



**MINUTES** (Approved on 3-1-17)

**TIME:** Wednesday, February 15, 2017, 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), Meredith Neal, Anna Petersen,  
Brett Santhuff, Dorian Waller, Scott Winship, Jeremy Woolley  
**ABSENT:** Jeff McInnis

**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 FEBRUARY 1, 2017**

The agenda was approved. The minutes of the regular meeting on February 1, 2017 were reviewed and approved as submitted.

**C. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

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

- (1) John Burkhalter:  
Mr. Burkhalter commented that he needed clear language on how the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan would be implemented and how the connectivity requirements would be triggered. He commented that they needed certainty that they could do tenant improvements and expand retail space without triggering requirements. He asked how nonconforming uses would be addressed in the plan.
- (2) Beverly Bowen-Bennett:  
Ms. Bowen-Bennett commented that since they were giving up their right of appeal once the subarea plan was passed, they needed a plan that was right for the residents, property owners, and business owners. She suggested that there be no front doors on alleys, that streets be accessible, and that they don't put streets through existing buildings. She commented that she was not against the plan, but that she wanted to make sure it was the best plan.

**D. DISCUSSION ITEMS**

**1. Dialogue with the Sustainable Tacoma Commission**

Peter Hickman, Sustainable Tacoma Commission (STC), reviewed that the STC was created in 2008 and that the initial focus was the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. He commented that with the Environmental Action Plan (EAP) they now had more elements that they were looking at. Mr. Hickman reviewed that they had six defined roles: to request research and analysis on sustainability issues from staff; to provide policy, program, and budget recommendations to the City Council; to request updates on implementation of sustainability policies and results; to provide an annual progress report to the public; to coordinate and encourage public involvement in sustainability initiatives; and developing an annual work program identifying Commission goals.

Mr. Hickman reviewed accomplishments of the STC from 2016. For the reusable bag ordinance, they had conducted outreach, hosted a survey, sent a letter to the Infrastructure, Planning, and Sustainability Committee, held a world record bag build, and spoken to the City Council in favor of the Bellingham

model. For the proposed methanol plant, they had sent a letter to the Planning Department. For the EAP, they had conducted outreach, sent letters to the City Council and the Planning Commission, and sent a letter of recommended budget priorities. Kristi Lynett, Environmental Policy and Sustainability, added that their office had been successful in securing funding for some key EAP actions.

Priorities for 2017 were reviewed. Mr. Hickman reported that for the Building and Energy category they would prioritize green building advocacy, resource conservation management, and incentivizing energy conservation in rental properties. For education and outreach, they would prioritize supporting the South Sound Sustainability Expo, Bring Your Own Bag outreach, and the Sustainability Speaker Series. For Transportation, they would prioritize the Green Roads Community, development of electric vehicle programs, and incentives for fuel efficient and alternative fuel vehicles. The climate resiliency priority for the year was the Washington Coastal Resilience Grant. For the material management category, they would be prioritizing work on the Construction and Demolition Diversion program, requiring adequate space for recycling in new buildings, and reducing disposable bag use. For natural systems, they would develop the Urban Forestry Implementation Strategy and improve regulations for tree preservation. For the air and local food category, they would prioritize supporting urban agriculture. Alexandra Brewer, STC's Climate Resiliency Subcommittee, reported that there were climate resiliency goals in the EAP that examined if there was a role for zoning. She added that in her subcommittee it was a priority to establish relationships with the Planning Commission as they start to look at those objectives.

Commissioners provided the following questions and comments:

