



## City of Seattle

Seattle Planning Commission

Michael Austin, Chair

Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director

### SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION

Thursday, October 10, 2019

Youngstown Cultural Arts Center, Delridge

Approved Meeting Minutes

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**Commissioners Present:** Michael Austin, Sandra Fried, David Goldberg, Grace Kim, Rick Mohler, Julio Sanchez, Amy Shumann, Lauren Squires, Patti Wilma

**Commissioners Absent:** Kelly Rider, Jamie Stroble

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

**Guests:** Jared Berg, David Bestock, Willard Brown, Asmeret Habte, Parie Hines, Chris Johnstone, Amanda Kirk, Kay Kirkpatrick, Nathan Kraus, Kirk Lauckner, Marianne McCord, Marty McLaren, Tasha Mosher, Pete Spalding

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

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Referenced Documents discussed at the meeting can be viewed here:

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

#### Welcome and Opening Remarks

Chair Michael Austin called the meeting to order at 4:10 pm. He acknowledged that this meeting in Delridge is the first of which the Commission hopes will be several meetings out in one of Seattle's communities. He thanked all the participants for attending this special meeting. Chair Austin stated the Commission's intent for this meeting is to learn about Delridge's community organizations and introduce the work of the Planning Commission.

#### Introducing the Commission

Chair Austin provided an overview of the Seattle Planning Commission. As an all-volunteer, independent citizen advisory body, the Commission advises Seattle's elected officials and City staff on broad planning goals, policies and plans for the physical development of the city – how we use our land, how we get around, how we live and how well we live. Each of the Commissioners present introduced themselves, noting where they work, where they live, and what prompted them to seek to serve on the Commission.

Chair Austin provided a brief overview of the Commission's recent and ongoing work, including review of annual amendments to the Comprehensive Plan as well as the Major Updates, Sound Transit West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions, and the Commission's recent *Neighborhoods For All* report.

### **Discussion with Community and Neighborhood Organizations**

Representatives of community and neighborhood organizations introduced themselves and shared their organization's respective mission, issues, projects, and concerns. Participating organizations were provided the following questions in advance of the meeting:

- What are the Delridge community's unique characteristics and strengths?
- What are some recent projects or other changes that have improved the quality of life for those who live and work in Delridge?
- What are some ongoing issues or challenges that have yet to be addressed in the community?
- What is your ideal vision for the future of the Delridge community?

Below is a brief summary of each organization's comments:

#### **Delridge Neighborhoods Development Association (DNDA) – David Bestock, Executive Director**

- The organization was founded in 1996. DNDA owns and operates seven affordable housing projects in Delridge as well as the Youngstown Cultural Arts Center, which provides artist housing, youth programming, a home to several tenant non-profits and an alternative high school. DNDA merged with Nature Consortium to expand the organization's environmental restoration work.
- DNDA wants to keep the affordable properties they own and would appreciate it if the Office of Housing would set aside additional money for rehabilitation projects. It is very difficult for non-profits to purchase properties on the market. When a property goes on the market, non-profits cannot be competitive.
- Delridge has the largest per capita youth population after South Park. Despite the challenges to engage youth in planning issues, DNDA strives to do so.
- Cultural communities need to be represented. It is unsatisfactory for a homogenous homeowner voice to be the only voice in community conversations.
- Funding for the Green Seattle Partnership has been reduced. Urban green spaces are valuable to the Delridge neighborhood. Drainage is an ongoing issue, especially with increasing density.

#### **Delridge Neighborhoods District Council - Pete Spalding**

- The District Council still has influence but not as much since a previous Mayor cut ties with all district councils citywide.

#### **High Point Community - Jared Berg, Seattle Housing Authority**

- High Point has a mix of public and private housing. Affordable housing is a major issue, as residents have difficulty finding private housing that is affordable in the area even after becoming stabilized.
- There is a lack of community-building between wealthier homeowners and the more racially/ethnically diverse renters and homeowners. It would be great if the City could support more programs that support community-building.

- Transportation and connectivity in the area can be very challenging, especially east-west connections and for those without reliable childcare.
- Business ownership is difficult for those who have historically been excluded from ownership.

#### **Highland Park Action Coalition - Marianne McCord, Kay Kirkpatrick**

- The Coalition was formed when two separate neighborhood groups merged. It is important to recognize that Delridge is a long corridor, not only for transportation but jobs. There is an Urban Village in the Delridge valley, but the City doesn't call it South Delridge. Highland Park is considered part of Westwood. It seems as if the City forgets we are here.
- Delridge is not accessible for all. There are only three access points to get on or off the West Seattle peninsula. The topography makes transit difficult.
- The Delridge corridor plan does not cover enough of Delridge. The plan only includes the first third (northern portion) of the neighborhood.
- Highland Park is isolated. There isn't enough affordable housing, and there aren't many commercial buildings. The neighborhood has no walkable retail or coffee shops. Residents must drive a mile for groceries.
- The 98106 zip code has the highest percent of vacant buildings in the city. Residents would like the City to allow more buildings to be torn down.

