



MINUTES (Approved on 6-3-15)

TIME: Wednesday, May 20, 2015, 4:00 p.m.
PLACE: Room 16, Tacoma Municipal Building North
733 Market Street, Tacoma, WA 98402
PRESENT: Chris Beale (Chair), Scott Winship (Vice-Chair), Donald Erickson, Meredith Neal,
Anna Petersen, Stephen Wamback
ABSENT: Benjamin Fields, Erle Thompson

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

Staff requested modifying the agenda by moving up discussion item D4. Work-Live and Live-Work Code Amendments to be D2. The agenda was approved as revised.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the regular meeting on May 6, 2015 were reviewed. Commissioner Erickson noted that the second sentence of page 2 needed clarification on the percentages regarding housing diversity. The minutes were approved as amended.

D. DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. Proposed Narrowmoor Addition Conservation District

Brian Boudet, Planning Services Division Manager, provided an update on the proposed Narrowmoor Addition Conservation District, which had been under review by the Landmarks Preservation Commission since May 2014 and would be before the Planning Commission in June to be considered as part of the 2015 Annual Amendment package. Mr. Boudet reported that there had been significant public outreach including a survey sent out to the community that had received feedback expressing support overall for the proposal. Mr. Boudet commented that one of the things that made the Narrowmoor area unique is that the character included site design and layout. He noted issues not addressed in the current design guidelines that might warrant consideration by the Commission including streetscape and trees. Reuben McKnight, Historic Preservation Officer, would provide more detail on the final recommendations of the Landmarks Preservation Commission at a future meeting.

Commissioners had the following comments and questions:

- Commissioner Wamback commented that it would be useful to eliminate any ambiguity in the packet and be clear which recommendations were specifically for the Conservation District and which were intended to be citywide.
- Vice-Chair Winship disclosed that he lives in the Narrowmoor area, adding that he has no direct financial benefit from the district and has no plans to recuse himself.
- Chair Beale requested additional information on issues pertaining to lot size requirements and the potential for future infill development. He expressed concern that they were not going to allow any further short plats or infill and requested more information on the reason for limiting the lot

coverage to 25%. Mr. Boudet responded that the low density was considered part of the neighborhood character and the lot restrictions would very likely restrict infill opportunities.

- Commissioner Neal requested information on the standard lot size.
- Commissioner Petersen requested notes on previous instances when the issue had been before the Planning Commission.

2. Live-Work & Work-Live Code Amendments

Elliott Fitzgerald, Planning Services Division, reviewed the findings and recommendations of a recently completed Work-Live Adaptive Reuse Code Compatibility Study for consideration in regards to potential amendments to the Land Use Regulatory Code. Mr. Fitzgerald reviewed that Live-Work and Work-Live units are a type of mixed-use development that eliminate the need to commute to work, provide affordable work and housing space, and support the creation of new businesses. Code amendments were developed in 2012 to promote these uses with an emphasis on the adaptive reuse of existing buildings in downtown Tacoma and the City's Mixed-Use Centers. The provisions that were adopted permit live-work and work-live units in downtown and Mixed-Use Centers only and limit the applicability to existing buildings. The existing provisions offer development flexibilities like not requiring additional parking and exempting exterior additions from design standards.

A study on the compatibility between the Building Code and the Land Use Regulatory Code had been recently finalized and included code precedents from other jurisdictions and case studies from three existing buildings in downtown Tacoma. The recommended revisions to the Land Use Code included: increasing allowable residential space, allowing "separated" Live-Work uses, eliminating restrictions for 20+ dwelling units, and removing limitations for new construction.

Mr. Fitzgerald discussed the need for a clearer distinction between a home occupation and a Live-Work unit. Staff was proposing a definition for Live-Work as a unit intended predominantly for living space with incidental accommodations for work related activities.

Mr. Fitzgerald reviewed the key issues: Looking at the existing provisions to see where clarification is needed and ensuring consistency with the building code; allowing these uses in new buildings; and allowing these uses in other zoning districts that allow for the associated mix of uses.

Commissioners had the following comments and questions:

- Commissioner Erickson asked why they were proposing removing limitations on new construction. He noted that when initially proposed, Live-Work had been intended as a tool for saving existing older structures where building new structures would otherwise be more cost effective. Mr. Boudet responded that some of the flexibilities in the proposed amendments to the Building Code like phased fire sprinklers and not requiring change of occupancy would be reserved for older buildings. Mr. Fitzgerald added that existing flexibilities in the current Land Use Code like not requiring additional parking and exempting exterior additions from design standards would also be retained exclusively for existing buildings.
- Commissioner Erickson asked if they would require that new spaces be designed with 12 foot ceilings so they could convert from residential to commercial. Mr. Boudet responded that on key streets in downtown areas there would be requirements for design that accommodates the required uses.
- Commissioner Erickson asked if the parking flexibilities would be the same for live-work, work-live, existing buildings, and new construction. Mr. Boudet responded that new buildings would likely be treated differently. Live-work and work-live might be treated differently as well, since adding retail space to a residential building would have a significant parking impact.
- Commissioner Wambach asked what the process would be to make sure a building remains work-live and that the residential use is not abandoned after receiving the benefits of getting to change the use without having to comply with other change of use provisions. Mr. Boudet responded that in the scenario where a commercial building becomes work-live, the amount of

residential space would be limited, it would not require a change of occupancy, and returning to fully commercial would not be an issue. A residential building becoming live-work, then becoming fully commercial would be a change of occupancy, which would trigger additional requirements.

