



**SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION**  
**November 18, 2004**  
**APPROVED MEETING MINUTES**

**Commissioners in Attendance:** George Blomberg, Chair; Steve Sheehy, Vice Chair; Anjali Bhagat, Mahlon Clements, Tom Eanes, Jerry Finrow, Chris Fiori, John Owen, Joe Quintana, Mimi Sheridan, Paul Tomita.

**Commissioners Absent:** Matthew Kitchen, Jeanne Krikawa, Lyn Krizanich, Tony To.

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

**Guests:** John Rahaim, DPD; Jory Phillips, DPD; Mary Catherine Snyder, SDOT.

**Call to Order**

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

**Approval of Minutes**

Commissioner Mahlon Clements moved and Commissioner Mimi Sheridan seconded to approve the October 28, 2004 Commission minutes. The motion to approve the minutes was unanimously approved.

**COMMISSION BUSINESS**

**CHAIR'S REPORT**

• **New Commissioner Recruitment**

Chair Blomberg reported that the Commission will be accepting applications until the end of the month for three open Commissioner positions. Commissioner Clements suggested that it would be helpful to consider someone with expertise in Industrial Lands given that the Industrial Lands Policy will be under Commission review in 2005. Chair Blomberg requested that Commissioners propose candidates and pay special attention to racial and gender diversity in the Commission's recruitment efforts. He asked Commissioners to participate in the initial screening and interviewing process. Chair Blomberg, and Commissioners Steve Sheehy, John Owen and Tom Eanes offered to screen candidates. Commissioners Jeanne Krikawa and Lyn Krizanich have also participated in the past and will be asked to assist with this process.

- **Upcoming and Recent Activities**

Chair Blomberg noted the following upcoming activities. He stated that the Northgate Stakeholders' group meets this evening, 11/18. On 11/20 there will be a Comp Plan Community Forum from 10am – noon at City Hall sponsored by the CNC. On 11/22 the AIA is holding a Waterfront Design Forum. On 11/30 MRP is meeting. On Thursday, 12/9 the Commission will have its holiday party at Commissioner Owen's residence starting at 6:00pm. The Full Planning Commission meeting will be held in the morning on 12/9 from 7:30am – 9:00am.

## **COMMISSION PROJECT REVIEW:**

### **COMP PLAN UPDATE**

Chair Blomberg led the discussion of revisions to the draft Comp Plan Update response letter. There is a concern in the Urban Village Element about the increase in job target numbers outside of urban villages and centers. Commissioner Sheridan mentioned that Mr. Tom Hauger, DPD staff, had explained that these numbers reflect past patterns and do not indicate a change. Council recommended a reduction in numbers for jobs and housing in South Lake Union. Some of these numbers were reallocated outside of urban centers and villages. Commissioner Sheridan asked how different this is from what has happened in the past.

Commissioners Eanes and Owen restated that this goes back to the question of what is meant by a "target" versus an "estimate". Commissioner Blomberg asked if this may have an adverse affect or be contrary to the City's overall strategy of focusing jobs and housing in urban centers. Commissioner Sheridan commented that currently there are lots of businesses outside of urban villages and that she is not sure that this makes any difference. Commissioner Owen stated that if this is a target then it needs clarification. He recommended that this request for clarification be added to the draft letter. Commissioner Paul Tomita suggested that "target" is appropriate where the city wants growth and "estimate" is the appropriate term to describe the jobs and housing outside of urban villages. He suggested that such language be added to the SPC letter. Commissioner Joe Quintana asked if these numbers are additional numbers or just a reallocation. Chair Blomberg pointed out that the numbers for housing and employment targets are the largest item in the spreadsheet. Commissioner Jerry Finrow proposed a special task force to examine what these numbers actually mean and how they are derived to prepare for the review of the next Comp Plan Update. He suggested that the task force could come back with recommendations for implications for City policy.

Commissioner Owen observed that the same confusion regarding numbers is evident in the Transportation Element and the Transportation Strategic Plan (TSP). Commissioner Sheehy stated that the City is not changing overall growth targets noting the numbers for housing and jobs are the same. He asked what the numbers mean and if the City shifts its resources to assure that a target is met. Commissioner Sheridan stated that the origins and implications of the target numbers remain unclear. Commissioner Quintana commented that they seem to signal a major shift in housing and jobs. Commissioner Owen indicated that the increase in the University District will result in about 100 units per acre.

