

Planning Commission
Meeting Minutes
November 15, 2016

Approved: AMP



Vice Chair Greg Tisdel called the meeting to order. Other Commissioners in attendance: Chris Adams, Loren Sand, Richard Jordison, Kathryn Beck, Michael Zelinski, and Alex Lark.

Commissioners Absent: Chris Holland and Megan Dunn

Staff Present: Allan Giffen, David Stalheim, Niels Tygesen, Paul Popelka, Karen Stewart, and Kathy Davis

Meeting Minutes

Motion: Commissioner Sand made a motion to approve the November 1, 2016 meeting minutes. Commissioner Zelinski seconded the motion.

Vote: Commissioner Lark, yes; Commissioner Zelinski, yes; Commissioner Beck, yes; Commissioner Jordison, abstain; Commissioner Sand, yes; Commissioner Adams, abstain; and Vice Chair Tisdel, yes.

Motion Carried.

Commissioner Reports

Commissioner Zelinski attended a kick-off meeting on a mentoring program for planning graduate students at the University of Washington.

Vice Chair Tisdel attended the City Council meetings on the barrier free housing project.

Staff Comments

David Stalheim, Long Range Planning Manager, stated that the meeting on December 6th will include two docket items which are both quasi-judicial items (site specific): comprehensive plan and rezone amendments in the Silver Lake area. The following meeting is scheduled on January 3, 2017.

General Citizen Comments

Victor Harris, 3017 Lombard Avenue, stated he has researched regional planning and transportation, and all the visionary work that has been done over the years. He suggested that in regards to population growth, we should also consider recent events such as the drought in the midwest which may mean that a lot more people than anticipated may choose to relocate to the Puget Sound or West Coast area because of water resources.

Slawek Porowsky, Seattle Architect, stated that he supported higher vertical growth in Metro Everett. He is interested in a location adjacent to the Xfinity Arena.

Item 1: Metro Everett

David Stalheim, Long Range Planning Manager, reviewed the Metro Everett survey results.

Commissioner Beck asked if the survey results included citizen demographics. Mr. Stalheim responded no. Commissioner Zelinski asked if the survey results included information on where citizens lived or worked. Mr. Stalheim responded no.

Vice Chair Tisdell asked about the demographics at the public meetings. Mr. Giffen responded that there was a good mix of citizens who attended the meetings. Commissioner Beck asked about neighborhood meetings. Mr. Stalheim responded that staff did meet with the neighborhoods and presented information at the Council of Neighborhoods. He added that the purpose of the survey was to test some of the ideas and incentives for the Metro Everett area before staff began work on the draft subarea plan.

Commissioner Jordison commented that it appeared to him that the survey results on some of the responses might not be what was anticipated in terms of what the preferences were such as the absolutely yes on the market rate housing in Metro Everett. He was pleased and a little surprised by some of the responses.

Commissioner Sand asked staff if 143 responses to the citizen survey was enough input to drive policy matters. He was skeptical that citizens would have enough information to make a determination regarding some of the light rail questions. Mr. Stalheim responded that there were drawings associated with those questions. Mr. Stalheim added that the intent of the survey was to get an indication of what was important to those that responded.

Commissioner Jordison asked Mr. Stalheim if there was any departure from what he anticipated in the survey responses. Mr. Stalheim was surprised about the support for more low income housing which indicated that affordable housing was an issue that citizens are concerned about.

Metro Everett Overview

Niels Tygesen, Planning staff, presented information regarding zoning and building heights in Metro Everett.

Commissioner Sand asked why the Peninsula Apartments wouldn't be allowed under the current zoning regulations. Mr. Giffen responded that the Peninsula was built prior to the adoption of the Floor Area Ratio (FAR) standards established in the 2006 revision to the B-3 zone regulations. Commissioner Sand asked why the floor area ratio standard was adopted. Mr. Giffen responded that the intent was to encourage the greatest height in the center of the downtown area and step down in height and bulk as development neared the residential neighborhoods.

Mr. Tygesen presented pictures of streetscape examples. He reviewed the existing B-3 retail street regulations and the existing C-2 ES pedestrian street regulations.

David Stalheim presented a map that showed the existing street designations. He provided information on the pedestrian street, connector street, and mixed use street designation concepts. He presented a map on the existing street designations and a map that showed the potential street designations, along with the existing residential parking permit zones.

Commissioner Sand asked if the intent was to remove parking stalls or shorten the length of stay a car can remain in a parking stall. Mr. Stalheim responded that the reduction in parking was for off-street parking as new development is constructed. He stated that currently there is no requirement for non-residential parking in the B-3 zone. That concept along with reduced parking for residential uses within some of the downtown area could potentially be expanded to the Everett Station area. Commissioner Sand would like to reserve a lot of discussion time for reductions in parking.