- Chair Beale noted items from the 2017 priority list that were relevant to the Planning Commission including tree preservation, the construction and demolition diversion program, adequate space and receptacles for recycling, electric vehicle infrastructure, and green building advocacy.
- Chair Beale suggested that a member from the Planning Commission could attend one of the STC subcommittee meetings.
- Chair Beale commented that they could work together on code related issues and that the STC could also send written recommendations.
- Commissioner Waller asked how their work would affect the average person. Ms. Brewer responded that in subcommittees they had discussed issues related to renters and sustainability like the food composting initiative which was not accessible to renters.
- Commissioner Neal asked how they could tie in the public feedback that the STC receives for things like tree canopy goals and if there was a way to loop the STC in to see if they are meeting goals. Ms. Lynett responded that they had received funding to help write an urban forestry implementation strategy with a large stakeholder involvement process and parts of it would likely come to the Commission.
- Commissioner Santhuff noted that the Tacoma Mall Subarea Plan had some elements around storm water, which had an eco-district quality, and that they also had the potential to strengthen policies on sharing systems across different property lines to be more sustainable. He expressed interest in the STC giving their thoughts as they worked on those items in the future.
- Commissioner Santhuff suggested that they could collaborate on developing criteria for acquisition priorities from an environmental and quality of life standpoint for privately owned forested areas and sensitive slopes.
- Commissioner Santhuff asked if any action was being considered to divert, in a more useful way, the recyclable and compostable waste from businesses that was going directly into the garbage. Ms. Lynett responded that a 2017 goal of the solid waste route supervisors was to have a conversation with every customer. Commissioner Neal asked if they had those conversations with the school district as well. Ms. Lynett responded that when the school district hired their sustainability manager they would seek to address that with them.
- Vice-Chair Wamback commented that there isn't a body sending the message that density is the cure for some environmental problems and that the STC had the opportunity to do that.
- Chair Beale commented that if they were working on an item and the STC saw a connection to the EAP, he would like to see letters from them on the relevant policy in the action plan.

## **2. Hilltop Links to Opportunity Program**

Ian Munce, Planning and Development Services, reviewed that the Hilltop Links to Opportunity Program is a joint effort of Sound Transit and the City of Tacoma and that they had received a \$2 million grant from the Federal Transit Administration to improve social and economic development along the Tacoma Link Light Rail Expansion corridor, applying the recommendations of the Hilltop Subarea Plan. Mr. Munce reported that the majority of the grant funding would allow them to engineer what the streetscape would look like from the curb of the sidewalk to the building along Martin Luther King Jr. Way (“MLK”). They would also be coordinating street improvements with the developers of several mixed-use projects along MLK. He noted that to ensure successful work in streetscape design and engineering and workforce development, they would conduct comprehensive outreach as a critical component of the project. He reviewed that the Hilltop Engagement Committee established by the City Council was meeting monthly to guide the project. Mr. Munce reported that in the next several months they would be working on the conceptual design and that they would also be coming up with criteria to hire people with Hilltop connections. They also had small community grants to help work with some of the stakeholders so that they could conduct their own outreach.

Commissioner Neal asked if the bike lanes would be on the neighboring street since the width of MLK would not support a dedicated bike lane. Mr. Munce confirmed that they would locate the bike boulevard on South J Street, but would also consider that people would still ride bikes on MLK in the design parameters. Commissioner Neal asked if there would be funds for improvements on the bike boulevard. Mr. Munce responded that they had enough money to do conceptual design but not engineering.

Chair Beale asked if the Sound Transit had familiarity with labor agreements that require a certain percentage of contractors to be local. Mr. Munce noted that Sound Transit has their own requirement for labor agreements for each of their projects. He noted that the project labor agreement was the one crossover piece between the rail expansion and the streetscape enhancement projects.

Commissioner Winship asked if they would seek a grant for streetscape improvements. Mr. Munce responded that they would seek funding from a gas tax allocated by the Puget Sound Regional Council.

## **3. Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan**

Elliott Barnett, Planning Services Division, facilitated a discussion to continue reviewing the draft plan document, focusing on the development of medium and long term vision documents as well as residential development, housing, and neighborhood related issues.

The medium term vision concept was discussed. Mr. Barnett reviewed that it had been difficult for people to envision how they would get from the present to the long term plan and that they had developed a document to help explain how development would unfold over time. He discussed a map of the medium term vision which focused on improving what was already present with the addition of Tier 1 street connections and completion of short to mid-term capital projects. Commissioner Waller asked what the inspiration for the medium term concept was. Mr. Barnett responded that it was to show what City investment in the neighborhood’s street network could be done to improve what was already there.

