



# City of Seattle Seattle Planning Commission

Tony To, Chair  
Barbara Wilson, Executive Director

## SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION MAY 8, 2008 APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

### **Commissioners in Attendance**

Linda Amato - Vice-Chair; Josh Brower, Tom Eanes, Colie Hough-Beck, Mark Johnson, Martin Kaplan, Kay Knapton, Amalia Leighton, Kevin McDonald, Leslie Miller, Kirsten Pennington

### **Commission Staff**

Barbara Wilson-Director, Casey Mills-Planning Analyst, Robin Magonegil-Administrative Specialist

### **Commissioners Absent**

Jerry Finrow, Chris Fiori, Michelle Mattox, Tony To

### **Guests**

Lynne Barker, Sandra Mallory; DPD-Green Building Team

### **In Attendance**

Marty Liebowitz, Madrona Company ; Valerie Kinast, Alessandro Filla Rosaneli, Kevin Hockley, Anthony Russo, Michael Jenkins, City Council Central Staff; Mike Podowski, DPD.

*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**

Chair Tony To was absent from the meeting.

Vice-Chair Linda Amato called the meeting to order at 3:04 pm.

### **COMMISSION BUSINESS**

#### ▪ Minutes Approval

**ACTION: Commissioner Kay Knapton moved to approve the April 10, 2008 minutes. Commissioner Kevin McDonald seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

## ▪ Chairs Report

Vice-Chair Amato called attention to the upcoming meetings. She stated that next Tuesday, May 13 will be the Executive Committee meeting and at this meeting, the Commission will set the May 22 meeting agenda, update and discuss the work plan, review comments regarding the Seattle Center Master Plan and get a briefing on the status of the Sound Transit Phase 2 package.

Vice-Chair Amato noted that the next Land Use and Transportation Committee meeting will be Thursday, May 15. She added that the Commission will get a briefing from the Department of Transportation on the Residential Parking Zone (RPZ) Program and will discuss recommendations on the Seattle Center Master Plan.

Vice-Chair Amato stated that the next Housing, Neighborhoods and Urban Centers Committee Meeting will be Tuesday, June 10. She noted that the Commission will continue to work on the next steps of the Affordable Housing Action Agenda and will get a briefing from the Office of Housing on Levy Renewal planning and Housing Needs Assessment

Vice-Chair Amato stated that the Next Full Commission meeting will be held on May 22. She added that at this meeting the Commission will get a briefing from DPD on the Dravus/Interbay rezone proposal and ordinance.

Executive Director Barbara Wilson stated that the Commission has three representatives on the Light Rail Review Panel and because two members cannot make the next meeting, she wondered if anyone else could attend.

Ms. Wilson introduced Brazilian urban planning student, Alessandro Filla Rosaneli who would be observing the meeting.

Vice-Chair Amato stated that DPD is holding interviews next week for the new Planning Director. She noted that Diane Sugimura would like the Commission to interview the final 2 or 3 candidates in the last week of May.

Vice-Chair Amato noted that the Planning Commission Demographer selection process is moving forward and that the Commission held interviews with 5 highly qualified candidates and will conduct final interviews sometime in the next few weeks. She continued that the Commission hopes to have the demographer on board by the end of the month.

Vice-Chair Amato stated that she would like to thank everyone for a very successful and productive retreat. She noted that it was a great opportunity to think about how the Commission will continue to be an independent, objective voice on the important planning decision at the City and how it can continue to be an innovative voice. Vice-Chair Amato noted that the sessions with the City Directors and the Planning Commissioners from across the region were very useful. Vice-Chair Amato thanked the Commissioners for taking a whole day out of their busy schedules to attend the retreat.

Casey Mills stated he would be departing from the Commission and would be moving to Sacramento, California. He thanked the Commissioners and noted that he had learned a tremendous amount from them and had a lot of fun working with them. Mr. Mills noted that he will leave in late June for California and that he is working with Ms. Wilson to make sure a smooth transition between analysts occurs.

## COMMISSION DISCUSSION

- **ACTION: SPC 2008 Affordable Housing Comp Plan Amendments**
  - Update on Process (Casey Mills)
  - HNUC Report (Commissioners Johnson & Miller)

Vice-Chair Amato called for any recusals or disclosures.

**Recusal & Disclosures: Commissioner Josh Brower disclosed that his firm, Tupper Mack Brower, represents multifamily developers. There were no recusals.**

Mr. Mills stated that the Commission had initially approved language at their April 10 Full Commission meeting. He added that since then, staff had performed outreach to a variety of stakeholders to get feedback on the language and that the HNUC Committee reviewed this feedback and made some changes, which they will now be discussed.