Mr. Tygesen presented a topography map, maps of existing current height limits, the potential height alternatives, and examples of potential height design regulations which were examples from a City that has a form based code. Commissioner Beck stated that the examples might be easier to visualize by using 3-D modelling to understand how the height of buildings may impact surrounding properties. Commissioner Jordison agreed that more visuals would be nice.

Commissioner Sand asked if the presentation could be uploaded to the website so he could review the proposals. Mr. Stalheim responded that he would send a web link to Commission.

Commissioner Jordison stated that FAR becomes more critical for commercial development so the height of the buildings don't overwhelm the district. Commissioner Sand stated that it would be important to know how the building fits into the surrounding areas both under the existing conditions and how it is expected to be in 10-15 years from now when all the properties redevelop. Commissioner Beck asked if there was a way to prepare before and after graphics to show what the skyline would look like overtime to help commission understand the cause and effect of the proposed regulations. Mr. Stalheim responded that staff would see what they could do.

Vice Chair Tidel asked about the riverfront and waterfront connections. Mr. Stalheim referred to the pedestrian streetscape map to show the lower Hewitt Avenue concept, location of the bike and pedestrian routes, Everett Avenue improvements, and the east-west corridor bike route on California Street. He added that Public Works has the funding to design the bicycle corridor from Broadway to Hwy 2. He stated that there were challenges in some areas connecting to the riverfront.

Vice Chair Tidel suggested a riverfront connection at 36th which he felt was more pedestrian and bike friendly. He asked how the proposed Grand Avenue Bridge was built into the plan. Mr. Giffen responded that connection at Grand Avenue and 16th Street is not located in the Metro area. However, there are a couple major barriers on either side of the Metro area which include the freeway on the east

and the topography, the railroad tracks, and the Port and Navy secured properties to the west. The connection to the waterfront from the Grand Avenue Bridge would require an individual to walk or ride a bike north to Grand Avenue Park. He added that 36th Street connection to the riverfront would require a way to cross over the railroad tracks and under freeway.

Vice Chair Tisdell asked for more information on Floor Area Ratio (FAR) and housing affordability.

Commissioner Adams asked about school connectors. Mr. Giffen responded that the City is aware of concerns regarding pedestrian connectivity on the east and west sides of Broadway. In response, the City has traffic signals about every two blocks in the north end of the Metro Area for pedestrian crossings. The City will also be creating some bulb outs at key intersections along North Broadway to shorten the pedestrian walking distance between the east and west side of Broadway. Commissioner Adams asked about pedestrian access from the north end to the downtown area. Mr. Stalheim responded that the area was primarily residential so staff didn't anticipate a big change north of Everett Avenue.

Commissioner Zelinski stated that there should be a relationship between the right-of-way uses and how the City classifies the street for the purposes of private development.

Commissioner Jordison stated that the regulations address maximum build-out but don't address a minimum build-out which should help encourage redevelopment of sites.

Citizen Comments

Slawek Porowski, 14704 NE 184th Place, Seattle, stated that it was difficult to create an incentive for a developer to come in with FAR regulations. He stated that if developers were allowed to design more creatively and openly, there is room for good housing, room for affordable housing, room for mixed use, and even room for underground parking. In return the City gets parks, open restaurant plazas, and public spaces which all improve the quality of life.

Victor Harris, 3017 Lombard Avenue, stated that he was concerned with increasing low income housing in Metro Everett. He asked if the survey respondents were aware of the low income housing density that already existed in the area.

Kent Pevery, 312 Pecks Drive, asked how someone would relate floors to feet knowing that in construction floor heights can be whatever is needed. He asked if mezzanines would be counted as a floor area. The regulations could possibly limit the floor height depending on what the use of the building is; however, he preferred that the regulations address feet instead of floors.

Area 1 Focus Discussion

Mr. Giffen reviewed the conceptual plans for the light rail station and the 3D models of the surrounding area with and without the light rail station. The pedestrian overcrossing from the light rail station would create a strong pedestrian connection between the light rail station, Everett Station, and the downtown. Commissioners and staff discussed the multi-layered station and pedestrian connections to and from the site.

Commissioner Jordison stated that transit oriented development creates vibrant communities and can bring life to the Everett Station area.

Commissioner Sand stated that the City should provide the tools needed to have the light rail conceptual plan become a reality. Mr. Stalheim responded that the principles about location and connections could be included as part of the policies in the Metro Subarea Plan.

Mr. Stalheim presented an Area 1 aerial view, a map on the existing street designations, and potential street designations, along with the existing residential parking permit zones.

