



MINUTES (Approved on 6-17-15)

TIME: Wednesday, June 3, 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, Anna Petersen,
Erle Thompson, Stephen Wamback
ABSENT: Meredith Neal, Benjamin Fields

A. CALL TO ORDER AND QUORUM CALL

Chair Beale called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m. A quorum was declared.

B. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda was approved.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the regular meeting on May 20, 2015 were reviewed and approved as submitted.

D. DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. Housing Conditions and Infill Tools Report

Stephen Atkinson, Planning Services Division, introduced the student planning group from Portland State University who had been working with City staff and the local community for the past six months to produce the “tacHOMEa – Infill Tools for a Happy City” report, which explores issues of residential infill development in Tacoma.

Anais Mathez discussed the process, purpose, and objectives of the project. The project originated from needs that had been identified in the planning efforts underway to prepare anticipated growth. The purpose of the project was to identify a variety of residential infill development strategies that promote housing choice and affordability as a means to foster thriving neighborhoods and meet the diverse needs of Tacoma’s current and future residents. The project objectives included increasing access to “missing middle” housing and promoting context sensitive development. Focusing on “missing middle” housing would help provide many more opportunities to access different types of housing. Context sensitive development would aim to guide housing development so that there would be a lasting positive impact through a synergy between form and function.

The project approach was discussed. The team had first produced a report to identify pattern areas in the built environment, and then analyzed the qualities that give these pattern areas a sense of place. The community engagement had included an online survey, walking tours, and stakeholder interviews to assess different perspectives. A visual preferences survey had assessed which types of housing and design people would prefer to see in their neighborhood. The study results had identified 6 pattern areas: post-war slopes, mixed-era transition, pre-war compact, pre-war expansion, mid-century expansion, and suburban fringe. The characteristics of each of the pattern areas were briefly discussed.

Michael Cynkar discussed applying the pattern areas to a strategy for the City of Tacoma. The pattern tools were used to create example general and pattern specific recommendations. The recommendation criteria were ranked by impact assessed from environmental, economic, and social criteria. Categories of

recommendations included Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs); lot size; building envelope; density/acre; permitted/conditional uses; economic; and environmental. The recommendations were bundled into three packages organized by level of effort involved:

- 1) Package 1: Low Hanging Fruit. Programs and partnerships focused on maintenance and improvement of existing conditions. An incentive identified was to begin developing a library of permit ready plans for middle housing. A zoning code change recommended was to promote attached ADU conversion.
- 2) Package 2: Courage Required. Programs and partnerships focused on research and development of future programs such as the parking management strategy and exploring adding a discretionary review to low density residential development. Incentives included rethinking planned residential development infrastructure and considering establishment of an impact fee system that could allow for more funding for infrastructure and other programs. Zoning code changes included allowing duplexes and triplexes as a conditional use in R1 zones.
- 3) Package 3: Aspirational. Incentives included refining ideas from Package 2 such as tailoring the impact fee system to favor missing middle housing. Zoning code changes included looking at rezoning R2-SRD to support more compact development; expanding the R3 and R2-SRD zones; and making small multifamily a conditional use in those zones.

Commissioners had the following comments and questions:

- Commissioner Petersen recommended removing the last line in the description of the Land Improvement Ratio map if there was no statistical data to support it.
- Commissioner Erickson requested additional information on the possibility of design guidelines. Mr. Cynkar reported that they had considered recommending development of a discretionary review for duplexes, triplexes, and multifamily at the city or neighborhood level.
- Vice-Chair Winship asked if the visual preference survey had identified specific reasons for preferences. Ms. Mathez responded that bulk, sizing, and prominence of garages had been the major reasons for disliking certain types of homes.
- Chair Beale asked for additional information on recommendations for planned residential developments in the Package 2 incentives section. Mr. Cynkar responded that requiring developers to do frontage improvements can be cost prohibitive. One idea was to develop the capacity for the City to pay for some of the infrastructure and linking it with an impact fee system.
- Chair Beale noted that of the six identified residential pattern areas, the more recent areas have a far different street pattern. He asked if there were any recommendations on the subdivision ordinance and retaining the permeability and the grid system.

2. 2015 Comprehensive Plan Update

Mr. Atkinson provided a review of key policy issues concerning the 2015 Comprehensive Plan Update. He reviewed that efforts to improve the usability of the document had combined like policies and examined dispersed concepts that could be brought together cohesively. The Plan Framework included framing the core policy chapters; recognizing programmatic elements; and placing more emphasis on strategy, implementation and system plans. Mr. Atkinson reviewed the previous discussions concerning the Urban Form chapter including discussions of mixed-use centers, land use designations, employment areas, transit station areas, open space corridors, and historic neighborhood pattern areas.

The chapters that had not been previously discussed were reviewed. The Design and Development chapter would focus on site considerations such as scenic resources that should be given planning consideration, public art and its role in neighborhood identity, safety by design, designing with nature, and hazard-resilient design. The Housing chapter would include the general goals of housing diversity, equitable access to housing, a healthy connected city, affordable housing, and high performance housing. The Public Facilities and Services chapter would consolidate multiple chapters including Utilities, Capital Facilities, and Community Facilities to consider and plan for the future needs of facilities like schools, parks, and libraries. The Parks and Recreation chapter would include stronger recognition of shared responsibility for meeting recreational needs; stronger focus on equitable access to parks and recreational facilities; level of service tied to proximity and density; and an updated inventory and goals for recreation to meet RCO requirements. The Economic Development chapter would consider people,

places, businesses, and key industries to attract and retain employers. Engagement, Administration and Implementation would include policy that considers how to engage with the public and how the Comprehensive Plan is used.

