



MINUTES (Approved on 8-20-14)

TIME: Wednesday, August 6, 2014, 4:00 p.m.
PLACE: Room 16, Tacoma Municipal Building North
733 Market Street, Tacoma, WA 98402
PRESENT: Scott Winship (Vice-Chair), Chris Beale, Donald Erickson, Benjamin Fields, Alexandria Teague, Erle Thompson, Stephen Wamback
ABSENT: Sean Gaffney (Chair), Tina Lee

A. CALL TO ORDER

Vice-Chair Winship called the meeting to order at 4:01 p.m.

B. QUORUM CALL

A quorum was declared.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the regular meeting and public hearing on July 16, 2014 were approved as submitted.

D. DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. North Downtown Subarea Plan

The Planning Commission had conducted a public hearing on July 16, 2014, on the Draft North Downtown Subarea Plan and kept the record open through July 18 for written comments. Cheri Gibbons, Planning Services Division, facilitated the Commissioners' review of the Public Comments and Staff Responses and Suggestions Report that summarized public comments, provided staff responses, and suggested modifications to the draft plan where appropriate.

Public comments centered on the following three issues: (a) the Stadium Way hillside; (b) revised Stadium Business District boundaries; and (c) on-street parking within the Stadium District. Ms. Gibbons also distributed supplemental information concerning the Stadium District Parking that had been provided by Mr. Denny Faker of the Stadium Business District, in response to the Commission's request at the August 6th Planning Commission meeting. The supplemental information included a map and associated statement detailing where parking has been removed in the District from Mr. Faker's perspective.

The Commissioners discussed and considered the above issues, brought up another issue relating to the boundaries of the Reduced Parking Area (RPA), and contemplated potential modifications to the draft plan. Upon concluding the discussions, the Commission reached a consensus on the following suggestions and directives:

- Stadium Business District boundaries: After discussion at the meeting of the revised boundaries and Neighborhood Business District program, the Commissioners determined that including revised boundaries for the Business District Association in the North Downtown Plan would conflict with the criteria in the Tacoma Municipal Code 1.47, which sets standards for establishing the Business District, including size limitations. As a result of discussions with the Commission, the section describing the proposed Stadium Business District Boundary Revision was to be removed from the Plan.

- Recommendation LU-5 regarding on-street parking in the Stadium District: After reviewing materials provided by Ms. Gibbons regarding on-street parking in the Stadium District, public comments, existing parking requirements, and the Plan's recommendations regarding multi-modal transportation and parking management. It was proposed that Recommendation LU-5 be modified by removing the reference to the goal of adding a specific number of on-street parking spaces in the district and adding a provision that supports future transit and multi-modal improvements.
- Reduced Parking Area Expansion: After discussion, the Commissioners decided to add a goal statement to the North Downtown Plan to revisit the boundaries of the RPA boundaries by 2020 or the construction of the Link Light Rail Expansion, whichever comes first. This goal statement was added after concluding that the St. Helens neighborhood, where the revised RPA boundary will not extend, is mostly residential in nature, mostly built out, and will have the LINK expansion route passing through it.
- Based upon a public comment from Ms. Jane Moore, the Commission added a clarification that pedestrians are also allowed to use streets that are not "Designated Pedestrian Streets". This addition will assist readers in their reading of the Plan and eliminate confusion about the intent of Pedestrian Streets.

At the conclusion of the discussion, Ms. Gibbons stated that a Findings and Recommendations Report for the North Downtown Subarea Plan would be brought back to the Commission for review on August 20, 2014.

2. Tacoma Mall Center Subarea Plan and EIS

Elliott Barnett, Planning Services Division, provided an overview of the scope of work, schedule, key issues, and outreach strategy associated with the Tacoma Mall Center Subarea Plan and EIS project. He stated that a consultant team will be selected soon, and the project will take about two years concluding in mid-2016. The next update to the Planning Commission will likely be toward the end of 2014 or in early 2015. The project will follow the approach taken with the three Downtown Subarea Plans, and will be comprehensive in scope. Key issues include the vision for the area, transportation, stormwater management, economic development, housing, parks and open space, and access to schools. The product will be a subarea plan, programmatic environmental review under and area-wide Environmental Impact Statement, and implementation steps.

Discussion ensued. The Commissioners provided the following comments and suggestions:

- Consideration should be given to modifying the boundaries of the study area, potentially to incorporate more industrial areas to the south and west, and commercial areas across I-5.
- Branding, or refining the vision, for the area as more than just the mall itself will be important
- Incorporate policies pertaining to site design, urban form, and landscaping into the plan
- Open space, parks, bicycles and pedestrians connectivity are major issues
- Public rights-of-way are a major opportunity to accomplish multiple goals
- Explore "de-paving", or removing pavement, and adding landscaping and green features
- Gentrification may be an issue as housing costs increase
- Should the EIS encompass the entire area?
- Consider during the EIS process opportunities for setting aside areas for parks, schools, and other priorities
- Dumping is an issue

Dana Brown, Public Works Engineering, spoke about a proposal to add HOV lanes connected to I-5, and suggested expanding the study to include the I-5/S. 38th Street Interchange.

Mr. Barnett concluded the presentation by suggesting a site visit to the area, to which the Commissioners concurred.

E. COMMUNICATION ITEMS

Lihuang Wung, Planning Services Division, provided the following information:

- (a) A letter from Mayor Marilyn Strickland and T.C. Broadnax, City Manager, to Sound Transit, dated July 28, 2014, regarding Comments on Sound Transit Long-Range Plan Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement.
- (b) Agenda for the Infrastructure, Planning and Sustainability Committee meeting, August 13, 2014.
- (c) Agenda for the Planning Commission meeting, August 20, 2014.

Brian Boudet, Planning Division Manager, reported that the City Council has adopted the 2014 Annual Amendment to the Comprehensive Plan and the Land Use Regulatory Code on July 22, 2014. The Council appreciated the Planning Commission's analyses and recommendations on the subject.

Mr. Boudet reported that the City's strategic planning project, "Tacoma 2025", conducted a community workshop on July 30, 2014, and that pertinent information and outcomes of the project will be incorporated into the 2015 Comprehensive Plan Update. He indicated that the City is soliciting consultants for the 2015 Update and will invite the Chair of the Commission or his designee to participate in the consultant interview and selection process.

Commissioner Erickson referred to the Mayor's letter to Sound Transit, wherein it was indicated that the Transportation Commission, the City Council's Infrastructure, Planning and Sustainability Committee, and citizens of Tacoma had been consulted. He pointed out that the Planning Commission was never consulted on this important transportation issue before the letter was composed and sent out, and suggested that in the future City staff ensure better coordination among pertinent groups on relevant matters like this.

Commissioner Beale suggested that the Commission receive briefings on how effective are the adopted subarea plans and EISs in meeting challenges, assisting in development project reviews, and producing expected outcomes.

Commissioner Wambach requested clarifications on the membership and operations of the Community Working Group that is being established to assist the City in the review of the billboard regulations.

Commissioner Thompson indicated that he participated in the "Tacoma 2025" Community Workshop on July 30 and looks forward to seeing the report.

F. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:04 p.m.