



City of Seattle

Seattle Planning Commission

Jerry Finrow, Chair
Barbara Wilson, Executive Director

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION DECEMBER 14, 2006 APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

Commissioners in Attendance

Jerry Finrow – Chair, Hilda Blanco, George Blomberg, Mahlon Clements, Chris Fiori, Martin Kaplan, Valerie Kinast, Kay Knapton, M. Michelle Mattox, Kevin McDonald, Steve Sheehy

Commissioners Absent

Tony To – Vice Chair, Linda Amato, Tom Eanes, Amalia Leighton, Kirsten Pennington.

Commission Staff

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

Guests

Mike Podowski, DPD; Mimi Sheridan, Planning Commission ex-officio

In Attendance

Nathan Torgelsen, Mayor Greg Nickel's Office Staff; Ketil Freeman and Bob Morgan, Council Central Staff; Neil Powers, Councilmember Peter Steinbrueck's Office; Piper Marckx, Chris Leman.

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

The meeting was called to order at 3:06 pm by Chair Jerry Finrow. Chair Finrow announces that the Mayor will not be coming to the meeting today as he is out ill. He will be rescheduled for a later date.

COMMISSION BUSINESS

- Approve November 9, 2006 Minutes

ACTION: Commissioner M. Michelle Mattox moved to approve the November 9, 2006 minutes. Commissioner Mahlon Clements seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Finrow notes the length of the minutes and requests that they be shorter in the future.

▪ **Chairs Report**

Chair Finrow noted that today is the last meeting of the Planning Commission in 2006 and noted that the December 19, Executive Committee; the December 21 Land Use and Transportation Committee; and the December 28, 2006 Full Commission Meeting, are all CANCELLED to accommodate holiday vacation schedules.

Chair Finrow thanked the Commission for all their hard work noting that the Commission should be proud of its great work on numerous planning initiatives and projects, including work in South Lake Union, Downtown, on DADUs, on the Industrial Lands Strategy and on major transportation projects.

Chair Finrow announced the Commission needed to recruit one new member to replace outgoing Commissioner George Blomberg. Ms. Wilson added that a press release had already been issued, and that the City Council would be appointing this member. George has agreed to stay on until the new member is confirmed.

Chair Finrow encouraged Commissioners to attend the January 9, 2007 Affordable Housing Roundtable, the January 11th Full Commission meeting and the January 18th LUT meeting.

▪ **Commissioner Spotlight**

- Hilda Blanco, Seattle Planning Commission

Commissioner Hilda Blanco gave a presentation of the work that she has been doing near New Orleans. She stated that she has been working with the University of Washington to help plan the redevelopment of a mall-oriented area called Terrytown. Commissioner Blanco noted in particular, that they have been trying to encourage the use of mixed-use development there.

COMMISSION DISCUSSION

▪ **Multifamily Code Rewrite**

- Mike Podowski, Department of Planning & Development Staff

NOTES FOR THE RECORD:

Chair Finrow called for any disclosures or recusals. Commissioner Chris Fiori disclosed that his firm, Heartland LCC, might do work in a Multifamily Zone at some point.

Mike Podowski thanked the Commission for their work on the Multifamily Zone Code Rewrite. He reported on the rewrite's concept plan. Mr. Podowski detailed seven concepts contained in the concept plan. He noted that the first concept reduced the number of different types of zones; the second concept encourages development flexibility by making Floor Area Ratio and setbacks and height limits the only restrictions on development; the third was requiring less setbacks when areas abut commercial areas, and more when they abut single-family zones; the fourth was that height in low-rise zones should be just as great as that in single family zones, so height restrictions were changed slightly.

Commissioner Steve Sheehy suggested that additional areas should be considered to be zoned Multifamily as part of the rewrite process.

Commissioner Valerie Kinast said that she liked the idea of the additional height adding more units.

Chair Finrow stated that he would like to see construction technology be made more of a consideration when discussing heights.

Mr. Podowski noted that the fifth concept was design review. He added that the rewrite will include some design standards for those projects that did not wish to go through design review.

Commissioner Sheehy questioned what the time frames for development are for projects that must go through design review and for those that don't.

Commissioner Kaplan stated that developers often attempt to avoid design review by building below the threshold of units that triggers the design review process. He said one result of this is the ubiquitous 'six-pack' developments of townhouses that are being built at a rapid pace, and which often lower the value of land in neighborhoods in which they are built. He Kaplan stated that many developers building standard prototype 6-pack townhouses to avoid design review. He noted that unfortunately many of these townhouses are unattractive. He stated that the Multifamily Code rewrite could contribute to increasing density and improving design all at once.

Commissioner Clements noted that it would be possible that neighborhoods would be more amendable to higher density if the higher density developments were better designed.

Commissioner Kinast said that a good thing for the design standards to include would be a provision that developments must address the street.

Chair Finrow suggested the threshold for design review could be lowered. He also mentioned that Commissioner To has mentioned several times that the concept of minimum densities could be introduced.

Commissioner Blanco suggested that some prototypes for development could be developed by architects and used by developers to ensure high design standards.

Mr. Podowski said the sixth concept was open space, and noted that the Green Factor would make open space requirements easier to meet.

Chair Finrow stated the Commission's continuing concern with the Green Factor, including its relationship to construction technology and follow-up by the city to ensure landscaping remains green. He also noted that moisture intrusion should be a big concern for the application of the green factor in the multifamily zone.

Commissioner Kinast suggested that the city could do inspections of sites five years after development.

Mr. Podowski said the seventh and last concept was parking, and the rewrite will eliminate parking requirements in some places and reduce them elsewhere. He added that there will also be a public benefits concept for affordable housing as well as a green building incentive concept that are both still being worked on. Mr. Podowski stated that he will have draft code at the end of February and asked that the Commission evaluate the rewrite.

Commissioner Kinast suggested that the rewrite consider introducing minimum densities. She also asked about how the code addresses housing for families and whether the revisions assess whether we are getting the type of housing that we need in the city.

Commissioner Sheehy stated that the analysis should include an assessment of how the changes to the Multifamily Code will help the city meet its housing targets as outlined in the Comp Plan. He noted that he realizes that the goal of the rewrite of the Multifamily Code was simplification but he stated that the other fundamental goal should be to better prepare the City for growth. Chair Finrow asked Mr. Podowski if he would be willing to provide the Planning Commission with an analysis of how the revisions would impact housing targets. Mr. Podowski stated that he would provide this information to the Commission.

Chair Finrow thanked Mr. Podowski for his time.

▪ **Public Benefits Zoning**

Ms. Wilson gave the Commission a briefing on why the Commission is involved in this issue. She noted that the Department of Planning & Development, the Office of Housing, Seattle City Council and Mayor Nickels had all requested the Commission's involvement of this issue in order to provide some clarity.

Chair Finrow asked that Department of Planning & Development provide some information about the amount of money that could be generated from public benefits zoning.

Commissioner Kevin McDonald described Bellevue's previous public benefits zoning plan and mentioned the recent rezone on Broadway. He questioned whether public benefits zoning could be applied retroactively.

Chair Finrow advocated the necessity of a citywide strategy.

Mr. Mills described why affordable housing was considered the primary policy objective for public benefits zoning. He primarily discussed HB 2984, the state bill that authorized the City of Seattle to develop their Public Benefits Zoning program.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chris Leman stated that public comment is more valuable when it is provided just after each issue addressed by the commission rather than at the end of the meeting. He noted that he was disappointed that the Commission dismissed the importance of providing a bike lane and bike connections on the rebuild of SR520, and hopes they will reconsider.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Finrow adjourned the meeting at 5:30 pm.