Commissioner Clements responded that the City is supposed to steer the course, not the market. Commissioner Sheehy asked how the City is going to do this. He asked if the City will use regulations, standards, or incentives. He commented that it is fine to have a target but without the steps to implement it is meaningless. Commissioner Owen mentioned that at a community meeting it was mentioned that an increase in housing should mean an increase in open space stating that this is an example of policy engendering expectations that go along with the growth targets.

Commissioner Sheehy suggested shortening the letter to read that the Commission is concerned that the size of the increase of target jobs and housing outside of urban centers is inconsistent with its density goal within urban centers. Commissioner Sheridan recommended that the second sentence in the South Lake Union section be deleted as it has already been articulated in the draft letter. Commissioner Quintana pointed out that the reallocated numbers include a 25% decrease in manufacturing jobs in the city whereas the City's stated goal is to increase the number of manufacturing jobs. He stated that these numbers do not indicate that. Commissioner Sheehy agreed that this point should be made in the letter.

Commissioner Chris Fiori asked if it is known how the job to household ratio was developed to 4.2 and 4.1. He said that in the future the City is projecting more housing than jobs. He commented that the projection does not seem very aggressive. Commissioner Owen commented that that is a key and fundamental point and would be worth discussing with Mr. Hauger as part of the task force work. Commissioner Quintana suggested that the Commission signal what the problem is and where City policies are contrary to the housing and job targets. Commissioner Eanes asked if the targets are based on what has happened in the past or is the City targeting higher projections outside of urban villages. Commissioner Clements wondered if given that current industrial growth estimates are currently very low perhaps the decrease of 25% in manufacturing jobs may still be consistent with the City policy of increasing industrial jobs.

Chair Blomberg asked that the Commission review the proposed SPC recommendation on **View Protection**. Commissioner Finrow pointed out that there is a fundamental conflict between view protection and densification noting that if the City is going to adopt a policy to increase density then it is going to have a real problem protecting everybody's view in the process. He noted it is not possible to protect all views.

Commissioner Eanes stated that the new language is ambiguous and can be interpreted in many different ways. The current City policies on view protection are clear enough and according to him there is the concern that the new language will be interpreted to protect private views. Different Commissioner viewpoints included: "do not say anything about view protection" to "the Commission does not support the amendment" in the draft letter.

Commissioner Quintana pointed out that the City will have a serious discussion about view protection pretty soon. He thought there will be a conflict with density. He agreed that the current language in the Comp Plan is already well-stated; there is the redundancy issue as well

as unintended consequences from additional ambiguous language that is subject to other interpretations.

Commissioner Sheehy stated that the Comp Plan does not regulate views. Commissioner Eanes said that he thought that the City's view protection policies are pretty clear. He acknowledged that the policies may not all be stated in the same place. Commissioners agreed to include in the letter that view protection language is already well-stated in the Comp Plan. The Commission agreed to oppose the Council amended view protection language.

Chair Blomberg asked that the Commission review the proposed SPC recommendation on the **Precautionary Principle in the Environmental Element**. Commissioner Sheehy stated that non-binding language is not worth discussing. Commissioner Finrow reported that at the Center City talk guest speaker, David Dixon, mentioned an increase in legal challenges related to public health and city policy. Commissioner Finrow recommended that the Commission keep this issue in mind in future.

Commissioner Eanes suggested that the Commission use item #10 in the draft letter in place of commenting on the precautionary principle. Commissioner Blomberg agreed that the Commission should keep its finger on the pulse of this. He agreed that reference to natural resource use and the Endangered Species Act would nudge people in a productive way. He suggested that the Commission refrain from commenting on the precautionary principle. Commissioner Owen pointed out that in item #10 in the draft letter the Commission recommends deletion of the precautionary principle because it is non-binding and can not be implemented. The Commission recommends instead these elements which actually mention human health in city policies and talk about monitoring of human health indicators. Commissioner Quintana concurred. The Commission voted on this action and approved this revision to the draft letter. Commissioner Sheehy recommended that the letter refer to specific pages and items in the Comp Plan.

