different districts; including not only the spatial and circulation connections but also the economic and social relationships as well
7. Consider design and community character. While Seattle has done an excellent job of building and protecting a recognizable identity, this plan provides a chance to consider this issue again. Urban design improvements will be an important tool in increasing the livability and identity of the individual neighborhoods and the Center City's overall image is a crucial regional asset.
8. Establish a unified, consistent and equitable policy regarding development requirements, incentives and public investment to encourage/shape development. Perhaps start with the current DPD study to make development requirements/incentives more consistent, but think this through at the policy level as well.

9. Explore creative ways to implement current programs and plans, including public safety efforts, park improvements, capital infrastructure and the Green Streets Program.

Roundtable participants emphasized that this will not be a small effort. Even though the strategy may not substantially redirect the content of various adopted plans or ongoing projects, the articulation of a clear vision and organized, long term strategy will take work. But the work could yield structural benefits beyond the project itself because this is an opportunity to consider the bigger picture. It carries the potential to:

- Go beyond the competition between neighborhoods and the downtown that has plagued Seattle for decades
- Consider the benefits of the Center City to the region in order to help make wise decisions about large regional reinvestment
- Join the different neighborhood plans and city activities into a more cohesive strategy, and
- Transcend the normal political and institutional practices, providing the chance for the Mayor, City Council, department staff and private partners to build stronger working relationships.

The primary theme arising out of our efforts this summer is the need to connect or “knit” the various pieces together. This means not only connecting the physical pieces of the various neighborhoods and districts, but also the importance of bringing together the various departmental activities, public and private interests and components of our City government. The benefits arising from this ‘knitting together’ are the reason the Seattle Planning Commission urges the Mayor, Council, and staff to aggressively pursue a broad, visionary and inclusive Center City Strategy.

Sincerely,



George Blomberg, Chair



John Owen, Chair. SPC Center City Workgroup

CC:

Diane Sugimura, Director DPD
Grace Crunican, Director SDOT
Mary Jean Ryan, Director OPM
Ken Bounds, Director Parks
Jill Nishi, Director OED
Katie Hong, OH
Patricia McInturff, Director HSD
Steve Nicholas, Director OSE
Yvonne Sanchez, Director DON

Center City Strategy: Recommendations Developed from Roundtable Discussion

Second Draft: Sept 7, 2004

I. Rationale

Seattle's Downtown is one of the strongest in the nation and it remains the region's dominant commercial focus. Aggressive efforts in the past two decades have helped to keep the retail core viable and new civic attractions have made it the region's cultural center as well. The South Lake Union area is attracting new high technology jobs and expanding its residential neighborhood. Additionally, the surrounding districts of South Lake Union, Uptown, and the western parts of First Hill and Capitol Hill are emerging as vital, urban mixed use communities in their own right. Taken together, these communities, along with the downtown districts including the International District and Pioneer Square, are reaching "critical mass" to the extent that they interact in ways that are transforming the whole. For this reason, it is more useful to think of them together as a **"Center City" which offers a whole new range of possibilities to create unique economic opportunities, address transportation needs comprehensively, and foster in-city residential neighborhoods.**

The City has been actively pursuing these emerging opportunities, not only in its comprehensive, neighborhood and downtown plans, but also in a number of special projects to address special transportation, redevelopment, design and public infrastructure challenges. In these efforts, City officials have been actively engaged with the private sector to move forward in ways that benefit both public and private interests. All of these efforts combine to provide a framework for managing growth and creating a center city that has thriving neighborhoods where residents and businesses work with the City to plan and produce projects that enhance the quality of life for those who live, work, and play in our city.

Although the City is working hard to address a whole new set of possibilities and challenges, a comprehensive and clearly articulated strategy is needed for moving forward. The general public, as well as those most involved in Center City activities, will be better enabled by a well-defined vision for Seattle Center City that includes a course of action that combines the range of efforts already ongoing. Additionally, while Center City redevelopment is a cornerstone of the City's comprehensive plan and regional growth management, there is little public appreciation of its importance in this context, which

could potentially translate to a lack of support for Center City investments that are essential to the city and the region. Given these opportunities and challenges, now is an ideal time to initiate a Center City Strategy that would:

- **Articulate a clear vision that identifies the Center City’s role within the city and the region**
- **Details the characteristics of the individual districts and neighborhood and illustrates its future character and quality**
- **Establish an organizational framework for integrating City activities and engaging other partners for maximum effectiveness, and**
- **Identify a realistic implementation strategy for achieving the vision through coordinated actions over time that take advantage of emerging opportunities over time.**

Another reason for initiating such an effort now is to capitalize on the excitement surrounding current possibilities. Besides the obvious benefits in addressing immediate challenges, the Center City Strategy is an opportunity to bring together the various elements and players for a more effective and enduring partnership. **An inclusive Center City Planning process has the potential to bring together:**

- **Both Seattle neighborhood and Center City advocates for mutual benefit.**
- **City and Regional interests so that the Center City is recognized as a central part of the Puget Sound’s future.**
- **Previous efforts such as the DUCPG and neighborhood plans with new initiatives.**
- **City officials including the Mayor, the Council and supporting departments.**
- **Public and private interests, for a more effective and comprehensive partnership.**

It is this opportunity to strengthen lines of communication and restructure, where appropriate, our organizational approaches that makes the Center City project potentially transformational.

II. Center City Strategy Contents

The Center City Strategy should include **1) a vision statement, 2) an organizational framework for coordinating the various policies and activities supported by clear analysis and 3) an implementation strategy outlining actions, timeline and means to achieve the goals.**

The Center City Strategy Vision Statement should be clear and well articulated. It should define the Center City's role in the city and the region. The vision will help us to speak with one voice. When we say, "this is the vision of Seattle Center City" we should be able to tally a list elements and characteristics, including economic, cultural and social characteristics and especially those characteristics that make it unique in the region. The vision statement should describe the Center City's role in the region and its relationship to other Seattle neighborhoods.

