



City of Seattle Seattle Planning Commission

David Cutler and Amalia Leighton, Co-Chairs
Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION APRIL 24, 2014 APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

COMMISSIONERS IN ATTENDANCE

Co-Chair David Cutler, Catherine Benotto, Luis Borrero, Josh Brower, Keely Brown, Bradley Khouri, Grace Kim, Amalia Leighton, Tim Parham, Matt Roewe, Morgan Shook

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT

Colie Hough-Beck, Jeanne Krikawa, Kevin McDonald, Marj Press

COMMISSION STAFF

Jessica Brand - Policy Analyst, Diana Canzoneri-Senior Analyst, Robin Magonegil – Administrative Assistant, Vanessa Murdock - Executive Director

IN ATTENDANCE

Dennis Saxman, Victoria Nelson, Brian Ramey, Aly Pennucci

Please Note: Seattle Planning Commission meeting minutes are not an exact transcript but instead represent key points and the basis of the discussion.

CALL TO ORDER

Co-Chair David Cutler called the meeting to attention at 7:31 am.

- **Action: Minutes Approval**
 - Co-Chair David Cutler

Commissioner Bradley Khouri moved to approve the April 10, 2014 minutes. Commissioner Morgan Shook seconded the motion. The minutes were approved with Commissioners Parham, Benotto, and Leighton abstaining.

- **Chair's Report:**
 - Co-Chair David CutlerCo-Chair David Cutler reviewed the upcoming meetings and briefly reported on the interview process for new Commissioners.

▪ **Action: Approve Microhousing Letter**

Commissioner Parham reviewed the Commission history on microhousing and the need to make it compatible with other Lowrise zones, such as parking standards and design review.

If you would like to view the power point presentation on microhousing, it is included in the supporting documents found in the minute's section of our website.

Commissioner Khouri stated that the Department of Planning and Development made recommendations on the Design Review threshold that had a minimum square footage of 2,000 and the equivalent of three units for a total of 6,000 sq. ft. He added that the Commission has recommended a smaller footprint of 5,000 total sq. ft. as a threshold for Design Review for microhousing because many of the townhomes we are seeing are less than 2,000 sq. ft.

Diana Canzoneri outlined the change in the letter to clarify both the Commission's support for microhousing and which locations the Commission would support siting future development of microhousing.

Commissioner Kim asked if the loopholes had been closed. Commissioner Parham replied that there was a Director's Rule that closed that loophole early on in the process when it was discovered that this was a problem.

Commissioner Roewe asked if the Multi-Family Tax Exemption (MFTE) is actually incentive zoning? Commissioner Shook answered that it is a tax break rather than an incentive and that it is not in the land use code. Commissioner Roewe suggested that there be clarification on this topic in the letter.

Commissioner Kim referred to the bullet point on the bottom of page 4 and wondered if it is in advance of the legislation or was is part of incentive zoning. Ms. Canzoneri responded that DPD is hoping to close the loophole on incentive zoning before the full incentive zoning legislation. She added that they are proposing the new calculation for approval be at a lower rate of 40%.

Commissioner Shook stated that it is about getting the incentive on par with other types of development and that it would need to be less than is currently charged for micros.

Ms. Canzoneri noted that Commissioner Brown pointed out that this does not always include the broadest sense of diversity in the community, economic diversity perhaps, but not diversity in the broadest sense, and suggested an additional modification that would allow micros to better fit in the context of the neighborhood.

Commissioner Khouri suggested moving up the second to the last bullet in the letter. Commissioner Parham agreed. Co-Chair Cutler stated that he did not think the move was necessary.

Co-Chair Cutler called for a motion to approve the letter.

Commissioner Grace Kim moved to approve the letter on Microhousing. Commissioner Amalia Leighton seconded the motion. The letter was approved.

▪ **Discussion: Pedestrian Zone Letter**

Ms. Brand walked the Commission through the points for a possible Pedestrian Zone letter.

If you would like to view the power point presentation on the pedestrian zone, it is included in the supporting documents found in the minute's section of our website.

Commissioner Benotto stated that overhead protection is required to get an annual permit from SDOT and wondered if it is required as a public benefit, should property owners be charged every year to maintain it. Commissioner Roewe noted that SDOT will mark down the cost of this permit if there is a public benefit. Ms. Pennucci replied that DPD is looking at this issue and it would be helpful to have the Commission's input on how to proceed.

Commissioner Kim asked if it was helpful to have the sidewalk design located in the Right-of-Way Improvement Manual (ROWIM) instead of the land use code. Commissioner Leighton stated that this is the appropriate place to put this information, as this is the logical place to put all types of street design. She added that the ROWIM is also easier to update than the land use code.

Commissioner Roewe stated that it is great that they are updating both the Right of Way Improvement Manual and the Pedestrian Zones at the same time and it is good for the Commission to remind staff to coordinate these two efforts. He asked what the Commission was recommending on allowable uses in Pedestrian Zones. Ms. Brand noted that the letter is supportive of the current proposed uses and specifically that live/work capped at 20% as was discussed at the previous Commission meeting could serve as a transitional use for areas not quite fully activated with retail.

Commissioner Kim stated that she was not sure live /work is a good use to promote in a Pedestrian Zone, noting that the areas that are successful do not base themselves on live/work zones. She added that it does not provide the retail activity and eyes on the ground necessary to be successful. Commissioner Benotto stated that it was her understanding that these areas are thriving business districts and therefore live/work might not be appropriate for the reasons previously stated. Ms. Pennucci replied that the pedestrian zones are a mix of areas with some thriving and others more visionary and could in the future foster this kind of development. She added that the designation is intended to help bolster these thriving business districts but also to help maintain a good stock of commercial for future activation.