Chair Blomberg asked that the Commission review the proposed SPC recommendation on the **Transportation Element**. Acting Director, Barbara Wilson, requested that Commissioners who attended the special session on the Transportation Strategic Plan (TSP) and Transportation Element submit any revisions to staff by close-of-business on Monday, 11/22. She added that the deadline for comments on the TSP has been extended for the Commission.

Chair Blomberg asked that the Commission review the proposed SPC recommendation on the **Northgate Neighborhood Plan in the Neighborhood Element**. Ms. Wilson asked Commissioners if they wanted to support the Northgate Neighborhood Plan's (NNP) incorporation into the Comp Plan.

Commissioners supported the incorporation of the NNP. Chair Blomberg asked that the Commission review the proposed SPC recommendation on **Northgate Single Family Zoning**.

The Commission discussed the language used to describe single family zoning in Northgate. Ms. Wilson noted that one possible revision uses locational criteria to assess single family

zoning. She mentioned that the alternate language proposed by Councilmember Conlin omits locational criteria.

Commissioner Sheridan pointed out that the Northgate Stakeholders Group has put a lot of effort into this. She questioned whether the Commission wants to oppose the Group's stance on the single family zoning language. Commissioner Eanes commented that this is not a re-zone. He said that there are sites in Northgate now that are locationally multi-family but are zoned single-family. Commissioner Eanes acknowledged that it is possible that locational criteria could lead to a rezone. He commented that there is no lack of multi-family housing. However, he said that it is underutilized. Commissioner Tomita observed that the Comp Plan is not intended to look at specific properties.

Mr. John Rahaim, Planning Director, DPD, greeted the Commission and asked Chair Blomberg if he might comment on this. Chair Blomberg welcomed Mr. Rahaim to the meeting and encouraged his input. Mr. Rahaim stated that the neighborhoods prefer stricter protection of single-family zoning. He mentioned that Council Central staff have recommended that there is slightly more flexibility if single family is required to meet locational criteria. The question was raised as to whether support of including the Northgate Neighborhood Plan in the Comp Plan indicates supports for the stricter single-family use code language. Commissioners concurred that Commission support endorses the process, not the particular details of the plan.

Chair Blomberg asked that the Commission review the proposed SPC recommendation on **Wallingford**. The Commission agreed not to comment on the Wallingford Neighborhood Plan. Ms. Wilson noted that there are conflicts regarding the amendments proposed and the process employed. Commissioner Sheridan pointed out that the plan was last reviewed in October 2002 and has not been seen since. The Commission agreed that they have not reviewed this enough to comment.

Chair Blomberg asked that the Commission review the proposed SPC recommendation on **Cultural Resources**. Commissioner Sheridan mentioned that Councilmember Tom Rasmussen requested assistance with a public forum on cultural resources. Commissioner Sheridan offered to provide guidance on how to manage cultural resources. She suggested deleting the last sentence in this section of the draft letter. Commissioners concurred.

Chair Blomberg asked that the Commission review the proposed SPC recommendation on **General Draft Letter Items**. Commissioners agreed to delete items 5 – 7 in the SPC draft letter and to delete all but the Northgate portion of item 8. Commissioner Owen encouraged the Commission to look carefully at the reduction in parking in urban centers. He mentioned a concern about small neighborhood businesses. Commissioner Owen said that he supports it as a general goal but stressed the importance of looking at individual urban centers when evaluating parking reductions. He recommended specific analysis to determine what the parking demands are.

Ms. Wilson noted that the Urban Development and Planning (UDP) Committee may request the Commission to attend the December 8 meeting and present the letter with their comments.

She added that the Commission has been invited to attend the December 13 Full COW session to brief Full Council before the vote. Ms Wilson noted that at the next Executive Committee meeting Commissioners will discuss the presentation of this letter at these future Council meetings.

**ACTION: Commissioners agreed to oppose the view protection amendment. The Commission supports including the Northgate Neighborhood Plan in the Comprehensive Plan.**

**Commissioners approved the Seattle Planning Commission final letter on the Comprehensive Plan Ten-Year Update with the proposed revisions. Commissioners will also submit revisions to the Transportation Element to staff by close of business Monday, November 22.**

**Final copy of the Comprehensive Plan Update letter will be submitted to Commissioners on Wednesday, 11/24 for final approval and then the final letter will be delivered to City Council on Wednesday, 11/24 before the Thanksgiving holiday. The Seattle Planning Commission will provide briefing to the City Council upon request.**

## **DPD PLANNING DIRECTOR REPORT**

Chair Blomberg welcomed Mr. John Rahaim, Planning Director DPD, and invited him to share his monthly report with the Commission.

