



City of Seattle Seattle Planning Commission

Josh Brower, Chair
Barbara Wilson, Executive Director

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION NOVEMBER 12, 2009 APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

COMMISSIONERS IN ATTENDANCE

Josh Brower, Chair; Leslie Miller, Vice-Chair; David Cutler; Chris Fiori; Colie Hough-Beck; Kay Knapton; Kevin McDonald; Christopher Persons; Matt Roewe; Amanda Sparr

COMMISSION STAFF

Barbara Wilson, Director; Katie Sheehy, Planning Analyst; Robin Magonegil, Administrative Specialist; Diana Canzoneri, Demographer; Michael Pickford, Intern

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT

Linda Amato; Catherine Benotto; Jerry Finrow; Mark Johnson; Marty Kaplan; Amalia Leighton

GUESTS

Susan McLain, Gordon Clowers, Dennis Meier, DPD;

IN ATTENDANCE

Gary Johnson, Ray Gastil, John Skelton, DPD; Martha Lester, Rebecca Herzfeld, Council Central Staff; Jen Kelly, Pioneer Square Blog; Noah Collins

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 Josh Brower called the meeting to order at 3:00 pm.

COMMISSION BUSINESS

- Minutes approval

October 8, 2009 Minutes

ACTION: Commissioner Kay Knapton moved to approve the October 8, 2009 minutes; Vice Chair Leslie Miller seconded the motion. The minutes were approved with one abstention.

October 22, 2009 Minutes

ACTION: Commissioner Kay Knapton moved to approve the October 22, 2009 minutes; Vice Chair Leslie Miller seconded the motion. Commissioner Colie Hough-Beck suggested a friendly amendment to make one correction. The amended minutes were approved unanimously.

- **Chair's Report** - Chair Josh Brower

Chair Brower thanked Commissioners for attending the second round of neighborhood plan 'status check' open house meetings. He noted that today's meeting would adjourn early so that Commissioners could travel to the final meeting at the North Seattle Community College in the evening. Chair Brower stated that as the status check process draws to a close, the Commission will make recommendations to Councilmember Clark about what worked well, how the process could be improved, etc.

Chair Brower reminded everyone that the Commission's holiday party will be held on December 4 at Commissioner Johnson's house. He then noted the upcoming meetings: the next Executive Committee meeting will be on Tuesday, November 17; the next LUT Committee meeting will be held on Thursday, November 19; there will be another Executive Committee meeting on Tuesday, November 3; the next HNUC Committee meeting will be on Wednesday, December 9 and the next Full Commission meeting will be on Thursday, December 10. He also noted that the 2011 Comprehensive Plan update kick off meeting will be held on Tuesday, November 17.

- **SPC townhouse tour report** – Chair Brower, Commissioners Knapton and Roewe

Commissioner Knapton remarked that it was interesting to see a variety of townhouses but that most of them seemed like they would be difficult to live in; most had very small kitchens and bedrooms, lots of stairs, shoddy construction materials, and garages that are difficult to access. Commissioner Roewe agreed with Commissioner Knapton's concerns. He suggested that structured parking can greatly improve design opportunities and that it should be encouraged. He also said that the [Urban Trees](#) (1818 E Yesler Way) project took an innovative approach to parking, although it was not executed particularly well. Commissioner Roewe noted that the project developers had received numerous departures from the current regulations. Chair Brower concurred with Commissioners Roewe and Knapton and remarked that the land use code requirements really seem to dictate the form of townhouses. He mentioned one project that had all of the parking spaces right off the street with the homes, which were rather pleasing, behind the lot. Chair Brower also commented on the Urban Trees project as a different approach than the typical townhouse design and suggested that it is worth going to see. Commissioner Hough-Beck asked about the how the Green Factor applied to the project. Ms. Sheehy replied that it was a split zone (NC1 and L3) and had achieved a Green Factor score of 0.36. Chair Brower noted that the permeable paving contributed to more than half of the score.

BRIEFING & DISCUSSION

- **Briefing: Livable South Downtown**
 - Susan McLain, Gordon Clowers, Dennis Meier, DPD

Recusal & Disclosure: Chair Josh Brower disclosed that he is an investor in a commercial building in the International District.

Ms. McLain presented a powerpoint. Please see the powerpoint presentation on the Commission's website.

