



MINUTES (Approved on 2-5-14)

TIME: Wednesday, January 22, 2014, 4:00 p.m.
PLACE: Council Chambers, Tacoma Municipal Building, 1st Floor
747 Market Street, Tacoma, WA 98402
PRESENT: Sean Gaffney (Chair), Scott Winship (Vice-Chair), Chris Beale, Tina Lee (excused at 4:45),
Alexandria Teague, Stephen Wamback
ABSENT: Benjamin Fields, Donald Erickson, Erle Thompson

A. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Gaffney called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m.

B. QUORUM CALL

A quorum was declared.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the regular meeting on January 8, 2014 were approved as submitted.

D. DISCUSSION ITEMS

The Commission suspended the rules and modified the order of discussion items as follows:

1. Mixed-Use Centers Code Review (MUC-Lite)
2. Public Hearing – Draft Hilltop Subarea Plan
3. Public Hearing – Temporary Homeless Camp Permitting Process
4. Affordable Housing Policy and Code Amendments
5. Urban Forestry Landscaping Code Update

1. Mixed-Use Centers Code Review (MUC-Lite) (Annual Amendment #2014-04)

Brian Boudet, Manager of the Planning Services Division, along with Ben Ferguson and Aaron Winston from BLRB architects, provided an update on the Mixed-Use Centers Code Review. The project includes two phases: (1) an internal review with staff to evaluate the existing regulatory standards applicable within the centers and identify potential barriers to achieving the desired development, and (2) outreach to stakeholders, particularly the development community, to get their direct input on what kinds of barriers they see to achieving the desired development. The project focuses on evaluation of the existing development requirements applicable within the Neighborhood Mixed-Use Centers, and particularly those applicable to mixed-use projects in the core of these districts. BLRB architects were hired to assist in the analysis, stakeholder engagement, and drafting of recommendations in the second phase of this project.

Mr. Ferguson proceeded to discuss the findings of a stakeholder interview with five local developers and a phone interview with three other local developers. Universally all of the developers said that the reason that development is not happening for them in Tacoma is that the market is poor; other factors include a lack of high-paying jobs, and a lack of interest in the Tacoma market for national banks and institutional lending and developers. Mr. Ferguson indicated that developers stated that policy was not the major issue causing a lack of development, though there were some suggestions for improvement, and that developers praised Tacoma as their favorite place to develop in the region because of the reasonability of the Planning and Development Services Department.

Mr. Boudet facilitated the Commissioners' review and discussion of potential code amendments based on the consultant's findings and recommendations; the amendments were intended to address multi-family uses prohibited at street level on core pedestrian streets, X-District height bonuses, yard space standards, mass reduction – upper floor street-front step-backs, residential transition standards – upper story step-backs, and off-street parking and storage areas. The Commissioners raised some issues concerning the time-sensitive approach for permitting work-live, people's attitudes about parking in different markets such as Seattle vs. Tacoma, the livability of a mixed-use center building with reduced yard space requirements, and whether some of the design and development standards are making mixed-use centers feel too suburban. Mr. Boudet finished the presentation and stated the intent is to come back at the next meeting with a draft proposal or different options for the recommendations.

2. Public Hearing – Draft Hilltop Subarea Plan

At 5:00 p.m., Chair Gaffney called the public hearing to order and reviewed the procedures. Mr. Boudet provided an overview of the Draft Hilltop Subarea Plan. Chair Gaffney called for testimony. The following citizens testified:

(1) **Justin Leighton, Hilltop Working Group:**

Mr. Leighton praised City staff for work over the past two years and collaborating with community groups, leaders, and residents. He acknowledged that the Hilltop Subarea Plan was not received well by both the community and the Hilltop Working Group when the process first started; the community wanted to make sure that the plan would be implementable, realistic, pragmatic, and reflecting shared values of the community. Mr. Leighton now believes the Plan accomplishes each of these tasks and looks forward to helping the City implement the Plan.

(2) **Connie Brown, Tacoma-Pierce County Affordable Housing Consortium:**

Ms. Brown extended compliments to City staff for including the community in the planning process and stated that the plan is a promising start to a resurgence of Hilltop because it incorporates business, fun, multimodal transportation and affordable housing.

(3) **Aaron Wilson, Hilltop Action Coalition:**

Mr. Wilson represented block leaders and stated that the overall feeling is enthusiasm about the project and they are thankful that it includes a thoughtful analysis of how to keep the people who live in Hilltop included in the community.

(4) **Timothy Johnson, Johnson Commercial Properties:**

Mr. Johnson thanked staff for allowing for a lot of input from different groups.

(5) **Liz Dunbar, Tacoma Community House:**

Ms. Dunbar commended staff for including everyone in the process and the Tacoma Community House looks forward to helping implement the visions in the plan and believes it will help include the community and provide more opportunities for the people that they serve. Ms. Dunbar noted that it will be a challenge to both encourage development and keep the character of the community as well.

(6) **Sean Lloyd:**

Mr. Lloyd requested clarification of the processes of the Planning Commission's meeting and two public hearings tonight. He also had questions regarding the Draft Hilltop Subarea Plan and whether "public testimony" entails interactive discussions about the Plan. Chair Gaffney explained the purpose and process of the public hearing and suggested Mr. Lloyd talk to staff after the hearing.

(7) **Josh Rizeberg, Hilltop Build and Destroy (B.A.D.):**

Mr. Rizeberg expressed concern that the Hilltop Subarea Plan over-represents the corporate interests of hospitals, real estate developers and only the people who've attended meetings, and indicated that some view this Plan as a form of gentrification.

(8) **Nick Brandenburg:**

Mr. Brandenburg expressed thanks for including many different groups in the planning process, at the same time he wanted to indicate that affordable housing is a key part of this plan and wants to make sure that businesses and people within the community have a stake in the process of developing the community over the coming years.