Mr. Rahaim reported on Central Waterfront Planning. He noted that DPD is working with a Waterfront Advisory Team and there will be an open house in late January. He said that staff recommendations have grown out of the results from the public charrette. He mentioned that there will be graphics and boards at the open house. He said that the State and City are putting off a decision on the preferred alternative. Mr. Rahaim mentioned that they seem to want legislator support before they go public. Commissioner Finrow asked if the participants in the charrette have received any updates on the process. Mr. Rahaim answered that an email has been sent out to all participants and another notice will go out notifying them of the open house.

Mr. Rahaim reported on the Broadway Revitalization Project. He reported that components of the land use code will change to reduce parking requirements. He noted that SDOT has conducted a parking analysis of First Hill and Capitol Hill. He said that the actual parking demand is .6 parking spaces per resident, not 1 – 1.1 parking spaces per resident. He noted that the requirement will be reduced to .6 spaces. He added that the residential amenity requirement will be changed to be less onerous. He said that some payment in lieu of amenity will be allowed as well as counting some space inside of the building. According to Mr. Rahaim, up to half of the residential amenity can be paid in lieu of by contributions to an existing park within a certain distance from the residential.

Mr. Rahaim also reported that East of Broadway the density goes down and currently it is difficult for developers. In response to this, he said that DPD is looking at increasing the height limits from 40' to 65'. He noted that there is not unanimous support in the neighborhood for the increased height limits. He added that a study conducted to look at the height limits concluded that it is difficult to develop within a 40' height limit. Mr. Rahaim pointed out that with QFC moving and Safeway closing there is room to consider redevelopment options. He also mentioned that the Sound Transit sites are expanding considerably. He stated that the Office of Economic Development is offering a storefront improvement matching grant and that there will be increased police presence on Broadway and sidewalk cleaning. He noted that in future, DPD hopes to implement a business improvement district to continue security and cleaning operations. Mr. Rahaim indicated that the area is under consideration as an alcohol impact area. He stated that height is the biggest issue on Broadway followed by parking.

Commissioner Fiori asked if the increased property values generated by up-zoning can somehow be captured for the public good. Mr. Rahaim replied that DPD is looking at this issue downtown stating there will be a bonus for tall residential and a bonus for workforce housing. He noted that outside of downtown the economics do not work as well.

Commissioner Owen recommended that any changes remain consistent with the neighborhood plans. Commissioners asked Mr. Rahaim if the Commission could weigh in on the zoning schedule. He replied that the Commission could do that.

Commissioner Sheridan commented that she is concerned about community character. She asked what the provisions are for preserving historic buildings in all areas including downtown. Mr. Rahaim responded that there is a bonus program for historic buildings and an increase in FARS. He pointed out that many of the significant buildings are housing in Downtown and Belltown.

Mr. Rahaim briefed the Commission on the Center City Strategy. He said that the project will clearly map Center City and delineate the economic benefits of Center City to the city and the region. He stated that DPD hopes to get a full-time person to work on data gathering.

Mr. Rahaim noted that there was an in-house session with the Downtown Seattle Association and the City Urban Design Section. He added that there will be a strategic project analysis that looks at neighborhood and infrastructure plans to see if there are gaps or synergies. Mr. Rahaim noted the budget allows for 5.5 staff positions to support Center City. He clarified that this budget includes downtown zoning, south downtown housing and zoning, and South Lake Union work.

Ms. Wilson asked if there is a scope of work or work plan yet for Center City. She suggested that the Planning Commission white paper and Roundtable Report provide a good starting point from which to generate a scope of work and work plan. Mr. Rahaim offered to draft a scope of work and work plan and then ask for Commission input and comment. Mr. Rahaim was invited to join the Commission's ad hoc committee on Center City to discuss the scope of work and prepare for a meeting with Deputy Mayor Tim Ceis in the next few weeks.

Mr. Rahaim mentioned that there will be an EIS for the Downtown Height and Density project in mid-December followed by a review period and public meeting in January to present the preferred alternative.

