

Code and Character Taskforce

March 25, 2008 – Notes

Present:

Allen Matsumoto – Sehome Neighborhood Association
Liz Jennings – Education of Whatcom Coalition for Healthy Communities
Bob Ross – Architect
Ted Mischaikov – Private Developer
Jim Bishop – Planning Commission Chair and Local Builder
Kurt Baumgarten – Birchwood Neighborhood Association President and MNAC Representative
Brian Evans – Residential Builder and Director of BIA
Nick Hartrich – Sustainable Connections
Danne Neill – Realtor
Darby Watson - Consultant
Tim Stewart – Planning Director
Nicole Oliver - Communications Coordinator
Marilyn Vogel – Senior Planner
Chris Koch – Planner II
Linda Stewart – Neighborhood Services Coordinator
Heather Aven – Secretary III

Called to Order: 3:30pm

Tim Stewart thanked the group for being willing to participate in this Taskforce. He pointed out that the two ways policies are implemented are the “carrot of capital improvements” and the stick of “development regulations”. He stated that this taskforce was called together to help set up the process to build broad-based neighborhood consensus for the changes that most of the community would like to have happen. He explained that a proposal will be presented to the Planning Commission and City Council based on the ideas that this Taskforce implemented into the 2nd Planning Academy.

Mayor Dan Pike also expressed his appreciation for the members of the taskforce and complimented the mix of committee members, which include members from both the development and residential communities.

The group introduced themselves and expressed any expectations they hoped would result from the work of the taskforce or the 2nd Planning Academy.

Tim Stewart talked about some of the other initiatives and projects happening concurrent with the Planning Academy this year. He pointed out that the Planning Academy is meant to be an education process that allows City Staff and consultants the opportunity to provide technical information to the community, and the community to provide value-based information back to the staff. He clarified that the toolbox that will be created by this taskforce is very important because each neighborhood is different, and what works in one will not necessarily work in another.

Ted Mischaikov suggested that a governance component be included in the toolbox. He explained that the Neighborhood Associations need to understand what their role is in effecting change.

Liz Jennings commented that in regard to governance, the neighborhood planning process is one area that neighborhood association and others need to be aware of how they fit into the process. She also pointed out that the role of neighborhood associations needs to be identified, so they can begin to understand how they can build up their community.

Tim Stewart clarified that, in the past, the neighborhood plans were the legal basis for the zoning in the neighborhood. He explained that as of a few years ago, the land use regulations have been separated from the neighborhood plans and placed in the Development Code. He stated that the neighborhood associations have legal authority through the Mayor's Neighborhood Advisory Commission (MNAC) to comment on any changes to the neighborhood plans or the Comprehensive Plan; as well as, being the entity that any land use activity is noticed through. Tim also suggested that building consensus for positive change is also something that the neighborhood associations are providing.

Jim Bishop wanted to know if the numbers from the Land Supply Analysis would be updated for each neighborhood.

Tim Stewart replied that for the purpose of this taskforce, the numbers will not be updated.

Kurt Baumgarten reiterated that the fear of the unknown is very real and he wanted to discuss ways of getting different materials from one neighborhood association to another.

Brian Evan expressed his concern about discussing neighborhood changes without knowing how many people the neighborhood is expecting.

Tim Stewart responded that he would like to focus on building a great community in a form that enhances the value of the existing neighborhood, and then begin to focus on how to accommodate the people.

Nicole Oliver referenced the proposed outline for the Taskforce Meetings and encouraged the members to provide feedback on additional topic they would like to discuss during the meetings or topics that should be included in the curriculum for the Planning Academy.

Jim Bishop would like to see incentives for the neighborhoods that are willing to provide some of the infill that is being proposed and talked about.

Tim Stewart wanted to talk about how a neighborhood might use the different housing forms from the toolbox through an entitlement process to assure the community what is proposed is what is going to be built.

Liz Jennings suggested that the neighborhoods be given the opportunity to talk about what they like about what already exists in their neighborhood, so that as we present the various tools to them, we are promoting ways they can build on the existing character.

Bob Ross pointed out the importance of getting the community to support higher density by showing them what the benefits for their neighborhood would be.

Ted Mischaikov suggested that the conditional use permit process be a component of the education for the community

Tim Stewart agreed with Ted and would suggest including more process questions than just relating to conditional use permits.

Danne Neill would like to see affordable housing be part of the market consideration section. She would also like to see design standards indentified within the different neighborhoods.

Brian Evan reiterated that the quality of life benefits to the neighborhood for allowing higher density need to be illustrated.

Ted Mischaikov suggested that the difference between the commercial component and the residential component of an urban village or neighborhood commercial center be discussed with the community.

Liz Jennings was hoping to have some skills training on developing collaborative, so there is an understanding of when the public should be giving input on the process, at which point wider community involvement should be engaged, and when should the members of the development community be talking with the neighborhoods.

Darby Watson suggested a discussion on design review criteria.

Nicole Oliver discussed the logistics of the Planning Academy.

LOCATION: The sessions will be held at the old JC Penney store front.

TIME: Begin April 30, Wednesday evenings

FURNITURE: Mt. Baker Theater is allowing the use their table and chairs.

PARTICIPATION: 80 – 100 people. Ideally 50% of attendees would be from the neighborhoods (2 seats for each neighborhood) and 50% from other stakeholders (4 seats for each group).

DISCUSSION:

- Observers should not be allowed.
- Attendees should be invited via personal invitations and will be asked to attend all sessions.
- Each taskforce member will invite 2 people from their respective groups and forward those names to Nicole Oliver as soon as possible. Nicole will forward a personal invite to them.
- Encourage the MNAC representatives to nominate the neighborhood attendees, and ask them to specify if they are

skeptical or in support of infill so that there is a mix of community members at the academy.

- Allow community members to come forward if they want to attend (rather than being selected by neighborhood associations) and commit to attending all the sessions.
- Encourage previous Planning Academy graduates to share their knowledge with the new attendees from their neighborhood.
- Commitment beyond the Planning Academy – share information with their stakeholder group, and participate in the legislative debate before Planning Commission and City Council, regardless of the personal feelings toward infill.
- Be clear on the intent of the Planning Academy – for example is this process a conversion or discussion.
- Offer “open public meetings” for those neighbors that could not attend.
- Produce a “highlight reel” and invite the public (as well as televise on BTV10) to view a recap of the entire event.
- Provide a “train the trainer” kit to each of the participants to take back to their stakeholder group.
- Invite those participants with a high level of interest for follow-up and present the “train the trainer” kit to them for feedback prior to releasing to all participants.
- Pre- and Post test for each session.
- Minimize the amount of paper by providing some of the information to be online.

Other Stakeholder to be added:

- **Legal**
- **Fire**
- **Press**
- **School Administration / Educators**
- **Chamber**
- **EDC**
- **Communities of Faith**
- **Cultural Organizations**
- **YWCA**
- **Environmental Organizations**
- **Renters Association**

Marilyn Vogel stated that the Maker Study that was handed out is a technical report that reflected the opinions of the people that critiqued the code, staff, and focus groups with builders and architects that use the code.

HOMEWORK: READ THE MAKER STUDY!

Allen Matsumoto suggested the message that is given to the neighborhoods and the community at large should be, “although we are talking about infill, we want to understand how to enhance the character of your neighborhood”.

Adjourned: 5:40Pm