



# Planning Commission

## Meeting Minutes

**Tuesday, Dec. 12, 2023**

**4:30 p.m.**

**City Hall**

**Council Chambers**

**415 W 6<sup>th</sup> Street**

**Vancouver, WA**

**Commission Members Present:**

Patrick Adigweme, Larry Blaufus, Nena Cavel, Marjorie Ledell, Zach Pyle, Steve Schulte, Melissa von Borstel

**Commission Members Absent:**

none

**Staff Present:** Rebecca Kennedy, staff liaison, Julie Nischik, staff liaison, Becky Rude, staff attorney

The meeting was called to order at 4:30 pm by Chair Ledell.

Motion by Commissioner Schulte, seconded by Commissioner Cavel, and carried unanimously to approve the November 14, 2023 minutes.

**Strategic Plan Overview**

Aaron Lande, Policy and Program Manager, City Manager's Office

Staff presented the purpose of the Strategic Plan, how it connects with other policy plans adopted by the City, an overview of the public engagement process, the core values and focus areas identified in the plan, measuring progress through performance measures and community indicators, and next steps for implementation of the Strategic Plan.

Commission discussion and staff responses:

- Is the community dashboard interactive? Staff responded it allows you to view community indicators. There are also survey questions within the dashboard to collect real-time data.

## Members

**Marjorie Ledell**

*Chair*

**Zach Pyle**

*Vice Chair*

Steve Schulte

Larry Blaufus

Nena Cavel

Patrick Adigweme

Melissa von Borstel

## Community Development Department

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- Proactive identification of areas with safety concerns. Staff responded at this point it's a reactive report, rather than proactive. As part of the biennial budget process, we can use this tool to respond to issues as they arise in real time. There are also metrics in the Transportation System Plan to review collision inventory and staff can respond pro-actively based on that data to address safety concerns.
- During the public engagement process, who were the interested parties that were involved? Staff responded they included neighborhood associations and community organizations and can follow up with more details on specific groups that were contacted.
- Reconciling community indicators and performance measures. Staff responded the community indicators are a longer-term measurement. In the example of community safety and preparedness, if crime rates go down, but the community responds that they don't feel safer, staff will need to work through how to respond and react to that issue as it arises.
- How to determine which areas or neighborhoods receive investment. Staff responded this plan is intended as a high-level policy document for Council to direct staff on what types of investments to make, and staff will provide recommendations on how to make those investments throughout the City.
- Is there any prioritization for the indicators, values, or outcomes? Staff responded there is not.
- Will the Comprehensive Plan replicate the goals from the Strategic Plan? Staff responded the two policies should be consistent, and there may be minor updates to the Strategic Plan after the Comprehensive Plan is adopted.

### **Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO) Update**

Domenique Martinelli, Senior Planner; Keith Jones, Senior Planner, Community Development Department; Ethan Spoo, consultant project manager, WSP

Staff presented background information on the Growth Management Act and critical areas, goals for the CAO, the purpose and intent of this update, the timeline and scope for the update, the types of critical areas and the types of changes including wetlands, fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas, and geological hazard areas. Staff presented takeaway themes from the focus group discussions, alignment of the proposed changes with the City's core values, and the timeline and next steps for this update.

Commission discussion and staff responses:

- In critical areas assessments, is adjacent land use a consideration? Staff responded land use can be factored in. For example, in each of the options for wetlands, adjacent land use is considered from low to high impact. The City is considering some flexibility in regard to specific sites and types of development.
- Are critical areas regulated for performance outcomes? Staff responded the primary goal of the ordinance is "no net loss". If a property owner or developer impacts a critical area, they must demonstrate how that impact is mitigated. The State provides regulatory guidance on the science of critical areas. For instance, wetland categories are consistent throughout the State of Washington.
- How do surrounding jurisdictions treat these regulations? Staff responded these updates happen on a similar schedule with the Comprehensive Plans. All the jurisdictions in Clark County are updating their critical areas ordinances now. Staff are reviewing what other jurisdictions are updating to identify opportunities for alignment.
- Are there grant opportunities for property owners and small developers for environmental assessments? Staff responded they are not aware of any current grant opportunities.
- Impacts to critical areas outside this jurisdiction if applications are denied due to impacts on critical areas in Vancouver. Staff responded the primary goal is "no net loss", which would be

applied consistently for each property. All jurisdictions are required to have critical areas ordinances that meet state law and utilize the best available science. It's unlikely an application would be denied in Vancouver and approved in another jurisdiction with similar critical areas conditions.

- Impacts beyond the regulatory extent of a critical area. Staff responded runoff can impact wetlands, and there are rules that apply in those situations. For example, if a property has runoff into a wetland, it must get a permit from the State and meet water quality requirements. The buffer area is regulated in the code to assess when critical areas permits are required.
- Is there a buffer for geological hazard? Staff responded there are buffers for landslide and erosion hazard areas. If there is a geological hazard on a development site, the developer must hire a geotechnical engineer to do a site-specific study of the area and the risks associated with development, and the development itself must either avoid or mitigate the hazard.
- Are there changes to mitigation practices? Staff responded they are looking at some changes for wetland mitigation, though the mitigation ratios would stay largely the same.

### **Community Forum**

Teresa Hardy had questions regarding the Vancouver Innovation Center, related to accommodations by the developer for the nearby elementary school to manage the increase in students, affordable housing units, and the amount of existing forest that will be retained in the development.

### **Vancouver Innovation Center (VIC) Master Plan and Development Agreement Amendment**

Joana Filgueiras, Real Estate Project Manager, Economic Prosperity & Housing; Mark Person, Senior Planner, Community Development Department

Staff presented an overview of the proposed revisions to the master plan, including removal of the single-family detached zoning, increased maximum density, changes in the land use area acreage, the proposed open space plan, and the proposed street plan and streetscapes.

