



PLANNING COMMISSION

May 18, 2021

MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Judi Roland called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom due to Governor Inslee's Healthy Washington – Roadmap to Recovery initiative and the Governor's Emergency Proclamation 20-28 due to the Covid-19 Pandemic which establishes the official meeting place, as virtual.

a.) ROLL CALL/ESTABLISHMENT OF QUORUM

Commissioners present: Chair Roland, Vice-Chair Lee, Commissioner Stephens, Commissioner Moutzouris, Commissioner Khanal, and Commissioner Mason

Staff present: Planning Services Manager Jeff Dixon; Doug Ruth, Assistant City Attorney; and Administrative Assistant Jennifer Oliver.

Members of the public present: Tyler Bump, EcoNorthwest; Andres Arjona, EcoNorthwest.

b.) PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. February 2, 2021 – Regular Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Khanal moved, and Commissioner Moutzouris seconded to approve the minutes from the February 2, 2021 meeting as written.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY. 5-0

Commissioner Mason did not vote as she was excused from the February 2, 2021 Meeting.

III. PUBLIC HEARING

There was no public hearing scheduled for this meeting.

IV. OTHER BUSINESS

A. Presentation by City Consultant EcoNorthwest on proposed development of an Auburn Housing Action Plan (HAP) and recommendations and strategies contained in the public draft.

Tyler Bump from EcoNorthwest gave the Planning Commission a PowerPoint presentation on the updates to the Auburn Housing Action Plan. Mr. Bump briefed the Commission on what he covered at the last meeting. He described the project overview and steps within the project. There are four major components for the Housing Action Plan (HAP): Public Engagement; which consists of Community Vision, solicit ideas from the community and assess changes; Existing Conditions; which include data analysis, employment trends, population growth, and policy evaluation; Recommended Actions are Public Input, Staff input, development analysis and prioritization. The adoption process for the HAP would be passed onto City Council in the coming months.

Mr. Bump mentioned again to the Commission that EcoNorthwest is building off the South King County Subregional Housing Action Plan Framework document which consists of: Public Engagement; Assess housing needs in 2040; Evaluate demographic & employment trends; Develop new strategies: Preserve existing housing, increase housing production; increase housing choice; Evaluate neighborhood context for housing type allowances; Create the Housing Action Plan (HAP).

EcoNorthwest discussed the Existing Conditions and Housing Needs Assessment, South King County Subregional Income Distribution, Housing Affordability Cost Burdening, Displacement Vulnerability in Auburn, and Auburn's Housing Production Trends.

Mr. Bump referring to a figure in the Powerpoint went over the 2040 Housing Need that touched on the future housing needs through 2040 and Auburn's Future Housing Needs by Income Level.

EcoNorthwest described the recent public engagement activities that have been conducted and the key results. The engagement methods included commenting via the City's Website, 13 interviews with individuals, 2 focus/small groups, 2 community forums, and targeted stakeholder presentations; one being completed recently to the Master Builders Association of King and Snohomish Counties.

Mr. Bump went over four key categories of recommendations. He explained that integrated into these recommendations are 3 core inputs: 1) Public engagement, 2) findings from data analysis and existing conditions, and 3) feasibility/sensitivity testing--meaning that inputs are varied to evaluate the resultant financial feasibility based on the input.

- Encourage Market Rate Development Downtown.
 - Reduce parking requirements to 0.8 spaces per dwelling unit.

