



MINUTES (Approved on 10-5-16)

TIME: Wednesday, September 21, 2016, 4:00 p.m.
PLACE: Room 16, Tacoma Municipal Building North
733 Market Street, Tacoma, WA 98402
PRESENT: Chris Beale (Chair), Stephen Wamback (Vice-Chair), Jeff McInnis, Meredith Neal,
Anna Petersen, Brett Santhuff, Dorian Waller, Jeremy Woolley
ABSENT: Scott Winship

A. CALL TO ORDER AND QUORUM CALL

Chair Beale called the meeting to order at 4:04 p.m. A quorum was declared.

B. APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES OF AUGUST 17, 2016

The agenda was approved. The minutes of the regular meeting on August 17, 2016 were reviewed and approved as submitted.

C. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Chair Beale opened the floor for public comments. The following citizens testified:

- 1) Eleanor Brekke:
Ms. Brekke commented that she was a commercial property owner and stakeholder in the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood. She noted that a quorum of commercial property owners had expressed concerns about some of the concepts in the draft Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan currently under development and that more time was needed to address them. Ms. Brekke commented that the proposed road plan was unrealistic and came with significant added expense to private property owners. She commented that property owners needed to be able to own, operate, and redevelop properties without undue risk, regulation, or financial burden imposed by the City's long range neighborhood plan.
- 2) Valarie Fyalka-Munoz:
Ms. Fyalka-Munoz commented that she objected to the street network proposed in the draft Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan. She added that the proposal splits many parcels and reduces property values. She noted that the financial impact had not been discussed and that the City would be taking out buildings that generate \$60 million in retail sales per year. She suggested that they let the property owners maintain the roads in their own parcels. She commented that the city is setting the stage for devaluing the northwest quadrant of the study area and cutting their own tax base.

D. DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan

Elliott Barnett, Planning Services Division, provided an update on the status of the project. He reviewed that the plan was for a 600 acre area including the Mall and several surrounding neighborhoods. He reviewed that the area was a regional growth center and that the purpose of the project was to meet growth management requirements to identify areas where they can concentrate growth to accommodate long range planning targets. He noted that after feedback from business and commercial property owners, they had determined that it was necessary to take two months for additional engagement to work through the issues.

The project approach was discussed. Mr. Barnett reported that they had taken a placemaking approach to the project, knowing that there was significant difference between the patterns on the ground and the idea of a compact, walkable, transit oriented place. He commented that components of the approach included improvements to quality of life, water quality, air quality, investment climate, and development quality. He added that circulation and mobility were also large issues for the neighborhood. Mr. Barnett commented that the programmatic environmental review would look at area-wide issues and potential actions that can be achieved.

Key themes from stakeholders had included that it was a great location with connections to transit infrastructure; was affordable; that they needed to develop a sense of place; that they needed to develop a more positive identity; that more green infrastructure was needed; that the area needed to be more walkable and transit ready; that they needed to promote housing affordability; and that they needed to promote public health. The two themes that they needed to focus more time on were that the need to ensure that it would be an economic plan and recognize the importance of the existing businesses.

Mr. Barnett reviewed that the main outcome of the previous year's design process was an illustrative vision plan with four distinct quadrants. He noted that there were areas where additional street connections were important and that there was an opportunity to link the four quadrants with a loop road and complete the streets throughout the neighborhood. Mr. Barnett reviewed existing issues with transportation including poor connectivity, traffic directed onto arterials, safety issues, lack of bike lanes, gaps in pedestrian facilities, and the need to shift the mode share towards other choices. The current plan proposed the following actions to improve the street network: reconnecting the grid, refining the zoning, completing the street network, improving regional and local access, handling growth through mode share and internal capture, and introducing an internal connection to the northwest quadrant.

