



MINUTES (Approved on 12-2-15)

TIME: Wednesday, November 4, 2015, 4:00 p.m.
PLACE: Room 16, Tacoma Municipal Building North
733 Market Street, Tacoma, WA 98402
PRESENT: Chris Beale (Chair), Stephen Wamback (Vice-Chair), Donald Erickson, Meredith Neal,
Anna Petersen, Scott Winship
ABSENT: Brett Santhuff, Dorian Waller

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 October 21, 2015 were reviewed and approved as submitted.

D. Public Comments

No members of the public came forward to provide comments.

E. DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan Update

Elliott Barnett, Planning Services Division, provided an update on the project including a review of the policy background, project approach, and outreach to date. Mr. Barnett reported that some of the major concepts included utilization of a place-making approach; a focus on transportation solutions and accommodating growth without creating traffic problems; planning ahead to get the most out of public investments; and expecting more out of private development to maximize the benefits to the City. Mr. Barnett reviewed that the Tacoma Mall Subarea is a 485-acre Regional Growth Center that provides a retail draw, jobs, and an increasing number of residents. The effort is also evaluating a 127-acre study area for potential inclusion in the Regional Growth Center. He reviewed that the growth targets for the area are to double the number of jobs and triple the amount of housing by 2040. He reported that the project was being facilitated by a watershed protection grant.

The project approach was discussed. Mr. Barnett reported that they were taking a place-making approach for identity and neighborhood structure. A Smart Growth approach would improve quality of life, water quality, air quality, investment climate, and development quality. He commented that circulation was a large part of the project, focused on mobility and planning for transit-oriented development. He reported that they were doing an upfront environmental review to allow a coordinated approach to mitigation and to catalyze investment. They were also prioritizing actions and creating a list of projects, capital facilities, and partnerships.

The process update was reviewed. Mr. Barnett noted that the initial public outreach was complete, they had finished the SEPA scoping period, and they had completed an intensive design workshop. The outreach to date had included stakeholder interviews, Health Department focus groups, public meetings, EIS scoping meetings, a design workshop, web site input, mailings, and signage. Key issues identified

from public input included lack of identity, no walkability, perceptions of crime, lack of open space, lack of local-serving businesses, perception that growth is occurring haphazardly, a lack of green features, and equity and empowerment issues. Public input had also identified strengths of the neighborhood including location, affordability, and anchor businesses.

Julia Walton, 3 Square Blocks, discussed the neighborhood structure approach where the subarea was broken into four quadrants: the Mall Area, West of the Mall, the Northeast Quadrant, and the Northwest Quadrant. The existing characteristics of the four quadrants were discussed and a table showing the land use, streets, block size, and urban pattern for each of the quadrants was reviewed. The goals for all quadrants included cohesive urban form, walkability, parks and public places, transit access, links with the bike and pedestrian loop, safety and livability, improved image and investment climate, and strategic investment to capture multiple benefits. The goals distinct to each quadrant included character and identity, internal connectivity, focal points, and gradations in height, scale, and form.

The illustrative vision plan was discussed and a map of the vision for the area was reviewed. Parks, Open Space, and Circulation Concepts were discussed, Ms. Walton noting public gathering places in each quadrant connected by a bike and pedestrian loop. A map of storm water opportunities was reviewed and Ms. Walton noted where they could work with water quality and infiltration and where they could locate regional treatment facilities. A green street concept drawing was shown where a stormwater approach was used to organize the streetscape to better benefit the community. Ms. Walton reviewed illustrations of the existing zoning potential compared to the Potential Scale & Form Transition concept that would concentrate development activity to create more coherence.

Key actions to improve neighborhood form included creating attractive mixed-use neighborhoods; building on neighborhood structure where present and establishing it where absent; differentiating form and scale between quadrants; strengthening the human scale to build a sense of place; establishing a hierarchy of streets and bike/pedestrian thoroughfares; public gathering spaces for events; and achievement of multiple goals through public projects. Chair Beale asked if they would be considering a form based code as a potential tool to create predictability in development patterns. Ms. Walton commented that they have an approach that identifies future streets, public places, and intensities of development around them as a form making device. Commissioner Erickson asked what they were considering for infill development in the West of Mall quadrant. Ms. Walton responded that it had not been precisely defined yet, but they were interested in site size and building scale congruent with the 3 story townhome developments currently in the area.

Key actions for Transportation included reconnecting the grid; complete streets retrofits and improved right of way design; incorporation of linear park and green features in the street system; improved access for regional and local traffic; creation of an internal bike and pedestrian circulator loop; direct I-5 access to Tacoma Mall Boulevard; plans for a consolidated Sound Transit LRT/ Pierce Transit station; a potential Sounder Station on South Tacoma Way; mixed-use walking streets along 38th, Steele, and Pine Street; connections to other neighborhoods; coordination with transit service providers; and development of design elements for the three major corridors. Chair Beale asked about connectivity to the Water Ditch Trail on the bike/pedestrian loop. Ms. Walton responded that external connectivity was one of the next steps and had been discussed with the Transportation Commission and Metro Parks.

Key actions for the natural and built environment included a green infrastructure system for water quality; reduction of greenhouse gas emissions with compact mixed-use walkable neighborhoods; increased access to parks; increased tree cover and landscaping; infill on existing paved areas; and reconnecting the street grid. Commissioner Neal asked if there was a plan to update parks. Ms. Walton responded that they were planning on improving parks, but still needed to determine what the character and use of the public places would be.