- Offer a density bonus to support density and mixed income (3.5 to 4.3:1 Floor Area Ratio (FAR))
 - Promote lot aggregation.
 - Support shared and pooled parking between developments and uses and expand city code ACC I8.52.050(A) (2) and provisions in Table ACC I8.52.030
 - Explore fee waivers for targeted development types.
 - Evaluate partial fee waivers, up to 80%, that does not require local funding to backfill the exempted portion of the fee consistent with recently adopted RCW 82.020.060(3)
- Encourage Affordable Housing Downtown
 - Create Policies to Lower the Cost of Affordable Housing Development
 - Consider expedited permitting for affordable housing and mixed in-come housing.
 - Consider reduced permitting costs specific to non-profit affordable housing developers.
 - Continue to support South King County Housing and Homeless Partnership's (SKHHP's) housing capital fund through SHB1406 funds.
 - Consider a Voluntary Inclusionary Housing Program Paired with a Development Bonus or Financial Incentive (Multifamily Tax Exemption program) MFTE))
 - Evaluate a 20% set-aside at 80% Median Family Income (MFI) for a 12-year duration with a 12-year MFTE program.
 - Inclusionary requirements without financial incentives are not feasible.
 - Reduce Parking Requirements for Micro Housing Units
 - Micro units can be affordable to single person households at 60% MFI and below with no public subsidy.
 - Auburn could reduce parking requirements in exchange for affordability requirements.
 - Might need to monitor and regulate parking impacts.
- Encourage Middle Housing Options in the R-5 and R-7 Zones
 - Allow duplexes and triplexes in these zones.
 - Increase density and reduce minimum lot size per unit (18 dwelling units per acre).
 - Revise rear yard setbacks to provide greater flexibility in siting triplexes (reduce to 10 feet).
 - Reduce parking requirements.
 - Consider minimum site size requirements relative to homeownership goals (2,500 sf per lot).
- Development Feasibility of Middle Housing

Mr. Bump shared an example chart of development feasibility analysis of duplexes and triplexes. Mr. Bump explained that what they found is that it would be difficult for a builder to come in and redevelop an existing single-family developed site for a duplex or a triplex. But if the City did allow it on vacant sites, it is likely that you would see the new and different housing

types being built. It is much more likely to occur on vacant sites and less likely to occur on existing developed sites with existing units.

The last category presented was Anti-Displacement and Affordable Housing Preservation. Most of these recommendations are targeted towards coordination and collaboration with regional agencies such as SKHHP.

- Monitor and track unregulated affordable housing.
 - Coordinate with SKHHP on regional efforts.
 - Potential to build off existing rental licensing program.
- Preserve “naturally occurring” affordable housing.
 - Coordinate with SKHHP and other regional agencies
 - Continue to build relationships with multifamily property owners and building managers.
- Monitor and track regulated affordable housing.
 - Coordinate with SKHHP and other regional agencies
- Identify opportunities to increase homeownership.

Mr. Bump concluded his presentation with discussion of the implementation process.

- Recommendations are of three types:
 - Zoning Code and/or comp. plan update and code amendments
 - New programs/initiatives
 - Increased partnership and collaboration
- Implementation will require further collaborations and engagement with City agencies and community stakeholders.
- City Staff will need to assess levels of effort, priority, and resources to develop a work program plan and schedule.
- EcoNorthwest indicated that they reviewed the existing City Comprehensive Plan polices and EcoNorthwest stated that the Comp. Plan supports these recommendations for the Housing Action Plan. Only minor wording refinements are suggested.

The Commission inquired what the next steps are being asked of the Planning Commission for the Housing Action Plan. They asked if staff would be taking the data and coming up with specific recommendations to bring back to the Commission for action.

Planning Services Manager, Jeff Dixon explained that the Housing Action Plan includes a number of actions that the City can choose from to increase the supply of market and affordable housing in the city. These recommendations fall into 3 basic categories as Mr. Bump has mentioned. The three types include: 1) Policy changes such as changes to the Comprehensive Plan and code changes, 2) new programs and initiatives, and 3) and additional partnerships the City can work on, such as the SKHHP participation that is underway currently. There is a lot of moving parts to the HAP and at the moment the City is collecting public comment through June 1 primarily through the city website and some of the comments received could require further refinement of the HAP. The comments will also help with establish prioritization and also considering Council input on prioritization, and then city staff will develop a work program based upon which of these goals best align with the city's objectives and the timing of implementation.

