



MINUTES

(Approved 06-16-2021)

TIME: Wednesday, April 21, 2021, 5:00 p.m.

PRESENT (virtually): Anna Petersen (Chair), Jeff McInnis (Vice-Chair), Ryan Givens, David Horne, Christopher Karnes, Brett Santhuff, Andrew Strobel, Alyssa Torrez

ABSENT: Carolyn Edmonds

A. CALL TO ORDER AND QUORUM CALL

Chair Petersen called the meeting to order at 5:02 p.m. A quorum was declared.

Chair Petersen read the Land Acknowledgement.

B. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda for the meeting was approved as submitted.

C. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Public comments were not accepted for the Discussion Item, which was the subject of a recent public hearing.

D. CONTACT DISCLOSURE

E. DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. Home In Tacoma Project

The Planning Commission had conducted a public hearing on the subject on April 7, 2021 and left the record open through April 9 to accept additional written comments. Elliott Barnett, Planning Services Division, facilitated the Commission's debriefing of the public hearing and review of comments received. He began with an outline of objectives for the discussion. An overview of the current Phase 1 of the Home In Tacoma Project and the content of materials released to the public were provided. Mr. Barnett also reviewed the public comments received in the public engagement process and categorized them into seven (7) main themes. The levels of support and opposition seen in the comments were roughly equal.

Vice-Chair McInnis commented on the citywide Missing Middle Housing approach, which he did not necessarily agree with, and encouraged looking at the issue by individual neighborhoods. Commissioner Givens supported Vice-Chair McInnis's comments and wanted more commitment in the plan to address affordable housing at neighborhood level. Additionally, he would like further clarification in the code language regarding housing types subject to Conditional Use Permits (CUPs). Commissioner Torrez expressed support for the project with some modifications based on public comments. She was pleased with the public engagement efforts and was actually in support of the citywide approach as she considered it more equitable. Commissioner Karnes agreed with Commissioner Torrez, adding that housing supplies and market were different at this time than in the 1990s, and there was prejudice against renters in the public comments. He wanted to get specific about housing types and design standards. Commissioner Strobel discussed the plan's vision and the City's growth strategy, urging the City to implement plans that

would be able to accommodate the projected growth. Commissioner Santhuff preferred the Evolve option to the Transform one, and wanted a well-planned Phase 2 of this project. Commissioner Horne commented on the issue of renters vs. homeowners and equitable approach, as well as advocated for increased density. Chair Petersen stated that this phase was to set the vision for the overall plan and specific codes would be discussed in details at subsequent times. She was supportive of increasing density in the whole City, citing equitable housing choices and opportunities. She also emphasized that the proposal was not to remove Single Family Housing, but rather to expand the housing types and supplies. The extensive level of community outreach was also mentioned.

Heidi Aggeler, Root Policy Research, presented the reasoning for Missing Middle Housing and how they could promote affordability. Commissioner Santhuff had questions regarding flexibility to convert single-family dwellings into duplexes or houses with accessory dwelling units (ADUs) to generate additional income and encourage ownership.

Regarding the project timing and engagement, the Commission wanted to make sure the next phase of the project would have ample time to discuss it thoroughly, but also efficiently so that the housing crisis due to lack of housing supplies would not be prolonged more than necessary. Commissioner Strobel requested additional data on how affordability was changing in the City to provide context for the housing crisis and the proposals.

The meeting was recessed at 6:18 p.m. and resumed at 6:23 p.m.

Mr. Barnett continued that from the public comments, the Low-scale Residential designation was more broadly supported than the Mid-scale option. There were concerns with the Mid-scale designation such as building height, yard space, setback, traffic, etc. Commissioner Karnes suggested installing a limit of three-story buildings and only allowing four-stories in select areas. Commissioner Strobel put forward a tiered concept based on proximity to corridors or targeted centers. Commissioner Givens liked the draft language and agreed with previous Commissioners. Chair Petersen stated that there already existed neighborhoods with three-story buildings or higher, in which the Mid-scale housing could easily fit; she did not want the Commission to limit their options this early on in the process. Commissioner Torrez agreed. Commissioner Santhuff recommended having requirements for setbacks or height limit for four-story buildings, especially if adjacent to lower residential units. Commissioner Givens wanted explicit height limit added to the language.

