



**MINUTES** (Approved on 7-1-15)

**TIME:** Wednesday, June 17, 2015, 4:00 p.m.  
**PLACE:** Room 16, Tacoma Municipal Building North  
733 Market Street, Tacoma, WA 98402  
**PRESENT:** Chris Beale (Chair), Donald Erickson (excused at 6:45 p.m.), Benjamin Fields,  
Meredith Neal, Erle Thompson, Stephen Wamback  
**ABSENT:** Scott Winship (Vice-Chair), Anna Petersen

**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**

Lihuang Wung, Planning Services Division, proposed moving the Communications Items ahead of the Discussion Items and moving Discussion Item 2 ahead of Item 1. The agenda was approved as amended.

**C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the regular meeting on June 3, 2015 were reviewed and approved as submitted.

**D. COMMUNICATION ITEMS & OTHER BUSINESS**

Ian Munce, Planning and Development Services Division, provided an update on the Landscape Conservation and Local Infrastructure Program (LCLIP) feasibility study for Downtown Tacoma. The conclusion of the report was that under current market conditions the full scale program was too large to take on, but an optional smaller scale approach was being discussed with Pierce County.

Lihuang Wung, Planning Services Division, updated the Commission on the following items:

- a) Two letters concerning the proposed Narrowmoor Conservation District had been included in the meeting packet. An additional letter had been distributed at the meeting.
- b) A special meeting of the Planning Commission focused on reviewing the 2015 annual amendment package was proposed for July 8<sup>th</sup>. Commissioners agreed to the proposed date.
- c) Commissioner Petersen and Vice-Chair Winship had asked to be excused. Commissioner Petersen had a schedule conflict and Vice-Chair Winship was volunteering at the US Open.
- d) Commissioner Fields was not seeking reappointment and his term would be expiring at the end of June. Mr. Wung thanked Commissioner Fields on behalf of staff for his service over the previous three years representing Council District 3 and providing perspectives from the architectural profession.
- e) The Infrastructure, Planning and Sustainability Committee would be conducting interviews with candidates to fill vacancies for districts 2, 3, 5, and the "Architecture, Historic Preservation and/or Urban Design" position.
- f) The City Council would be accepting the Puget Sound Regional Council's Vision 2040 award for the center plan for the Downtown Tacoma Regional Growth Center.

Commissioner Fields invited Commissioners to a showing of The Competition at the Grand Cinema on July 13<sup>th</sup>.

## E. DISCUSSION ITEMS

### 1. Proposed Narrowmoor Addition Conservation District

Mr. Reuben McKnight, Historic Preservation Officer, presented the Findings and Recommendations from the Landmarks Preservation Commission regarding the proposed Narrowmoor Conservation District. The proposal was to establish a conservation district overlay zone to protect neighborhood character through design review and by setting specific requirements for lot subdivision and siting of buildings on lots. The review process would include reviewing new construction, additions to the footprints of existing buildings, and substantial demolition of existing buildings. The key characteristics of the district included low slung, horizontally massed homes with a main floor and a daylight basement; siting of homes on the upper side of the lot; and lots that extended from street to street oriented east-west. Homes in the area were typically constructed in the late 1940s through early 1960s.

The Landmarks Preservation Commission had found that the Narrowmoor area was eligible to be a conservation district based on TMC criteria and that the draft regulations met the requirements of a conservation district. A large majority of the respondents to outreach efforts had been supportive of the district. The key issues identified during the review period included a strong interest from the neighborhood in tree regulation; clarifying that the conservation district was not intended to adopt, replace, or act as an enforcement mechanism for private covenants; concerns from the public regarding accessory building placement; and streetscape being considered a significant component of the neighborhood character. Key differences between the original proposal and the proposal before the Commission included removing minimum lot size requirements and regulation of trees; amending subjective guidelines to be more specific; and adding design guidelines for character elements.

Mr. McKnight reviewed that the process had begun with a feasibility study in 2007 that had led to the amending of the conservation district tool in 2011 and the submission of the Narrowmoor proposal in 2013. The Landmarks Commission's review of the proposal, public engagement process and subsequent discussions through May of 2015 had resulted in the findings and recommendation that were forwarded to the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission was being asked to authorize the documents for public review as a part of the 2015 Comprehensive Plan Annual Amendments package.

