

Seattle Neighborhood Workshops  
**OTHELLO SMALL GROUP NOTES**

January 19, 2017

*\*\* Please also see map of potential zoning changes discussed at the workshop*

**GROUP 1**

**Assets**

- Othello Park
- The People!
- Morgan P-Patch, selling produce on-site
- The streets that are pedestrian/bike-only
- The pedestrian area leading to the light rail
- Shopping, restaurants, deli
- Graham Street Station (to come)
- Chief Sealth Trail
- Bike facilities – separation from traffic
- School and Brighton Playfield
- New Holly Library

**Zoning comments**

- Mistake to eliminate all single family homes in Urban Villages
- Need ownership to have sense of community
- Fear of developer pressure on homeowners and the displacement of homeowners that will result
- Concern that taxes may become unaffordable to current owners
- “Value capture financing” – concern this will apply [Note: OH staff said this died in the Legislature]
- Proposed increased density is OK -- as many people as possible to have access to our assets, especially park and light rail
- Consequences for other people by rezoning
- Distribution of change not equitable across the city; more of the city should be subject to MHA; need more development nodes throughout the city
- Look closer at numbers of what exists and what is proposed – the change from two units to 10 isn't small
- Is there concurrent development of open space like pocket parks along with density? [Note: Staff said that Parks is working on how space is programmed and possible investments]
- Concerned about greater traffic and whether there will be protected bike lanes
- Transitions on south end in proposal are OK
- It would be helpful to understand the changes with a “massing” model with 3D pictures instead of a flat map

- Will there be pressure to upzone property at the Urban Village boundary? [Note: Staff said the U.V. boundary is strict]
- Heard that the city will look at this again in five years and maybe change the Urban Village boundary by making it easier to rezone single family areas
- Zoning around park, school, transit should be more intense – LR2 at least
- MLK and Rainier Ave. development should relate to each other
- Look at adding more Urban Villages and not limit to the number we foresaw in the 1990s
- Major transportation package points to other areas [for growth]
- Plenty of development capacity exists in the city; we're doing more than our share
- Not much development yet by some of the other light rail stations
- Buildings in NC zone will affect neighboring families in SF zones
- Concern re violence with business and night life open late
- More setbacks where commercial zones abuts residential area [Note: Staff said the zoning code requires this] - more transition might help in these instances
- Will there be low-income commercial space, that is, space that small businesses can afford?
  - Concerned about the risk of displacement of small businesses
- "Equitable development initiative" – community-developed enterprise
- Can parking fees be returned to the community, as in Capitol Hill?
- Tired of new taxes while giving City funding to South Lake Union
- Is there a point at which Seattle is full? What growth can we sustain?
- Larger zoning changes should correspond to high-opportunity Urban Villages
- Need more buffer zoning along the border of UV between LR2 and single family
- Prefer RSL to LR1
- Continuity and sense of place are important
- Take advantage of flexibility in the program
- Top height should be 75' because higher requires changing to steel construction

#### **Questions:**

- Will taxes increase as zoning increases?
- Is there a way to reward people (financially) who are part of and actively contribute to their community (volunteering, etc)?
- How can we increase access to capital for homeowners?

#### **Summary points**

- Displacement concerns: residential due to development potential, and commercial due to lack of affordable space
- More transitions needed
- Make consistent 10-minute walk zone
- More density by Brighton Park, school and stations
- Predictability needed in an uncertain future
- Balance density with open space

## **GROUP 2**

### **Assets: “Community Treasures”**

- Othello Park
- Light rail town center (walkable, friendly)
- Nice neighborhood: lovely homes, yards, and the new development tries to keep the character
- Brighton Ball Field
- Schools
- Chief Seattle Trail
- Community Center/Library
- Diversity
- Modest homes, home ownership
- The local retail (including Rainier)
- South Seattle Community College is near – not a lot of presence, but it could be an economic opportunity

### **UV boundary expansion**

- Doesn't go far enough – expand the boundary to give more people access.
- Discussion re efforts to avoid displacement
- Concerned that there isn't enough density around the proposed Graham Station

### **Development, zoning**

- There are single family zones that aren't absorbing the density
- Density pros: Attract opportunity
- Cons: Displacement of owners/renters
- Othello: Victim of a lack of \$ investment and redlining
- Condos/ownership would be better than rentals
- We have to have room for renters, too
- More affordable ownership will help
- Concern that the city's focus on affordability leans too much towards the renter and not the owner
- Stability: It's about people investing in the neighborhood
- Diversity of housing choices
- A zone that emphasizes employment in the U.V.
- Mixed housing is desirable – diversity of housing choices and cost
- Ensure that small businesses can afford to stay, too
- Graham should mirror the Othello Station in terms of density
- The height around Safeway doesn't work: No one builds 95 ft.—go up to 125 ft.
- Transition from MLK and Othello and meet in the middle
- Why can't MLK be an urban village?
- LR around schools and playgrounds