The organizational framework should assemble and synthesize previous and current work into an efficient and understandable whole.

The implementation strategy should be realistic and achievable, recognizing that conditions will change over time given the realities of market and fiscal constraints. Flexibility is necessary in planning infrastructure design and uses. The strategy should emphasize working with the private sector and explore creative measures to accommodate growth. The strategy should provide a clear and equitable policy basis and efficient means of administering development incentives and requirements.

The Center City Strategy should include at least these four elements:

1. **Mobility**

- Means to handle growth and stay mobile: transit, density

2. **Quality of Life**

- The strategy should be about building *community* rather than sterile metrics like height and density

3. **Design Identity**

- People are interested in the experience and the character of the city and neighborhood. For instance, preserving the 80 landmarks and 150 potential new landmarks will add value to the personal experiences of people in the Center City
- Design will be important in the livability of neighborhoods

4. **Economic Development**

- Center City will be an economic engine that powers the whole city and provides economic stability and delivers amenities throughout
- The strategy should provide for those economic activities that are best located in the center city. While the Center City Strategy should build on previous and existing work, it should be “bold” in the sense that it presents an integrated and comprehensive picture of how the pieces fit together, and explore new ideas and options not previously considered.

III. Center City Strategy Process

There are two aspects recommended for inclusion in the process: 1) Identify and articulate why Center City is important to the city and the region and what the Center City should be, and 2) Determine how we “make it happen”. **There are at least four recommended steps in the project work;**

1. Identify with clarity the Vision + Articulation = How to tell the story.
2. Conduct an info gathering exercise; factoids, plans, analysis, focus groups.
3. Once the City has organized the project and has the necessary background information, conduct a communication effort with both CC and outside neighborhoods and others in the region.
4. Continue to organize activities building on the synergies and addressing the conflicts between departments. Example; explore ways how can we connect the need to have a new substation, park and downtown bus transfer station?

Recommended Elements in a Communication effort;

- First, organize the process, glean pertinent material from previous work and obtain the necessary background information.
- Regional perspective is important - show the different scenarios for growth and explain the economics
- Project definitions/descriptions.
- There may be skepticism and the City will need to convince stakeholders that the Center City Strategy will “Do No Harm” to the neighborhoods either within or outside the Center City. Do no harm is not the same as ‘do nothing’. The best way to do this is to make choices based on Seattle principles. We already have that information in the Comp Plan, neighborhood plans and elsewhere. Reaffirm our vision for Seattle. Combat potential cynicism by articulating the broader positive goals for the whole city.

- Demonstrate connections between Center City and other neighborhoods. (Go to neighborhoods and say here is your neighborhood plan we want to make sure it connects with the other neighborhoods).
- Gather "factoids" (in this case, true statements that shed light on the Center City's relationship to the city and the region) and describe benefits.

Recommended analysis activities needed to build a strategy:

- Identify information needs.
- Map capital investment -- show where the money goes.
- Develop income map -- show where the money comes from.
- Conduct a Cost Benefit Analysis.
- Analysis of Investments (and communicate how they work).
- Money and resources in the region.
- Feasibility rating system --ripe versus less ripe.
- Gather pertinent neighborhood plan statements of their goals, desires, etc.
- Demonstrate broader Connections (to surrounding neighborhoods, and to the region).

It will be important not to let this overall thing called Center City Strategy slow down the positive work that is happening now. Progress is important.

IV. The Center City Strategy should Acknowledge the Following Considerations

- The Center City is a collection of 10 neighborhoods.
- The Center City will capture about 1/2 of future citywide growth and enhancing the development in the center city is a sound regional growth management strategy.
- The City is creating a place that is different from residential neighborhoods.
- Infrastructure: Needs to be there to accommodate growth. It has been lagging. City commitment is needed.
- Characteristics for an individual should include safe, inviting, easy to get to, close in proximity to places you want to go and be that are different than what people experience in single family neighborhoods, high quality and character of the experiences.

V. Next Steps in Preparing the Center City Strategy

1. Develop Communication Strategy

- Develop a case statement stating why the goal is necessary/desirable.
- Education and Outreach starts from a regional perspective; the Puget Sound is growing; how has it grown, where will the growth go? Show example of how 50,000 new people look in Center City versus Carnation Valley or another area in the city) and then back it up with economic data of what it will cost each household to pay for infrastructure and services.
- Conduct Focus Groups (explore questions about alternative futures).
- Craft communications/neighborhood outreach plan.
- Vision Statement that knits together CC and other neighborhoods.
- Figure out a schedule for public communication (what and when).

2. Develop Internal Work Plan

- Ensure political level involvement, including mayor and council.
- Develop interdepartmental work plan - include budget office.
- Get to the next level of inter-departmental cooperation – how?
- Internal cross-departmental organizational plan with accountability measures,
- Get Budget office involved in the financing approach especially where it relates to CIP.
- Get SPU involved (infrastructure improvements).
- Recommend that Council /council staff be intimately involved throughout the CCS process.
- Develop a joint strategy with the private sector.
- Look creatively at funding opportunities.