Mr. Atkinson noted that they would not be proposing changes for elements like the Downtown Element, the Historic Preservation Plan, the Shoreline Master Program, the Subarea Plans, and the Container Port Element. Elements that were adopted years ago that would be superseded by elements adopted since included the Neighborhood Element, Tacoma Dome Area Plan, Community Facilities Plan, Arts and Culture Element, MLK Design Plan, South 38th Street Design Plan, and Sixth Avenue Design Plan. Future discussion for 2016 and beyond would include putting in place zoning to implement land use designations; development of updates to regulation; the Mixed-Use Centers work program; and the Capital Facilities program.

Commissioners had the following comments and questions:

- Commissioners expressed concern about the Neighborhood Element components being difficult to identify as neighborhood policy by being woven throughout the document. Commissioner Wamback suggested that it could be done effectively if each element has consideration for policies and procedures that are enhancing and protecting neighborhoods.
- Vice-Chair Winship asked if there would be outreach once the plan was in place to inform the public in a manner returns to the vision that sparked the regeneration. Mr. Atkinson responded that they would be exploring the use of web based applications.
- Commissioner Wamback noted that in “Promote additional land supply for multi-family along corridors”, the word “along” might be an over simplification that would lead people to believe that only the frontage along the road was being considered.
- Commissioner Erickson suggested removing the word “consider” from “Consider an update to the Neighborhood Action Strategies”.
- Chair Beale commented that there is an opportunity to consider design review and setting the stage for policy that would move them in that direction.

3. Billboards Regulations

John Harrington, Development Services Division, reviewed the proposed sign code amendments concerning billboards. He reviewed that there were currently 311 billboard faces in the city and that they were in a standstill agreement with the current code not being enforced. As part of the standstill agreement, the City had agreed to pursue regulatory alternatives resulting in the convening of the Billboards Community Working Group. The community working group had been tasked to develop two viable alternatives to reduce the negative impacts of billboards on neighborhoods and sensitive uses in town. The composition of the community working group had included billboard owners, representatives of Clear Channel, as well as community members opposed to billboards. The work group had voted to recommend the following: broaden the locations in which billboards were allowed; loosen the size, height, and design limitations; and create an exchange mechanism. Objectives for the Commission would be incorporating the recommendations; filling in the gaps like how to handle narrow strips where billboards are allowed, but residential is in close proximity; and the development of an exchange mechanism for consolidation. The next steps for the Commission would be to review the recommendations of the Working Group, work on the exchange program, and consider conditions where they might want to retain the amortization clause.

Commissioners had the following comments and questions:

- Vice-Chair Winship asked for more information on the auto extension of the standstill agreement. Mr. Harrington clarified that it would extend for one more year automatically.
- Commissioner Erickson expressed concern that the report had not considered the possibility of companies other than Clear Channel having billboards in Tacoma in the future.
- Commissioner Erickson expressed concern that the rhetoric of reducing billboards was being contradicted by the proposal to expand the number of zones where billboards would be allowed. Mr. Harrington responded that the expansion of allowable areas was part of the exchange mechanism to move billboards away from areas where they are creating issues.

- Commissioner Thompson expressed concern regarding language that gives Clear Channel exclusive rights to new zones. He commented that any language to allow billboards in new areas should explicitly state that they would not be allowed unless they were being exchanged from other areas.
- Commissioner Erickson asked if there had been any consideration for scrolling or mechanical billboards as an alternative to digital.
- Commissioner Erickson commented that since the proposed regulations would need to be publicly acceptable, outreach would be an important part of the process.

4. Tacoma Mall Subarea Plan

Elliott Barnett, Planning Services Division, discussed items related to the Tacoma Mall Subarea Plan including the updated project schedule, staff and consultant project team, and public involvement plan. The staff core team was reviewed. The consultant team would include Three Square Blocks, Fehr and Peers, Community Attributes, and ESA. The project will follow the same approach as the three downtown subarea plans and EIS projects, but with some differences including a focus on implementation and on specific technical issues for the Tacoma Mall area including storm water and transportation. Additional key issues included the area needing to work as both a local and regional center; the need to nurture and grow the area's economy; high mobility, access, and transit readiness; the area-wide stormwater strategy; equity and environmental health; jobs and housing near transit; and opportunities for livability, place making and identity. The major project goals included an implementation-oriented plan; grant-making and implementation such as a scope of work that includes grant ready streetscape plans; clear vision and priorities; and infill and investment.

Engagement strategies were discussed. Partner agencies would include Metro Parks, the Tacoma School District, Transit Agencies, the Health Department, and Safe Streets. A stakeholder committee and a technical committee would be formed. Property owners, managers, residents, and employees would receive focused outreach. The schedule was reviewed with community engagement starting in the first week of July. Commissioners recommended including customers, restaurant associations, and retail associations in the outreach. Chair Beale suggested considering a Sunday Market booth at the Star Center.

Mr. Barnett discussed arranging a site visit for the Commission and agreed to send out possible dates for consideration.

5. Nomination of Officers for 2015-2016

Lihuang Wung, Planning Services Division, facilitated a discussion to nominate candidates for the Chair and Vice-Chair positions for a one-year term from July 2015 to June 2016. Commissioner Erickson nominated Chair Beale to continue as Chair and Commissioner Petersen seconded. Chair Beale nominated Vice-Chair Winship to continue as Vice-Chair and Commissioner Wamback seconded. The election would be held at the next meeting.

E. COMMUNICATION ITEMS & OTHER BUSINESS

No communication items were discussed.

F. ADJOURNMENT:

At 6:32 p.m., the meeting of the Planning Commission was concluded.