Commission discussion and staff responses:

- What is the current and proposed forested area, in acres? Staff responded the City is negotiating to acquire 13.7 acres, which is the same area in both the approved plan and in the proposed amendment. The overall open space in the proposed amendment is greater than in the approved plan.
- Which streets are dedicated as public right of way? Staff responded this hasn't been finalized yet, as the developer is still finalizing building configurations and access.
- Do the approved development agreement minimum parking requirements include or exclude on street parking? If the minimum parking standards are changed throughout the City, would this be updated in the agreement? Staff responded the developer is including minimum parking based on an analysis of need, and it includes on street parking. If there were changes to the minimum parking requirements, the developer could propose an amendment to be consistent with the new policy.
- Transitional spaces between industrial and residential land uses. Staff responded there is right of way separation. With light industrial, there is less need to separate industrial nuisances from residential.
- How many acres of open space are part of the property where the school will be located? Staff responded they will provide this information at a future presentation.
- Evergreen trees in the median of the loop road. Staff responded the developer has not yet planned out the placement of trees on the site. They are planning for 30% canopy coverage.

Staff continued the presentation with details of the proposed changes to the development agreement.

Commission discussion and staff responses:

- How many jobs will be within this development? Staff responded the previous master plan estimated 5,000 jobs.
- Of the trees that will be replaced with parking, will they be moved, or new trees planted? Staff responded new trees will be planted to replace those that need to be removed. There is a calculation to determine what types of trees are planted to replace those that are removed.
- Do the business tenants need to demonstrate a need for dedicated or assigned parking? Staff responded they do not, tenants have indicated they need the assigned parking.
- Removal of the sequencing of development for housing and commercial. Staff responded the office market has changed and it is difficult to get financing for office buildings due to lack of demand, which is the reason the applicant and staff are proposing more flexibility on the office development. Often developers will build housing before commercial, but there is already permitted light industrial on the site which provides a level of comfort that the jobs portion of this development will come to fruition.
- Current tree canopy coverage on the site. Staff responded as of 2021, it was about 20%.
- The multifamily tax exemption (MFTE) program. Staff responded it is a property tax exemption for 12 years if 20% of the housing units are at 80% of the area median income (AMI), with an option to reapply for another 12-year exemption. After the exemption expires, there is a limit on how much rent can increase over five years to get to the market rate.
- Who and how is the synchronicity in the development agreement enforced? Staff responded every land use and building application is reviewed against the development agreement. The applicant will need to show how they are meeting those requirements for every land use and building application.
- Structural requirements in the mixed-use zone. Staff responded the mixed use has design standards for ground level interactivity, three stories where feasible around the loop road, among others.
- Is there an expiration date for the development agreement. Staff responded it will expire in 15 years, in 2036.

The developer, represented by Ian Klein, Jennifer Rabina, and Marc Esrig, was present to answer the Commissions questions.

- How will the developers provide placemaking in the proposed commercial corridor? The developer responded the proposal is an enhancement of the town center, that will wrap around the light industrial village and include retail streets. The sidewalks are wide to accommodate pedestrians narrow traffic lanes to slow traffic, and bike lanes. The new commercial corridors is larger than the town center in the original plan and includes different types of surfaces and lightweight structures that could hold farmers markets, craft fairs, and other community activities. The perimeter park is open to the public and integrated with the City's plans for adjacent streets.
- Community engagement for the amended development agreement. The developer responded they held two community forums in January to present the master plan and invited the public to ask questions. They notified area homeowner and neighborhood associations of these events to gather public input and feedback. They could also consider sending postcards to all who live nearby to notify them of the proposed changes. The response was largely positive, including support for the buffer between light industrial and the existing homes to the north, the perimeter trail and open space. Concerns about traffic were also shared.
- Updates on transit and communications with C-TRAN. The developer responded they have met with C-TRAN staff on site and are currently considering a shuttle system to connect with the Vine on Mill Plain. They are open to accommodating C-TRAN within the site.

- Building more housing than is currently proposed. The developer responded there is existing traffic capacity to consider, height restrictions, and market demand for parking for residential and commercial that limit how many housing units can be built on this site.

**Election of Officers**

Rebecca Kennedy, Deputy Director, Community Development Department

Commissioner Pyle nominated Patrick Adigweme for Chair.

Roll Call Vote

Commissioner von Borstel Yes  
Commissioner Cavel Yes  
Commissioner Pyle Yes  
Commissioner Blaufus Yes  
Commissioner Schulte Yes  
Commissioner Ledell Yes  
Commissioner Adigweme Yes

Commissioner Schulte nominated Zach Pyle for Vice Chair.

Roll Call Vote

Commissioner von Borstel Yes  
Commissioner Cavel No  
Commissioner Pyle Yes  
Commissioner Blaufus Yes  
Commissioner Schulte Yes  
Commissioner Ledell Yes  
Commissioner Adigweme Yes

**Communication from the Chair**

Chair Ledell thanked and congratulated Steve Schulte and Larry Blaufus for their commitment and service to the Planning Commission.

**Communication from Staff**

Rebecca Kennedy recognized the work of Steve Schulte in his effort to shape the Planning Commission into what it is today, his preparedness for meetings, and building the team. She recognized Larry Blaufus for his work with the Commission, his concern for the community, and preparedness for meetings. She thanked Marjorie Ledell for her 6 years of service as Chair.

The meeting adjourned at 8:36 pm

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Marjorie Ledell, Chair