V. Appendix

A. August 26, 2004 Roundtable Participants

B. August 26, 2004 Roundtable Agenda

C. Seattle Planning Commission White Paper

D. Executive Summary Seattle Planning Commission White Paper

Appendix

Center City Strategy Recommendations From August 26th, 2004 Roundtable Discussion

Second Draft: September 7, 2004

Appendix A: Roundtable Attendees

August 26, 2004 Center City Roundtable Sponsored by the Seattle Planning Commission

Planning Commissioners:

1. George Blomberg
2. John Owen
3. Anjali Bhagat
4. Angela Brooks
5. Tom Eanes
6. Lyn Krizanich
7. Joe Quintana
8. Mimi Sheridan
9. Tony To
10. Paul Tomita

City Staff:

1. Diane Sugimura, Director DPD
2. Grace Crunican, Director SDOT
3. Mary Jean Ryan, Director OPM
4. Steve Nicholas, Director OSE
5. *John Rahaim, DPD
6. *Steve Johnson, OED
7. *Gary Johnson, DON
8. *BJ Brooks, Parks
9. *Anne Sutphin, SDOT
10. *Richard Gelb, OSE
11. *Rick Hooper, OH
12. Barbara Wilson, Planning Commission Acting Director
13. Bob Klug, SCL
14. Jemae Hoffman, SDOT
15. Susan Sanchez, SDOT
16. Hazel Bhang, DON
17. Bernie Matsuno, DON
18. Geri Beardsley, Council Central Staff
19. Scott MacColl, Council Central Staff
20. Neil Powers, Councilmember Steinbrueck
21. Layne Cubell, Seattle Design Commission Coordinator
22. Ethan Melone, SDOT
23. Haddis Tadesse, Mayor's Office

* *Internal Work Group team member*

Appendix B: Roundtable Agenda

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION

CENTER CITY STRATEGY ROUNDTABLE

August 26th, 2004
2:30 – 5:00 p.m.
City Hall, Room L280

FINAL AGENDA

COMMISSION BUSINESS	2:30 – 3:00 p.m.
CENTER CITY ROUNDTABLE & DISCUSSION	3:00 – 5:00 p.m.
<hr/>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Welcome & Introductions George Blomberg, Chair, Seattle Planning Commission	3:00 – 3:15 p.m.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• UPDATE on Status of the City’s ‘Center City Strategy’ Efforts DPD Director, Diane Sugimura City Planning Director, John Rahaim	3:15 – 3:25 p.m.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• SPC BRIEFING Planning Commissioner John Owen	3:25– 3:40 p.m.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION Moderated by John Owen	3:40 – 4:50 p.m.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• WRAP UP & CLOSING REMARKS George Blomberg, Chair, Seattle Planning Commission	4:50 – 5:00 pm
ADJOURN	5:00 p.m.

Appendix C: Roundtable Unedited Notes

Center City Strategy

Seattle Planning Commission Roundtable

8/26/04

DRAFT Notes & Results



Suggested Planning Commission potential products

- ✓ SPC Conceptual work
- ✓ Roundtable consensus points
- ✓ The SPC recommendations to the mayor and council.
- ✓ Others?

Center City Roundtable Themes and Consensus Points

Definitions and Elements

- ✓ Center City Strategy is about everything the City has been trying to do and Seattle core values;
 - Preserve the environment and quality of life
 - Focus growth near the downtown core so as to better preserve the Seattle single family neighborhoods
 - Do a good job on how we provide amenities
- ✓ 2 Elements: Mobility and Quality of Life
- ✓ Why CC?
 - What's good for CC is good for region
 - Mobility—need to handle growth and stay mobile: transit, density
- ✓ About *community* rather than sterile metrics like height and density.
- ✓ CC is a collection of 10 neighborhoods
 - Will capture about 1/2 of future citywide growth
- ✓ CC is “what we want to be.”

- ✓ “The mother of all urban village strategies.” in all of the best ways,
- ✓ Provides a great opportunity to do the right thing
- ✓ Center City is about what we want to be; peoples’ experiences and capitalizes on character
- ✓ Center City STRATEGY → About creating framework not a plan
 - Framework for actions, timeline and directions
 - Center City will be an economic engine that powers the whole city and provides economic stability and delivers amenities throughout
 - Fosters positive Neighborhood growth
 - “Connection” strategy (try not to alienate outlying neighborhoods)
- ✓ We are creating a place that is different from residential neighborhoods
- ✓ Infrastructure: Needs to be there to accommodate growth
 - Has been lagging
 - Need commitment!
- ✓ CC work should focus incrementally with existing plans

- ✓ Communication Elements
 - Do no harm
 - Regional perspective
 - Show the different scenarios for growth
 - Explain the economics
 - Project definitions/descriptions
- ✓ A lot of the elements are in place
- ✓ Characteristics for an individual should include safe, inviting, easy to get to, close in proximity to places you want to go and be that are different than what people experience in single family neighborhoods, high quality and character of the experiences.

Principles & Ideas

- ✓ ENERGY & infrastructure: driving city evolution (sustainability).
- ✓ Basic infrastructure must be in place to make it work, right now we do not have the infrastructure necessary in place to make this work
- ✓ CC reflects our values: should lead to political support
- ✓ Recognize Distinction: between 5 downtown neighborhoods and 5 outer neighborhoods, e.g. Cap Hill
- ✓ Get Community Buy-In
- ✓ Build off what neighborhoods have said they want.
- ✓ 2 Step Process:
 - Why CC?
 - How do we make it happen?
- ✓ Remember: We’ve already come along way with our downtown.
- ✓ People are interested in the experience and the character of the city and neighborhood. For instance, preserving the 80 landmarks and 150 potential new landmarks will add value to the personal experiences people in the Center City as will the
- ✓ Recognize Disconnect: between the quantitative idea of density and how people experience it.
- ✓ First: Do No Harm (convince stakeholders that this is true).