Mr. Tygesen presented maps on the existing height allowances and potential height allowances.

Mr. Tygesen asked Commission if the regulations should add the bonus density or height density for outlying areas. Vice Chair Tisdell stated if the City wants to create more density in Area 1, if that makes transit work and more people make commerce work, and if we are looking at the sustainability of Everett and keeping the area vibrant, he felt that suggested heights were too low for the area. Commissioner Lark agreed. Commissioner Beck supported incentives to increase heights. She felt that the proposal was reasonable to what the City is trying to accomplish in the area; however, if the City can get additional amenities in terms of quality of life from a developer, adding density to those areas should be an option. Commissioner Jordison stated that incentives creating LEED platinum buildings should be encouraged.

Vice Chair Tisdell asked about the heights on Colby Avenue. Mr. Tygesen responded that the base height allowance is 200 feet but with amenities, the height is unlimited. Vice Chair Tisdell stated that the topography along the McDougal corridor is lower than Colby so he suggested that those heights could be increased to create more density in the Everett Station area. Mr. Stalheim stated that the current proposal was to allow for seven and nine story buildings and asked Vice Chair Tisdell if he wanted to go higher than that. Mr. Stalheim added that one of the reasons staff suggested the potential heights in that area was that taller buildings wouldn't create a silo effect along the Broadway corridor.

Commissioner Jordison stated that topography could help in creating view corridors. Commissioner Beck stated that the height regulations step the heights down to the residential areas which creates a seamless transition to other land uses. Commissioner Zelinski would support the highest density around

the light rail station in spite of the topography so that density is within walking distance of the light rail station if the City is confident of the location.

Vice Chair Tisdell stated that he wouldn't want to create a silo effect along the Broadway corridor; however, he would like to see parcels redeveloped to be consistent with the buildable lands data. Mr. Stalheim responded that staff could look at minimum standards within the area to achieve the expected density by creating regulations regarding design standards that would address building heights with setback provisions. Commissioner Lark asked if there would be any rules or new approaches to allow and facilitate better land assembly to create the larger buildings. Mr. Giffen responded that staff had discussed a toolbox of incentives for a developer who assembles multiple lots for redevelopment.

Mr. Stalheim stated that there is some disconnect between rents and development costs. There isn't an incentive for developers to assemble properties from a market perspective, so the biggest issue for the City is that minor development doesn't preclude land assemblage.

Commissioner Beck asked about programmatic SEPA review. Mr. Giffen stated that the City already has that in the B-3 zone; however, the City could consider expanding that to the entire Metro area. Mr. Stalheim added that the City just recently raised all the SEPA exemption thresholds.

Area 2 Focus Discussion

Mr. Stalheim presented an aerial, a map on the existing street designations and potential street designations, along with the existing residential parking permit zones.

Mr. Tygesen presented an aerial, a map on the existing height allowances and potential height allowances.

Commissioner Beck preferred the step down of the heights towards the surrounding residential neighborhoods. She stated that if density increases, there should be incentives for affordable housing, open spaces, and other quality of life amenities for the community. Commissioner Jordison stated that the step down approach is a good way to handle the transitions to the surrounding neighborhood.

Conceptual Plans

Mr. Stalheim reviewed the conceptual plan for the west Hewitt area. Commissioner Beck stated that the concept was good and would create an identity piece for the City. Commissioner Lark agreed.

Area 3 Focus Discussion

Mr. Stalheim presented an aerial, a map on the existing height allowances and potential height allowances, along with the existing residential parking permit zones.

Commissioner Adams made a motion to extend the meeting past 9:00 to finish the discussion. Commissioner Lark seconded the motion. Commissioners agreed.

Commissioner Beck asked staff to investigate what other communities have done and possibly to experiment with taking parking spaces off of public right-of-way and not requiring parking. The idea would be to return the parking if the experiment doesn't work. She commented that eventually the City will have to reconsider the parking requirements for the level of growth that is anticipated, and that there are new techniques and new demographics that use other forms of transportation. She suggested contacting the City of Seattle, Portland, and San Francisco regarding parking.

Citizen Comments

Slawek Porowski, 14704 NE 184th Place, Seattle, referred to the Area 3 – Potential Height with Existing map and asked if the height boundary could be moved to square off the area between Oakes and Wetmore along Hewitt Avenue.

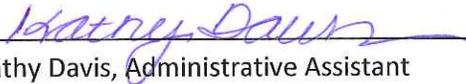
Victor Harris, 3017 Lombard, stated that there is room for redevelopment at 36th in the area of the Longfellow building neighborhood.

9:05:34 PM ADJOURNED



Planning Commission Secretary

12-6-16
Date



Kathy Davis, Administrative Assistant

12-6-16
Date