

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION
JULY 10, 2003
APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

Commissioners in Attendance: George Blomberg, Vice Chair; Angali Bhagat, Matthew Kitchen, Jeanne Krikawa, Lynn Krizanich, Joe Quintana, Steve Sheehy, Mimi Sheridan, Tony To, Paul Tomita.

Commissioners Absent: John Owen, Chair; Angela Brooks, Gregory Davis, Denise Lathrop.

Staff: Marty Curry, Executive Director; Barbara Wilson, Commission Analyst.

Guests: Peter Steinbrueck, Council President; Neil Powers, Council Staff; Jackie Kirn, Office of Policy Management; Kenny Pittman, Office of Economic Development; Cheryl Sizov; DCLU, Martha Lester, City Council Central Staff; Bob Morgan, City Council Central Staff; Michael Seliga, UW student.

Call to Order

Vice Chair Blomberg called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

Commission Analyst Barbara Wilson noted that an addition needed to be made to the June 12th meeting – Bob Morgan was present but not listed as a guest. Commissioner Tomita made a motion to approve the June 12, 2003 Minutes with the addition, Commissioner Sheridan seconded and the Commission unanimously approved the amended minutes.

COMMISSION PRESENTATIONS

BRIEFING/DISCUSSION ON NORTHGATE WITH COUNCIL PRESIDENT PETER STEINBRUECK

Vice Chair George Blomberg welcomed Council President Peter Steinbrueck to the Commission. Council President Steinbrueck thanked the Commission for its review of the Mayor's Northgate proposal. He complimented the Commission for a helpful analysis that brought needed objectivity to the issue. He expressed his hope that the Commission will engage in future work with the Council on this issue. President Steinbrueck acknowledged that the mall is only a piece of the puzzle and that the Commission could help the City in taking a broader view of Northgate.

Council President Steinbrueck stated that the Planning Commission's work on Northgate has brought useful insights. Particularly the town center charrette and report are still relevant and should be used as a base for current discussions about how to create a more holistic vision for Northgate. He noted that one of the important steps is to update the Northgate Plan and have

it formally included in the Comprehensive Plan. This updated plan should then be treated as the guiding vision for the area.

Council President Steinbrueck stated that increased housing is a key goal for the Northgate Urban center that is languishing. He posed the question of why dense housing development is happening on Lake City Way and not in Northgate; why we are getting single story auto-oriented development in the area where the plan clearly calls for more density. He noted that developers feel the cause is zoning that doesn't support density and that 85' height limits would help. The high water table in the area also creates a problem in building underground parking. Council President Steinbrueck reiterated that he would like to look at a broader focus for development opportunities, not just the mall property. He added that the City can begin by building on the investments it has made in the community center and library.

Council President Steinbrueck closed his remarks by stating that he would like the Planning Commission's advice on legislative and other strategies to encourage higher density housing and mixed use development and to achieve better results in creating a pedestrian oriented town center that is the vision for Northgate. He stated that he believes the City can do better on the South Lot (regarding more housing) than is currently being proposed and that he does not want to miss opportunities. He agrees that the area is overregulated, but also hopes that the mall owner will begin to incorporate some of the new concepts for malls such as "lifestyle malls". The City should set the framework using the Comp Plan, the overlay and design guidelines as a starting point.

Council President Steinbrueck commented on the Mayor's Proposed Northgate Agreement, sharing his concern that this was produced with little consultation with the Planning Commission, Design Commission and CityDesign. He expressed his opinion that this does not reflect the best ideas or highest priorities of the City. Steinbrueck stated he would like the Commission's advice on the idea of a Planned Action. He believes this might afford an opportunity to depoliticize the issues and to work collaboratively and constructively with the various stakeholders.

COMMISSION DISCUSSION

Commissioner George Blomberg asked if the Planned Action is congruent with what the Council President heard at the recent public forum. President Steinbrueck affirmed that he believed it was congruent. He stated that he would have liked to have had more collaboration during the negotiations of the development agreement. He also stated that there is not a huge amount of support for the detention pond.