- ✓ Do no harm is not the same as ‘do nothing’. Make choices based on Seattle principles. We already have that information in the Comp Plan, neighborhood plans and elsewhere. Reaffirm that vision.
- ✓ FLEXIBILITY in planning; infrastructure, design, use issues
- ✓ Speak with one voice: VISION
- ✓ Express excitement about CC: it’s contagious
- ✓ Channeling Growth with help preserve existing lower density areas outside CC
- ✓ Work with Private Sector
- ✓ Be creative in accommodating growth

Recommendations, Strategy and Next Steps

- ✓ Articulate the vision/goal
 - When we say, “this is the vision of Seattle Center City” be able to rattle off a short list
 - Need a broad civic understanding and consensus of vision and goals
 - Consider name for strategy such that emphasizes relationship between city center and other neighborhoods
- ✓ Combat cynicism, e.g. “no developer left behind”
- ✓ Gather "factoids" and describe benefits
 - Map capital investment - show where the money goes
 - Develop income map -- show where the money comes from
- ✓ Conduct Important Analysis
 - Conduct a Cost Benefit Analysis
 - Analysis of Investments (and communicate how they work)
 - Money and resources in the region
 - Feasibility rating system; ripe versus less ripe
 -
- ✓ Develop Communication Strategy:
 - Develop a case statement stating why the goal is necessary/desirable
 - Education and Outreach starts from a regional perspective; the Puget Sound is growing; how has it grown, where will the growth go? Show example of how 50,000 new people look in Center City versus Carnation Valley and then back it up with economic data of what it will cost each household to pay for infrastructure and services.
 - Conduct Focus Groups (explore questions about alternative futures)
 - Craft communications/neighborhood outreach plan
 - Vision Statement that knits together CC and other neighborhoods
 - Figure out a schedule for public communication (what and when)
- ✓ Demonstrate connections between city center and other neighborhoods. (Go to neighborhoods and say here is your neighborhood plan we want to make sure it connects with these other neighborhoods)
- ✓ Gather pertinent neighborhood plan statements of their goals, desires, etc.
- ✓ Demonstrate broader Connections (to surrounding hoods, and to the region)
- ✓ Develop Internal Work Plan
 - Ensure political level involvement, including mayor and council
 - Develop interdepartmental work plan - include budget office
 - Get to the next level of inter-departmental cooperation – how?
 - Internal cross departmental organizational plan with accountability measures
 - Get Budget office involved in the financing approach especially where it relates to CIP

- Get SPU involved (infrastructure improvements)
- Recommend that Council /council staff be intimately involved throughout the CCS process.
- Develop a joint strategy with the private sector
- Look creatively at funding opportunities
- ✓ Don't let this overall thing (Center City Strategy) slow down the stuff that is happening now.
Progress is important
- ✓ 3 part plan
 - Clarity - Vision – Articulation = How to tell the story
 - Conduct an info gathering exercise; factoids, plans, analysis, focus groups
 - Continue to organize activities building on the synergies and addressing the conflicts between departments. Example; how can we connect the need to have a new substation, park and downtown bus transfer station

Appendix D: Seattle Planning Commission White Paper

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION WHITE PAPER

Recommendations for Center City Strategy

August 22, 2004

Introduction

The Seattle Planning Commission is pleased to have been invited to be part of Mayor Nickel's Center City Strategy effort. During the months of August, Commission members met several times to discuss issues, processes and outcomes relevant to the development of the Center City Strategy. The Commission submits this report to the Department of Planning and Development, Mayor's office and the City Council for their consideration.

The Comprehensive Plan established the Downtown Urban Center and the five downtown urban center villages that include; the International District, Pioneer Square, the Urban Core; Denny Triangle and Belltown. In 1999, the Downtown Urban Center Planning Group completed their Downtown Urban Center Neighborhood Plan (DUCPG Downtown Plan) which was adopted by the City. In addition, neighborhood plans for South Lake Union, First Hill, Capitol Hill, and Uptown have been prepared and adopted.

The Mayor's direction to prepare a strategic plan for the Center City is well timed given the anticipated infrastructure projects and the implementation of neighborhood and DUCPG Plans to achieve the jobs and housing objectives. It is also an ideal time to briefly step back and examine basic assumptions regarding the Center City's role in the city and region, identify ways to integrate the various neighborhoods and districts, create livable communities, explore implementation measures that equitably balance public and private investments and think strategically over the longer term.

Fundamental Considerations

While discussing the questions posed by John Rahaim in the July 04 Mayor Nickel's Center City Strategy Outline (CCSO), Commission members identified the following considerations related to the broader Center City planning effort.

- The City, Region and State will be making important decisions regarding infrastructure investments. There must be a clear rationale for investing in the Center City if support those investments is to be generated.

*Therefore: The Center City's economic importance and the benefit of investments within it must be demonstrated. The planning process **must begin by identifying the Center City's role in the City, region and state.** While guest lecturers can provide valuable insights, the City must engage its neighborhood leaders and regional partners in exploring this question.*

- In its review of current conditions, the Commission was impressed with the amount of work that has already been accomplished or is ongoing, including the neighborhood/DUCPG plans, Center City Circulation Plan, the Downtown DEIS, Comprehensive Plan amendments and current work on the development incentives/requirements, TDR program, green streets, and North Downtown park planning.

*Therefore: Center City planning should **build on existing work.** As suggested by the CCSO, the planning should first identify what is not already being accomplished. At the same time, there is the need to **tie the various efforts together into a cohesive and understandable strategy.***

- While the level of effort has been impressive, Commission members noted that there are several issues such as for which more technical information and analysis is needed if the planning is to go beyond current practices.

*Therefore: The City should be prepared to expend resources to **provide the technical work necessary to test assumptions and evaluate new solutions** to issues such as circulation, economic market response, coordination with regional planning, equitable and effective development incentives and requirements, and a phased fiscal strategy.*

Planning Elements

The following are some thoughts regarding the key aspects of the plan that should be considered.