### **NEIGHBORHOOD BUSINESS DISTRICT STRATEGY (NBDS)**

Ms. Mary Catherine Snyder, SDOT staff, and Mr. Jory Phillips, DPD staff, presented background and public involvement results for the NBDS to the Commission.

Mr. Phillips noted that Draft Land Use Code will be presented to the Mayor's Office by the end of the year. He stated that SEPA environmental review will be published at the same time as the DPD Determination of Non-Significance is issued. He reported that DPD does not anticipate the need for an Environmental Impact Statement, as no changes are being proposed to the height, bulk, or expected density of new buildings allowed by the commercial zones. Mr. Phillips anticipates the draft code will go to City Council in February or March.

Mr. Phillips stated that DPD proposes using Floor-Area Ratios (FAR) for 30', 40' and 65' zones to replace requirements for residential upper story lot coverage and to also regulate the bulk of fully commercial buildings. He stated that currently, commercial buildings are allowed to be built from lot line to lot line. Mr. Phillips noted that DPD staff hopes that applying a FAR requirement to fully-commercial buildings will result in more building setbacks and modulation and that Design Review will also evaluate much new development.

Mr. Phillips stated that NBDS will combine Pedestrian designations (P1) and (P2) into one P designation. He noted that outside of the pedestrian designations, more flexibility of uses would be allowed at ground level, including residential uses. He said that currently, residential uses at ground-level must meet live/work requirements or be granted a conditional use permit.

Mr. Phillips reported that six initial business districts were selected for expansion or establishing a P designation based on geographic mix. He indicated that these business districts have neighborhood plan goals or policies that support establishing or maintaining a pedestrian-oriented retail core. He stated that following an inventory of existing conditions and vacancies, a retail core was defined in each business district where only retail use would be allowed at ground level. Mr. Phillips reported that DPD held a meeting in each of these areas, and received strong support in Columbia City and Eastlake,

Mr. Phillips noted that there is a parking waiver in Pedestrian designated areas for ground-related uses. He noted that the parking waiver will apply to businesses at ground level up to 5,000 square feet. He said that this is scaled back from the initial proposed waiver for ground-level businesses up to 25,000 square feet. Mr. Phillips reported that there will be new street-level standards and guidelines for commercial and residential uses at ground level. He mentioned that standards include a visually prominent entrance at street level. He added that a slight height bonus for a grade-separated stoop is also proposed. According to Mr. Phillips, blank residential and commercial facades are prohibited under the new standards. He added



that Design Review uses neighborhood-specific guidelines in neighborhoods where they apply.

Commissioner Owen stated his concern that there will be some flexibility based on local needs. Mr. Phillips responded that each of the six neighborhoods was evaluated as to whether the P zone needed to be expanded and/or established. Commissioner Owen mentioned his concern for local businesses that may rely on parking to sustain their livelihood. Ms. Snyder mentioned that a developer can still build as much parking as desired. Commissioner Sheridan mentioned that Seattle used to be based on the streetcar model to access local businesses. Commissioner Owen expressed his reservations about linking the P designation with ground level commercial. He agreed that this works in urban centers but was not sure this holds true in other areas. Commissioner Owen mentioned some areas in Greenwood, along 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue on Capitol Hill, and areas on 56<sup>th</sup> Street and 65<sup>th</sup> Street as areas of concern.

Mr. Phillips stated that the proposal will go to Diane Sugimura, Director of DPD, and then to the Mayor, perhaps in the form of a Director's Report. Commissioner Owen said that he wanted to commend the tremendous amount of work that has been done on NBDS. Commissioner Owen expressed that his reservations rest on the parking issue, linking non-residential and the P zone, and potential impacts on small, local businesses. Mr. Phillips responded that there is not a major difference noting that today they require a conditional use permit and with NBDS changes a conditional use permit will not be required. Mr. Phillips also stated that in many of these areas there is not a market for commercial.

After the briefing by Ms. Snyder and Mr. Phillips, Commissioners discussed next steps. A proposal was made to ask Mr. Phillips to return to meet with 4 or 5 Commissioners to discuss specific parts of the NBDS.

**ACTION: A group of Commissioners will meet with Mr. Phillips, DPD staff, to go over specifics of NBDS and make recommendations for a Commission response.**

**Public Comment**

No public comments were made.

**Adjournment**

Chair Blomberg adjourned the meeting at 5:40 p.m.