



City of Seattle
Seattle Planning Commission

Michael Austin, Chair
Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION

Thursday, February 27, 2020
Approved Meeting Minutes

Commissioners Present: Michael Austin, David Goldberg, Grace Kim, Rick Mohler, Kelly Rider, Amy Shumann, Lauren Squires, Jamie Stroble, Patti Wilma

Commissioners Absent: Sandra Fried, Julio Sanchez, Rian Watt

Commission Staff: Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director; John Hoey, Senior Policy Analyst; Connie Combs, Planning Analyst; Robin Magonegil, Commission Coordinator

Guests: Joseph Gellings and Kyra Lise, Port of Seattle; Erica Barnett, Geoff Wentlandt, Barbara Oakrock, Mark Weed

Seattle Planning Commission meeting minutes are not an exact transcript and represent key points and the basis of discussion.

Referenced Documents discussed at the meeting can be viewed here:

<http://www.seattle.gov/planningcommission/when-we-meet/minutes-and-agendas>

Chair's Report & Minutes Approval

Chair Michael Austin called the meeting to order at 7:37 am and recognized that we are on indigenous land, the traditional and current territories of the Coast Salish people. Land acknowledgement is a traditional custom dating back centuries for many Native communities and nations. For non-Indigenous communities, land acknowledgement is a powerful way of showing respect and honoring the Indigenous Peoples of the land on which we work and live. Acknowledgement is a simple way of resisting the erasure of Indigenous histories and working towards honoring and inviting the truth. Chair Austin provided a preview of the agenda and announced several upcoming Commission meetings.

ACTION: Commissioner Patti Wilma moved to approve the February 13, 2020 meeting minutes. Commissioner David Goldberg seconded the motion. The motion to approve the minutes passed.

Announcements

Seattle Planning Commission Executive Director Vanessa Murdock announced that the application period for new Commissioners closes on Friday, February 28. She also announced that Commissioner Sandra Fried's last meeting will be on March 12th.

Discussion: Industrial Maritime Strategy Follow-Up

Executive Director Murdock provided some background and context for this discussion. She stated that the Planning Commission has traditionally advocated for protection of industrial lands in reports, updates to the Comprehensive Plan, and Comprehensive Plan amendments. The Commission supported inclusion of strong protectionist language in the Seattle 2035 Comprehensive Plan. This language was ultimately not included. The Mayor's current Industrial Maritime Strategy will consider the historic context of Seattle's industrial lands as well as new light rail stations in areas zoned for industrial uses. This discussion is intended to be a follow-up to the Industrial Maritime Strategy update the Commission received at its February 13th meeting.

The discussion was organized to allow the Commissioners to respond to four questions. Below is a summary of the Commission discussion.

Question #1: What areas should have the highest focus for protection of existing industrial/maritime land uses and zoning?

- Waterfront areas, areas with rail access and areas not within a high capacity transit walkshed. This will preserve critical maritime industry and help to avoid conflicts between freight mobility and pedestrian/bicycle mobility.
- The Duwamish Manufacturing/Industrial Center (MIC) is very strong. The Ballard Interbay Northend MIC is more fragile.
- Other entities, including the State and Port of Seattle, are involved in industrial and maritime activities. This should not just be an issue for the City to address.
- Concern that the Commission does not have strong representation on industrial and maritime issues. The Commission needs to take a resilient/protectionist approach.
- Determining the future of SODO should consider the highest and best use and be approached similar to a campus planning approach.
- The Port of Seattle needs the flexibility to change use of its land.
- The Commission has not heard much from Interbay stakeholders yet.
- Areas near transit are at highest risk for nibbling away at industrial and maritime uses. A heightened focus should recognize that those could be the first to go away.
- Ballard is at risk for sea level rise. This should be considered in refining our definition of protection. Sea level rise will require land use codes to be revised.
- A strong consideration should be protection of industrial and maritime jobs.
- We need to have a conversation about balance and compatibility when considering areas within high-capacity transit walksheds. Three things are competing – industrial uses, golf courses, and light rail.
- Industrial areas near water should be protected. Living wage jobs depend on marine-adjacent uses.
- There are differences between heavy and light industrial maritime uses. Heavy industrial uses should be protected without exception. Light industrial uses are a different issue.
- Arterials connecting to highways should be protected for freight mobility. Conflicts between freight movement and pedestrian/bicycle traffic will start to occur in light rail station areas once the stations open.

Question #2: Which areas or land use zones could allow flexibility for allowing integration of some industrial/maritime uses and non-industrial/maritime uses?

