

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, February 13, 2024

5:00 p.m.

City Hall

Council Chambers

415 W 6th Street

Vancouver, WA

Commission Members Present:

Patrick Adigweme, Sandra Beck, Nena Cavel, Marjorie Ledell, Zach Pyle

Commission Members Absent:

Melissa von Borstel

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

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 pm by Chair Adigweme.

Motion by Commissioner Ledell, second my Commissioner Pyle to record the absence of Commissioner von Borstel as unexcused. The motion carried unanimously, Commissioner Beck abstained from the vote.

Motion by Commissioner Pyle, seconded by Commissioner Cavel, and carried unanimously to approve the December 12, 2023 minutes. Commissioner Beck abstained from the vote.

Housing Action Plan

Patrick Quinton, Director; Samantha Whitley, Housing Programs Manager, Economic Prosperity & Housing

Staff presented the development process of the Housing Action Plan, data on current housing needs, addressing the housing deficit in the near term, housing production rates, affordable housing production rates, and the principles of the Housing Action Plan. The Plan includes seven categories of actions including changes to land use regulations, policies and processes, investments and incentives, fees, innovation, advocacy,

Members

Patrick Adigweme

Chair

Zach Pyle

Vice Chair

Sandra Beck

Nena Cavel

Marjorie Ledell

Melissa von Borstel

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and data tracking and reporting. Staff concluded with the investment and policy work to date in implementing the Housing Action Plan.

Commission discussion and staff responses:

- How was the housing deficit of 10,000 units determined? Staff responded this amount is based on various data sources including economic and market analysis. This number represents the current housing deficit plus a vacancy rate of 5%. It doesn't consider future population growth. As part of the Comprehensive Plan, we are considering the deficit as well as housing needs to get to a properly functioning housing market over a 20-year time horizon, but still aim to front load production to reduce the deficit in a shorter timeframe.
- What building code updates are included in the plan? Staff responded there are opportunities to update the building code for new construction types that cost less but don't align with the legacy building code. For example, the State Legislature in 2023 passed a bill allowing for single loaded six story buildings, which removes a stairwell from a building and allows for more efficient use of space within buildings.
- How are the efforts of the Housing Action Plan and the Comprehensive Plan coordinated? Staff responded one example includes the MFTE program that directs development along bus rapid transit routes, where there are existing infrastructure investments to serve those developments. The Comprehensive Plan will direct growth and development to certain areas of the city to maximize and leverage existing infrastructure investments. City Council has directed staff to address some housing needs early where possible rather than wait for adoption of the Comprehensive Plan in 2025.
- How was the SEPA exemption threshold increased for housing projects? Staff responded in fall 2023, the Planning Commission and City Council approved a change to the threshold for exempting developments of 200 units or less from SEPA review, unless there are critical lands present. Other City standards for residential development remain the same. This change was enabled by the state legislature in 2023 and the City opted to maximize the exemption to support streamlined housing production.
- Does SEPA require traffic studies? Staff responded the requirements for a traffic study are based on City transportation standards and occur at the development review stage.
- How much housing production on vacant land versus redevelopment? Staff responded they don't have specific data on that, though logically, there is less vacant land available over time.
- Has staff considered waiving or reducing System Development Charges (SDCs) to promote infill development? Staff responded they have not due to restrictions at the State level. If these fees are waived or discounted, they must be replaced with some other funding source. Staff are looking at what's possible with SDCs, such as deferring them or not requiring payment until certificate of occupancy, rather than at the time of permit issuance. The legislature passed a law 2023 that requires the City to recalibrate the impact fees based on the size of housing, with the goal of making generally smaller housing more affordable to build, but this does not apply to System Development Charges (SDCs).
- Does the Housing Action Plan inform where and how affordable housing is built? Staff responded the housing dashboard has information on the amount of housing throughout the City. The Comprehensive Plan will inform where growth and development of additional housing occurs over a 20-year time horizon. With the MFTE program, the intent is to collect funds from market rate developers to fund affordable housing in those same areas where the fees.
- How has the public and the development community reacted to the plan? Staff responded this plan was developed primarily as internal policy for the City. The public reaction was generally positive, though there was not a robust public outreach effort associated with the development of the plan. The development community has been generally open and supportive of changes.