Commissioner Mark Johnson reported on the general feedback received from stakeholders. He noted that this feedback included:

- Generally supportive of amendments, considered a step forward in addressing Seattle’s lack of affordable housing
- Do not water down language to the point where it loses its meaning
- The amendments should be prioritized in order of importance
- Ensure amendments are not redundant to other Comp Plan language
- Ensure language meets standards of Comp Plan language, e.g. no programmatic or budgetary directives

Commissioner Leslie Miller reported on the language for each of the amendments and the prioritization the HNUC Committee had given them. She noted that these amendments were:

1. Strengthen language to include concept of transit corridors rather than just transit hubs. *(Strategy 1)*

AND

Encourage linking of incentive zoning programs with Transit Oriented Development (TOD). *(Strategy 1)*

2. Add “opportunities to provide affordable housing” to all rezone evaluation criteria. *(Strategy 4)*

3. Introduce principle ensuring that those that work in the city should be able to afford to live in the city, and introduce goal of providing housing to Seattle’s workers who have been priced out of the market. *(Strategy 5)*

4. Encourage any significant up zones include a funding and sub area plan for developing transportation strategies or infrastructure, open space and other public amenities. *(Strategy 9)*

Commissioner Tom Eanes stated that he was concerned that the language for amendment 1, by including the term ‘residential,’ could prevent office and mixed use development in the exact type of places the Commission is trying to encourage a mix of housing and jobs. Commissioner Brower stated that the intent of the Action Agenda, however, was to get more affordable housing, not necessarily more commercial development. Commissioner Eanes stated that building wood frame construction with two concrete stories on the two bottom floors and wood frame above makes far more economic sense as a mixed use development rather than a solely residential development.

Commissioner Brower suggested removing ‘except in industrial zones,’ if the word residential is removed, because the Commission should be trying to discourage residential in industrial zones, but not necessarily commercial uses. He added that residential is not currently allowed in industrial zones, so it could seem redundant.

Vice-Chair Amato asked for a show of hands regarding how Commissioners would like to see the amendment written. The Commission voted to remove the term ‘residential,’ but keep the phrase ‘except in industrial zones.’

Commissioner Martin Kaplan asked why amendment #1 no longer mentioned ‘transit corridors.’ Commissioner Johnson replied that it was simply too major of a departure from the Urban Village strategy to propose without more examination of the situation regarding corridors. Ms. Wilson stated the issue would be placed on the Commission’s 2009 Work Plan.

Commissioner Hough-Beck questioned, with regard to amendment #2, if there were any other zones that did not allow residential uses. Ms. Wilson answered that there were not.

Commissioner Brower stated that he believed ‘except in industrial zones’ should be stricken from the language in Amendment #2, because there will be some industrial zones rezoned to something else, and it would be unfortunate for the city to not have a requirement for affordable housing in those situations.

Commissioner Johnson suggested changing the language to ‘except from one industrial use to another.’ He noted that residential is already not permitted in any industrial zones, and the City should ensure the opportunity exists to require affordable housing should an area be rezoned from industrial to another use.

Commissioner Brower questioned whether the language for amendment # 4 would include small rezones. Commissioner Johnson replied that was not the intent – instead, ‘sub area zones’ was used to identify rezones initiated by the city that involved larger areas and looked at a variety of planning issues.

Commissioner Kirsten Pennington stated that, based on the prioritization provided by the Committee, it seemed that the Commission was stating that the best way to tackle affordable housing was to up zone. Ms. Wilson responded that the Commission’s choice of amendments to move forward this year reflected what they felt they could achieve in a short amount of time, and that the prioritization of the amendments does not necessarily reflect the only strategies they believe will increase affordable housing.

Commissioner McDonald suggested that the language for amendment #4 be reordered, so that the second half was placed at the beginning of the amendment. The Commissioners agreed.

**ACTION: Commissioner Josh Brower moved to approve the amendments with the changes. Commissioner Leslie Miller seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

▪ **Presentation and Discussion: Built Green Program**

- Lynne Barker & Sandra Mallory, DPD's Green Building Team

Vice-Chair Amato welcomed Lynne Barker and Sandra Mallory from DPD's Green Building Team to the meeting. She noted that they are here today to respond to some questions and discussion that came up about the Built Green Program when the Commission was reviewing the Multifamily Code Update.

Ms. Barker provided some initial comments. She stated that the Built Green program was developed locally, and due to City involvement in this process, the City could have a say in refining the program. Ms. Barker added that LEED was a better program for designers and projects that required designers, but for many other projects, Built Green was a superior alternative. She stated that the program is being used more and more, including increased use among affordable housing developers.

Ms. Mallory then presented a power point presentation to the Commission. The PowerPoint presentation is attached.

Commissioner Eanes stated that the Built Green program did not formerly have a size requirement, and that was why he was concerned about it being placed in the multifamily code. Ms. Mallory responded that three star Built Green homes could probably be built that were 5,000 square feet, but that the four and five star homes are hard to build that big. She added that the size element of the program was not a requirement, but one of the options for increasing the possibility of obtaining a higher Built Green rating.

Commissioner Hough-Beck asked about recycling programs for food waste composting in new multi family buildings. Ms. Mallory stated that SPU was currently developing such a program.

Commissioner Kaplan asked what assistance developers get for building a Built Green project. Ms. Barker answered that they have not implemented fast-track permitting for such projects, because so many permitting staff are already working mandatory overtime. She added that there were financial incentives, development incentives downtown and in other areas, and a variety of resources for developers to aid them in their efforts.

