



Seattle Design Commission

APPROVED

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

21 April 2005

Gregory J. Nickels,
Mayor

David Spiker
Chair

Charles Anderson

Pam Beyette

Karen Kiest

Hannah McIntosh

Anindita Mitra

Sheri Olson

Nic Rossouw

Darrell Vange

Guillermo Romano,
Executive Director

Layne Cubell,
Commission Coordinator

Projects Reviewed

Blue Ring Strategy Update

City Planning Division Update

Convened: 9:00am

Adjourned: 2:00pm

Commissioners Present

David Spiker, Chair

Pam Beyette

Hannah McIntosh

Sheri Olson

Nic Rossouw

Darrell Vange

Staff Present

Guillermo Romano

Layne Cubell

Tom Iurino

Emily Podolak



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21 Apr 2005 Project: Blue Ring Strategy Update

Phase: Update

Previous Reviews:

Presenters: Guillermo Romano, City Design
Robert Scully, City Design
Lyle Bicknell, City Design

Attendees: none

Time: 1 hour

Action: The Commission commends the work of City Design and appreciates today's presentation and its value as a marketing device to solicit the support of city departments and private developers.

- **In an effort to increase exposure and understanding of the concept, the Commission encourages proponents to reach out to the next phase of CIP projects coming down the pike, to the street car proponents and to the public through an event like the fun run;**
- **encourage proponents to continue following the Olmsted Brothers tradition of flexibility in their urban design strategy;**
- **commends the Blue Ring's proactive approach to organizing open spaces and strengthening the design of the right of way;**
- **supports showing Broad Street as the major connection linking the aquarium, Seattle Center and South Lake Union instead of the Potlatch Trail;**
- **applauds the Blue Ring for its potential to incorporate currently marginalized public spaces as well as its ability to rationalize new development; it is the piece of the puzzle that is currently missing from the Center City Strategy;**
- **encourages proponents to continue to develop specific guidelines for private developers and also encourages working with the city at large to help clarify its own commitment to the Blue Ring.**

Proponents presented the Blue Ring Strategy providing an overview of the history, a discussion of the progress to date and a PowerPoint presentation that underscored the message of making better connections between downtown neighborhoods and presented street design and civic

Blue Ring Strategy Background

The foundation for the Blue Ring Strategy began in a neighborhood planning process in early 1990s when five neighborhoods joined together to make a center city plan. In 2000, an urban design forum, not confined to the five neighborhoods, focused on the connections of the neighborhoods which extended the focus from the five neighborhoods to ten and developed another center city plan. Another outcome of the forum was the need to create an open space plan. In response, a draft report of the Blue Ring Strategy was published in 2002; however, it was never endorsed by the new mayor. New efforts are being made to incorporate it into the Center City Strategy.



Blue Ring Strategy Concept (image on the left) and example of Freeway Park, a civic project located along the ring (images in center and to the right)

Commissioner Questions and Comments

- Comments that the potential has always been there for this to effectively tie together, rationalize and control the city's future development, encourages the city to push the strategy. It is the piece of the puzzle missing from the Center City Strategy, with the move towards increasing density, this represents the public amenities and open spaces that can be provided
- Expresses some confusion as to the target audience of the power point, doesn't believe that it provides the necessary information to guide private developers or design review board members on what to do and how to review projects
 - This is meant to be the overlay that will give direction and provide a framework for then further specificity and clear design guidelines
 - Agrees, the potential strength of the message is in its ability to overlay two layers of information, private development opportunities and where real public capital improvement projects are being funded. By overlaying the public and private projects, the strategy then becomes clear to everybody who is a vested stake. It is a pitch to developers and a pitch to the departments suggests adding CIP projects that are happening; believes that it would be helpful to map them out and show their relation to the Blue Ring
 - Believes that this serves to help the city to direct its efforts and communicate it to the public
- Expresses that as an urban planning tool it makes great sense but still questions as to how it will translate to site scale design
 - They are currently working on those aspects
- Believes that the links between the jewels are tenuous connections, at least for right now
- Doesn't think that the connections are that tenuous, the connections proposed are the ones that are used
- Encourages proponents to take it to the ground level, promote it to the public through signage, fun runs, street car stops along the ring

Public Comments

- Asks if there is any plan to propose the Blue Ring as part of the comprehensive plan or something that the council would adopt; that would make it a little formal as far as working with developers and creating recognition
 - Not sure yet if it would become part of the comprehensive plan, it will likely be a part of a series of policies that come out of the Center City plan, idea is it becomes the pedestrian improvement plan for the Center City area
 - Expresses that the Capital Cabinet would be an opportunity to brief them on the Blue Ring that includes all of the capital departments, it could be a way to target the next wave of capital investment

21 Apr 2005 Project: City Planning Division Update

Phase: Update

Previous Reviews:

Presenters: John Rahaim, Department of Planning and Development

Attendees: none

Time: 1 hour

Action: The Commission appreciates the update from the City Planning Division and appreciates hearing about their current work on the Center City Strategy, South Downtown planning initiatives and the South Lake Union Urban Center Plan and

- **encourages proponents to continue working in the International District and Pioneer Square to creatively encourage housing development in those neighborhoods;**
- **looks forward to seeing the South Lake Union Urban Center as it evolves;**
- **are encouraged by the proposal to create incentives for green buildings in downtown;**
- **looks forward to meeting with proponents again in two months for the next City Planning Division update.**

Proponent's presentation focused on the Center City Strategy and two components of the Strategy, the South Downtown planning initiatives and the South Lake Union Urban Center Plan. They recently have brought on board a staff member to coordinate activities of the Center City to make sure all of the departments involved are communicating and helping each other out and also to establish and reinforce the relationships with the private development community and neighborhood groups. They are still working to define the Strategy and plan to establish a set of qualitative and quantitative goals that relate to the 20-year time frame of the comprehensive plan, with the ultimate vision to create a lively series of high density neighborhoods and reinforce the regional core. The goals will help city staff and departments work towards something fairly specific.