Commissioner Tony To stated that from a revitalization perspective, Northgate highlights a situation where there are developers that want to do something. This presents a good opportunity for market forces to play a role and to be consistent with the City's growth management desires and goals. The economy gives us some breathing space for considering

the impediments to development. He stated that the Planning Commission recommendation's on the Northgate development agreement outlined one way to begin moving forward and an opportunity to make some gains. He pointed out that a development agreement is not like a redevelopment plan. Without the details you'd learn in a redevelopment plan, it is difficult to know the whole picture. If the development agreement is approved, follow up will be needed.

Commissioner Steve Sheehy observed that the City has tried the prescriptive regulatory approach to guide development and it has not worked – the City needs to use a more performance based approach. Council President Steinbrueck agreed with taking a less regulatory approach, focusing on a stronger planning/design framework to accomplish the goals and vision outlined for getting housing density and managing growth. He noted that his is supportive of the housing incentives such as the tax exemption which may be a tool to consider with regard to Northgate.

Commissioner Blomberg asked how the Planning Commission can help in creating this vision. President Steinbrueck stated his belief that the GDP will most likely be lifted, but expressed less confidence that the Mayor's proposed development agreement will be approved by the City Council.

Commissioner Kitchen cautioned the Council to carefully consider the implications of the City's negotiating power if they remove the GDP without getting the development agreement in place. He added his opinion that the GDP has been a recipe for 10 years of nothing. However, removing the GDP with no development agreement would leave the City with little leverage to get an agreement from the developer/ property owner. Council President Steinbrueck agreed that something else will need to be in place before removing the requirements outlined in GDP. He added that he thinks the City needs to look at the larger zoning issues, rather than being focused only on the mall. Commissioner Mimi Sheridan suggested that the City should consider look at the design guidelines and the overlay and consider whether both are needed. She noted that the Northgate overlay is unlike anything else in the City given its level of detail. President Steinbrueck agreed that the overlay in Northgate was unusual and stated that the City Council is open for suggestions and new ideas. He closed by saying that he will rely to the expertise of the Commission on this issue in looking at the broader issues that will bring positive results to this area.

Vice Chair Blomberg thanked the Council President Steinbrueck for taking the time to have a discussion with the Commission and pledged the Commission's continued efforts on Northgate.

Jackie Kirm of Office of Policy Management briefly addressed the Commission stating that OPM would like to have a discussion with the Planning Commission on expanding the Coordinated Transportation Investment Plan to include other areawide issues at Northgate

such as housing, storm water and a Planned Action EIS. She stated that it makes sense to update the Northgate plan and incorporate it into the broader City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan. She noted that she would be attending the Commission's Executive Committee meeting on July 15 to have a longer discussion and to update the Commission on the Mayor's and OPM's latest thinking.

Vice Chair Blomberg extended an open invitation to other Commissioners to attend the Executive Committee meeting for that discussion. He then asked the Commission to consider what the kind of time commitment it was willing make on this issue for the rest of the year. Commissioner Sheridan stated that the Commission should consider where it best adds value to the process and the debate. Marty Curry suggested that the Commission assess where it can contribute to the most in relation to its time and resources. Commissioner Joe Quintana asked what the Commissions role has been and will be with regard to the update of the Comp Plan and how it can offer value as the City proceeds with integrating the Northgate plan into the Comp. Plan. Marty Curry stated that the Planning Commission has a history of involvement and institutional knowledge on Northgate that calls for some level of participation in Northgate issue.

Commissioner Paul Tomita suggested that this is an opportunity for the Planning Commission to really offer a vision and proposal for what Northgate could be. Commissioner Tony To added that in some ways, the Commission has already started down that path and that we should revisit our response where we spell much of that out. Commissioner Sheridan suggested that the Commission look at the neighborhood plan objectives and the vision articulated for the neighborhood. Commissioner Sheehy stated that since he has been involved with the Commission there has been no other issue where the Planning Commission has been asked by the Executive to weigh in and by a Council member to do a detailed analysis. He believes that the Planning Commission has a duty to continue to weigh in on this issue. He stated that in his opinion Northgate is at the top of the Commission's work plan.

