



SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION
December 9, 2004
APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

Commissioners in Attendance: George Blomberg, Chair; Steve Sheehy, Vice Chair; Tom Eanes, Jerry Finrow, Chris Fiori, Jeanne Krikawa, Lyn Krizanich, John Owen, Mimi Sheridan, Paul Tomita

Commissioners Absent: Anjali Bhagat, Mahlon Clements, Matthew Kitchen, Joe Quintana, Tony To

Commission Staff: Barbara Wilson, Acting Director; Elizabeth Martin, Analyst

Guests: Chris Leman, Eastlake Neighborhood Council; Rachel Ben-Schmuel, Seattle Monorail Project; Brad Shinn, Seattle Monorail Project

Call to Order

Chair George Blomberg called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m.

Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Tom Eanes moved and Commissioner John Owen seconded to approve the November 18, 2004 Commission minutes. The motion to approve the minutes was unanimously approved.

Public Comment

Chair Blomberg introduced guest, Chris Leman, from the Eastlake Neighborhood Council. Mr. Leman expressed his concerns regarding the Comp Plan Update. He encouraged the Commission to support the continued inclusion of the Urban Trails Map in the Comp Plan. Mr. Leman stated that in future it would be easy to make changes to the Urban Trails Map (UTM) without City Council or Planning Commission approval if it were to be moved from the Comp Plan to the Transportation Strategic Plan (TSP) as had been proposed. Mr. Leman pointed out that if the UTM stays in the Comp Plan it is protected by the Growth Management Act in terms of how it can be revised.

Mr. Leman expressed his support for the Urban Development and Planning Committee's decision to not to distinguish a preference for the location of cell

tower in multifamily or single family (arterial), over multifamily or single family (non-arterial) in Comp Plan Policy LU31.

Mr. Leman asserted that there are more multifamily residences on arterials than non-arterials and that therefore, the order of preference in LU31 is still biased against multifamily residents, who he asserted are mostly renters and low income families. DPD has compiled information on the number of multifamily and single family parcels and units on arterials and non-arterials. He recommended that the Planning Commission support the UDP recommendation.

Mr. Leman added that he supported the Planning Commission's recommendation to address local conditions and planning objectives when considering reducing parking requirements. He suggested that the Planning Commission look to the neighborhood plans and if a parking reduction is consistent with neighborhood plan goals, retain it, and if not, do not force a parking reduction on a neighborhood. Mr. Leman pointed out that in the Commission's 11/24/04 letter to City Council, the Commission stated "parking requirements of the individual urban centers should be based on parking studies that account for local conditions and planning objectives." Mr. Leman would like consideration of "local conditions and planning objectives" to apply to urban villages like Eastlake as well as to urban centers.

Mr. Leman expressed his support for the listen line in the City Hall Boards and Commissions room as a tool for public outreach. He mentioned that the Commission meetings can be heard by the public thanks to the listen line.

Mr. Leman encouraged the Commission to ensure that the Neighborhood Plans are implemented. He stressed that this is more important than ever given that budget cuts have reduced staff for Neighborhood Planning and that the current mayor's priorities are elsewhere or possibly contrary to neighborhood planning. Mr. Leman mentioned the proposed streetcar expansion as an example of the importance of implementing neighborhood plans. He said that the Eastlake neighborhood plan has significant warnings on the implications of rail on Eastlake Avenue. Mr. Leman added that he thought the Eastlake Avenue arterial too narrow for the extension of the streetcar.

Commissioner Owen agreed that the Urban Trails Map should stay in the Comp Plan for now until there is more clarity about the TSP. He pointed out though that there are advantages to moving projects to the TSP since it allows for more flexibility. He indicated that this flexibility in the TSP can allow for good plans to move forward. Commissioner Owen cited projects in Madison Park and the connection to I-90 as examples where more flexibility would have benefited both projects. He stated that if an item is in the Comp Plan this can occasionally prevent projects from moving forward as the Comp Plan does not allow project change without extensive review.

Mr. Leman mentioned that the City Council did not accept the new language proposed by the Commission on the Comp Plan and the TSP. Acting Director

Barbara Wilson indicated instead that issues related to the TSP were tabled until 2005 to allow for more public involvement and consideration by the City Council. Commissioner Jeanne Krikawa added that more time is needed to allow for public process on the TSP. Ms. Wilson noted that Councilmember Richard Conlin passed by resolution a 2005 amendment to address the TSP.

Commissioner Owen asked if the City Council had approved the TSP yet. Commissioner Jerry Finrow responded that it is still pending. Commissioner Finrow pointed out that the Commission has yet to weigh in on the TSP to the degree that it will. Commissioner Mimi Sheridan pointed out that the City Council does not have to pass the TSP by the end of the year but legally it is required to pass the Comp Plan Update by the end of the year which it did on 12/8/04. Commissioner Blomberg indicated that the TSP is useful but a healthy tension between the TSP and the Transportation Element in the Comp Plan has to be maintained.