Mr. Barnett reported that they were also proposing changes to the current zoning. He reviewed that the area was zoned largely for high density mixed-use development with some light industrial along the edge. He reported that they were proposing extending the mixed-use zoning district towards the Nalley Valley area and refining the zoning to provide high, medium, and low intensities of development. He noted that the current code would not have allowed some of the development patterns present today; requiring that buildings are oriented towards the street, providing pedestrian connections, and locating parking behind buildings. He commented that in anticipating projected growth, they could do better than the current development regulations that are in place because while development would be required to provide things like pedestrian connections, it might not result in a logical network. He commented that they consider it an economic growth plan as it would include tools like up-front environmental review, infrastructure coordination, incentives, and more predictability. They also wanted to see more City leadership in providing investment, attracting regional funding, and completing offsite improvements.

Mr. Barnett reviewed that at a recent stakeholder meeting they had heard concerns related to the street network and zoning changes. Concerns expressed by stakeholders had also included potential impacts to businesses, who would pay for the construction of new street connections, what the City is willing to commit to in terms of providing infrastructure improvements, and the development thresholds for connectivity requirements. He reported that for the next two months they would set up a series of smaller meetings to go back to the core principles of things like the street network concept, clarify the project purpose, consider how people might want to utilize their property in the future, explore options for how to achieve objectives, discuss potential impacts at greater detail, identify the benefits, provide details on phasing, and see how the city can add value to the neighborhood. Mr. Barnett reviewed the next steps and asked Commissioners to consider attending the November stakeholder meeting.

Commissioners provided the following comments and questions:

- Commissioner McInnis asked if other options for connections in the northwest quadrant had been considered other than the angled road. Mr. Barnett responded that they had also considered following the existing street grid, though it wouldn't follow topography or consider placemaking.
- Commissioner McInnis asked if there would be transitional zoning outside of the proposed mixed-use expansion. Mr. Barnett reviewed the proposed zoning, which would still allow industrial uses but also allow for mixed-use residential to provide more flexibility for property owners.

- Vice-Chair Wamback suggested that they identify whether some of the proposed future roads used to be City streets that were dedicated back to the adjoining property owners.
- Vice-Chair Wamback commented that there was an obligation for business owners and the City to disclose to the people who live in the area which businesses are in opposition to the plan.
- Chair Beale commented that it was important that the Mall be fully aware of what was going on and that their participation and opinion would be important.
- Chair Beale asked if there were options for thresholds of redevelopment that would trigger the proposed street grid. He suggested that there could be different thresholds with design standards for parking lots that would create functionally equivalent roads and allow for pedestrian movement across lots in the interim.
- Chair Beale asked where they were in terms of the EIS process. Mr. Barnett responded that the intent was to bring forward the draft EIS at the same time as the draft subarea plan. Chair Beale commented that the lack of walkability had implications on health and they needed to consider whether they were doing any kind of health impact assessment.
- Chair Beale commented that he liked the concept of placemaking and asked if they were addressing key improvements that create a sense of place. He asked how they were addressing public rights of way, infrastructure and tree canopy relative to the city goals. He suggested discussing placemaking with the general public.

2. Residential Infill Pilot Program

Lauren Flemister, Planning Services Division, provided an update on the status of the program. Ms. Flemister reviewed that the purpose of the pilot program was to create demonstration projects to assess if the housing types proposed made sense for the zoning districts. The program would also allow continued dialogue with home owners, developers, citizens, and neighborhoods. It would also create an environment where quality projects are expected and can become the norm. The housing types included in the program were detached accessory dwelling units (DADUs), Multifamily Developments of up to six units, Two Family/Townhouses that look like single family, and Cottage Housing. Ms. Flemister reviewed the zoning districts included in the pilot program for each housing type.

The draft program handbook was discussed. Ms. Flemister reviewed that the finished book would be around 30 pages printed slightly larger than a pamphlet. She reviewed the structure of the handbook, noting that the Introduction section would include an explanation of which housing types would require the use of CUPs. The section covering the types of infill would include the process and what the typologies could look like based on code. The Pilot Program section would include code references, timelines specific to housing types, and where infill projects can happen. The Resources section would provide examples from other cities and list relevant Planning Commission meetings.