There are several geographic-specific areas that are the focus of the Center City Strategy's attention

The Downtown Core Proper and the Denny Triangle

Zoning in the core of downtown is moving forward, language planned to be done next week and then taken to Council. It has been a five year process so this is a major piece of work to have completed. It has been surprisingly supported as an overall concept but with some specifics, concerns have been raised and have been addressed, for instance: a green building incentive will be introduced and protection of historic buildings will be reinforced through code changes

South Downtown-Pioneer Square, International District and Stadium Area

focus study on land use, code, transportation and open space related issues

In Pioneer Square and International District the primary focus is how to make it more attractive for housing development, currently only 1900 people live in Pioneer Square. In the Stadium Area the major question to ask is, what broader range of uses should the city now be looking at? This exploration will not include Terminal 46 because it is included in the Waterfront Planning work and will recommend not changing its land use for at least the next 20 years given the long term leases signed and terminal expansion. Seattle Department of Transportation is starting a fairly comprehensive study of the area at the request of the railroads because of the additional train traffic's potential impact on east/west traffic. They are currently organizing an advisory group of neighborhood stakeholders that will start meeting once a month for 6-7 months.

South Lake Union

Council recently designated South Lake Union as the 6th urban center in the city of Seattle. The other five urban centers include Downtown, 1st Hill/Cap Hill, Uptown Northgate, and the University District. The addition of South Lake Union rounds out the ring of neighborhoods around downtown. County requires that an urban center plan be completed once there is designation. Because there has been so much development proposed in the area, many plans have been done. Work is being done now to compile the information. It will hopefully be done by the end of the year or early next year. They have contracted with the University of Washington's Northwest Center for Livable Communities which holds a studio run by local design professionals. The students are working as consultants, compiling background information and will help lay the ground work for the plan.

Commissioner Questions and Comments

- Asks if there has been any progress on the North Lot
 - Same issues with multi-ownership keep developing the land very complicated. Vulcan's development rights have expired. King County who owns the north half of the lot, have talked about going on their own and issuing an RFP. Their initial thought is to leave the development program pretty open ended which is of concern to the city.
- Asks if the Commission can get involved in the review of King Station
 - Not sure about a reviewing role because it will be provided by Landmarks and Pioneer Square Board but an urban design role might be helpful
- The Commission might have potential to weigh in on long standing code issue that allows building in Pioneer Square to be 100-120 feet but can build no higher than 15 feet of the adjacent building. This is strongly supported by the preservation community and is in the land use code
 - They would like to address this during their study, but it will be a very sensitive issue
- Comments about how ID is a difficult neighborhood to work with for cultural reasons, with zoning is there a way to strategize to encourage people to improve their property
 - The community did get together and complete a neighborhood wide urban design plan and came together on the rezoning east of I-5. There currently are 700 units of vacant housing in the upper floors in the International District. This is driven by the complex family ownerships where family partnership groups are scattered

around the world and the buildings are not seismically updated. Three major buildings are planned for renovation which includes about ½ of the vacant units

- Asks about potential of the streetcar to extend into the International District
 - 4th Avenue and Jackson between 3rd and 5th is a viaduct and is in bad condition. Plans do have it extending to 12th Avenue
- Asks why Ballard is not included as an urban center, and is it on the verge
 - The urban center designation is based on county wide criteria including transportation access - Ballard does not meet but may in the future with Sounder and monorail, housing density and number of jobs offered - imagines jobs are not quite there for Ballard
- Asks to repeat list of urban centers
 - Downtown
 - 1st Hill/Cap Hill
 - Uptown
 - Northgate
 - University District
 - South Lake Union
- Asks if any urban centers anticipated south of downtown with sound transit stops
 - No, density is too low at this time
- Asks what the schedule is for the South Lake Union Urban Center Plan and what the end product will be
 - A revised neighborhood plan and the policies from the neighborhood plan would be adopted in next years comp plan amendment
- Asks if it includes zoning changes
 - They are actually underway now, council just approved 1st round, but there will be a 2nd round done. The changes that council just approved includes requiring design review across the whole neighborhood, which right now doesn't apply to ICU district which is in the heart of the neighborhood and includes a large housing allowance and a broad range of land uses
- Asks how he perceives the Commission's role in promoting the original Civic Center Master Plan open space, should they look just at sites or comprehensively
 - Would be happy for the Commission to weigh in on that issue
- Asks in regards to monorail, if there has been any agreement from the city to re-staff as it moves forward
 - They are working on it right now, it is a two part agreement, one part the beginning of this year to the time they sign the deal with the contractor and the second after the notice of proceed is given to the contractor, the first part is bare bones and was used already for the beginning of the year, it will basically end in April