It will be a collaborative process in the future to figure out how to move forward between staff, Planning Commission, and City Council.

The Planning Commission members voiced concerns over the reduced parking recommendations. The Commission commented that the downtown area struggles now with available parking. They asked if any studies or research has been done/looked at for the people you expect that would live in these units downtown and how many vehicles they have on average. Additional cars could cause excess parking on City streets causing an even greater parking concern. The Commission continued to comment that if affordable housing is the goal and folks that move into these homes are on a fixed income, if they have another vehicle but their complex doesn't accommodate extra parking, they are forced into a situation where they may have to pay for parking, which seems to go against the idea of affordable housing. Mr. Bump stated the concerns are very valid. Mr. Bump stated it is something that does need to be talked about and addressed. How EcoNorthwest came up with the parking reduction is by looking at what is called a 5 over 2 development or a 7-story "podium type" development, which is allowed and encouraged in the downtown urban center. He explained that parking reductions affect the amount of floors that are devoted for parking and the cost of those floors, and how to essentially build only one floor of parking and make that as efficient as possible to have that parking serve a greater number of dwelling units above it. Mr. Bump continued that adding more spaces can make it a heavy cost issue. The recommendation is coming from an efficiency of development standpoint.

The Commission expressed concern over the predicted amount of building and people coming into Auburn by 2040. With the number of people leaving downtown Seattle and people moving into the south sound, will the business in Auburn get support in the long term and can Auburn handle the growth. Planning Services Manager Jeff Dixon commented that the Growth Management Act has requirements that we do regional coordination and county coordination. All of those things influence the population allocations that go on. The state and Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) allocate state population increase estimates on a county-wide basis. City has a population allocation that is given to us on a countywide basis and the cities work cooperatively to establish how each can grow within the allocated population. As Mr. Bump mentioned, it's not necessarily that you can pick and choose the amount of people you want. The increase is based on population increase from the existing population that is already here, and from migration from people that are moving here from other parts of the country, as well. The growth and development is a hard thing to transition away from, but what we are trying to do is concentrate that growth and development in places where there are existing services and infrastructure to support it and avoid encouraging that kind of population increase and development, in natural areas and in the rural areas that we enjoy on the weekends and places we can get away to when we want to escape the more concentrated developments that occur in City centers. Mr. Dixon went on to explain that this is a challenging time to balance all of these factors. That is why it is important to get the community input and is why the Planning Commission exists. Mr. Dixon stated that the same types of comments and concerns the Commission is expressing, are reflected in the comments coming from people on the Housing Action Plan. The City and Staff try to take into consideration the quality of development that Auburn wants to see, and with quality housing style that will last for many years. The number of projects going on downtown will increase the nearby population and this will likely encourage more business opportunities as well. With the increase in the population downtown, it's hopeful that more business will be encouraged to open up here.

Commission Khanal commented that the recommendations of duplexes and triplexes were a great idea for more affordable housing. It is likely to be desirable. The Commission inquired if the pricing used in the presentation was updated to today's market price. Mr. Bump stated that the pricing is what is achievable in the market today. It is current. The pricing comes from two things to make duplexes and triplexes less expensive: One being cost of the land is spread over more than just one unit. Two: duplexes and triplexes, while they are still family sized, they are generally smaller rooms than a detached single-family residence which in turn makes them less expensive. The Planning Commission also asked if the Housing Action Plan concept was to open/change the zoning to allow duplex and triplex homes to be built on vacant land. Mr. Bump stated that there are different ways to implement the change in zoning. You could have it be more geographically targeted through a base zone like an R-16 or more appropriately, an R- 18, for example. Or it could be more broadly allowed by changing the set of uses allowed in the R-5 and R-7 residential districts or city wide. It depends on where the community wants to see those housing types. Mr. Bump mentioned that there is a case to be made for allowing Triplex/Duplexes in places where you would also allow single family development because the same occupants/tenants in general want the same amenities as someone purchasing a single family: they want parks, neighborhood schools, and a lot of the similar attributes because Triplex and Duplex homeowners are similar to single family homeowners.