Mr. Leman mentioned that in his opinion it is premature to remove the Urban Trails Map from the Transportation Element of the Comp Plan. He recommended that items should be removed from the Comp Plan only with real caution.

Commissioner Owen said that lowering of the parking requirements is only for urban centers. Commissioner Steve Sheehy agreed. Commissioner Owen recommended that the SPC letter should state that parking requirements should be lowered only in urban centers. There was general agreement on this. Commissioner Owen requested that this language be clarified in the Commission's letter to Council. Mr. Leman pointed out that the 11/24/04 Commission letter to Council includes lowering parking requirements in both urban centers and urban villages. Commissioner Blomberg emphasized that parking requirements ought not to be tampered with without careful consideration and in reference to a neighborhood plan.

Commissioner Paul Tomita observed that transit service must be increased before parking requirements can be lowered. In the case of urban villages, he said, the transit capacity is just not there yet. He stated that it is necessary to get to that tipping point where the critical mass and transit capacity exist before the parking requirements are lowered.

Mr. Leman mentioned that in Eastlake, parking is above capacity. He recommended that a case by case discussion should occur when looking at reducing parking requirements.

Commissioner Owen made a motion on the Commission's letter to City Council. He recommended that the Commission add a brief addendum to support keeping the Urban Trails Map in the Comp Plan until there is more clarity about the TSP. He also recommended that staff check on the Commission's 11/24/04 letter to Council to be sure that it reads support of lowering parking requirements only in "urban centers" rather than in both "urban centers and villages". He stressed

that it is even more crucial to do a parking needs study in urban villages if the parking requirements are lowered in these areas.

Chair Blomberg suggested that the letter addendum should take into account the vote by the City Council Urban Development and Planning Committee that took place on 12/8/04. Commissioner Finrow seconded the motion. Chair Blomberg called for more discussion.

Commissioner Sheehy mentioned that legislative staff in a legislative memo dated 12/8 to take into account local conditions when considering parking reductions for both urban centers and urban villages. LU50 reads "parking requirements for urban centers and villages should account for local conditions and objectives."

Commissioner Owen and Commissioner Jeanne Krikawa suggested strengthening the language requesting further analysis regarding reducing parking requirements in urban villages. Commissioner Blomberg mentioned Commissioner Tomita's point about the mass and tipping point of transit that has to be reached before parking requirements can be lowered. He suggested including this point in the addendum.

The Commission voted in support of this motion.

ACTION: The Planning Commissioners will prepare and send an addendum to the 11/24/04 letter to Council on the Ten-Year Comprehensive Plan Update. The addendum will include Commission support of continued inclusion of the Urban Trails Map in the Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan until further review of the City's Transportation Strategic Plan can be completed and approved. The addendum will also clarify that the Planning Commission does not recommend reduced parking requirements in urban villages.

COMMISSION BUSINESS

CHAIR'S REPORT

▪ 2005 New Commissioner Recruitment

Chair Blomberg gave an update on recruitment of new Planning Commissioners for 2005. He noted that the Commission had received 22 applications for the three open positions. He requested that the candidate review team submit their comments to staff as soon as possible and noted that over the next two weeks interviews will take place. Chair Blomberg added that schedules will be proposed to the review team. He stated that the Commission would like to submit 5 or 6 names to the Mayor's Office for consideration. Chair Blomberg explained that

the Urban Development and Planning Committee will then approve final candidates and submit them to Full City Council for a vote.

- **Upcoming and Recent Activities**

Chair Blomberg reminded Commissioners that the Commission holiday party will take place on Thursday, 12/9 at 6:00 pm at Commissioner Owen's residence.

Chair Blomberg also mentioned the SPC Center City workgroup meeting on Thursday, December 16.

- **Update on Light Rail Review Panel**

Chair Blomberg reported that he and David Spiker of the Design Commission will be representing the Light Rail Review Panel on Tuesday, December 14 at the Seattle City Council Transportation Committee. He said that Sound Transit representatives will brief the Committee on the pros and cons of the different Roosevelt Station Alternatives. He added that Councilmember Conlin requested that LRRP review the alternatives. He mentioned that there will be a LRRP meeting on Tuesday, 12/21 from 4:00pm – 7:00pm.

Commissioner Finrow requested that Commissioners who are familiar with the planning issues involved please brief both him and Commissioner Blomberg as the Commission's representatives on the Light Rail Review Panel (LRRP). He added that LRRP will eventually vote on the preferred Roosevelt Station alternative.