Next, Mr. Barnett presented maps illustrating that there was a higher percentage of the Low-scale designation in the high-opportunity areas and Mid-scale in the low-opportunity areas. In terms of geography of the proposed residential designations, Commissioner Karnes suggested focusing Mid-scale housing along the corridors with required minimum standards for transit services, and less focus in the residential centers. Commissioner Santhuff supported reducing the Mid-scale buffers around the centers and setting a full-block buffer around corridors. Commissioner Strobel wanted to see a hybrid of both Evolve and Transform scenarios. Commissioner Horne supported the more aggressive scenario but wanted to make sure the buffers would not have adverse effects to the areas. Commissioner Torrez inquired about whether increasing density would attract more transit services or transit should be built first to accommodate increased density. Chair Petersen asked Commissioners for clarifications regarding the buffers surrounding the centers. The Commission discussed the potential of dedicating a subcommittee to study the subject of eliminating or modifying the buffers.

Moving on to the next topic, Chair Petersen cautioned against using views and historic neighborhoods to argue against change. She also mentioned traffic and parking issues. Commissioner Santhuff commented on demolition of non-landmarked properties and wanted to explore other ways to encourage mindful developments. Furthermore, he was concerned with parks and open spaces, suggesting collaboration with Metro Parks to proactively set a vision for these facilities. Commissioner Givens wanted to involve Impact Fees in the proposals to raise funds for developments.

Then, Ms. Aggeler went over the affordability and anti-displacement policy options. The Commission felt that incentives were necessary to promote developments. Commissioner Givens mentioned high permit

fees, street frontage maintenance, and tax reduction policies as areas for consideration. Commissioner Santhuff recommended the idea of requiring affordable units in Mid-scale developments and waiving Impact Fees for developments with affordable units. Commissioner Strobel concurred, adding that there should be other incentives to offset offsite improvements and other associated costs. Commissioner Karnes commented on the needs for transit services to make one-car or no-car families possible. Commissioner Torrez wanted to change the perception on developers, stating that many local organizations and developers strived to create more affordable housing, not all were fixed on making profit. Chair Petersen agreed with all comments.

Concerning near-term code changes, Chair Petersen wanted to make sure housing would not be pushed in unsuitable areas as seen in some public comments. Multiple Commissioners advocated for more housing on vacant lots in commercial areas and along corridors, as well as not limiting the height of ADUs. Chair Petersen would like to explore incentives for family-size apartments over smaller single-occupant units.

F. TOPICS OF THE UPCOMING MEETINGS

- 1) Agenda for May 5, 2021 meeting includes:
 - Home In Tacoma Project (Recommendation)
 - 2022 Amendment – Review of Applications
- 2) Agenda for May 19, 2021 meeting includes:
 - Impact Fees Program Update
 - 2022 Amendment – Assessment of Applications

G. COMMUNICATION ITEMS

The Commission acknowledged receipt of communication items on the agenda.

- 1) Status Reports by Commissioners
 - Commissioner Karnes reported that the Transit-Oriented Development Advisory Group was working on a White Paper on various topics and a joint letter with the Transportation Commission regarding the Tacoma Dome Link Extension within the context of Sound Transit's Program Realignment to be submitted to Sound Transit.
 - Chair Petersen briefed the Commission that the Housing Equity Taskforce had a meeting two weeks prior, but due to technical issues, they did not have sufficient participation and did not make any official decisions.
- 2) Brian Boudet, Planning Division Manager, informed the Commission of the following:
 - Sound Transit was conducting a survey on the realignment priority of the Link Extension.
 - The Tideflats and Industrial Land Use Regulations were scheduled for the City Council's Study Session and Public Hearing on April 27, 2021.
 - The Commission terms for District 2, 3, and 5 were coming up. Commissioners were invited to re-apply or encourage their affiliates to apply.

H. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

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