

Members

Donald Erickson, Chair
 Sean Gaffney, Vice-Chair
 Theresa Dusek
 Benjamin Fields
 Mark Lawlis
 Tina Lee
 Matthew Nutsch
 Erle Thompson
 Scott Winship



Minutes

Tacoma Planning Commission

Community and Economic Development Department

Ricardo Noguera, Director
 Peter Huffman, Assistant Director
 Charles Solverson, P.E., Building Official

Public Works and Utilities Representatives

Kurtis Kingsolver, Assistant Director/City Engineer, Public Works Department
 Heather Pennington, Resource Planning Manager, Tacoma Water
 Diane Lachel, Community and Government Relations Manager, Click! Network, Tacoma Power

747 Market Street, Room 1036
 Tacoma, WA 98402-3793
 253-591-5200 (phone) / 253-591-2002 (fax)
www.cityoftacoma.org/planning

(Approved on 12-5-12)

MEETING: Regular Meeting

TIME: Wednesday, November 7, 2012, 4:00 p.m.

PLACE: Room 16, Tacoma Municipal Building North
 733 Market Street; Tacoma, WA 98402

Members Present: Donald Erickson (Chair), Sean Gaffney (Vice-Chair), Theresa Dusek, Benjamin Fields, Mark Lawlis, Tina Lee, Erle Thompson, Scott Winship

Members Absent: Matthew Nutsch

Staff Present: Stephen Atkinson, Elliott Barnett, Brian Boudet, Ian Munce, Lucas Shadduck, Lihuang Wung (BLUS); Brian Boyd, Josh Jorgensen (Planning Interns); Jennifer Kammerzell (Public Works)

Chair Erickson called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. The minutes of the October 17, 2012 meeting were approved as submitted.

GENERAL BUSINESS**1. Annual Amendment #2013-01 Drive Through Regulations**

Elliott Barnett, Comprehensive Planning, stated that this application was submitted by the Dome District Development Group, which proposed that drive-throughs be prohibited Downtown and in most Mixed-Use Districts. Staff had reviewed the original proposal, conducted preliminary stakeholder outreach, and developed a modified proposal which would increase standards across all zones where drive-throughs are permitted, but would only prohibit them in one zone – the Downtown Commercial Core (DCC) District. The modified proposal is supported by the applicant, Mr. Barnett indicated.

Mr. Barnett explained the current code approach to drive-throughs. Some standards exist Downtown and within Mixed-Use Districts, but there is still significant latitude for drive-throughs in these areas, and no specific drive-through requirements apply in the other districts. The key issues amenable to zoning standards include pedestrian safety and comfort, stacking lane function and impacts, aesthetics, and impacts to adjacent properties. The proposal would address these concerns by strengthening code requirements, but still retaining the ability to develop drive-throughs in most zones. Standards would apply citywide where drive-throughs are allowed, with stronger standards in Mixed-Use Districts and the strongest standards Downtown. This approach is consistent with the City's goal for emphasizing pedestrian-friendly environment citywide. Jennifer Kammerzell, Engineering Division, also explained how the City addresses driveways and pedestrian and traffic safety when reviewing drive-through proposals.



The Commissioners discussed the proposal and raised several comments, questions and suggestions, including: that the proposed 75-foot setback requirement in Mixed-Use Districts could unduly impact potential developments, particularly on smaller lots; that the proposal might need to be tailored to approach different types of Centers, some of which are more auto-oriented and others more pedestrian-friendly; and that consideration should be given to how drive-through requirements work with driveway and parking requirements. Several Commissioners also questioned the idea of prohibiting drive-throughs within the DCC District, though there was agreement that they should be strictly regulated Downtown.

Ian Munce, Comprehensive Planning Manager, suggested that it might be strategic to retain the proposed DCC prohibition in the public review draft, in order to get public input on the broadest possible scope which could always be narrowed as a result of comments. The Commission concurred, and voted unanimously to authorize the release of the proposal for public review, subject to modifications by staff through further stakeholder outreach.

2. Annual Amendment #2013-09 Sign Regulations

Lucas Shadduck, Comprehensive Planning, presented the proposed amendments to the Sign Code (i.e., Tacoma Municipal Code Sections 13.06.520, 521 and 522), focusing on issues relating to on-premise digital signs. The proposal was prepared in response to the questions and concerns raised by the Commission during its review of the billboards (off-premise signs) regulations in 2010-2011. The Commission had found that many of the same concerns regarding digital billboards were also pertinent to on-premise digital signs.

Mr. Shadduck mentioned that staff had outreached to stakeholders, sign companies, and businesses when developing the proposed code amendment. The Commissioners suggested adding Historic Tacoma, experts in energy code and conservation, and persons or groups within the environmental community to the public outreach component. Mr. Shadduck then highlighted some technical issues relating to “brightness” and “message and transition frequencies” for signage and reviewed the rationale and methodologies used for developing the corresponding code amendments.

Discussion ensued. The Commissioners suggested that staff provide additional information concerning: how the brightness of signs is measured (perhaps by using a “sign meter”); examples of electronic message signs; how other municipalities handle the issues; restricted hours of operation (during night hours, in particular); location/zoning issues; and potential exemptions for existing signs, public facility sites and regional mall sites. The Commission requested that these suggestions and concerns be properly addressed before sending out a draft code for public review.

3. Annual Amendment #2013-05 Shoreline Related Elements

Stephen Atkinson, Comprehensive Planning, presented an update on proposed amendments to the Ruston Way Plan, Shoreline Trails Plan, and Foss Waterway Design and Development Plan. He indicated that during the final stage of the Commission’s review of the Shoreline Master Program (SMP) in 2011, staff had requested that these documents be rescinded and replaced by the SMP and the Public Access Alternatives Plan. The Commission had expressed concern about this approach and requested that staff consider ways of carrying forward the design and public access vision from these historic planning documents.

To address these concerns, Mr. Atkinson presented a framework for updating these documents. He provided background information on the SMP update, and detailed several ways in which elements of the Shoreline Trails Plan, Ruston Way Plan, and Foss Plan have already been incorporated into other planning documents, including the SMP, the Mobility Master Plan, and the Open Space Habitat and Recreation Plan. He also proposed further updates to the Public Access Alternatives Plan to better incorporate the vision from the past plans as well as the development of a Tacoma Waterfront Design Guidelines document to incorporate the design guidance from the historic waterfront plans. The Commission concurred with this approach. Chair Erickson summarized the salient points that he took from Mr. Atkinson’s presentation and commended him for his work.

COMMUNICATION ITEMS

Chair Erickson acknowledged receipt of the following information/announcements:

1. Cancellation of the Planning Commission's meeting on November 21, 2012 (approved unanimously by the Commissioners).
2. Final session of the "Conversation RE: Tacoma" Lecture Series on November 8, 2012 (featuring Chair Donald Erickson as one of the speakers).
3. Planning Commission Tentative Agenda for December 5, 2012.

COMMENTS BY COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING DIVISION

Lihuang Wung reported that he and Commissioner Thompson attended the "Short Course on Local Planning" in October 2012 conducted by the Department of Commerce (DOC) as part of the Annual Conference of the Washington Chapter of the American Planning Association. Chair Erickson mentioned that staff is working with DOC to bring a Short Course to Tacoma and he is looking forward to it.

COMMENTS BY PLANNING COMMISSION

None.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 6:17 p.m.