



**MINUTES** (Approved on 4-5-17)

**TIME:** Wednesday, March 1, 2017, 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), Jeff McInnis, Meredith Neal,  
Anna Petersen, Brett Santhuff, Dorian Waller, Jeremy Woolley  
**ABSENT:** Scott Winship

**A. CALL TO ORDER AND QUORUM CALL**

Chair Beale called the meeting to order at 4:07 p.m. A quorum was declared.

**B. APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 15, 2017**

The agenda was approved. The minutes of the regular meeting on February 15, 2017 were reviewed and approved as submitted.

**C. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

No members of the public came forward to provide comments.

**D. DISCUSSION ITEMS**

**1. Residential Infill Pilot Program Update**

Lauren Flemister, Planning Services Division, reviewed the status of the pilot program implementation. Ms. Flemister reviewed the remaining milestones, noting that pre-application meetings would be completed by March 10; that she would be going to the neighborhood councils with specific projects; and that the review committee meeting would be pushed back so that early involvement meetings could be completed first. She reported that they might also consider doing another round of the program.

The types of infill were discussed. Ms. Flemister reported that they had not received any multifamily housing proposals, but did get a good response for detached accessory dwelling units (DADUs) and cottage housing. She reviewed that they had received four statements of interest for the review committee and 23 statements of interest for the different types of infill housing. Ms. Flemister commented that the dispersion of proposals was pretty good with some concentration in the north end. She discussed some of the areas where they had not received any statements of interest, commenting that she would go out to the neighborhood councils of those districts if they did a second round. Ms. Flemister reviewed the individual projects proposed for the West End, South End, North End, and Central neighborhoods.

The findings so far were reviewed. Ms. Flemister reported that for DADUs they needed to clean up the language for determining the size and provide specific guidelines governing conversions, carriage houses, and other accessory structures. For 2-family housing they needed clarity on the guidelines for condominiums versus short platting. For multifamily, they would need to modify the process to allow speculation prior to the purchase of land if they wished to see proposals in the future. For cottage housing, the small lot standards would need to be modified if they wanted to encourage small lot cottage style development and that if they wanted to see more innovation they would need to provide assurances and incentives, particularly with site development and utilities. Ms. Flemister commented that they should consider doing additional rounds of the pilot program due to the high demand and that they should also take the opportunity to look at larger housing trends.

Commissioners provided the following questions and comments:

- Commissioner Woolley asked if they were still limiting the pilot program to three of each infill type, considering that they had not received any multifamily proposals. Ms. Flemister confirmed that the limitation was in the code, but that they also could do another round of projects in the future.
- Commissioner McInnis asked if they had some goals for what success would look like at the end of the program. Ms. Flemister responded that the greatest concern was feedback from the owner and the neighbors and that they would also be going back to neighborhood councils for feedback.
- Commissioner McInnis asked if there would be revised SEPA thresholds that might apply to some of the proposals. Ms. Flemister responded that it had been discussed, which is why she wanted to modify it to be more specific.

## **2. Open Space Corridor Development Standards**

Stephen Atkinson, Planning Services Division, provided an overview of the scope of work for the project proposed as part of the 2017-2018 Amendment to the Comprehensive Plan and Land Use Regulatory Code. He reviewed that the City had adopted an open space habitat and recreation plan in 2009 that designated habitat corridors throughout the City without implementing regulations. He reviewed that during the Comprehensive Plan update they had created the Parks and Open Space land use designation which had changed the conversation around the open space areas.

Mr. Atkinson discussed the purposes and intent behind the policy designation. One consideration was to protect and preserve the environmental assets throughout the City. Mr. Atkinson reported that they would likely need to update priority habitat data using new information from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. Another consideration was environmental hazards including steep slopes, erosion hazards, and seismic hazards. An additional consideration was the stormwater function that open spaces provided for water quality and water flow to storm basins. Mr. Atkinson noted that they were managing many of the publically owned open spaces through Environmental Services partly because of the stormwater functions that they provide. For public access considerations they had identified some of the areas for potential passive recreation and required easements to create a future trail system as part of platting. Lastly they had also considered the aesthetic value and characteristics.

Mr. Atkinson noted that most of the parks and open space areas fell into the single family zoning, adding that there was still a considerable amount of activity that could occur in those areas, particularly the steep slopes. He reviewed that they had acquired a significant number of properties in the past, but that there was still a considerable amount of privately owned open space. Mr. Atkinson reported that as part of the Container Port Element the slopes and open spaces were identified as key transitions between the industrial areas and residential neighborhoods in northeast Tacoma.

