



PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Vancouver City Hall – Council Chambers – 415 W. Sixth Street
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www.cityofvancouver.us

Marjorie Ledell • Steve Schulte • Larry Blaufus • Zachary Pyle
Nena Cavel • Patrick Adigweme • Melissa von Borstel

February 14, 2023

REGULAR MEETING

Vancouver City Hall - 415 W. Sixth Street, Vancouver WA

CALL TO ORDER

The February 14, 2023, meeting of the Planning Commission was called to order at 4:30 p.m. by Chair Ledell.

ROLL CALL

Present: Marjorie Ledell, Zachary Pyle, Patrick Adigweme, Larry Blaufus, Nena Cavel and Steve Schulte

ADOPTION OF MINUTES

Motion by Commissioner Schulte, second by Vice Chair Pyle, and carried unanimously to adopt the December 13, 2022, minutes. Commissioner Adigweme abstained.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM CHAIR AND STAFF

The Chair welcomed the new Planning Commissioners, Patrick Adigweme and Melissa von Borstel.

Rebecca Kennedy also welcomed the new Commissioners and reminded Commissioners of the annual retreat on February 25, 2023.

WORKSHOP

EVERGREEN AND GRAND COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

Becky Coutinho, Associate Planner, and Bryan Snodgrass, Principal Planner, Community Development Department; Pauline Ruegg and Jamin Kimmell, Cascadia Partners

Becky Coutinho presented the adoption process with the Planning Commission and City Council, the goals and visions for the strategy, high level regulatory standards, implementation recommendations, transportation recommendations, and the proposed new code. Pauline Ruegg presented on the current commercial and residential condition of the area and the process to analyze the strategy with existing code. Jamin Kimmell presented a review of the existing allowances for building heights, how the strategy addresses building heights, and an analysis of building height options. The presentation continued to review existing code for bulk and massing and how the strategy addresses this type of code. Staff presented the proposed code for rear step down and maximum building width.

Commission Discussion

- With the rear building step back, how does this affect living space? Staff responded they are trying to find a balance between livability and buildability. One way this was addressed was to allow for greater height on Evergreen and the flexible step down at the rear of the building.
- What is canyoning and is there a quantifiable standard? Staff responded the effect comes from tall buildings close together and was a concern that is addressed in the strategy. Staff addressed that concern with the proposed maximum building width code in addition to building height maximums. The general preferred ratio for width and height is 3:1.
- Does the 10' rear landscape buffer between lots and parking areas apply for all buildings regardless of height? Staff responded that change applies throughout the zone. It could potentially give more space for parking on the site. Whether it's used for parking depends on if the developer meets the minimum parking requirement.
- With the step down, continued concern for privacy of single family homes neighboring multistory residential buildings with balconies. Staff responded that is a situation that could occur today as well, and the recommendation doesn't change that. There is a privacy impact in either situation, but there is not a good code or regulation to address that. That is a tradeoff for a growing corridor with new development. A balcony would protrude 5' to 6' from an upper level, where the step down area at the back of the building protrudes 25'.
- Building standards in the future, looking out 20 years. Staff responded it's a challenge to anticipate the market and cost of construction in the future. It's likely, given consistently increasing construction costs, that it would continue to rise over time. It's prudent for the City to continue to look at how to make new development financially feasible and to maximize the use of the site to get the development that's envisioned.
- What is the overall approach to apply the code to the zone and what would be the process to add adjacent parcels to the existing zone in the future? Staff responded, as of now, the assumption is an overlay zone to implement this. The study area is only focused on community commercial properties. If other properties wanted to be included in the overlay, they would have to change their base zone. This could occur through the Annual Review Program, which provides a mechanism for private property owners to apply for changes to their comprehensive plan and zoning designations.
- Recommendations seem to overly simplify the context sensitive ideas from the strategy document. Staff responded that, in general, the height recommendation is less granular, but is still responding to the existing conditions. There wasn't a strong argument for three story versus four story along Evergreen. For development feasibility, three story buildings would be difficult to make work in a mixed use zone.
- Building length versus lot line coverage, parking under the building, consideration for 100% lot line coverage? Staff responded on a small lot, it's very narrow. Development will be incremental over time and small lots may be combined in the future, but this was the only feasible way to make those lots work. It's not a code recommendation.
- Would the step back approach to height preclude the step down development? Staff responded its probably not logical to build a residential building under the current step back approach.
- What graphics will be available at future community engagement events to give the neighborhood an idea of what to expect? Staff responded they are working on those graphics now and will be simplified from what was shown at the workshop. They will provide more examples from similar and existing developments.

The presentation continued with the existing zoning and corridor strategy ground floor commercial requirements, an analysis of commercial uses for small and large lots, and the code concept for commercial on Grand and Evergreen. Staff reviewed the existing parking code for residential and commercial, the strategy recommendation, an analysis of parking from the strategy document, and the code concept for parking.