The long term vision was discussed. Mr. Barnett commented that the long term vision map depicts a different development pattern where buildings had been replaced by redevelopment and there were new streets. He reported that they intended to develop some alternative layouts and street connections to convey that there was no single way to develop the street network. He noted that street improvements, Tier 2 connections, and concepts for site access connections would be shown on the map. Commissioner Santhuff commented that the street trees shown on South Pine Street and 38<sup>th</sup> Street suggested that they might be considered Tier 1 streets for improvements. Mr. Barnett responded that the medium term map included capital projects like improvements to Pine Street and 38th Street. Chair Beale expressed concern that there was still a lot of surface parking on the long term vision map, adding that if they were going to use it as a communication tool he would like them to think more about the density of buildings shown on the long term vision map. Commissioner Winship asked if there was a timeframe associated with mid-term and long term. Mr. Barnett responded that the distinction was not based on time but on the implementation actions that will have taken place. Vice-Chair Wamback noted several inconsistencies

between the two maps including the addition of low density housing along Fife Street in the medium term map.

Residential, neighborhood, and housing topics were discussed. Mr. Barnett stated that this grouping of topics was intended to address the key concerns and actions relevant to residents. Mr. Barnett stated that the following actions are intended to address residents goals and concerns: Improving streets and alleys; achieving better outcomes through future development; providing neighborhood amenities like parks and neighborhood serving businesses which are currently missing; empowering residents to take charge of their neighborhoods; and ensuring that the neighborhood remain affordable and diverse when growth occurs. Mr. Barnett commented that more recently they had heard about the need for more focus on near-term actions. Mr. Barnett then discussed the actions recommended in the Plan for each of those topics, as well as indicating additional recommended refinements to the Preliminary Draft.

Fixing alleys and streets was discussed. Mr. Barnett reviewed that issues included poor pavement conditions, incomplete sidewalk systems, and unpaved alleys. He commented that the medium to long-term actions recommended by the subarea plan included City capital projects, adding that the plan would position them to bring in funds for those projects. He noted that an \$8 million green roads grant for the Madison neighborhood had already been preliminarily approved. For private development, they would be enhancing their guidance and would be getting improvements as development occurs. However, those actions would take place over the course of years and would not be timely in addressing pressing concerns.

Allyson Griffith, Neighborhood and Community Services, discussed additional actions to improve street and alley conditions in the near-term. She reported that they would look at temporary fixes to better define street edges and garbage collection retrofits for some of the existing developments where it had not been well planned at the time of development. She briefly discussed the services offered by NCS through 311 and discussed green features including the street tree program, de-paving, and community gardens. Ms. Griffith noted that the Madison neighborhood had one community garden that they would look at moving as the medium term vision map showed South 40<sup>th</sup> Street going through the current space. Vice-Chair Wamback requested that they not open the street up without a new garden built in a location that is desired by the residents in the area.

Residential zoning changes intended to achieve better development outcomes were discussed. Mr. Barnett commented that the proposed zoning changes were based around the idea of identifying core areas where the current character is primarily residential and lower scale and having the zoning reflect that. In the Madison district the zoning was proposed to be changed from mixed-use to low density multifamily and the height limit would be reduced. In the Lincoln Heights district the proposal was for mid-density residential. There would also be transitions in terms of the scale of the areas immediately around those districts.

Chair Beale asked for an explanation on the change and whether they were meeting their targets for the Puget Sound Regional Council growth centers update. Mr. Barnett responded that the change was based on community input that reflected an appreciation for the residential character and scale in those two areas. Mr. Barnett noted that they had several times more development capacity in the current zoning than they were planning for even if they met the targets of doubling jobs and tripling residents by 2040.

Vice-Chair Wamback commented that if they wanted quality residential development they needed to allow for the height and the massing that would make it economically feasible to have that quality. He expressed concern that the proposal would allow the current pattern of development to continue while taking away the right of people who live in the area to appeal bad development. He added that it seemed unfair to put responsibility on commercial property owners to plan for a different future and then plan for a lower density residential area.

Chair Beale recommended that they bring the residential zoning changes back as a focus item.

Mr. Barnett discussed considerations that had gone into the proposed residential zoning changes including compatibility with existing development patterns; scaling the level of development to lower than downtown; and the connection between the density the green stormwater strategy. He indicated that the green roads approach would only work if the Madison area stays below a certain threshold of density.

Brian Boudet, Planning Services Division Manager, commented that while they were talking about lowering density, the area would still become a dense neighborhood with the proposed zoning, adding that the proposed downzoning would not affect the residential capacity in a significant way. Vice-Chair Wambach commented that in the packet there was messaging that they were downzoning and limiting it to residential land uses, which sent the message that the district would no longer be mixed-use, which he felt was not appropriate for a regional growth center.