The Commissioners asked what happens now and where is the City in the process for the Housing Action Plan. Mr. Dixon explained that the City is in the Public Comment opportunity until June 1. At the conclusion of the public comment period, staff will synthesize those comments into the final document that will be presented to the City Council for adoption. Our contract does require that the City Council ratify that document. This does not mean they have to do everything that is listed in the HAP , but it does set some expectations that the City is going to do some things to promote additional housing supply. Chair Roland asked how the general public knows to go to the City website to make comments. Planning Services Manager, Jeff Dixon stated that the city has made every attempt to provide notification. The city has used social media networks to put it out on Next Door, on Facebook, on Instagram. The City has held stakeholder interviews, and other outreach methods, as well as being discussed on the city website and city forums, such as at the Homelessness Open House the Mayor held, last Thursday. City Staff has been getting the word out for a long time even before the public draft of the plan was available for the public to view.

The Commission asked if Tiny Houses would be an option. Mr. Dixon stated that while the building code allows, the zoning code is not suited for a Tiny Home Village as you may have seen in Seattle or in the City of Orting and the City of Olympia. The Mayor and Kent Hayes, City of Auburn Homeless Manager, expressed they are not in favor of tiny homes or tiny homes villages to house homeless since it is in highly visible places that separate them from the community.

B. Continued Discussion of Planning Commission Rules of Procedure

Prior to the Commission's February 2, 2021 meeting, the Community Development (Planning Services) and Legal Dept. staff reviewed the latest adopted Rules of Procedure document and recommended a minor change. The amendment shown in strike-through (deletions), and underline (additions) was distributed in advance of the meeting.

- A. The first recommended revision which was discussed at the PC February 2, 2021 meeting, is to section XIII and permits the Commission to suspend rules of procedure. The recommendation is in response to the changes in how meetings are conducted during the pandemic and is intended to give the Commission more flexibility in its procedures. The revision allows Commissioners by a two-thirds vote to suspend a rule of procedure. This authority does not apply to rules required by statute and is also limited by Roberts Rules of Procedure. Those rules restrict the Commission from suspending the following types of rules:

“Rules which embody fundamental principles of parliamentary law or require a ballot vote and rules protecting a basic right of the individual cannot be suspended. Thus, the rules cannot be suspended to allow non-members to vote; to authorize absentee or cumulative voting; to waive the requirement of a quorum; to suspend a rule pertaining to something outside a meeting; or to take away a particular member's right to attend meetings, make motions, speak in debate, and vote.”

- B. **Second Rules of Procedure Update:** Also at the meeting, Chair Roland brought to Senior Assistant City Attorney Doug Ruth's attention that there was an inconsistency in the Rules. The inconsistency is whether the Chair's silence on a vote is recorded in the affirmative or negative. Mr. Ruth reminded the Commission that last year, the Rules were amended to make a silent vote, a negative vote for all Commissioners. This was based upon the idea if you did not hear a vote, the Commission should not be adopting or changing something in a policy or decision based on silence. The conservative approach would be to consider it a “no vote”.

The change that was made last year is shown on Page 8 of the Rules of Procedure, under Section X, “Public Hearings” and subsection 10, “Voting”, and subsection B. that states:

“B. Any member, including the Chair, not voting or not voting in an audible voice shall be recorded as voting in the negative”.

This conflicts with the pre-existing language in preceding Section IV, “Chair”, Subsection 1, which as the last sentence reads:

“Unless stated otherwise, the Chair's vote shall be considered to be affirmative for the motion.”