Commissioner Krikawa mentioned that there is community support for the station location near QFC. She mentioned that the tunnel is more expensive but the transfer of development opportunities are excellent. She also noted that the station location parallel to the freeway will require the removal of homes.

Commissioner Sheridan mentioned that there are a lot of architects in the neighborhood that provide considerable information about the alternatives.

Commissioner Owen recommended that it is important to look to the neighborhood plan to see if there is guidance on a preferred alternative there.

Commissioner Krikawa reminded Commissioners that it is important to consider the whole system, not just the station. In particular, she suggested that it is important to pay attention to the associated vent shaft placement along the route. She said that there is a proposal to locate a vent shaft at University Heights and that the community protested against this option.

Commissioner Finrow pointed out that there is a property being developed near QFC. He said that this will push the station location north and increase the cost as a result.

Ms. Wilson mentioned that Sound Transit has looked at an alternate route without this particular piece of property and that they found this alternative to be feasible.

Commissioner Krikawa mentioned that it is helpful to consider the connections to Metro and to listen to the Greenlake neighborhood for their input on where the station should be located. Commissioner Tomita added that the QFC station location has different issues related to construction. He said that there is additional mucking out and hauling of dirt involved at the QFC location. Commissioner Krikawa mentioned that the other location has better freeway access and that there is a big portal that is more easily removed.

Commissioner Sheehy mentioned the draft EIS on North Link. He noted that at the Central Link Oversight Committee (CLOC) meeting there will be the same briefing on the Roosevelt Station alternatives. Commissioner Sheehy said that CLOC will meet on Thursday, 12/16 from 11:00am – 1:00pm

- **Joint Design Commission/Planning Commission meeting**

Chair Blomberg reported that Acting Director, Barbara Wilson, Vice Chair, Steve Sheehy, and Planning Analyst, Elizabeth Martin met with Layne Cubell, Design Commission staff, David Spiker, Chair of the Design Commission, and Don Royse, Vice Chair of the Design Commission. Chair Blomberg mentioned that it was helpful to learn more about the purview of the Design Commission and the recent and future projects slated for Design Commission review. Chair Blomberg reported that one of the main items stemming from the meeting was that it is essential to distinguish the work of each Commission. He added that this can occur in presentations to City Council. He noted that it is helpful to define the Planning Commission's role by describing the extensive work plan that the Commission undertakes.

- **Follow Up on the Neighborhood Business District Strategy (NBDS)**

Chair Blomberg announced that on Wednesday, 12/15 staff have arranged for Commissioners to sit down with John Rahaim, DPD; John Skelton, DPD; Jory Phillips, DPD and others to articulate some of the Commission's concerns and recommendations for NBDS. He stated that this meeting will be in the Seattle Municipal Tower, Room 4096 from 3:00pm – 4:00pm.

Commissioner Eanes commented that he was uncertain about the reasoning behind some of the pedestrian designated zones in NBDS. He said that in Lake City, for instance, he was uncertain why some areas were mapped as pedestrian zones and others were not. Commissioner Owen also expressed concern about the pedestrian designated zones. He added that he would be interested to hear feedback from the neighborhoods as to where the pedestrian zones should be located.

- **Waterfront Advisory Team (WAT)**

Chair Blomberg mentioned that there is an upcoming meeting of the WAT on Monday, 12/13. Commissioner Krikawa said that she had attended these in the

past and that it was important for the Commission to continue to have a presence at these meetings after her term ends. She recommended that a Commissioner attend the sessions and offer input on the central waterfront planning process. Ms. Wilson noted that Commissioner Eanes had agreed to attend as the Planning Commission liaison for future meetings.

▪ **2005 Work Plan**

Ms. Wilson informed the Commission that upon the recommendation of the Housing, Neighborhoods and Urban Centers Committee (HNUC), the Neighborhood Business District Strategy has been added back to the work plan. She mentioned that the multi-family code revision work item has been expanded to the broader topic of housing and implementation strategies on the work plan. Ms. Wilson stated that the Northgate Plan implementation has also been added. She noted that each project has been assigned to a committee. Ms. Wilson mentioned the suggestion to assign a project lead for each work item. She requested that Commissioners inform staff if they would like to be the lead for a certain work project. Ms. Wilson reminded Commissioners that the goal is to approve the 2005 Work Plan in January. She added that the Executive Committee will continue to work on the Work Plan at their next session.

Planning Commission Director Interview

The next item on the Planning Commission agenda was the Planning Commission Director interview. The Planning Commission interviewed Acting Director, Barbara Wilson, for the Planning Commission Executive Director position.

Adjournment

After the interview, Chair Blomberg adjourned the meeting at 9:00 a.m.