- How many people would be housed in 10,000 housing units? Staff responded the average household size is 2.3 people per unit, so about 23,000 people.
- The current and ideal vacancy rates. Staff responded the current vacancy rate is around 2 or 3%, and ideally it would be around 7% to accommodate the high demand population growth environment. This new 7% vacancy rate goal has been established through Housing Needs Assessment developed as part of the Comprehensive Plan update.
- How are the MFTE program funds reinvested in the community? Staff responded the funds are for housing that's affordable to those below 80% area median income (AMI) for homeownership projects and below 60% for rental projects. The fee in lieu is generally reinvested within the same area where funds are collected, though there are not hard boundaries regarding reinvestment areas. Once the fund starts to grow, it could be brought back to Council to update the guidelines.

Community Forum

No members of the public were present to speak during the community forum.

Comprehensive Plan Update – Assumptions and Land Use Alternative Components

Domenique Martinelli, Senior Planner, Community Development Department; Nicole McDermott, WSP; Tyler Bump, ECONorthwest

Staff presented a broad overview of the process for developing three land use alternatives and the key assumptions that feed into it. The assumptions include data on population growth and housing need, current housing and population trends in Vancouver, recently passed statewide housing legislation, land use assumptions as adopted by Council and the County, employment, equity and displacement risk, the Climate Action Framework and other environmental factors, park accessibility, utility and public services infrastructure, transportation modal networks, and Comprehensive Plan chapter vision statements as developed by the community partners. The presentation continued with components of the three forthcoming alternatives, and how the process will frame the intensity of development in different place types, and the site selection model for identifying focus areas for growth.

Commission discussion and staff responses:

- Population growth assumptions and pros and cons of over accommodating for growth. Staff responded the three alternatives will demonstrate the ability to accommodate a minimum population threshold as well as meet the housing needs to support that growth. Within the housing need, it must also plan for units by income category. It's important to plan for greater than the minimum population growth to have market capacity for all members of the community and with the understanding that not all areas that could accommodate growth actually will, as individual property owners will make different decisions about how to use land over time.
- Are school sites and Fort Vancouver included in the park inventory? Staff responded school yards are included in the park inventory for the Comprehensive Plan due where joint maintenance agreements between the school districts and the City are in place. Fort Vancouver is maintained by the National Park Service and is included as open space in the Comprehensive Plan.
- What is the balance between housing and jobs? Staff responded there is a current ratio of 1.17 jobs per housing unit. The types of jobs will shift over time as will the needs to support those jobs. The zoning code should accommodate those shifts over time.
- Who are the Community Partners? Staff responded they are an advisory group engaged to co-create the Comprehensive Plan with the project team, the Council and the broader community. Their group includes 12 members from community based organizations and represent an intersectional cross section of equity priority communities.

- How are you defining a 15-minute neighborhood and what assumptions are made about how someone gets to a destination in their neighborhood within that time period. Staff responded a heatmap was developed to show where there are existing amenities with a ¾ mile buffer. There will need to be further analysis of that map to adjust where there are physical barriers or limitations like a highway or lack of sidewalk infrastructure. The project team are working with the Community Partners and Planning Commission and Council to determine the specific characteristics of 15-minute neighborhoods.
- Will there be an economic analysis based on existing infrastructure that would also inform the equity analysis? Staff responded the equity index and existing infrastructure are two of the data inputs in this process and informs where to prioritize infrastructure needs to support development. Staff is integrating development feasibility into the framework to understand the types of housing that can feasibly be built by the market, both under existing and future conditions. Staff will also look at the connection between 15-minute neighborhoods and the jobs needed to support those types of neighborhoods.
- How will the three alternatives be narrowed down to one preferred alternative? Staff responded once the three alternatives are developed, they will engage with the community to get feedback on those options. The resulting preferred alternative will likely include components from each of the three alternatives.
- How will the change in the way zones are structured affect community members? Staff responded the intent of this type of zoning is to create a framework with fewer barriers to development. It will facilitate incremental change over 20 years that responds to the rapid growth in the City and reduces the negative impacts of development.
- How do you ensure the data used to inform this process does not perpetuate historical disadvantages of harms? Staff responded they are engaged with the Community Partners to understand and prioritize the needs of equity priority communities.