Economic Development

The Center City Strategy outline sketched by John Rahaim raises the questions, “What is the economic development future for certain parts of the CC and what is the possibility of attracting new uses?” In considering these issues the commission recommends to **first identify those activities that can only happen (or most effectively happen) in the Center City.** Why, for example, would a particular type of business or residential population choose to locate in the Center City rather than downtown Bellevue, Tacoma, or Northgate? Determine what “agglomerated economic activities” (those activities that benefit from clustering around a proximate location, economies of scale or other interferences including unprogrammed human contact) need to be in the City Center. While some activities such as regional retail may no longer need a centralized location, others such as biomedical research require proximity to hospitals and the university. So the question is what economic activities agglomerate at the regional scale and need a centralized focus.

Richard Florida, in *The Rise of the Creative Class*, makes an argument for the need to nurture living and work spaces for the so-called creative class if that economic sector is to locate within a region. He also notes that nurturing of that “class” is critical to attracting the “new economies

built around emerging technologies, demographic trends and knowledge based industries. So one answer to the questions regarding the CC's economic role and ability to attract new uses may be for it to become the premier center between Vancouver and San Francisco for attracting the energetic, creative individuals looking for an urban lifestyle and engaged in the knowledge based professions. Ken Johnson has expressed this role for the South Lake Union area, but it might be equally valid for the Center City complex as a whole.

Center City planning must be based on a unified and articulated economic development strategy, and this strategy must be related to the larger regional economic picture. While we would normally advocate examining these issues at the broad scale first and then looking at opportunities at the city or district scale, questions raised in Center City planning may help to catalyze thinking at the city and regional levels.

Transportation

The Center City Circulation Plan (CCCP) will be a keystone in the larger strategy. While the level of analysis supporting the CCCP recommendations was necessarily limited by budget and timing constraints, it is a particularly instructive piece of work because it exemplifies many of the aspects that the larger Center City Strategy should also exhibit; namely:

- The plan links the CC to Seattle as a whole

- It makes some strategic points with the analysis (e.g.: better understanding of the "bottlenecks" phenomena

- It combines a comprehensive policy framework with a conceptual strategy and specific recommendations,

- It considers and conceptually links all modes, and

- It introduces some innovative solutions, such as the notion of street typologies being responsive to adjacent land uses and context.

Some Commission members noted that the CCCP could be significantly strengthened through additional analysis to check assumptions and explore other ideas. The Commission could relay additional input on this matter if desired.

Quality of Life

As John Rahaim noted when he briefed the Commission, many of the challenges in the planning of metropolitan cores result from the conflicts between regional economic and civic activities and the need to create livable neighborhoods. While it will be a challenge to provide sufficient local amenities, services and sense of privacy stability and community, several metropolitan cores overcome this challenge so it may be useful to explore examples from elsewhere.

At first glance, the most effective tools to greater livability are urban design and, of special importance to the Center City, looking at the unique opportunities within certain sub-areas. The Center City's wealth and diversity of different neighborhoods will help it accommodate both the regionally based and local activities. The different neighborhood locations provide opportunities for different development types and lifestyle choices. The Center City Strategy should identify

the means to provide the resources necessary for public safety, infrastructure and neighborhood amenities. Clearly, providing sufficient resources will rely on a combination of public and private investment, so a critical part of the CC strategy will be to establish a comprehensive, rational and equitable means of sharing costs and benefits associated with these improvements and services.

Identity

The Center City, along with views of Mt Rainier and Elliott Bay is the most identifiable image for the region and the state. While Seattle has done an excellent job of building and protecting a recognizable identity, it seems that this plan is a chance to consider this issue again.

What will our identity in 2024 be? A recent provocative article by Jonathan Raban criticized Seattle for being too environmentally oriented and not pursuing a more robust, humanistic approach to city building. Why not pick up this intellectual challenge and discuss it? Certainly a consideration of this question, from fundamental objectives to implementing actions, would enrich the larger Center City planning discussion.

Looking Internally

As noted above, thinking of the Center City as a complex of unique neighborhoods and districts will be a valuable concept. Center City planning should maximize the advantages of each area by building on earlier neighborhood planning and treating each district or area as a unified and cohesive unit. For each district, the plan should identify the key characteristics such as noted on the conceptual chart on the next page.

At the same time the plan should identify the interrelationships between the different districts; including not only the spatial and circulation connections but also the economic and social relationships as well.

The CCSO asks the question regarding the feasibility of a Center City school. Assuming that the School District favors such a facility, this is an issue where resource allocation in the CC versus the neighborhoods will be an issue. Many Seattle neighborhoods have fought for generations to keep local neighborhood schools viable. If the development of a Center City school is perceived to reduce resources to existing schools there will likely be vocal opposition. A better question might be: “How can we increase educational opportunities in the Center City?” This question would engender a broader look at the educational needs of projected population groups and a wider variety of solutions. For example the Center City Strategy might consider a cooperative network of educational resources that might include Cornish Institute, School for Visual Concepts, private elementary schools, Pacific Northwest Ballet School, Antioch, etc. What if Seattle Center was a mixed use-educational facility 5 days a week? How about an educational facility serving targeted needs in the Convention Center Transit Station redevelopment? The North Downtown Park Plan identified a need for indoor sports facilities. Can a recreational center be part of the mix?