Commission Discussion

- How does this project align with plans for the Washington School for the Deaf? Staff responded they consulted with the School during the development of the strategy document. As we move forward, we'll reach out to them again to get their feedback. The strategy document also called for improved pedestrian crossing at 6th Street to serve the School for the Deaf.
- Concern for affordability and feasibility of residential development in this area. Staff responded looking at the current market rents in the area, allowing for taller buildings and less parking drives intensity which should make the price per unit lower. There is an opportunity for better affordability, though it would not provide strictly affordable housing. New construction is not affordable, but in aggregate, over the long term, adding housing to meet demand should produce more stable housing prices.
- Does on-street parking change throughout this process? Staff responded that the focus of this code update is on off-street parking and on-street parking would not change as part of this update.
- Is the recommendation for 1 parking spot per 1,000 square foot for commercial a best practice? Staff responded one reason for that recommendation is based on current rates of parking in a commercial zone. The older requirements are based on parking studies from a long time ago, when access to transit and vehicle ownership was different than current conditions. Those rates are generally too high. Not having specific requirements for specific uses allows for greater flexibility in the future if the type of commercial changes.
- What is the effect of livability on Evergreen without the ground floor commercial requirement? Is there consideration of incentives for ground floor commercial on Evergreen? Staff responded there is a limited amount of demand for retail space in this area. If it's required everywhere, it would likely be overbuilt. It's also worth looking into incentives for commercial and discouraging redevelopment of the existing commercial on Evergreen.
- How do we ensure there is enough parking for residents while also supporting multimodal transportation? Staff responded they don't expect there will be as great of parking demand in this corridor compared to some of the examples from other areas, where there are older apartments that do not have off street parking.
- In public outreach, emphasizing the benefits of these changes to the existing community. Staff agreed this will be important in the outreach process.

COMMUNITY FORUM

No members of the public were present to speak during Community Forum.

ACTION ITEM

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Rebecca Kennedy opened the floor for nominations for Chair. Commissioner Pyle nominated Commissioner Ledell for Chair. Commissioner Cavel seconded the nomination.

Roll Call Vote

Commissioner Adigweme	Abstain
Commissioner Cavel	Yes
Commissioner Pyle	Yes
Commissioner Blaufus	Yes
Commissioner Schulte	Yes
Commissioner Ledell	Yes

Chair Ledell opened the floor for nominations for Vice Chair. Commissioner Cavel nominated Commissioner Pyle for Vice Chair. Commissioner Schulte seconded the nomination.

Roll Call Vote

Commissioner Adigweme	Abstain
Commissioner Cavel	Yes
Commissioner Pyle	Yes
Commissioner Blaufus	Yes
Commissioner Schulte	Yes
Commissioner Ledell	Yes

WORKSHOP

GROWTH MANAGEMENT ACT (GMA), OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS (OPMA), AND APPEARANCE OF FAIRNESS TRAINING

Bryan Snodgrass, Principal Planner, Community Development Department; Becky Rude, Assistant City Attorney

Bryan Snodgrass presented an overview of the Washington Growth Management Act, the state's land use planning framework, and local guidance for planning in Vancouver.

Commission Discussion

- Will the bills currently being considered in the Legislature affect the Comprehensive Plan update? Staff responded it will depend on what is passed. We do need to incorporate into the Comprehensive Plan the requirements under HB 1220,, which was passed in a previous session, to accommodate a set number of housing units. HB1110 is of particular importance, as we would likely be subject to it, and it requires us to adopt guidance for compliance within six months.
- Will the Comprehensive Plan Update be formatted similarly to the current one? Staff responded that the details are to be determined but the intent is to make it more accessible and community facing, accompanied by dashboards to show how the City is progressing towards goals over time.
- Define capital facilities. Staff responded capital facilities are brick and mortar services, such as transportation, sewer, water, schools, fire, police.
- What is the relationship between the City and County as we both update the respective Comprehensive Plans? Staff responded that both the City and the County, as well as other cities

in Clark County, are required to conduct periodic updates to the Comprehensive Plans, and that any party can appeal another jurisdiction's plan. There is also a requirement under the Growth Management Act (GMA) that Cities and Counties plans should generally be consistent. We are required within the Urban Growth Area, through a land capacity analysis, to demonstrate that there is room to accommodate population and employment growth.

Becky Rude presented on the Planning Commission organizational framework and associated enabling ordinances and bylaws, the Appearance of Fairness Doctrine, quasi-judicial acts, ex parte communication, doctrine of necessity, conflicts of interest and the code of ethics, the Open Public Meetings Act, and the Public Records Act. The presentation concluded with constitutional law, specifically the takings clause, regulatory taking, exactions, the due process clause, and freedom of speech.

ADJOURNMENT 7:40 P.M.

Marjorie Ledell, Chair

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