Commissioners had the following comments and questions:

- Chair Beale asked if research had been done on the average lot widths and the possibility of proposed lot size standards precluding infill development. Mr. McKnight responded that the typical lot was 100 feet wide and that the regulations on subdivision were not intended to preclude development but to preserve the street to street layout of the lots. Commissioners expressed concern that, given the typical lot width of 100 feet, the 60 foot frontage restriction would prevent short platting. Mr. McKnight responded that the number was not intended to prevent subdivision and that another number could be more appropriate.
- Commissioner Thompson asked if the maximum lot coverage requirement would preclude accessory dwelling units (ADUs). Mr. McKnight responded that the lot coverage percentage would include ADUs.
- Chair Beale asked for clarification on the recommendation that the lot coverage issue be examined on a broader basis. Mr. McKnight responded that the recommendation was to consider a standard for lot coverage due to the proliferation of accessory structures limiting usable space.
- Chair Beale asked for clarification on the recommendation that the zoning code on variances be amended to include consideration of design guidelines and historic preservation standards. Brian Boudet, Planning Services Division Manager, responded that the intent of the recommendation was to encourage cooperation early in the land use administration process to avoid approving variances that would not be consistent with design guidelines.
- Commissioner Thompson commented that more work needed to be done on being consistent with the Growth Management Act to address questions like how this would affect affordable housing before the proposal could be put out for public review.
- Commissioner Wambach recommended that when the proposal is provided to the public for review, staff should include background information on the conservation district concept and discussion of how it could impact the entire city.

Commissioner Erickson made a motion to put the Proposed Narrowmoor Conservation District out for public review as presented by the Landmarks Preservation Commission. Commissioner Fields seconded the motion. Mr. Wung clarified that the motion would add the proposal to the 2015 Annual Amendment package which would be released for public review on July 15<sup>th</sup>, in preparation for the public hearing tentatively scheduled for August 19<sup>th</sup>. The motion as clarified was passed five to one with Commissioner Thompson voting against.

## **2. Sound Transit 3 – Regional Transit Long-Range Plan Update**

Chelsea Levy, Sound Transit Government Community Relations, provided an update on the planned expansion of the regional mass transit system, i.e., Sound Transit 3 or ST3. General information on the area covered and services offered by Sound Transit was shared to provide context for the projects identified in the draft project list. The Puget Sound Regional Council's growth projections were discussed with Tacoma expected to receive an anticipated 60% population growth by 2040. The anticipated population growth prompted the long range planning effort leading to the establishment of November 2016 as a target date to potentially return to the voters with a package of regional transit investments. The steps needed to meet the target date were updating the agencies long range plan in 2014; discussing additional revenue authority in Olympia in January of 2015; and creating the system plan which would eventually turn into the ST3 ballot measure.

Eric Chipps, Sound Transit, discussed the ST3 timeline, the Draft Priority Projects List, and the outreach campaign. The Sound Transit board would consider feedback and finalize the priority projects list in August. The resulting project template would be used to choose projects to create a draft ST3 plan that would eventually result in a final plan that would go to the individual counties for their approval for a ballot measure. The core priorities for ST3 system plan development included completing the spine; multi-modal access; promoting Transit Oriented Development (TOD) and transit supportive land use; connecting the region's centers; and consideration for socio-economic equity. The draft priority project list categories included deferred projects; enhancements supporting the existing system; corridors from ST2 High-Capacity Transit Studies; system wide programs and studies from the 2014 Long Range Plan; and supporting system expansion. The outreach campaign would be from June 4<sup>th</sup> to July 8<sup>th</sup> with Tacoma's public meeting scheduled for June 24<sup>th</sup> at the Greater Tacoma Convention and Trade Center.

Commissioners had the following comments and questions:

- Commissioners asked for clarification on the deadline for comments. Ms. Levy responded that the deadline for comments was July 8<sup>th</sup> for the public and July 15<sup>th</sup> for jurisdictions.
- Chair Beale expressed interest in seeing the next draft of the City's Transportation Master Plan (TMP) and how it addresses some of the issues relating to high capacity transit systems in Tacoma.
- Chair Beale commented on access improvements being a great complement to the ST3 plan and being interested in how they would handle TOD. Ms. Levy commented that they had updated a policy in 2012 on TOD and that Sound Transit partners with the private sector and local jurisdictions to create an environment that promotes development around their stations.
- Chair Beale asked if they had considered Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) in the Pierce County area. Mr. Chipps responded that there was nothing on list regarding BRT for Pierce County, but that there was discussion of BRT for two corridors in King County.

