



City of Seattle

Seattle Planning Commission

Rick Mohler and Jamie Stroble, Co-Chairs
Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION

Thursday, February 25, 2021

Approved Meeting Minutes

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- Commissioners Present:** Mark Braseth, McCaela Daffern, Roque Deherrera, David Goldberg, Matt Hutchins, Katherine Idziorek, Rose Lew Tsai-Le Whitson, Patience Malaba, Rick Mohler, Radhika Nair, Alanna Peterson, Dhyana Quintanar, Julio Sanchez, Jamie Stroble, Kelabe Tewolde
- Commissioners Absent:** Lauren Squires
- Commission Staff:** Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director; John Hoey, Senior Policy Analyst; Connie Combs, Planning Analyst; Robin Magonegil, Commission Coordinator
- Guests:** Geoff Wentlandt and Jim Holmes, Office of Planning and Community Development; Diane Wiatr, Seattle Department of Transportation

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

Co-Chair Jamie Stroble called the meeting to order at 7:32 am 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. Co-Chair Stroble 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.

ACTION: Co-Chair Rick Mohler moved to approve the February 11, 2021 meeting minutes. Commissioner Katie Idziorek seconded the motion. The motion to approve the minutes passed.

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. She announced that this is the first formal meeting for eight new Commissioners. Each of the Commissioners introduced themselves.

Planning Commission Review of Industrial and Maritime Policies

John Hoey, Seattle Planning Commission staff, provided an overview of previous work done by the Planning Commission to review industrial and maritime policies. Mr. Hoey stated that this briefing is intended to serve as a useful introduction to this work for the new Commissioners and a review for the benefit of continuing Commissioners. His presentation included an overview of Seattle's industrial lands, previous reports, and recommendations on this subject by the Planning Commission, and a review of the Commission's comments on the Industrial and Maritime Strategy to date.

Industrial lands support manufacturing and maritime activities that contribute to Seattle's identity, support family-wage jobs, and promote economic diversity. Seattle's industrial areas highlight positive economic indicators such as low vacancy rates and high demand for industrial property. Mr. Hoey provided a summary of Seattle's Manufacturing/Industrial Centers (M/ICs) and industrial zoning categories. He presented a summary of ongoing challenges to Seattle's industrial and maritime sectors, including non-industrial development pressure, which has resulted in erosion of industrial lands along M/IC edges; the shifting nature of industrial labor market, including the growing role of small-scale manufacturing, local production, and supporting services; and the ongoing impacts of technological advances, such as increased automation that may change workforce requirements.

The Planning Commission has historically been supportive of policies and plans that protect Seattle's industrial lands. Overarching themes of previous Planning Commission work on industrial lands include industrial lands play a vital role in the local and regional economy, and strong land use and zoning policies are needed to protect industrial areas from redevelopment. A 2007 report published by the Planning Commission called *The Future of Seattle's Industrial Lands* included the following statement: ""Industrial zoned land is a vital civic asset. Because Seattle's industrial businesses are critical to our city's overall economic health and global competitiveness, the City should strengthen its industrial policies." The Planning Commission was supportive of policies proposed in the July 2015 Draft Seattle 2035 Comprehensive Plan that were more restrictive for protection of industrial lands. However, these policies were not included in the final Seattle 2035 Comprehensive Plan adopted in 2016.

Mr. Hoey summarized several ongoing and recent projects related to industrial lands that the Commission has reviewed, including annual amendments to the Comprehensive Plan; the Interbay Armory site; the West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions project; and the Ballard Interbay Regional Transportation System project. The Planning Commission has been briefed several times and provided feedback on the current Industrial and Maritime Strategy project. The Commission's comments and concerns have primarily focused on the following topics:

- Draft Land Use Concepts
- Future Transit Stations in Industrial Areas
- Housing In/Near Industrial Zones
- Environment/Climate Impacts
- Transportation/Multi-Modal Mobility
- Public Health Considerations
- Workforce Development

Update: Industrial and Maritime Strategy

Geoff Wentlandt and Jim Holmes, Office of Planning and Community Development

Mr. Wentlandt highlighted the Mayor's Principles that were established at the beginning of the Industrial and Maritime Strategy project and provided a summary of potential recommendations in the following categories resulting from the stakeholder process:

- Workforce Opportunity
- Transportation
- Environment
- Public Safety

He then reviewed three potential new land use concepts that are proposed to refresh and update the existing industrial zoning categories:

- Maritime + Manufacturing + Logistics
- Industry + Innovation
- Neighborhood Industrial

The Maritime + Manufacturing + Logistics (MML) category would apply to clusters like maritime, fishing, and logistics located near key infrastructure such as water and railroads. These clusters occupy a low-density use of land and face development pressures from office and residential uses. This category could and should do a better job of establishing long-term predictability for use of this land compared to existing regulations. This new zone would consolidate the Industrial General (IG) 1 and Industrial General 2 zones into a new MML category; protect against annual threats to remove land from an industrial designation; and close zoning loopholes that allow non-industrial development to encroach industrial areas. Examples of permitted and prohibited uses in this zone are similar to the existing IG zones with updated and refreshed conditions and limitations. A case study for the MML zone is Salmon Bay Sand and Gravel, an existing business with a unique location that supports other businesses in the area and is adjacent to the fast-growing Ballard Urban Village. Stronger policies here could provide stronger predictability.