- Areas in close proximity to high capacity transit and public parks.
- We need additional information about where heavy industry and concentrations of jobs are. These are areas of high productivity.
- People are already living in areas adjacent to the Duwamish MIC. This area is different from other industrial areas. People need parks and trees for livability.
- Areas that could allow for integration of light industry and makerspaces – activities that are not loud and smelly. These uses could be incorporated into urban villages.
- Interbay is an exceptional example with two future light rail stations a mile apart. The Armory site and Interbay golf course are within the walkshed. Treating that as traditional industrial land is a missed opportunity. The City needs to ensure that new auto-dependent strip mall development does not happen there again.
- Concern that creating innovation districts in industrial areas will instantly increase rents. Allowing light industrial makerspace should be very site-specific. Portland has shown us that makerspaces such as candlemakers can be located anywhere.
- Parcel size, age of the built environment, and business size are important criteria for makerspaces and innovation districts.
- Light industrial uses could be in urban villages and transition zones. Small maritime business owners have a need for delivery access that does not conflict with pedestrians and bikes.
- Many small light industrial activities were formerly located in Belltown and South Lake Union.
- We should consider Rainier Valley and the MLK corridor for jobs and economic opportunity. There has not been a lot of economic development in the south end due to a lack of demand. We should work with the community to discuss future opportunities. Puget Sound Sage has done a lot of work around the Graham Street station area. Rainier Beach has already had some new opportunities such as the Food Innovation District.

Question #3: What are some important criteria for determining future land uses in existing industrial zones around light rail and other high capacity transit investments?

- We should examine which uses should be preserved, look for opportunities to utilize lands that are not currently industrial, and create a more vibrant mix of uses.
- The ten- minute walksheds around light rail stations will be areas of high job concentrations, including living wage jobs.
- Consider sea level rise. Interbay could be inundated.
- Balance the needs of rights of way and freight corridors with walksheds. There is tension with the transport needs of industrial maritime uses.
- Industrial living wage jobs used to provide a reasonable level of income. Now rents are not affordable. We need to look at how to house living wage workers, including opportunities around transit. Looking at opportunities for housing within industrial areas would need to consider potential health impacts.

- We are in a rapidly changing industrial environment with an ongoing need for large-scale freight mobility and a need for some housing near living wage jobs. There are some conditions where mutual benefit opportunities may exist.
- The impact of Amazon in South Lake Union is significant. It has become a corporate campus without the mitigation that should have come with it. We need to consider how to create innovation districts and flexibility zones and not allow them to be taken over by a single user. There will be conflicts with mixed use and access, so we need to be extra cautious.
- In an industrial area, preserving industrial activity should come first. Residents in Ballard seem to understand the industrial activities on Shilshole Avenue and do not complain about noise and other impacts.

Question #4: What are examples of non-land use criteria that should be considered in shaping the industrial/maritime strategy?

- The existence of large swaths of publicly owned land (state and city) in close proximity to one another and to light rail.
- Industrial production is changing – increased automation, disruptions in distribution, and the potential for previously incompatible uses to be combined for mutual benefit.
- The same criteria for light rail areas that are underdeveloped. Preserving existing uses and areas that have not gentrified in conjunction with neighborhood groups. South Seattle is a great opportunity.
- Consider the health implications of industrial maritime activities and expand the equity analysis to industrial areas. We need more data – who are the business owners, employees, etc.
- Zoning can create a buffer between industrial and residential uses. Sound Transit, the State, and the City own land in close proximity to both industrial uses and transit.
- Include historic and cultural elements in industrial areas. Review building codes for adapting and reusing buildings.
- Consider maximum business sizes to encourage small and independent businesses.
- Affordable housing has moved to other parts of the region. We want to preserve middle income jobs, but workers cannot afford to buy homes. We will always have industrial maritime jobs. We still have a responsibility for housing workers.
- Developers are not building middle income housing because it is not lucrative. What incentives can be offered for housing to accommodate average incomes (i.e., everyone beyond tech workers).
- Sound Transit has a statute that requires surplus land to be offered for affordable housing. The Interbay Armory property will also be surplus, but there are concerns about residential uses near an active rail yard, etc. Are there other surplus land policy options or can we propose another use?
- Could industrial buildings accommodate a mix of uses? Criteria could reinforce similar uses/industries. For example, businesses that support maritime uses.
- We should take an industrial lands tour. Concerns of workers and owners might be different than what we think.

Commissioners provided the following summary of the discussion:

- Support for site-specific flexible uses in industrial and non-industrial zones.

- Holistic thinking about environmental justice, preserving industrial uses, and making reasonable accommodations for access to industrial businesses.
- We need to better understand the specifics of current uses within the MICs. Need more information about heavy industry to have a more informed conversation.
- Consider regional trends and data.
- Be more specific in discussions of criteria for innovation districts and flexibility of uses.
- Underscore a future-focused vision, not a static condition. Trends are changing industrial uses.

Public Comment

Mark Weed stated that he works with the Stack family, who own 7.5 acres of land near the SODO light rail station. He is also part of a coalition that represents five million square feet of space. That group has a vision that includes vibrant transit-oriented development at every station along the line. The coalition encourages living wage jobs and is talking to Sound Transit, the Mayor, City Council, Port of Seattle, labor, and other stakeholders. He stated that the Mayor's Industrial Maritime Strategy is on a parallel course with his coalition's vision.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 am.