Commissioner Matthew Kitchen stated he felt that the framework for Northgate needs to be grounded in the growth management plan and that Northgate is an urban center in the regional growth management plan. He stated that he believes those origins need to be central to the goals and planning for Northgate.

Commissioner Quintana stated that it makes sense for the Commission to weigh in on how to help Northgate reach its realization as a growth center but cautioned against getting into the middle of a territorial debate between Council and the Mayor. He stated that he also believes that we need to begin this new assessment from the place the Commission left off in the last review, that the development agreement is a realistic first step.

Commissioner Tomita stated that the Commission sometimes needs to get involved in controversial issues and that it has the opportunity to help the City reframe the debate and remove a level of controversy in order to help achieve results. He stated this is also an opportunity to move beyond the mall and the development agreement and begin to look at the next steps and the broader vision beyond the mall property. Commissioner Sheridan reiterated that the Commission stands by its recommendation and the statement that the development agreement is a realistic first step but now has a chance to help define the next steps.

Commissioner Kitchen stated that there may be some hard feelings from various stakeholders about the negotiation one the development agreement but that he believes the nature of negotiating a development agreement is it is not an open process and needs to be small to be successful.

Vice Chair Blomberg closed the discussion by stating that the Commission will do some additional thinking and discussion about how it will engage next on this issue.

COMMISSION BUSINESS

CHAIR'S REPORT

Vice Chair Blomberg announced that the next Planning Commission meeting, on Thursday, July 24, will feature finalists for the Planning Director position. He encouraged all commissioners to attend in order to have the opportunity to hear from the finalists and ask questions. He also noted that Commissioner Tomita will sit on the interview panel.

Vice Chair Blomberg announced that the Commission will brief the Council on Commission's Housing Choices report on Monday, August 4. (Commissioners Tony To, Mimi Sheridan)

On August 4th there will also be a Council Committee of the Whole where they will have a discussion on the Mayor's Northgate Proposal.

Finally, Vice Chair Blomberg noted that on Thursday, August 17, the Seattle Design Commission will be briefed on the Northgate Library and Community Center from 9:00 – 10:30 a.m. and that they have welcomed any Planning Commissioners who want to attend to hear this presentation.

COMMISSIONER SPOTLIGHT: STEVE SHEEHY

Commissioner Steve Sheehy shared that he is native of the Pacific Northwest, born in Tacoma. He has an 18 year old son who lives in Boston. He lives with his partner of 12

years in Madrona with their dog and cat and spends his free time gardening. He is a lawyer who has been practicing for 20 years and is currently a land use lawyer for Sound Transit.

Commissioner Sheehy stated that he would like to use his spotlight time to talk a little more about his philosophy on regional transit and his job. He explained that Sound Transit is larger than just light rail in Seattle. It is a regional transportation system with three major lines of business which includes regional express buses, Sounder commuter rail which is “heavy” rail, and light rail lines in Tacoma and Seattle. They are also doing projects like HOV lanes and other transportation improvements throughout the region.

Sound Transit has 5 subareas and one thing many people do not realize is that funding collected from each subarea has to be spent in that subarea. In Seattle the bulk of the funding and resources is going to build the Central Link light rail which will initially be a 14 mile line from Tukwila to north downtown. For this project alone there will be 52 master use permits issued. In addition, Sound Transit works with many different jurisdictions that have different ways of doing things. Commissioner Sheehy noted that for these reasons he loves about his job because it is incredibly complicated and it never becomes stagnant.

HOUSING CHOICES REPORT: COMMISSION DISCUSSION AND ACTION

Commission Analyst Barbara Wilson distributed the latest draft of the Planning Commission report on the Housing Choices Initiative noting that changes have been incorporated based on input from the July 8th Executive Committee Meeting. Ms. Wilson noted that the Commission will be presenting the report’s findings and recommendations to City Council on Monday, August 4th. Commissioner Mimi Sheridan walked the Commission through the report focusing primarily on Section III – the Findings and Recommendations.