The Industry + Innovation (I+I) category would support modern industrial innovation and capitalize on major transit investments. Industry is more design and research oriented than in past decades. Emerging industrial uses can be vertically stacked and have high employment density. Costs are significant to upgrade aging industrial buildings so more development capacity is needed to spur investment. This land use concept would typically apply in areas within one-quarter to one-half mile from high capacity transit. This category would support an industrial Transit-Oriented Development model and create employment at frequent transit stations. Mr. Wentlandt highlighted a proposed incentive structure in existing IG zones within one-half or one-quarter mile of light rail (SODO) and existing Industrial Commercial zones. This incentive structure would allow developers to increase the Floor-to-Area Ratio (FAR) if certain incentive conditions to include industrial space are met. A case study for the Industry + Innovation category is the West Woodland Business Center in Ballard, which has four floors and is the headquarters for Rad Power Bikes. The building includes assembly facilities and offices under one roof and is an example of a hybrid industrial use in a dense urban building.

The Neighborhood Industrial (NI) category would foster vibrant districts that support a mix of local manufacturing production and sense of place. These transition areas are good opportunities for affordable small-scale manufacturing, artisan, and makerspaces, and can provide needed opportunities for middle wage workers to live near jobs. Mr. Wentlandt described a draft concept for limited housing in the Neighborhood Industrial zones. He stated that this issue is the most controversial of the draft land use concepts and is subject to discussion with the Planning Commission and stakeholders. Case studies for the NI category include Equinox Studios in Georgetown and the Bemis Building in SODO. This new zone would encourage similar configurations and potentially allow for maker housing on-site.

Mr. Wentlandt highlighted two other key land use proposals that would:

- Commit to a site-specific planning process for the Armory (Interbay) and WOSCA (SODO) sites and keep the sites within the designated M/IC.
- Improve neighborhood cohesion in Georgetown and South Park by rezoning targeted parcels from industrial zones to mixed use zones.

The next steps for these land use actions include proposing text policies in the next annual Comprehensive Plan amendment cycle, interim closure of zoning loopholes, and launching Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to evaluate all impacts of the zoning overhaul. Mr. Wentlandt shared a reference map to highlight areas where the proposed zoning changes would apply.

Commission Discussion

- Commissioners asked if the I+I and NI zones be applied in all walksheds, and if yes, can existing loopholes for auto-dependent uses (such as car dealerships) be closed. Mr. Holmes stated that the intention of the draft land use concepts is to close loopholes. One example that would not be allowed is the retail plaza that includes the Michael's craft store in Interbay. He stated that several EIS alternatives will be evaluated to determine where the I+I or NI zones would be most appropriate.
- Commissioners inquired as to whether there has been an intentional planning effort around incentivizing public spaces and amenities. For example, Barcelona: has designated thirty percent of land for public uses. Mr. Wentlandt stated that stakeholders have advocated for healthy, sustainable industrial environments including sidewalks, walking and bicycle infrastructure, and more trees and greenery. The proposal for rezoning land in South Park intends to enhance the connection of that neighborhood to the Duwamish River. This aspiration was included in the Duwamish Valley Action Plan.
- Commissioners requested more information on where the proposed NI zones would be located. Mr. Wentlandt stated that potential areas include the edges around Georgetown, South Park, 1st Avenue, and Ballard. Commissioners stated that this proposed zone should ensure livability and address any potential concerns about public health impacts.
- Commissioners noted that many industrial workers commute long distances in vanpools and questioned the benefits of focusing one of the land use concepts on transit-oriented development. Diane Wiatr from the Seattle Department of Transportation stated that those long commute patterns are a result of Seattle's high housing costs. SDOT works very hard on providing transportation options for many workers, but the jobs/housing balance is very skewed and will continue to be a problem while housing affordability challenges are so difficult to address.

- Commissioners stated that an EIS will be necessary to study the public health impacts of housing near industrial areas. Mr. Wentlandt acknowledged that an EIS will help to determine any public health impacts associated with the draft land use concepts, including noise and air quality.
- Commissioners asked whether Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA) fees have been considered as a revenue source. Mr. Wentlandt stated that Commercial MHA fees are currently not collected in industrial areas, but this approach could be considered.
- Commissioners requested more information on how the draft land use concepts will accommodate a range of future uses at the proposed light rail stations. Mr. Wentlandt stated that the I+I concept is trying to envision an environment that does not exist today, providing employment density with transit-oriented development in existing industrial areas. Potential approaches include designing ground floors for loading, smaller and lighter industrial uses, and pedestrian-friendly environments, with other uses you would not find in a traditional industrial area above. This will require careful design and many details will have to be worked out.
- Commissioners asked if the proposed 10,000 square foot limit for retail spaces would apply to restaurants. Mr. Wentlandt stated that this would depend on the location. Mr. Holmes stated that buildings would have a FAR limit on non-industrial development in addition to the maximum size of use limit. Mr. Wentlandt noted that an even lower limit than 10,000 square feet could be considered for restaurants.
- Commissioners noted that industrial vacancy rates are still low, and with the increase in Amazon deliveries, Prologis is now the largest industrial landowner. Mr. Wentlandt acknowledged an increased interest in industrial lands as a result of the demand for deliveries.
- Commissioners stated that NI zones should not be located in M/IC areas and recommended exploring the potential for NI zone or uses within non-industrial neighborhoods and urban villages. This should be considered along with a re-evaluation of single-family zoning.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:01am.