Neighborhood Sub-districts

	D O C	D	P S q	W F	D e n n y T	B e l t n	S L U	U p t o w n
Sub-district Characteristics								
Basic Role/Functions								
Residential Growth Estimate								
Comp Plan Growth Target								
Types of Uses								
Population Groups								
Physical Character								
Assets to Build on								
Planning Challenges & Opportunities								
Key Challenges								
Market Timing								
Links to Other Neighborhoods								
Infrastructure Projects								
Regulatory Issues								

As part of the Center City planning process, the City should also build on neighborhood/DUCPG plans and work with local communities to establish a clearer picture of community development objectives, design character, development types and intensities, amenities, circulation patterns and other key aspects for each neighborhood or district. The sketches on the two following pages present a hypothetical example of a “vision” (for illustrative purposes only – the diagram’s content is not intended as an accurate representation of recommendations) and implementation actions for East Denny Triangle. Such an approach could help to translate earlier neighborhood plans into material that can be incorporated into the CC effort and will present an image around which to build a consensus for coordinated public-private action.

Cornish Institute serves as a cultural and educational hub with its own campus spine on Lenora

Green Streets create pleasant, cohesive neighborhood settings



Denny Park improved for more activity

Streetcar/Pedestrian oriented Westlake improvements



Multipurpose Center as part of Conv. Ctr. Sta.

Intermodal transit station lining district to retail center and focusing commercial activities



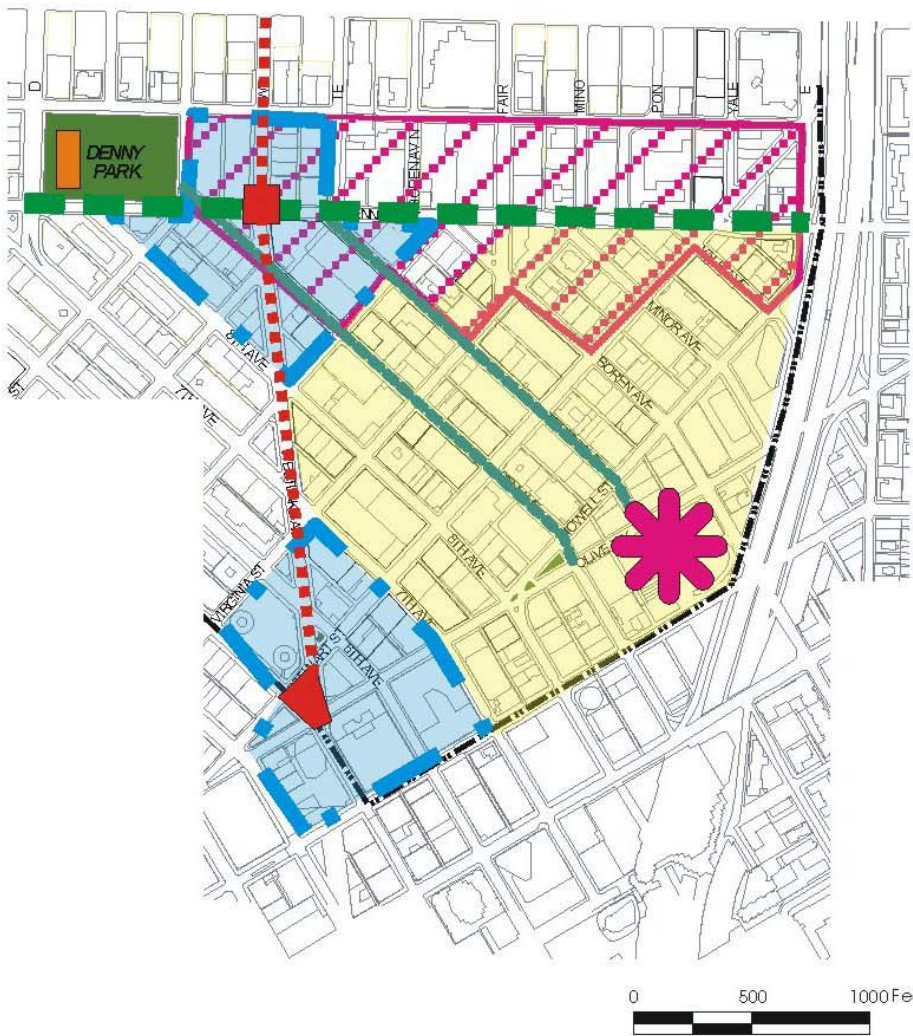
Commercial node serving local n'hood and downtown



Mixed use district with residential emphasis and low auto penetration



Neighborhood "Vision" for East Denny Triangle
(Hypothetical Example - Not Specific recommendations)



Actions to Achieve “Vision”

(Hypothetical example - Not actual recommendations)

-  Upzone area to provide edge to neighborhood and support commercial
-  Revise system of development incentives and requirements for greater effectiveness
-  Construct Westlake improvements and coordinate with property owners. Institute ped. overlay.
-  Construct Green Street improvements w/LID support
-  Implement urban design plan coordinating public and private improvements
-  Upgrade Denny Park and construct community center
-  Develop small parks per park plan
-  Establish indoor rec. Facility as part of Conv. Ctr. Redevelopment
-  Revegetate Denny Way as a signature street

Implementation Measures

Experience in other Puget Sound and Northwest communities (E.g.: Portland, Tacoma, Olympia, Kirkland) has shown that shaping a downtown requires committed action over the long term. Therefore the end result of this plan must be commitment to specific actions as well as clarity of vision. At the same time, the City must be creative and experimental in its implementation efforts. This suggests that the City begin with some small scale pilot projects to initiate and test larger programs. For example, a small scale green street project, perhaps partially funded as an LID, might demonstrate the benefits and problems with that implementation tool. *(Note: think about how much smoother the Neighborhood Planning Program would have been if it had started with a few well conceived pilot plans.)* With this approach the City could afford to be more experimental and pursue more creative actions such as tax increment financing or adaptive ecological management (leading to greater development flexibility) on the waterfront. A few specific ideas are listed in the Summary Recommendations below.