Commissioners discussed sending a comment letter to Sound Transit. There was agreement that they should wait until additional information on the TMP was available. Chair Beale suggested that they could resume discussion of what statement they would wish to make at a future meeting.

## **3. Work-Live/Live-Work Code Amendments**

Elliott Fitzgerald, Planning Services Division, facilitated a discussion to consider releasing the proposed changes to the Land Use Regulatory Code for public review and setting a public hearing date of July 15, 2015. He noted the main concerns from the previous discussion and reviewed that the purpose of the proposed code amendments was to expand the applicability, align the standards and flexibilities among the codes, and respond to the recommendations of a study on code compatibilities. Recommended

revisions to the Land Use Code had included increased allowable residential space; allowing separated live-work uses; eliminating restrictions on 20+ dwelling units; removing mezzanine provisions; and removing limitations to new construction. The code consistencies and clarifications proposed included clarifying the difference between live/work and home occupations and updating district use tables to allow work-live/live-work uses in areas that would allow the associated mix of uses anyway. The proposed uses would be allowed in new construction, but the development flexibilities would not be included in new construction.

Commissioners had the following comments and questions:

- Commissioner Erickson noted that the purpose of the original provisions was as an incentive for the reuse of existing buildings and as a historic preservation tool. He expressed reservations about allowing such a significant change after less than three years.
- Commissioner Thompson expressed support for the proposal, noting that three years ago they had seen the historic preservation aspect as a starting point to expand from.
- Commissioner Erickson asked about whether residential units would be allowed at the street level in work-live units in commercial zones. Mr. Fitzgerald responded that only work-live would be allowed and the units would be subject to transparency requirements. Commissioner Erickson recommended that they consider only allowing commercial units for the street frontage.
- Commissioner Neal asked if there were any live-work or work-live uses in Tacoma currently. Mr. Fitzgerald noted that the Roberson is an example of a recently constructed live-work development downtown.
- Commissioner Wambach noted that he shared Commissioner Erickson's concerns, while also agreeing that it would be difficult to justify not allowing it without being inconsistent with policies that could be interpreted more broadly. He suggested that a narrower interpretation of the other policies may be needed to address the inconsistency or the policies might need to be amended to be less open to interpretation. He felt that the policies should be focused more in the mixed-use centers (MUCs) and downtown to encourage adaptive reuse and ensure that MUCs were vital. Mr. Boudet responded that the process would provide opportunities for further discussion and for amendments to be made to facilitate focusing in MUCs, Downtown, or in historic buildings.

Commissioner Thompson made a motion to release of the proposal for public review, which Commissioner Erickson seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

#### **4. Affordable Housing Planning Work Program – Phase 3**

Elliott Barnett, Planning Services Division, stated that staff is seeking guidance from the Commission on the full package of proposed code changes pursuant to finalizing the public review draft code and staff report for the Commission's review at the July 1st meeting. Staff intend to seek authorization to release the code for public review at that meeting. Mr. Barnett stated this is a controversial subject and staff anticipate the Commission will hear a range of perspectives. Mr. Barnett then reviewed and requested direction on the full package. The draft code is based on the May 6, 2015 Planning Commission packet, Commission direction and also reflects stakeholder input to date.

Proposed changes to the Small Lot Design Standards include a proposed Floor Area Ratio, reduced required parking spaces from 2 to 1, changes to design requirements for roofs, windows and doors, and proposals pertinent to Historic Districts. The latter would clarify that no demolition of historically contributing properties would be allowed, reference the Landmarks Preservation Commission, require porches, and require that garages in rear yards be detached. The Commission directed that the proposed prohibition on vinyl and aluminum siding be removed from the proposal.

Proposed changes to Special Review Districts include reducing lot size and changes to criteria for 2-family and 3-family development. These have been the subject of considerable concern on the part of residents of the North Slope and Wedge Historic Districts. Mr. Barnett stated he has had multiple discussions with these stakeholders, and will present the proposals to the Landmarks Preservation Commission on June 24th. Commissioner Thompson stated that reducing lot size to 3,500 sf may not be appropriate in the HMR-SRD as it could negatively impact historic character.

The proposed Residential Infill Pilot Program has received positive feedback to date. Staff are refining the approach for the sustainability features which would be incorporated as part of the proposal. This program would be allowed in the R-1 District as well, per stakeholder input to date.