Staff suggests a provision in section IV.1 regarding the chair's vote be eliminated. This deletion is recommended to make section IV.1 consistent with changes in section X.10. Last year, the Commission revised section X.10 to change the presumption that a commissioner's silence during voting would be considered an affirmative vote. Section X.10 was changed to regard a commissioner's silence as a negative vote. Currently, section IV.1 reads that the Chair's vote shall be considered an affirmative vote unless stated otherwise. This is inconsistent with the prior revision.

- C. **Third Rules of Procedure Update:** Discussion of this inconsistency, raised the possibility that a commissioner may intend to give a verbal vote but due to the practice of conducting meetings virtually the commissioner's vote may not be heard. The Commission asked Senior Assistant City Attorney Ruth to update the rules to reflect the circumstances of virtual meetings and to address the possible technical difficulties such as a microphone failure. A revision to section X.10 addresses this possibility by permitting votes by electronic communication such as virtual hand raising or a chat message.

Transmitted is a version of the rules with the changes described above. If the Planning Commission has additional changes, these can be discussed, captured by staff, and then these changes can be presented in writing and provided at the next regular meeting. The amendments must be provided at a meeting prior to action (voting) as provided in Section XIII, "Amendment", which says:

"The Rules of Procedure may be amended at any regular meeting of the Commission by a majority vote of the entire membership. The proposed amendment should be presented in writing at a preceding regular meeting."

The Rules of Procedure document distributed with the Commission's packet did not have the redlines or strike throughs for the Planning Commission to view. Administrative Assistant Jennifer Oliver emailed the revised copy with the redlines and strike throughs to the Commission during the meeting.

The Commission had no comments on the changes. It is anticipated the Commission will review the changes and vote on the 3 changes at the next Planning Commission Meeting on June 8, 2021.

V. **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT REPORT**

Planning Services Manager, Jeff Dixon updated the Commission on The Auburn Apartments which is now called The Verge. It is located two blocks south of City Hall and has occupants moving in now.

The Legacy Plaza development (senior housing) which is located just south of City Hall is coming along nicely. The first two floors of concrete are installed.

The Commission asked if there were any businesses that were showing interest in moving in. Mr. Dixon stated that those two buildings will each have commercial space on the ground floor. It is premature to know of any tenants. However, one of the advantages of the two new buildings is they will have been built with heating and ventilation systems that could support restaurants tenants on the ground floor. By comparison, the Trek Building does not have the hood and ventilation system to support a restaurant tenant.

In response to advancement in stages of the pandemic, City staff is on track to return to the office July 6, 2021. Any updates on that will be shared to the Commission at the next meeting.

Doug Lein from Economic Development has retired. The Economic Development Department will now be part of Community Development Department and over seen by Community Development Director, Jeff Tate.

The Planning Services Department is also in the process of hiring a new Long Range Senior Planner.

The Planning Commission asked what was happening on Main Street where the former Heritage Building once was. Mr. Dixon said the last news he heard was the property owner was conducting value engineering to help lower the costs of construction. But Mr. Dixon verified that the owner is still planning on building at that location.

The Commission asked why the MultiCare Urgent Care closed that was on Cross Street. At this time, City staff was unsure as to why it closed and has not seen any permits come through for a revised location.

The Planning Commission inquired about the funding that was provided by the last government stimulant package to the City of Auburn and how was that money being used. Planning Services Manager, Jeff Dixon stated that he had discussed with Director of Community Development Jeff Tate that possible ways were being discussed on how to spend and what programs that funds could support. Mr. Dixon was not sure on how the money will be spent but would look into and let the Commission know.

The next Planning Commission meeting will be held on June 8, 2021. Agenda topics for discussion will be the approval of Rules of Procedure updates and downtown portable sign regulations such as businesses A-Board type signs placed on sidewalks. The City want to institute a program that allow portable signs but in a more controlled manner.

There being no further business to come before the Planning Commission, Chair Roland adjourned the meeting at 8:46 p.m.