#### **Pigeon Point Neighborhood Council – Pete Spalding**

- This area was a huge beneficiary of the 2008 Parks Levy, including a new skate park and ballfields.
- The Pigeon Point neighborhood was mostly made up of rental houses twenty years ago. Historically, a significant amount of housing was provided for workers at the steel plant. Most of the rental housing has turned over, sold, redeveloped, and now there are a lot of homeowners in the neighborhood.
- There has been a lot of density added, but the City has not done enough to improve infrastructure. For example, one block on 21st Avenue SW has thirty-eight new housing units and only twelve parking spaces. There has been trouble with cars lining the streets and fire trucks can't navigate the streets. The neighborhood is working with the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) to get signage (no parking, etc.)
- The neighborhood is happy to have density, but neighbors are worried about old utilities not being able to keep up with new residents. Drainage continues to be a significant issue. The hillside behind Youngstown had a landslide in the 1960s. The City thought it was cost-prohibitive to do anything about it.
- A key issue for the neighborhood is the future light rail project. Both proposed elevated alignments will come across Pigeon Point. There is concern that the alignments will need to move into the neighborhood and displace houses. The alignment on the north side of the West Seattle bridge would have significant impacts on the north Delridge business district. Most residents of the neighborhood want what Sound Transit calls the "Pigeon Ridge Tunnel."
- The neighborhood is also concerned about how the Rapid Ride H line might impact the community.

#### **Puget Ridge Neighborhood Council – Tasha Moser, Amanda Kirk, and Willard Brown**

- Puget Ridge is a highly residential neighborhood. We don't have a lot of retail.
- The neighborhood has three main projects: 1) working with Seattle Parks to create an edible park/food forest; 2) a project to create better access via trails through Puget Park and to South

Seattle College; and 3) working with Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) on a natural drainage system project, which was expected to be larger, but is now limited to only eight blocks.

- Flooding is still a major problem in Delridge. It is the most flood-prone neighborhood in Seattle other than Madison Valley. SPU recently attended a neighborhood meeting this week. The department does not currently have money for drainage projects.
- The Delridge Wetlands Project is an ongoing project to address drainage issues. SDOT and SPU are partners; but those departments are not structured so they can easily coordinate with each other. Another project is restoration of the Roxhill Bog, which is the headwaters of Longfellow Creek. The bog has become so dry it recently caught on fire. The Seattle Fire Department did not know how to put it out.
- The Puget Ridge neighborhood is very diverse, with many different languages spoken. This is one of its greatest strengths.
- Community assets include the Seattle Chinese Garden, the edible park, two co-housing sites, an orchard, and a recently upgraded "tot-lot" that was developed with input from neighbors and parents.
- The West Duwamish Greenbelt is Seattle's largest contiguous greenbelt with trails.
- A grocery co-op is breaking ground on November 2<sup>nd</sup>, but it will still be a while until it opens. Until now, the area's residents have not had any grocery store options.
- Many of the community projects are led by volunteers. This shows what neighbors can do together. Puget Ridge has an active neighborhood council with an email list of more than 400 people.
- Challenges yet to be addressed include a lack of sidewalks, which affects drainage and safe routes to schools. There has been frustration with speed humps in the neighborhood. Sanislo Elementary School enrollment has been declining. The school is not prioritized for any improvements, which appears to have a marginalizing effect on students.
- The Ideal vision for Puget Ridge includes figuring out how to address many language barriers and how to facilitate government involvement in the neighborhood.

#### **Involved Neighbor– Parie Hines**

- Parie Hines is an architect with her own design firm in Delridge. Previously she worked with DNDA as a project manager for Youngstown and other local projects. She is active in the neighborhood council and worked on the Delridge neighborhood plan. She is the project manager for the grocery co-op.
- The unique character of north Delridge comes from its location between two ridges. East-west connections are complicated. Delridge Way is a busy arterial with only a few blocks of residential uses north of Orchard. It is difficult to support a neighborhood center.
- There is a lot of development pressure for high-end homes. The neighborhood needs missing middle housing.
- The light rail alignment will be really tall if it is not in a tunnel. The geography and topography make for challenging alignments in this area.

#### **Overall Themes**

- Drainage is an ongoing, significant problem in Delridge.
- Delridge is a "healthy" food desert. The Delridge Grocery Co-op will help some but is not enough.
- Lack of east-west connections and lack of sidewalks are transportation problems.
- There are only three ways on and off the West Seattle peninsula. Traffic can easily become really terrible if one of these routes gets clogged up.

- Community groups expressed frustration that there is not more coordination and opportunity for collaborating between organizations when working with the City.

### **Public Comment**

Douglas, a Rainier Beach resident, stated that he works for the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections. He is participating in a program for code officials and is required to attend a Planning Commission meeting. He echoed statements from Delridge residents, saying that the Rainier Beach neighborhood often felt ignored by the City as well. He stated enforcing new building code provisions can be difficult. Standalone demolition projects are now easier than they were using the previous code.

Jared Berg, Seattle Housing Authority stated that there continues to be a lot of segregation between low income renters and homeowners. An ongoing challenge is how to integrate communities more. There is a large East African population in Delridge, but no one from that community is represented at this meeting.

Willard Brown, Puget Ridge Neighborhood Council stated the High Point community has the highest quality green stormwater infrastructure investments in the city. Other neighborhoods would like to receive similar investments. It would be very helpful to have a comprehensive plan for neighborhoods that addresses stormwater management infrastructure, parking, and sidewalks.

Tasha Moser, Puget Ridge Neighborhood Council stated that Neighborhood House in High Point is a wonderful community asset. Diverse neighbors interact and learn skills together. She expressed support for nonprofit neighborhood-based programs.

Marianne McCord, Highland Park Action Coalition expressed interest in developing a comprehensive plan for the Delridge community with all of the neighborhood groups represented at this meeting. She noted a lack of West Seattle representation on the Planning Commission. Commissioner Grace Kim stated that there may be some confusion about the Planning Commission's role regarding the Comprehensive Plan. The Planning Commission does not work with individual neighborhoods to develop plans. Executive Director Vanessa Murdock clarified that the City's Comprehensive Plan is a citywide vision and policy document.

Chair Austin thanked all the community organizations and participants for attending the meeting.

**The meeting was adjourned at 5:32 pm.**