Commissioner Amalia Leighton asked if there was anything being done to encourage development going beyond the current drainage code. Ms. Mallory responded that SPU was in fact developing a program to reduce the drainage rate in exchange for reducing the drainage that goes into the storm water system.

Commissioner McDonald expressed his concern about the long term maintenance of the plants being planted in Built Green developments so they maintain their intended function.

Vice-Chair Amato thanked Ms. Mallory and Ms. Barker for their presentation to the Commission.

▪ **Report and Discussion: Multifamily Code Rewrite**

- Update on process (Barbara Wilson)
- Townhouse slide show (Commissioner Eanes)
- Multifamily Code ad hoc committee report (Commissioners Knapton, Johnson, Eanes, Kaplan & Hough Beck)

Vice-Chair Amato stated that the Commission will be spending a significant amount of time reviewing and discussing the work of the ad-hoc Commission committee that has been reviewing and working with DPD on the Multifamily Code Update.

Vice-Chair Amato called for recusals and disclosures.

**Recusal & Disclosures:**

**Commissioner Colie Hough Beck disclosed that her firm, Hough Beck & Baird, does work on multifamily projects.**

**Commissioner Tom Eanes disclosed that his firm, Hewitt Architects, does work on multifamily projects.**

**Commissioner Josh Brower disclosed that his firm, Tupper Mack Brower, represents multifamily developers.**

**Commissioner Amalia Leighton disclosed that her firm, SvR Design, does work on multifamily projects.**

**There were no recusals.**

Ms. Wilson stated that the Commission had already submitted comments to Diane Sugimura on December 20, 2007. She added that, since then, Commissioners have met with DPD several times to discuss the comments and that some Commissioners have done independent research, and all are still working with DPD on further review. Ms. Wilson noted that DPD plans on submitting the rewrite proposal to City Council in June.

Commissioner Eanes then gave a Power Point presentation. The link to that presentation is:

<http://www.hewittseattle.net/downloads/MF%20Code%20Presentation.pps>

Commissioner Hough-Beck stated that she had looked at the Green Factor very closely and that DPD had recently added some criteria to the Green Factor to make it easier to reach the desired score. She added that even with factoring in these new criteria, it was nearly impossible to get to the score proposed in the multifamily rewrite without building a green roof. Commissioner Hough-Beck stated that she was concerned about requiring a green roof on wood frame construction types.

Ms. Wilson stated that DPD is considering lowering the required score in multifamily zones. She added that there were a variety of other issues the Commission would be providing input on in the future regarding the rewrite. Ms. Wilson noted that these include specific recommendations regarding height, bulk and density; supporting reduction of parking rations; supporting the use of incentive zoning programs; and sustainability concerns regarding the size, location and transit access of units in addition to materials and construction techniques.

Commissioner Eanes mentioned that the Commission had also discussed requiring minimum densities.

Commissioner Kaplan stated that under-building, with respect to allowable density, is a sustainability issue. He expressed interest in expanding the design review program to include town homes.

Commissioner Kaplan noted that many parking conflicts were occurring due to the city trying to social engineer people out of their cars. He added that this is causing problems in the neighborhoods, and that the Commission should ensure developers are taking care of parking needs in their projects.

Commissioner Eanes stated that one potential proposal would be to create a new slate of design regulations for townhouses, and an administrative design review process if developers choose not to adhere to them.

Commissioner Brower noted that town homes are one of the main sources of affordable housing, and he is concerned about tweaking regulations in a way that could decrease their affordability. He added that he is also concerned about a higher green factor ratio. Commissioner Brower concluded that incentives should be developed for projects that do undergo design review, e.g. two extra units could be allowed if a developer chose to go through the design review process.

Commissioner Kaplan noted that there is fear being spread that, if you require design review, it decreases the amount of affordable housing in the city. He added that he does not believe that is true.

Commissioner Leighton expressed doubt that town homes truly provide more affordable housing options for people. She added that trees and sidewalks should be more of a requirement for the developers of town homes.

Commissioner Kaplan expressed concern that many town homes were being shoddily built, and would not last long. He wondered how many of these townhouse sites would be redeveloped, since they had been subdivided into such small parcels.

Ms. Wilson noted that, regarding next steps, the Commission had already shared many of its thoughts with DPD and that there would likely not be any more formal feedback until DPD presented the rewrite to Council, and Council requested comment.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Valerie Kinast stated that she had not heard much discussion about mid rise zones. She stated that these zones presented a good opportunity for 3 and 4 bedroom units for families, which are currently completely unavailable on the market. Ms. Kinast added that there is demand for these units, and the Commission should be looking at opportunities to increase this type of unit.

Anthony Russo stated that the Commission discussed town homes and the problems that were happening as developers tried to make it under a variety of thresholds put in place by the city. He shared his view that this is always a problem when you create such thresholds, and the Commission should consider regulations that go all the way down, but are then phased in, to prevent his sort of regulation abuse.

#### **ADJOURNMENT:**

Vice-Chair Linda Amato adjourned the meeting at 5:29 pm.