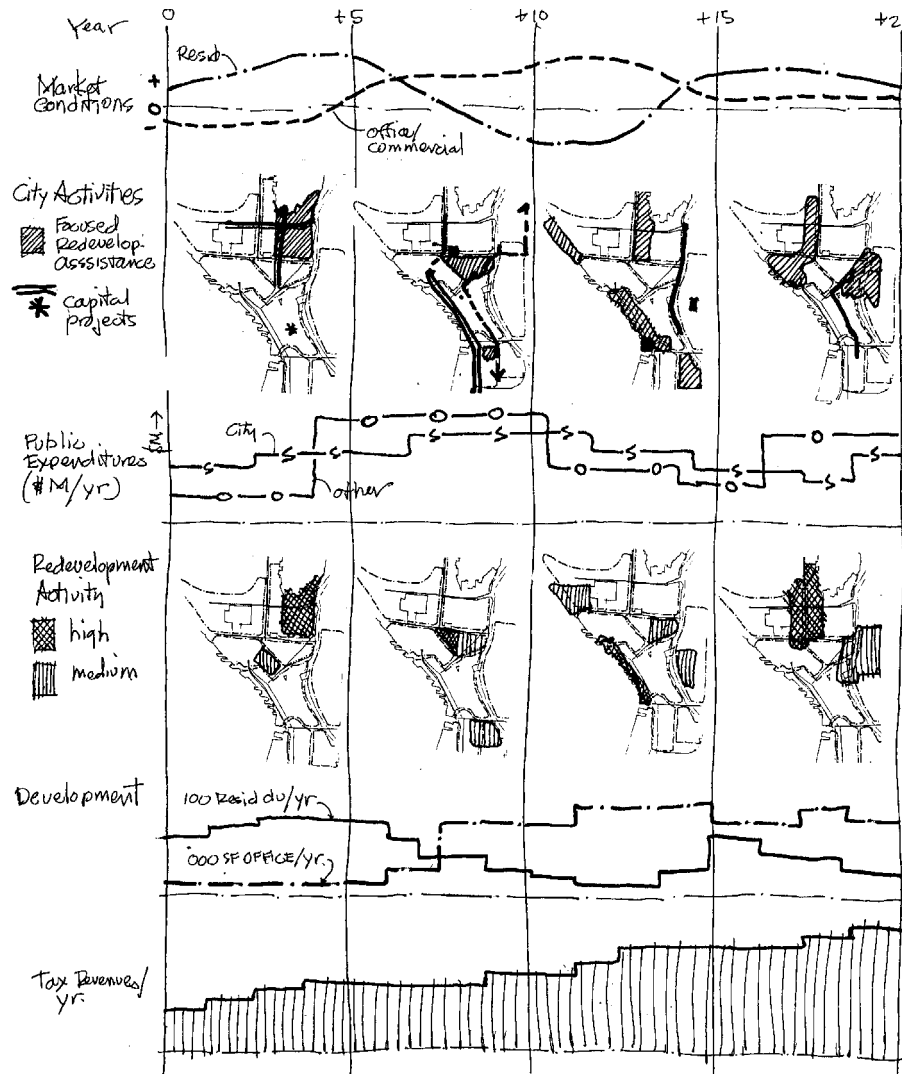
Thinking Strategically

The CCSO raises questions regarding market conditions and the ability to attract desired development. It is the commission's observation that market conditions will change dramatically over this plan's 20 year horizon. Therefore the question is really not what the immediate market is for various development types. Rather, the City should be thinking about when the market for the desired development will emerge and what can be done to encourage and shape it.

At the same time, the City has limited resources to shape development in the Center City. The City cannot successfully undertake all the Center City efforts at once, not to mention giving due attention to other neighborhoods. Therefore, it will make sense to target certain areas and projects within a given time frame. South Lake Union may currently warrant a high priority for action to take advantage of a special opportunity that would otherwise pass, but the CC strategy should address the longer term. Just as the City is now preparing for the Viaduct construction impacts by improving key surface arterials that will have to carry the traffic when Hwy 99 is constricted, the City should be thinking about the strategic connections and timing of various efforts.

Thus, the plan should be like a movie story board, illustrating the sequence of efforts, level of funding and projected development over time. Such an exercise will identify the assumptions necessary to fulfill the sequence and where contingency plans or future options must be included. The graphic on the following page illustrates this kind of sequential planning.

Conceptual Diagram: Assumed market conditions, civic activities, development activity and projected revenues over time



Summary Recommendations

The City is engaging in numerous individual capital investments, far reaching land use decisions and a myriad of interrelated development actions in the Center City. Given the magnitude and importance of these efforts, it is imperative that the City step back and think comprehensively and strategically about the role, functions and objectives set for the city's heart. This effort will require:

- Engaging Seattle neighborhoods, other cities and regional leaders.
- Basing decisions on sound analysis of fundamental questions.
- Assertive commitment to implementation measures
- Thinking strategically about timing, funding and local priorities

More specifically, the Planning Commission recommends that the following activities be incorporated into the Center City Planning.

- 1) Communicate with regional partners, especially with metropolitan centers and PSRC to establish the likely growth patterns, uses and opportunities in downtown Seattle and in other centers.
- 2) Communicate with “neighborhoods” to identify:
 - How Neighborhoods benefit from Center City activities
 - Relative priorities (No neighborhood left behind)
 - Relationship between development in the Center City to other initiatives such as Northgate, University Community and Rainier Valley
- 3) Begin communication with the School District and other educational institutions regarding educational facilities in the downtown. Include other educational institutions in the discussion.
- 4) Conduct research where necessary to verify assumptions or check the implications of proposed actions.
- 5) Establish a unified, consistent and equitable policy regarding development requirements, incentives and public investment to encourage/shape development. Perhaps start with the current DPD study to make development requirements/incentives more consistent, but think this through at the policy level as well.
- 6) Explore creative ways to implement current programs and plans such as the Green Streets Program, park improvements and capital infrastructure.
- 7) Continue process to implement DUCPUG recommendations which call for a strong and flexible policy framework that can respond to diverse demands and evolving service needs.