Seeing no more citizens coming forward to testify, Chair Gaffney reiterated that the public hearing record will remain open through January 24, 2014 to receive written comments, and closed the public hearing at 5:32 p.m.

3. Public Hearing – Temporary Homeless Camp Permitting Process

At 5:32 p.m., Chair Gaffney called the second public hearing to order and reviewed the procedures. John Harrington, Development Services Division, provided an overview of the proposed land use regulations concerning the Temporary Homeless Camp Permitting Process. Chair Gaffney called for public testimony. The following citizens testified:

(1) **Patricia Menzies, Tent City Tacoma:**

Ms. Menzies expressed the concern that the City is proposing regulations on the church run homeless camps that go over and above what other land uses in the neighborhoods would be expected to do, such as site obscuring fencing and requiring background checks for residents. This is not required for any other type of housing. There is a perception by some in the homeless community that the site obscuring fence purpose is to shield the “unwanted” use from the neighborhood. Ms. Menzies does not want showers to be required because of the financial and logistic difficulty of providing them. She feels that hygiene stations would be adequate.

(2) **Alan Oldskident, Tent City Tacoma:**

Mr. Oldskident believed that the City should not make rules specific to the camp except for health and safety. The existing camps allow residents to have dignity by allowing them to make many of their own rules and requiring community and camp service. The camps are essential because they are safer for a homeless person versus being out on their own.

(3) **Al Ratcliffe, Homeless Coalition:**

Mr. Ratcliffe confessed early skepticism and concern when this issue first came up, but over time the Homeless Coalition was able to work with Tent City Tacoma and City staff and now sees temporary homeless camps as a positive solution to housing for the homeless population and supports the general concept that this should be allowed. He supports the idea of self-governing by residents of the camps.

Seeing no more citizens coming forward to testify, Chair Gaffney reiterated that the public hearing record will remain open through January 24, 2014 to receive written comments, and closed the public hearing at 5:52 p.m.

4. Affordable Housing Policy and Code Amendments (Annual Amendment #2014-06)

Elliott Barnett, Planning Services Division, presented the proposal package, which was largely the same as what the Commission had reviewed at the last meeting on January 8, 2014. Staff changed the Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) parking requirement as requested by the Commission. Otherwise, the changes all pertained to the small lots provisions, which include allowing lot width down to 35 feet in the R-2 District. The Commission had directed staff to explore whether additional small lot standards are necessary to promote compatibility with the neighborhood pattern. Mr. Barnett stated that the biggest issue with neighborhood character has to do with encouraging lots to be oriented to the street and vehicular access to the rear of the site, which are already covered by the existing provisions. The proposal would add new height restrictions, clarify that lots and houses must be oriented to the street, and require one street tree. Staff also examined Floor Area Ratio (FAR) as a tool but is not recommending it at this time. The Affordable Housing Policy Advisory Group and the Master Builders Association are not in favor of adding FAR, Mr. Barnett indicated.

Discussion ensued. Commissioner Wamback stated he is disappointed that allowing detached ADUs in single family districts is not being proposed, at least as a Conditional Use. Mr. Barnett responded that issue is slated for consideration next year, per the City Council's work plan. Commissioner Beale requested staff examine the code provision that rent may not be received for owner occupied units, to verify it is legal, and to clarify that the owner could rent a room to a lodger. The Commission authorized the distribution of the proposal package for public review.

5. Urban Forestry Landscaping Code Update (Annual Amendment #2014-10)

Elliott Barnett, Planning Services Division, provided an overview of the proposed code amendments which relate to planting more, planting better, vegetation health, incentives and flexibility including sliding scale based on tree size, and an understandable and predictable approach. Mr. Barnett stated changes since the Commission's last review on December 18, 2013 include: changing the definition of tree size to be based on height, crown spread and growth rate; the self-managed agencies proposal 50% minimum would be replaced with an intent statement; street trees would be required in M-2 and in four specific corridors in the PMI District; and the specifics of the credits proposals.

Discussion ensued. The Commission directed staff to make several changes, including: provide more detail on planting area and requirements for parking lot landscaping; retain the current code's minimum tree trunk setbacks from curbs and infrastructure; add soil standards and mulching requirements; and add administrative flexibility to require a larger planting area width when appropriate for specific trees species.

Commissioner Beale requested further consideration of the issue of how the code will be implemented and verified. The Commission also discussed whether the code will actually help achieve more canopy coverage, and whether the intent has shifted back to a more traditional landscaping concept. The Commission discussed but did not reach consensus on adding a requirement that the largest tree be used for the available planting area. The Commission reiterated that enforcement is a significant issue. The Commission then authorized the distribution of the proposal package for public review, with the above changes as directed.

E. COMMUNICATION ITEMS AND OTHER BUSINESS

- (a) Mr. Barnett explained the memo to Planning Commission concerning Open Space Element Update (Annual Amendment #2014-08), dated January 16, 2014. The intent was to add a top priority projects list to the Open Space Element, which the Commission had already authorized for public review. Having this list is a way of strengthening grant applications and providing a forum for the City Council to express their priorities. The Commission concurred with adding the list. Commissioner Beale requested that the public review draft include the most up to date and accurate Open Space Inventory. Commissioner Wamback suggested that "Community Gardens Program" be changed to "Community Gardens".
- (b) Lihuang Wung, Planning Services Division, provided the following information:
- Planning Commission's Letter of Recommendation to the City Council concerning Tacoma Link Light Rail Expansion, January 15, 2014
 - Planning Manager's Letter to the Community regarding 2014 Annual Amendment, January 9, 2014
 - Agenda for the Planning Commission meeting, February 5, 2014.

F. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:55 p.m.