3. 2015 Comprehensive Plan Update

Stephen Atkinson, Planning Services Division, presented a summary of recent outreach efforts. The events in each of the City Council districts were attended by around 98 people with conversations ranging from neighborhood identity to neighborhood scale. He noted other community initiated outreach efforts including the Go Downtown mural, the #IHeartTacoma campaign, and the Shoot the T photo contest. The various outreach efforts shared the major themes of transportation and movement; community interaction; desire for the arts, businesses, and locations where people interact; sense of place; natural setting; and historic character. They were currently looking into how the feedback can provide context to future discussion of policies.

Reema Shakra, ESA Consulting Firm, facilitated a discussion of the rough draft of the proposed Environment and Watershed Health Element for the Commission's consideration. The Element had been developed from the combination of urban forest, open space, and habitat themes as well as the Environment Element. Four basic themes would provide the structure of the chapters: Planning, Protection, Improvement, and Watershed. Policies in the Planning section would look at integrating planning across multiple departments and agencies. Policies in the Protection section would look at protecting environmental assets in development scenarios. The Improvement section would look at aspirational goals and policies for improving environmental quality. The Watershed Planning section would look at policies and goals that improve the overall health of Tacoma's watersheds. The Watershed Basin Plan was an effort to study existing watersheds and look at watersheds at a large scale. Other policies would become part of strategies, actions, and directives that had been included in an action table for consideration to be included in development of regulations, design manuals, and the environmental action plan. Ms. Shakra reviewed the new concepts that had been incorporated into the element including: adapting and responding to climate change; lowering greenhouse gas emissions; hazard management; improving alignments with city functions; and documenting what Tacoma has right now.

The next steps would be adding maps, evaluating the action table to determine where the actions would best fit, and including more background information in the watershed section. Mr. Atkinson reported that he would return to discuss updates including the Design and Development Chapter and the Parks and Recreation Chapter on June 3rd.

Commissioners had the following comments and questions:

- Commissioner Erickson asked for clarification on policies in the Action Table that did not have anything in the action column. Mr. Atkinson responded that the intent was to document existing policies so they could be evaluated in the future.
- Commissioner Wambach commented that he was not sold on the Watershed Planning sub-element as a goal level element equal to the others in the chapter. He suggested that if it goes forward in the current format, they should attempt to treat all watersheds with equal focus.
- Chair Beale commented that given the current critical areas code on geological hazard areas, the policies should be set up to support code amendments in the future.
- Chair Beale requested that he would like to see policy for recognition programs like Tree City USA and that he would like to retain the Evergreen Communities policy language.
- Chair Beale commented that given the FEMA and National Marine Fisheries lawsuit, a policy may be needed to protect 100 year floodplains for habitat.
- Chair Beale commented that he would like to see a policy on significant tree retention.
- Chair Beale asked if they were reopening the RCO certified plan for the Parks and Recreation Element. Mr. Atkinson responded that they were still limitedly certified, but still had work to do on the needs assessment, which was being discussed in conjunction with Metro Parks.

4. Land Use Designation Framework Amendment

Stephen Atkinson, Planning Services Division, facilitated a review of the proposed amendment to the Land Use Designation Framework requested by the North Slope Historic District to determine if the request should be included in the 2015 Annual Amendment process. Mr. Atkinson reviewed the history of the North Slope area, noting that it had been prioritized for growth in the past and that there had been a large amount of infill. The HMR-SRD zoning designation was subsequently created to address the issues of the area. Discussing the proposed amendment, Mr. Atkinson noted that the applicant was concerned about the low-density multi-family allowance and the request was to move the zoning to the single family residential land use designation. Mr. Atkinson reported that as part of the current Comprehensive Plan update, staff would look at some additional policy language to recognize the unique circumstances in the neighborhood and the essence of the application would be taken into consideration.

Commissioners expressed concern about accepting an application at the current stage of the 2015 Annual Amendment Process and that there did not seem to be a cause for urgency. Commissioner Erickson pointed out that “point rezones” appears to be a potential concern alluded to in the application, while there probably are no known imminent “point rezones” forthcoming in the area. Commissioner Petersen suggested that if the Commission were to reject the application, it should be made clear to the applicant that the issue would be considered in the normal work load. She recommended a letter stating that the issue would be taken into consideration. Commissioner Wamback, while not disagreeing with the intent of the applicant, expressed concerns that the Commission is considering an incomplete application (incomplete response to Question #12), that the Commission is not being consistent in contemplating this application and a previous one for the McKinley Mixed-Use Center (MUC) boundary expansion that had been denied, and that the Commission’s determination on this application is not to be transmitted to the City Council for approval.

Discussion ensued, and concluded with a determination that a response be issued to the applicant, in a similar way in responding to the applicant for the McKinley MUC, with a statement that the request would not be processed as an individual application of the 2015 Annual Amendment, but the essence of the proposal would be considered as part of the work on the 2015 Annual Amendment. Vice-Chair Winship made a motion to that effect, which was seconded by Commissioner Erickson. The motion passed with a vote of five to one, with Commissioner Wamback voting against it.

E. COMMUNICATION ITEMS & OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Boudet updated the Commission on the following items:

1. If the City proceeds with the 2016 Annual Amendment cycle, the deadline for applications for amendments to the Comprehensive Plan would likely be August 1, 2015; if not, citizens’ comments and suggestions would be incorporated into the existing and follow-up discussions of the 2015 Annual Amendment. Announcement will soon be posted on the Planning Services Division’s website.
2. While concern had been expressed about the length of meetings, the Comprehensive Plan Update would necessitate a large number of items on the agenda for several months. Staff would seek to be more strategic with presentations and include more information in the packets.

F. ADJOURNMENT:

At 6:25 p.m., the meeting of the Planning Commission was concluded.