- Are there parts in the walkshed without sidewalks?
  - Want investment in infrastructure and safe streets
  - Paths from light rail stations into neighborhoods could be improved—light, eyes on the street, accessibility
- This zoning change forces displacement
- Meeting is not reflective of the neighborhood demographics
- Vacant retail around Othello Park
- De-emphasis of parking harms businesses
- Little parking regulation: People can park in neighborhood and take light rail: Hide & Ride
- Zoning is not the tool to address displacement. It's the neighborhood.
- Strengthen design review process: Get local input
- What does the city do with these comments?
- Reach out to Rainier Beach Action Coalition – More representative of the community makeup
- Community partnerships to improve outreach
- Could the changes be done incrementally?
- Concern that Othello single family homes are more targeted than other areas

**Questions:**

- How is the affordable housing fund distributed?

**Summary**

- Diversity of choice: Housing type, price, and owner/renter mix
- Density could be increased. Go further – Fair distribution; Graham St; aggressive upzoning
- Displacement – housing and commercial – the importance of stability
- Capture neighborhood mix and character through design review process
- Be aggressive about reaching out to diverse communities: Everyone should provide input (outreach, translators, etc.)
- In order to improve density and affordability, the city will have to also increase density in affluent, white neighborhoods – fair distribution

**GROUP 3**

**Assets**

- Commercial area on MLK (King Plaza)
- Restaurants and shops (Dim Sum, Cambodian grocery store, Lad Market)
- Light rail station
- Kubota Gardens
- Diversity of community
- SE Economic Opportunity Center
- Rainier Valley Community Development Fund
- Othello Park
- Chief Sealth Trail

- Island Pacific grocery store
- Fish store
- Regional hub for many ethnic groups
- Religious institutions – temples for many religions. They are cultural anchors, keep people here

### **Zoning proposal**

- Concern about tall buildings adjacent to single family homes (LR1 adjacent to SF zones)
- People in neighborhoods should be able to stay – concerned about displacement of elderly, people of color
- Step-down transitions is a good approach
- Would like to see more transition along Rainier commercial zones
- Would like to see more awareness of incentive, credits for homeowners, tax exemptions
- There is not enough affordable housing in neighborhood
- Very diverse business ownership. People who work there need housing opportunity.
- Not enough well-designed multifamily housing
- Affordable housing requires dedicated, subsidized units
- There is tension between the need for more affordable housing and potential displacement
- Not enough subsidy to build enough housing to eliminate displacement
- Increased commercial density along MLK near light rail makes sense
- Concern about 95 ft. height adjacent to light rail station – might not be workable. Maybe the height should be 120 ft. or another height.
- Concern that requirements for MHA do not provide enough affordable housing
- Concern that affordable units may not be built in Othello
- Need to help people find [affordable units]
- Concern that RSL will also lead to displacement because developers push owners to sell
- The boundary expansion doesn't make sense – particularly the infill gaps
- Elderly people would like to move to smaller units
- There is lack of opportunity for young people to find housing here
- The more commercial activity along spine, the more pedestrian opportunities
- Hard for pedestrians to cross MLK
- Limited ROW is common in the neighborhood particularly along MLK. Suggestion to increase setback requirements for developments along MLK to regain ROW/sidewalk widths and provide more opportunities for pedestrians and retail space.
- City should work with banks to help residents purchase and develop property. Help people convert their properties.
- If an owner wants to stay on their lot and develop as RSL, give them permit/infrastructure or tax incentives
- Concern that 55 ft. for commercial buildings next to single family will hurt property values. Building setbacks would help. Concern that commercial zones have gone from 35 ft. to 40 ft. to proposed 55 ft.
- Use MHA \$ for loans to RSL owner-occupied developments

## Summary

- Assets: Cultural regional hub; light rail connection
- Strong concern about displacement impacts.; also those who feel increased housing will address some displacement impacts
- Concern about NC/LR zones adjacent to single family – but others like transition from C to LR to RSL
- Support increased intensity along MLK as long as livable wage jobs and pedestrian friendly – more setbacks
- At Othello and MLK, 95 ft. height may not work (pencil out). Consider higher heights.
- Boundary expansion – Some feel too small, others, too big
- Need to find ways to incentivize local homeowners to stay in neighborhood