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

Mark Person, Senior Planner, Community Development Department; Patrick Quinton, Director, Economic Prosperity & Housing Department

Staff presented a brief overview of the site history, the proposed revisions to the master plan and development agreement, including changes to the land use, open space, and transportation network. The presentation continued with an overview of public outreach conducted by the City and the applicant, sustainability components of the development agreement, and the staff recommendation.

Commission discussion and staff responses:

- Will the pedestrian laneways connect to the sidewalks on 176th? Staff responded they anticipate it will connect to the existing sidewalk network.
- Changes to the open space from the approved plan to the proposed plan. Staff responded the proposed updated master plan includes 24 acres of open space, excluding the school area, which is an increase from 19 acres in the current master plan.
- How will phasing of development be determined? Staff responded development will depend on infrastructure and the development code, as each phase will need to function on its own.
- Notification of proposed development to neighbors of the site. Staff responded notification is determined by the parcel boundary. Notification was sent to those within 500 feet of the parcels that make up the full site.

The applicant, represented by Ian Klein, Gregg Pasquarelli, and Marc Esrig, presented revisions to the master plan, the loop road, expansion of open space, the perimeter trail, commercial corridor and town

square, lower density residential in the perimeter area, and shift of light industrial to the north with a planted buffer.

Commission discussion and staff and applicant responses:

- Freight traffic on the loop road. The applicant responded the shortest route to the industrial area is on the north section of the loop, so the majority of truck traffic will use that route. It's possible that some of that traffic will mistakenly follow the south part of the loop.
- Is there a berm on the south side of the site? The applicant responded the site slopes down to the south and there is a slight berm off of 34th Street. The perimeter trail will allow for multiple entry points for pedestrians. Staff responded there will be new crossings added to facilitate access, as part of the 34th Street Safety and Mobility Project.
- How many people attended the community meetings and feedback received? The applicant responded there were 50 people at each of the two meetings. The public talked about traffic, the perimeter trail, connectivity to the surrounding neighborhood, and access to the campus.
- Pedestrian access to the site. The applicant responded there is a pedestrian only south gateway with sidewalks on both sides of 34th Street. There are existing sidewalks on 176th and 192nd. To the north, the Clear Meadows has a right of way that could potentially connect to the perimeter trail.
- Development timeline if this change were to be approved. The applicant responded they are eager to start right away. Preliminary work has started on an industrial building and some residential buildings.

Public Testimony

Nickeia Hunter was present to express concern regarding contractors who extort workers, commit wage theft, tax fraud and human trafficking. She supported development that maximizes density and is built by a local workforce that can afford to live in the units it builds. She encouraged continued outreach to local organizations in the planning and development of these agreements.

Santino Juarez was present to express concern regarding contractors who extort workers and commit wage theft. He supported plans to protect workers.

Jesus Saucedo was present to express concern for the construction workers who will work on these types of projects. He encouraged the hiring of responsible contractors.

Joshua Lucas was present to support community benefits agreements and apprenticeship utilization to support economic development and community prosperity.

Commission Deliberation

Commissioner Ledell noted the increase in community engagement since the start of this development, as well as improved communication between the developer and the City. She was supportive of the community centered aspects of the development to allow for neighboring communities to access the services on the site. She supported the staff recommendation.

Vice Chair Pyle agreed with Commissioner Ledell's comments. The initial concerns regarding the balance of housing and jobs have been resolved and supported the staff recommendation.

Motion by Commissioner Cavel, seconded by Commissioner Ledell based on the February 13, 2024 public hearing discussion and staff report findings, the Planning Commission recommends that the City Council approve the proposed amendments to the Vancouver Innovation Center master plan and development agreement.

Roll Call

Commissioner Ledell	Yes
Commissioner Cavel	Yes
Commissioner Beck	Yes
Vice Chair Pyle	Yes
Chair Adigweme	Yes

Motion carried unanimously.

Communication from the Chair

None

Communication from Staff

None

The meeting adjourned at 8:43 pm

Patrick Adigweme, Chair