Commissioner Parham asked about the future timeline for updating these zones and how often these designations will be revisited. He added that he was not excited by live/work but also not excited about empty retail spaces. Ms. Pennucci replied that there is no agreed upon schedule for regularly updating the pedestrian zones. She added however that DPD continues to do area planning throughout the City and within these planning areas, there will be an opportunity to evaluate the possibility of a Pedestrian Zone.

Commissioner Roewe noted that a nice compromise could be to examine a smaller depth in mixed-use developments. He added that this could allow small businesses to find space and fill the vacancies in new construction. Commissioner Roewe continued that it might also be interesting to look at an incentive program, perhaps modeled on MFTE that would allow a certain percentage of small-qualified businesses to give landowners a tax exemption for the retail space.

Co-Chair Cutler stated that there could be a conversation about making retail more affordable. He added that the Commission has raised this issue before and we could raise it again as a conversation that is essential to have.

Commissioner Brown asked if the intent of this zone is to increase economic development opportunities. Commissioner Leighton responded that the purpose is to activate the street and make it better for the pedestrian experience.

Commissioner Borrero asked if this is a zone or an overlay. Commissioner Leighton answered that it was an overlay.

Commissioner Brown asked what happens when there are inconsistencies between the uses and the comprehensive plan or land use code.

Co-Chair Cutler stated that we have a lot of information on traffic counts and pedestrian activity and wonder if that aligned in these proposed areas. Commissioner Leighton replied that it is all coming from the pedestrian master plan. She added that what was understood by this work is that there are areas that have retail or neighborhood commercial that are activated but not a pleasant pedestrian experience. She continued that there are also targeted areas that could have better pedestrian access and neighborhood business vitality. Commissioner Leighton stated that the Pedestrian Master Plan is guiding this work.

Commissioner Roewe asked if they should look at South Lake Union as a role model noting that he realized it is not a Pedestrian Zone but there are exemptions that could be helpful in promoting more business at the ground level.

▪ **Discussion: Comprehensive Plan Major Update Commission Work Plan**

Executive Director Murdock recapped the Comprehensive Plan task force meeting and outlined the next steps noting that, coming out of the last meeting, there was a need to evaluate what the overarching goals and vision are for this year's update. She added that they had met with DPD staff to confirm the vision and core values will remain the same.

Commissioner Leighton noted that the Task Force felt the Commission needed to have grounding for their review and that this was needed before they embarked on discussion and feedback of any parts of the update.

Commissioner Kim stated regarding the goal on social equity, that every neighborhood should be desirable. She asked if the last part could be tweaked to say all residents and all neighborhoods.

Commissioner Roewe stated that the last goal should be more about economic development; right now, it is more about equity and environment.

Co-Chair Cutler suggested that it would be nice to include something about restorative and not just functioning natural systems in our environmental goals.

Commissioner Benotto stated that the Economic Goal should say something specific about diversification by sector. Commissioner Khouri agreed and wondered if the goal on economic development said enough.

Commissioner Roewe suggested that it would be good to include entrepreneurial spirit in the economic development piece.

Commissioner Shook noted that the tighter and cleaner the goals are the better. He added that goals do not want to go too far into the policy side of things.

Commissioner Kim asked if the Commission was in general agreement that these are the goals.

Commissioner Brown wondered if transportation is an important piece of the puzzle and if it is enough to be a stand-alone goal or at the least be included as accessibility.

Commissioner Leighton replied that the goal for today is to ensure that the goal headings are appropriate and that there is not anything missing.

Commissioner Khouri agreed that these are the overarching goals, however before we can use this as a lens it is essential that we dig into the words that we are using.

Commissioner Borrero wondered if this approach to evaluating the proposed outlines of the Comprehensive Plan elements made sense, noting the goals were rather arbitrary

Commissioner Brower stated that he thought this approach is valuable and that the Commission needs a set of criteria to evaluate this information. He added that the Commission approached the evaluation of the Comprehensive Plan amendment process in a similar manner by defining the criteria by which they would evaluate the proposed amendments. Now the Commission uses this criteria each year in their evaluation. Commissioner Brower noted that it is a helpful exercise to guide the future comprehensive plan work. He wondered if the Commission should approach DPD to help them with this work.

Commissioner Kim reiterated that transportation is important and wondered how it might be affected and should it be its own goal. Commissioner Leighton stated that these goals are overarching and each element should be addressing these specific goals. She added that the Transportation Element and all others should be viewed through this lens. Co-Chair Cutler suggested that it might be better to look at the community as neighborhoods and physical built form. He added that this might be a good way to strengthen this goal and separate it from the social equity goal.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Brian Ramey from the Lake Union Neighborhood Council requested that the following be read to the Commission, as he had to leave before the public comment portion of the meeting. His statement was in regards to the Pedestrian Overlay Zoning.

“Although this is well intentioned legislation the application needs much work. One of the elements that I am concerned about most is the proposed increase in the width of the sidewalks. We are losing our tree canopy in Seattle and have recently been rated at the bottom of the list for all major cities in the US for allocation of public green space. Widening the sidewalks will surely require the removal of trees and greenspace for filtering the pollutants of our streets from vehicles. Please examine this proposal and prevent the loss of tree canopy from our public spaces.”

ADJOURNMENT

Co-Chair Cutler adjourned the meeting at 8:58 am.