Commissioner McDonald asked how the plan will address a greater volume of pedestrians and bicyclists. Ms. McLain replied that DPD is working on a report that will be released shortly. The plan proposes a number of pedestrian amenities, such as installing sidewalks where they don't currently exist and widening

some of the City's narrower sidewalks. She said that DPD is working with SDOT to identify other improvements, particularly those related to new streetcar routes. Mr. Skelton explained that the Livable South Downtown plan encourages the development of more mid-block connections in areas with larger blocks, which would improve access for pedestrians. Mr. Meier added that the intended pedestrian routes would replicate the block pattern in Pioneer Square; Ms. McLain added that DPD has also been engaged in planning for green streets in Chinatown. Mr. Clowers highlighted some of the key proposed improvements for bicyclists.

Commissioner Hough-Beck asked for more details about the plan's public amenities and environmental standards. Ms. McLain explained that the public amenities are tailored to each neighborhood. For example, green streets and mid-block connections would be the priority in Little Saigon while hillclimb assists would be the priority in Japantown. Mr. Meier indicated that DPD conducted a nexus study to establish the relationship between the proposed increase in density and demand for amenities that provided the basis of the incentive program. He noted that bonus density would be awarded based on amenities provided by the project (split – 60% for providing affordable housing, the rest achieved through historic preservation or providing other public amenities). Ms. McLain noted that projects using the incentive program will be required to be certified LEED Silver and that the Green Factor requirement would be 0.3.

Commissioner Roewe asked if a higher height limit was considered for the North Lot site. Ms. McLain replied that while some people have argued for taller buildings, others have argued for shorter ones and that the main goal of the rezone is to encourage new development. She noted that Council approved the North Lot rezone earlier this year. Commissioner Roewe suggested that higher height limits within the incentive zoning could generate more affordable housing. Ms. McLain replied that the current incentive zoning program might result in 300-350 units of affordable housing by 2030.

Chair Brower asked how the plan addresses family housing and schools. Ms. McLain replied that Mr. Johnson is working on the "Family Urban Neighborhoods" program, which addresses how to make the center city neighborhoods more accessible to families with children. She also noted that Bailey Gatzert Elementary School is within walking distance of most of south downtown and that the Pacific Science Center has expressed an interest in including an elementary school when it redevelops its property. Mr. Meier noted that the redevelopment of Yesler Terrace also presents opportunities for family homes. Chair Brower agreed that it would be logical to connect Yesler Terrace to Bailey Gatzert.

Commissioner Fiori asked about the number of different zoning designations within the plan. Ms. McLain replied that there are two special review districts and many topographical differences between the neighborhoods that led to the fine grain of zoning designations. Commissioner Fiori asked if the nexus study went into the same level of detail. He noted that there seems to be more flexibility in the proposed zoning. Mr. Meier replied that state legislation allows the City to establish the affordable housing incentive program without a nexus study. He also indicated that the study provided the basis for the split between affordable housing and other public amenities.

Commissioner Roewe suggested that it would be really useful to have the First Hill streetcar tie in with a First Avenue streetcar that was also connected to the South Lake Union streetcar. Mr. Skelton indicated that DPD has focused on planning at the street level for pedestrian and other amenities.

Commissioner Knapton asked about the opportunity to develop projects over the railroad tracks. Ms. McLain replied that Burlington Northern has expressed no interest in allowing development to occur over the tracks at this time, but that the plan does call for pedestrian improvements in that area.

Chair Brower asked how the Planning Commission could be of the most help during the legislative review process. Ms. McLain replied that it would be helpful for the Commission to provide feedback on the

balance between height, density and neighborhood character. Mr. Meier said that it would be useful for the Commission to help keep focus on the larger picture of the entire project. Mr. Johnson suggested that a key issue will be how to strike a balance between gentrification and preservation of neighborhood character. The legislation is likely to be submitted to Council by the end of the year but with the other issues that PLUNC plans to review before taking up this project, there should be ample time for the Commission to review the project and provide feedback. Commissioner Miller asked for clarification about what it means to keep focus on the larger picture of the project. Mr. Meier replied that the project is the end result of very lengthy discussions with many interest groups and that the goal has been to achieve a balance among the different neighborhoods and interest groups. Ms. McLain added that the project creates a relatively simple, coherent set of development standards that respect the unique characteristics of each neighborhood while balancing the needs of the area as a whole.

Chair Brower thanked all of the DPD staff for their time and indicated that the Commission will continue to work with them as the legislation is reviewed by Council.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Josh Brower adjourned at 4:29 pm.