Commissioner Santhuff stated he was generally supportive of the residential enclaves concept, and recommended several refinements to the proposed land use map, suggesting that major boundaries on alleys should be shifted to streets instead. He asked why they were leaving the small area of URX south of 47<sup>th</sup> Street when it could be made UCX instead, allowing more density. He questioned if they needed the Neighborhood Mixed-Use area in the center of the Madison residential enclave, suggesting that they could move it to 43rd and Lawrence if the zone was still needed in the neighborhood.

Townhouse design was discussed. Mr. Barnett reviewed recommended changes for townhouse design standards including requiring that building frontages connect to the street; allowing front doors on alleys only if the alley is like a small street with a sidewalk and landscaping; and requiring a clear pedestrian pathway to front doors. Mr. Barnett added that the code language regarding utility and garbage collection siting would need to be strengthened. He discussed landscaping and yards, reporting that they were proposing requiring street trees for 1, 2, and 3 family residences; proposing 15% onsite canopy coverage; and strengthening the standards for functional yard space. Commissioner Santhuff noted that utility lines can impact height of trees, asking if they had a goal of undergrounding utilities. Mr. Barnett responded that the plan did call for undergrounding as the preferred way to handle utilities. He added that overhead utilities, when present, would not make it infeasible to meet the proposed canopy requirement since there was flexibility in the City's methodology for canopy calculation and a fee in lieu option if it was not feasible.

Community Vitality was discussed. Mr. Barnett reviewed that the community vitality chapter focused on actions including fostering a positive identity; bringing in more arts and culture; increasing local serving goods and services; improving safety; looking at the Madison School site as a hub; empowering the community; and improving parks, open space, and recreation. For the Madison school site he reported that staff would develop several redevelopment scenarios for the site as the Commission had previously requested.

For the parks and open space chapter, Mr. Barnett commented that they were proposing to make a stronger statement regarding the need for park space; replacing the parks system map with a more schematic map showing a generalized concept of a parks system; researching parks level of service alternatives; and strengthening the language for connections to other parks. Commissioner Santhuff commented that the sites shown in three of the quadrants of the long term vision map made sense from a development standpoint and that he hoped that the plan would identify them so that the City could work with Metro Parks to secure them. Commissioner Woolley asked if they had coordinated with public agencies that already have a stake in two of the four quadrants. Mr. Barnett responded that they had been communicating with Metro Parks and the school district to come up with the details of the parks approach. Chair Beale asked if there was a master plan for Lincoln Heights Park, noting that people who live in the area go to Wapato Hills Park and that similar features could help.

Housing was discussed. Mr. Barnett reviewed that housing was relatively affordable in the area, but that that it was a low income area with many cost burdened residents. Actions proposed included promoting development where transit was available; reaching out to developers and using existing tools through the Housing Division and public housing providers to encourage incorporation of community and green spaces; meeting a 25% affordability target and incorporate affordability into development; providing for low income and special needs housing; and monitoring the supply of affordable housing. Minor modifications recommended by the Housing Division included revising the previous proposed "no net loss" of affordable housing with a benchmark of 25% of housing being affordable, and developing a safety net for cost burdened households.

Mr. Barnett noted that for community empowerment, actions would include calling for the development of an implementation committee. Proposed modifications include dedicating more city resources to support

neighborhood empowerment and committing to regular implementation updates from staff every two years to neighborhood groups as well as to Council.

Chair Beale asked if the Transportation Commission had seen the updated connectivity proposal. Mr. Barnett responded that he had presented to them several times, with the last time being a few months ago. Chair Beale requested that he loop them back in at some point, possibly when they have a draft available for review.

#### **E. COMMUNICATION ITEMS & OTHER BUSINESS**

Mr. Boudet updated the Commission on the following items:

- (1) The UWT Urban Studies forum on immigrant labor in the economy would be on February 16.
- (2) The City Council had appointed Elizabeth Pauli to be interim city manager.
- (3) The first of the Planning and Development Services public forums had been held on February 13<sup>th</sup> and the next was scheduled for March 13<sup>th</sup> at Gray Middle School.

#### **F. ADJOURNMENT**

At 6:38 p.m., the meeting of the Planning Commission was concluded.