Proposals to allow Detached Accessory Dwelling Units (DADUs) continue to attract both support and opposition. Some of the issues are height, parking, and lot size. Mr. Barnett stated the proposal would limit height of DADUs in R-1, R-2, and SRD Districts to that allowed for all accessory structures – 15 feet or 18 with a peaked roof. The Commission directed staff to allow taller DADUs in proportion to height of the house and potentially surrounding houses to allow for DADUs above garages, and to remove the minimum ADU size from the code (200 square feet).

The Commission discussed the proposals for 2-family development on corner lots as well as cottage housing. The Commission noted these will not necessarily be affordable. Mr. Barnett stated this is consistent with the AHPAG's recent discussions which indicate the infill proposals may not result in affordable housing, though they increase housing options and support other policy objectives. Mr. Barnett clarified the proposal is an up to 50% density increase over what is permitted in the zoning district.

Mr. Barnett stated the Planned Residential District proposal is the opportunity to tie residential development to the proposed Affordable Housing Incentives Code. The Commission indicated staff should consult with the development community to learn whether the proposal would be used, and queried how many vacant lots there are larger than one acre.

Mr. Barnett stated the Affordable Housing Incentives and Bonuses proposals involve technical details, and that staff are looking to AHPAG and the Housing Division for additional input. The proposal offers additional density Downtown, and in residential areas through the Planned Residential Districts. The AHPAG has indicated that this is the most important part of this package and that they will be signaling the City should do more to integrate affordability into multifamily. Mr. Barnett stated the staff proposal would put affordability at least on an even keel with other public benefits incentivized through bonus programs, and in a favored position in residential areas. The proposals would not change the existing affordability bonus option for Mixed-Use Centers.

Commissioner Erickson stated he is concerned about the economics, monitoring and tracking of requiring 50 years of affordability. The proposal should not be a deterrent to development. Mr. Barnett responded some of the parameters are established by the statute (RCW 36.70A.540). Also, staff will request for the AHPAG and the development community to provide insight into the economics. In addition, the proposals for the most part either create new density which is not currently available, or are not the only option to achieve density bonuses. The exception to this is the proposal to require affordability with upzones.

Commissioner Wamback and others asked several questions regarding the Affordable Housing Incentives proposals, including the following: How should limitations on the maximum rent and purchase price work? Is the proposal consistent with housing discrimination laws? Should tenants' income be tied to the proposal, or is there an option to use a different measure such as a percentage of Area Median Income? Would rent be different for every tenant? How would developers project a future cash flow? Should the program use an established standard such as HUD income levels, Fair Market Rent or others? How will the provision requiring ongoing affordability through purchase work and has it been tried elsewhere? Mr. Barnett stated he will work with the Housing Division to respond to these questions.

Commissioner Wamback stated he wants this to be successful since this is the dedicated tool for affordability. He expressed some disappointment that the program would only be available Downtown and through PRDs.

Commissioner Wamback and Chair Beale stated it would be ideal if the City would commit to offering financial incentives, not just saying they might be offered if resources are available. They questioned whether it is appropriate to put "resource dependent" in code, rather than in a staff analysis.

Commissioner Beale and others requested additional clarity and detail regarding when affordability would be required through city-initiated residential upzones.

Mr. Barnett described the City review process enhancements proposed, including developing a good examples library to support Residential Infill Pilot Program. Staff are doing benchmarking with the objective of creating this to be ready around the time of the adoption of the new code.

The Commission directed staff to analyze options to reduce minimum lot sizes in the R-2 District. Mr. Barnett stated this is currently not in the proposed package, which instead includes options for limited flexibility through lot size averaging. Staff will bring back some additional analysis.

#### **5. Election of Officers for 2015-2016**

Mr. Wung reviewed that Chair Beale had been nominated to continue as Chair and Vice-Chair Winship had been nominated to continue as Vice-Chair for a one-year term from July 2015 to June 2016. Chair Beale nominated Commissioner Wamback as an additional candidate for Vice-Chair. Elections were conducted with the five Commissioners that were present. Commissioner Wamback received four votes, and with no vote for Vice-Chair Winship, was elected Vice-Chair. Chair Beale received four votes and was elected to continue serving as Chair. Commissioner Thompson abstained from both votes.

#### **F. ADJOURNMENT:**

At 7:24 p.m., the meeting of the Planning Commission was concluded.