Key actions for economic development included leveraging prime location while improving development outcomes; improving the investment climate; making phased investments in streets, infrastructure, and the public realm; calibrating zoning to respond to contemporary markets, lifestyle preferences, and housing needs; leveraging transit stations and parks as hubs; recruiting businesses and facilities in desired locations; responding to changes in retail dynamics; and an upfront SEPA review.

Proposals for the different quadrants were discussed. For the Mall Quadrant, Ms. Walton noted proposals to enliven the area and improve access that had been discussed with the Simon Property Group. For the West of Mall Neighborhood it was noted that they had examined how the development of the lot could be revised to provide private open space, parking, and building street frontage. For the Northwest Quadrant, Ms. Walton noted the opportunity for redevelopment with a new street pattern. Discussion ensued on whether eminent domain would be a necessary tool for redevelopment and Ms. Walton commented that it had not been considered. In the Northeast Quadrant, Ms. Walton noted proposals to transition from wartime housing to medium density residential development with neighborhood parks and a curvilinear street pattern. A map of the potential zoning and street grid was discussed.

Commissioners provided the following comments and questions:

- Commissioner Erickson commented that there would be significant costs that would need to be considered when they do the EIS.
- Vice-Chair Wambach asked if they could consider connecting an existing bike and pedestrian bridge to the east of the Northeast Quadrant. Mr. Barnett noted that it did not need to be inside of the subarea boundary to be considered for connections with other neighborhoods.
- Chair Beale expressed interest in the street design, public spaces, branding, green streets, and getting development to better interplay with the street. He also expressed interest in the potential light rail alignment.
- Chair Beale asked if they had discussed the potential park on the hill next to the Apex Apartments with Metro Parks. Ms. Walton responded that they have, and that that the approach differs from Metro Parks' typical service model and that the closest model they had was for parks and open space in Downtown.

2. Planning Commission Work Program for 2016-2017

Brian Boudet, Planning Services Division Manager, facilitated a discussion on the development of the planning work program for 2016-2017. Mr. Boudet reviewed the scope and status of projects from the draft list for the Commission's consideration. Items on the draft list included the following:

- Permanent Regulations for Medical Marijuana that would integrate new standards adopted by the State into the existing recreational regulations and would likely include dispersion and potential co-ops.
- The Unified Development Code which had been discussed at the previous meeting.
- Infill Design Guidelines which would be a necessary component of the pilot infill program,
- The implementation of Comprehensive Plan zoning districts where the next step would be to prioritize and break the project into manageable sections.
- The Phase 3 Land Use Designations that came from the public process could be looked at in 2016 as part of the zoning discussion.
- The JBLM Joint Land Use Study that examines compatibility issues and could possibly include an airport overlay zone.
- Short Term Rentals and B&Bs where there was the question of whether there should be limitations on what might be considered a commercial operation in a residential zone.
- A Sign Code Update in response to a recent Supreme Court case from Arizona that might have some effects on how many distinctions they can make in the code.
- A Wireless Facility Code Update in response to recent Federal legislation that identified wireless facilities as an important basic infrastructure to make sure local jurisdictions didn't put them through any unnecessary or punitive processes.
- The Capital Facilities Program which would involve potential amendments to the element in the Comprehensive Plan and the Transportation Improvement Program.
- Other transportation issues including Link, Amtrak, and implementation of the Transportation Master Plan.
- The Historic Preservation Demolition Review that would look at potential code amendments for demolition review and whether standards should be placed on potentially historic structures to make sure there are some protections.

- The Vision 2040 Update and “Growing Transit Communities Compact” Status Report that the City is obligated to participate in or fulfill.
- Other potential items to be accomplished by the Planning Services Division.

Commissioners provided the following comments and questions:

- Commissioner Erickson asked if Proctor Station and alternatives to the scale of development in Mixed-Use Centers would be examined. Mr. Boudet responded that the Commission had forwarded community feedback to the City Council. He commented that a common thread was the need to examine the multiple bonus systems and consider whether they are producing the desired results.
- Commissioner Erickson asked about possibly requiring a banked percentage of the Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) to come off of a historic structure to incentivize tools in the City. Mr. Boudet responded that there had been discussions with Historic Tacoma about examining what that program would possibly look like. He added that Pierce County has an existing TDR bank.
- Commissioner Neal asked if commercial buildings in residential areas would be addressed in any of the work program items. Mr. Boudet responded that it would be reviewed as part of the implementation of Comprehensive Plan zoning districts.
- Commissioner Neal asked if there was any plan for a “Tree Committee” or an “Urban Forestry Commission”. Mr. Boudet responded that with the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan habitat corridors concept they were considering different standards. At a broader level, they might provide an update on the status of the Urban Forestry Element and discuss the implementation.
- Chair Beale asked whether there would be discussion of design review, which had been one of the recommendations made by the Commission in the 2015 Comprehensive Plan Update. Mr. Boudet responded that the Council had not yet responded to the recommendation. He commented that the discussion would require a significant resource demand for outside services and also additional expertise within the Planning and Development Services Department.

F. COMMUNICATION ITEMS & OTHER BUSINESS

Lihuang Wung, Planning Services Division, noted the cancellation of the Commission’s meeting on November 18 and a special meeting of the Infrastructure, Planning, and Sustainability Committee on November 18 where the agenda includes the 2015 Annual Amendment. He reported that the December 2nd Planning Commission meeting agenda would include a Capital Facilities Program Process Update, Marijuana Regulations, and the 2016 Annual Amendment Package. He also reported that the Council had announced the vacancy for the Planning Commission’s Development Community position.

Mr. Boudet reported that the City Council would be holding a public hearing on Billboard Regulations on November 17th.

G. ADJOURNMENT

At 6:01 p.m., the meeting of the Planning Commission was concluded.