The next steps were discussed. Ms. Flemister reviewed that there would be community outreach including attendance of Neighborhood Council Meetings to discuss what housing types could be coming to their neighborhoods, press releases, a webpage, and “early involvement meetings” during the review process prior to the review committee’s determinations. Membership of the review committee would include City designees, appointees from Neighborhood Councils, an urban designer/architect, and a Landmarks Preservation Commissioner for historically significant projects. Commissioner Neal suggested including someone from the Planning Commission and the Master Builders Association on the committee.

The administrative process was discussed. Ms. Flemister reported that they still needed to develop application materials for the pilot program, add Accela (the department’s permitting and project tracking program) inputs to flag pilot projects moving into permitting, and work with current planning to make sure that procedures were conveyed at the counter and online. For site development/utility issues they would need to develop metering requirements for ADUs, consider parking, consider site drainage, and determine half street improvement requirements.

Commissioners provided the following comments and questions:

- Vice-Chair Wamback asked if they could reduce the requirements for site development and utilities to help determine if it would be feasible long term. He commented that they could structure it so that they can gather data while not making it so onerous that no one does it.

- Commissioner Neal asked if they could change the floor area limits for cottage housing from the maximum 0.5 FAR required for overall site to 50% of lot size instead. Brian Boudet, Planning Services Division Manager, noted that content of the handbook was based on the code that had already been recommended by the Commission and adopted by the Council.
- Vice-Chair Wamback asked if the criteria used to determine whether the pilot program had been successful would be available up front. He commented that having a Commissioner involved in the advisory group would be unnecessary if they had a transparent evaluation process with the checklist up front.
- Commissioner Santhuff noted that the image being used to represent two-family housing on page 8 had garages on two streets, which was an approach they did not want to advocate. He suggested using an image that looks more like a single family house.
- Chair Beale expressed concern that they spend time discussing what ADUs are intended for, but don't provide much in terms of architectural standards. He asked if they could include some language that requires the applicant to provide some of that information
- Chair Beale asked if some of the required private open space for cottage housing could be located between the walkway to the common open space and the building to ensure that the private open space wasn't entirely located between buildings where no one would use it. Ms. Flemister responded that they will make it clear that there is some flexibility to be creative.
- Chair Beale commented that when a novice comes into a process like this, where it's a fairly technical review, they need to be clear about what the expectations and criteria are.
- Chair Beale noted that one requirement for cottage housing was that landscaping be designed in an attractive way. He commented that the language might need some specificity. He also noted that the application checklist lacked a preliminary landscape plan requirement.

3. Election of Officers

Lihuang Wung, Planning Services Division, reviewed that according to the Commission's bylaws, nominations and elections of the Chair and Vice-Chair would occur at the first meeting of September each year. As the first meeting of September had been cancelled, Mr. Wung suggested that the present meeting would be an appropriate place to hold the nominations and elections.

Chair Beale opened the floor for Vice-Chair nominations. Commissioner Neal nominated Vice-Chair Wamback. Commissioner McInnis seconded. There were no additional nominations. Vice-Chair Wamback was elected to continue as Vice-Chair by a unanimous vote.

Chair Beale opened the floor for Chair nominations. Vice-Chair Wamback nominated Chair Beale. Commissioner Neal seconded. There were no additional nominations. Chair Beale was elected to continue as Chair by a unanimous vote.

Chair Beale and Vice-Chair Wamback would serve in their respective capacities through September 2017.

E. COMMUNICATION ITEMS & OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Boudet provided the following updates:

- The City Manager would present the proposed budget to the City Council on October 4. The Planning and Development Services department had highlighted two opportunities: an enhanced design process and continued progress on the Historic Preservation program.
- Staff was continuing to look at possible joint meetings with other Commissions and additional engagement with neighborhood councils. They would be holding planning forums around the community to build understanding about how development decisions get made.
- The City Manager indicated that after discussion with Lamar, which had purchased all of Clear Channel's billboards in Tacoma, there would be a 45 day extension to the standstill agreement.

F. ADJOURNMENT

At 5:48 p.m., the meeting of the Planning Commission was concluded.