Commissioner Jeanne Krikawa stated that she felt that the report has been strengthened since her last reading – it has a good flow and much of the redundancy has been eliminated. She thanked the staff for its hard work in putting together a clear and accurate document. She also stated that she felt that Section III, Planning Commission Observations and Recommendations, should come earlier in the document. She suggested moving the Observations and Recommendations up before the details and background on the Public Involvement Process. There was general consensus from the Commission to make this change.

Commissioner Sheridan then walked the Commission through the Planning Commission Observations and Recommendations. Commissioner Blomberg suggested that the recommendation to include a client assistance memo for DADUs include specific information about how to work with neighbors. Commissioner Sheehy suggested that the recommendation about not limiting the siting of DADU’s by neighborhood should be elaborated on. Commissioner Kitchen urged that the Commission recommend that the

specific development standards be carefully examined to make sure that they do not result in DADU's being favored in some neighborhoods over others. Commissioner Quintana suggested that references to certain neighborhoods having better potential should be removed and that the Commission should be stronger in its recommendation that this housing type be spread throughout the City.

In reference to the Commission's recommendation for analysis on the potential of cottage housing, Commissioner Quintana stated that it will be important to be clear that the City not delay the implementation of the legislation.

ACTION: Commissioner Steve Sheehy moved that this draft of the report be accepted with the changes outlined, Commissioner Joe Quintana seconded. The Commission unanimously approved the action.

MONORAIL PLANNING: COMMISSION DISCUSSION

PROPOSED LAND USE CODE AMENDMENTS

Director Marty referred the Commissioners to the proposed Land Use Code amendments in their packets, stating that the City Council will consider and vote on these amendments in late July/early August. Commissioner Steve Sheehy added that the Monorail Review Panel will be reviewing and submitting comments. He noted that at the July 21st MRP meeting they would discuss this issue and make a recommendation.

Commissioner Joe Quintana asked if it is appropriate for the Planning Commission to review these types of proposals. Commissioner Sheridan replied that it is indeed the very nature of the kind of issues the Planning Commission should look at, as it is about land use policy which is very much in the purview of the Commission's responsibilities. She also noted that the main issue of importance is the waiver of height limits and setbacks and how these might impact areas along the corridor and particularly station area neighborhoods. Commissioner Paul Tomita suggested that Planning Commissioners should review the code amendments and forward comments, questions and concerns to the three Planning Commissioners who sit on the MRP.

ACTION: Commissioner Matthew Kitchen recommended that the Planning Commission empower the three Commissioners serving on the MRP (Steve Sheehy, Mimi Sheridan and Paul Tomita) to represent the Commission on this issue through the MRP and that Commissioners with comments should directly forward them before July 21. There was general consensus from the Commission for this course of action.

STATION AREA PLANNING

Director Marty Curry announced that Cheryl Sizov has been hired as the Planning and Urban Design Lead staff in DCLU. She will coordinate Monorail land use, planning and urban design activities and manage the 4 other DCLU Monorail staffers. Ms. Sizov outlined the staffing at DCLU for the Monorail Project stating that Vanessa Murdoch has started as the Station Area Planning lead. She will be assisted by two additional staff people who would begin next week. Maureen Collazzi has been hired to coordinate the Monorail Review Panel and will officially begin the last week in July. Ms. Sizov stated that she is excited about this great opportunity and hopes to be able to rely on the expertise of the Planning Commission, especially in station area planning. She requested that she and Ms. Murdoch be given the opportunity to bring a draft work plan on Station Area Planning to the Planning Commission very soon.

ACTION:

Vice Chair Blomberg requested that Commission staff arrange a time for Ms. Sizov and Ms. Murdoch to attend a Full Commission or committee meeting as soon as possible is feasible.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

ADJOURN

Commission Vice Chair George Blomberg adjourned the meeting at 5:30 p.m.