Mr. Atkinson discussed a three-pronged strategy to looking at the open space areas. The first approach was overall open space standards for areas that were passive open space with the emphasis on conservation. Potential stakeholders included property owners, neighborhood councils, City departments, Metro Parks Tacoma, and the Master Builders Association. He noted that they would consider a potential overlay zone as part of the process that would include emphasis on tree canopy retention, limits on clearing/grading/building coverage, density limits, defining reasonable use, and site planning development standards.

Commissioners provided the following questions and comments:

- Vice-Chair Wamback asked if they would be mailing notices to every affected property owner. Mr. Atkinson confirmed that they would.
- Commissioner McInnis noted that there might be a 35% clearing limit on steep slopes, asking if it was part of the proposal. Mr. Atkinson responded that the interim director's rule had been developed because there had been an increase in applications for short platting in those areas.
- Chair Beale asked what the clearing limits were regulated under. Mr. Atkinson responded that the limits were generally tied to the policies in the Comprehensive Plan and guidance from the Department of Fish and Wildlife that a 35% clearing was the most that could be done while maintaining a habitat area.

The second approach concerned active parks and school properties, where they would need to look at how to identify and separate those locations within the open space corridors. He noted that Parks and Recreation Code TMC 13.06.560 applied to active destination facilities, so they would need to look at how to separate those as well. Vice-Chair Wamback noted that some properties were open space but are fenced off by the agencies managing the properties. Vice-Chair Wamback recommended bringing Environmental Services into the discussion for open spaces like the old landfill, which was the largest parcel mapped with a habitat connection and because the space would be reusable someday.

The third approach concerned steep slopes and geohazards which they were trying to differentiate from the broader landscape management approach by focusing on the best available science review. Separating it would also accommodate the timetable of the other agencies that would help inform the project. Possible amendments to the critical areas code included the best available science review, geo setbacks, application submittal requirements, what actions should be exempt, and what constitutes reasonable use for steep slopes. He noted that climate change scenarios would also be considered for some locations.

Mr. Atkinson reviewed that overall the project was within the purview of the Planning Commission; that there was urgency due to market activity; that policy support was reaffirmed in the One Tacoma Plan; that the current regulatory framework was insufficient to implement the existing policies; and that the intent was not to preclude the use of other incentives. The next steps would be to continue benchmarking, pull together permit case studies, and do additional mapping before the final assessment planned for April.

Commissioners provided the following questions and comments:

- Commissioner Neal asked when the outreach and stakeholder process would begin. Mr. Atkinson responded that once they finalized the work program they would finalize the stakeholder group.
- Commissioner McInnis suggested that they look at provisions for relief from setbacks from streets which had been problematic for developers by pushing buildings towards slopes.
- Chair Beale asked if view management would be considered. Mr. Atkinson responded that it was one of the things that they would need to explore further with Environmental Services.
- Commissioner Santhuff noted that street and highway right of ways were part of the open space corridors, asking if engagement with the Department of Transportation or the City on how they should be managed would be part of the conversation. Mr. Atkinson confirmed that it would.
- Commissioner Santhuff asked if golf courses and cemeteries would be considered active open space uses, noting that they would need different considerations.
- Vice-Chair Wamback recommended differentiating between public spaces, private spaces, accessible spaces, and spaces that were off limits to the public.
- Commissioner Petersen commented that she would like to see clearer definitions and subsets for open space corridors with distinctions between active and passive open space.
- Chair Beale asked if it would only be an exercise in auditing and improving the code or if there was an opportunity for an opportunities plan or designating parcels that had a high value. Mr. Atkinson responded some of the other programmatic elements could be helped along, but he didn't want to lose track of the regulatory side, which had a large missing piece.

## **E. COMMUNICATION ITEMS & OTHER BUSINESS**

Mr. Atkinson reported that the next Planning and Development Services Public Form was scheduled for March 13, 2017 at Gray Middle School. He noted that 50-75 people had attended the previous forum on February 13<sup>th</sup>.

Lihuang Wung, Planning Services Division, reported that they wanted to have a series of listening sessions with the Commission in small groups to discuss the issues contained in the draft Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea plan. Chair Beale commented that it was a decent concept to get some themes so that they know where to focus their effort at future meetings.

Mr. Wung reported that an upcoming Director's Rule would expand the notification radius for PMI and M2 zoning districts in the Tideflats area to 2,500 feet and that notifications would go out to all neighborhood councils, business districts, and SEPA contacts. The rule was a temporary measure that would be in effect for 18 months, allowing the Commission to put it in the code should they decide that it was worth proceeding with technical analysis. He added that additional Tideflats issues were being discussed at the City Manager and Director's level and that anything related to land use and zoning could come before the Planning Commission. Vice-Chair Wamback commented that if the conversation went forward and the Commission were required to conduct certain studies on a short timeline including a public hearing in the process, he would recommend removing the public comments from the agenda temporarily.

#### **F. ADJOURNMENT**

At 5:42 p.m., the meeting of the Planning Commission was concluded.