Appendix

The following are growth estimates from the 1994 Comprehensive Plan, 2004 Amendments, and the Downtown EIS.

Residential (Units)

	Comp Plan Growth Estimate	Units Added	Existing Units	Comp Plan Additional Capacity	Growth Estimate	Downtown EIS Ass. ²
	1994-2004	1994-2004	2004	(est.)	2004-2024	(2000-2020)
Downtown (including Belltown, International District, Denny Triangle, and Pioneer Square)	14,700	5,053	15,696	17,000	10,000	18,400
South Lake Union	1,700	440	1,209	15,951	10,000	
First Hill and Pike-Pine ¹	4,000	965	8,816	1,450	600	
Uptown	1,312	875	4,575	2,525	1,000	
Totals	21,712	7,333	30,296	36,926	21,600	18,400

Employment (Job)

	Comp Plan Growth Estimate	Jobs Added	Existing Jobs	Comp Plan Additional Capacity	Growth Estimate	Downtown EIS Ass. ²
	1994-2004	1994-2004	2004	(est.)	2004-2024	(2000-2020)
Downtown (including Belltown, International District, Denny Triangle, and Pioneer Square)	62,700	16,626	156,960	90,550	28,500	70,000
South Lake Union	4,500	4,689	19,689	28,123	23,000	
First Hill and Pike-Pine ¹	8,000	5,027	26,595	5,600	3,000	
Uptown	3,300	-1,168	15,565	7,700	1,100	
Totals	78,500	25,174	218,809	131,973	55,600	70,000

Notes:

1. Portion of Capitol Hill is excluded in the Comprehensive Plan Growth Estimate.
2. All alternatives assume the same growth figures.

Appendix E: Executive Summary Planning Commission White Paper

Executive Summary Center Seattle Planning Commission White Paper Recommendations for Center City Strategy *August 22, 2004*

Center City Strategy Planning Principles

- Center City planning should build on existing work. Planning should first identify what is not already being accomplished. At the same time, there is the need to tie the various efforts together into a cohesive and understandable strategy
- Expend resources to provide the technical work necessary to test assumptions and evaluate new solutions to issues such as circulation, economic market response, coordination with regional planning, equitable and effective development incentives and requirements, and a phased fiscal strategy
- Center City planning must be based on a unified and articulated economic development strategy, and this strategy must be related to the larger regional economic picture
- Center City planning should maximize the advantages of each area by building on earlier neighborhood planning and treating each district or area as a unified and cohesive unit. For each district, the plan should identify the key characteristics. At the same time the plan should identify the interrelationships between the different districts; including not only the spatial and circulation connections but also the economic and social relationships
- The Center City Strategy should identify the means to provide the resources necessary for public safety, infrastructure and neighborhood amenities. Clearly, providing sufficient resources will rely on a combination of public and private investment, so a critical part of the CC strategy will be to establish a comprehensive, rational and equitable means of sharing costs and benefits associated with these improvements and services
- Given the magnitude and importance of these efforts, it is imperative that the City step back and think comprehensively and strategically about the role, functions and objectives set for the city's heart
- When exploring new uses, identify those activities that can only happen (or most effectively happen) in the Center City. Determine what "agglomerated economic activities" (those activities that benefit from clustering around a proximate location, economies of scale or other interferences including unprogrammed human contact) need to be in the City Center. While some activities such as regional retail may no longer need a centralized location, others such as biomedical research require proximity to hospitals and the university
- The Center City Circulation Plan (CCCP) will be a keystone in the larger Center City strategy At first glance, the most effective tools to greater livability are urban design and, of special importance to the Center City, looking at the unique opportunities within certain sub-areas
- While Seattle has done an excellent job of building and protecting a recognizable identity, this plan provides a chance to consider this issue again

- Look broadly at the educational needs of projected population groups and consider a wider variety of solutions. For example the Center City Strategy might consider a cooperative network of educational resources that might include Cornish Institute, School for Visual Concepts, private elementary schools, Pacific Northwest Ballet School, Antioch, etc.
- As part of the Center City planning process, the City should also build on neighborhood/DUCPG plans and work with local communities to establish a clearer picture of community development objectives, design character, development types and intensities, amenities, circulation patterns and other key aspects for each neighborhood or district

Center City Strategy Recommendations

1. Engage Seattle neighborhoods, other cities and regional leaders.
2. Base decisions on sound analysis of fundamental questions.
3. Make an assertive commitment to implementation measures
4. Think strategically about timing, funding and local priorities

The Planning Commission recommends that the following activities be incorporated into the Center City Planning.

- Communicate with regional partners, especially with metropolitan centers and PSRC to establish the likely growth patterns, uses and opportunities in downtown Seattle and in other centers.
- Communicate with “neighborhoods” to identify:
 - How Neighborhoods benefit from Center City activities
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- Begin communication with the School District and other educational institutions regarding educational facilities in the downtown. Include other educational institutions in the discussion.
- Conduct research where necessary to verify assumptions or check the implications of proposed actions.
- Establish a unified, consistent and equitable policy regarding development requirements, incentives and public investment to encourage/shape development. Perhaps start with the current DPD study to make development requirements/incentives more consistent, but think this through at the policy level as well.
- Explore creative ways to implement current programs and plans such as the Green Streets Program, park improvements and capital infrastructure.
- Continue process to implement DUCPUG recommendations which call for a strong and flexible policy framework that can respond to diverse demands and evolving service needs.