



Lower Southeast Rising Area Plan Project Advisory Committee Meeting #12 July 25, 2023 | 6:30 – 8:00 pm

Meeting Notes

Meeting started at 6:35pm

Attendance:

Committee Members:

Nancy Chapin, Nick Sauvie, Pam Hodge, Anna Weichel, Kathy Brock, Melanii Lambert, Scott Goodman, Valeria Vidal, Meesa Long, Tim Williams

City Staff:

Bill Cunningham, BPS; Shane Valle, PBOT; Hector Rodriguez-Ruiz, BPS

Guests: (none)

Introductions:

Name, Pronouns, and Ice Breaker: what's your favorite thing to do in your neighborhood during the summer?

Public Comments:

No public comment

Project Updates:

Bill Cunningham (BPS) presented

The purpose of this meeting is to share public feedback received on the Lower SE Rising Discussion Draft Plan and discuss potential refinements to the plan.

Bill provided a review of the project timeline. Bill then provided an overview of public engagement undertaken for the Discussion Draft over the last two months, which included the online open house and survey, Map App, virtual information session, tabling events at six community events and gathering places, mailings to nearly 7,000 residents, and focus group discussions with members of the Spanish-, Vietnamese-, and Chinese-language communities.

Valeria Vidal- Asked about the possibility of having a couple of people from the PAC join staff for the Planning Commission staff presentation for the public hearing on September 26. Bill indicated that this was a possibility, and that in the past arrangements have been made for representatives from groups that have had key roles in projects to present as part of invited testimony before general public testimony begins.

Review of public feedback on the Discussion Draft Plan

Bill Cunningham (BPS) and Shane Valle (PBOT) presented

Bill and Shane shared slides providing a summary of online survey responses regarding the Discussion Draft proposals. The majority of community feedback was generally supportive of both the plan's land use and transportation proposals, including the proposals for zone changes to expand opportunities for neighborhood businesses and housing. People were interested in the details of implementation - issues raised by community members included:

- Need to include housing that will be affordable to lower-income people
- Concerns about the affordability of new commercial spaces and the need to prioritize local businesses
- Need for pedestrian/safety improvements on 82nd if the 82nd Avenue commercial hub is to become successful
- Interest in having more trees and other green elements
- Concerns from some about traffic and parking impacts and the loss of on-street parking
- Support for the corridor and neighborhood greenway projects, but divided opinions as to which types of projects should be prioritized.

Discussion on land use proposals

Valeria Vidal – Wondering what the relationship is between this plan's 82nd Avenue commercial hub and the PBOT 82nd Avenue Plan. Which takes precedence? Bill answered that the two plans are focusing on different things. The PBOT 82nd Avenue Plan is focused on transportation safety issues – not land uses, while the LSER Plan is looking at land use changes.

Tim Williams – People have concerns about the affordability of housing options, but my understanding is that the zoning changes don't directly address this. Affordability is addressed as a second step, when development is built.

Bill related that the proposed multi-dwelling zoning does have a relationship to affordability, in that it allows more options for a greater diversity of housing types and multi-dwelling units that are generally less expensive than the houses and townhouses allowed in the single-dwelling zones. There are also inclusionary housing requirements for including affordable units that apply to larger buildings in the multi-dwelling and mixed-use zones.

Tim Williams – Doesn't want people to be unsupportive of the plan proposals because the zoning by itself does not guarantee the units will be included.

Bill responded that it is a two-step process. First, zoning is needed to allow multi-dwelling development. Then, need to work with affordable housing developers to build affordable housing, exploring possibilities for things like a tax increment financing district or an NPI that could bring more resource to

invest in affordable housing and community economic development. Basically, zone changes are needed first, and then following up to deliver on affordable housing facilitated by the zoning.

Nick Sauvie – Agreed with the idea that allowing more multi-dwelling housing will allow for more housing that is affordable to people earning less than median income. There is also a lot of data showing that building more housing of all kinds increases affordability, because when you have a shortage of housing, people with more money outspend people with less, driving up the price of housing.

Discussion on transportation proposals

Valeria Vidal – I'm wondering if the reason TriMet did not include all the LSER recommendations in their Forward Together plan was because of data such as potential ridership.

Shane related that some of our asks would have required TriMet to put more resources into the area, while TriMet's Forward Together plan was intended to be revenue neutral and fairly short term in focus. TriMet did include more service to the area (such as continuous service on Woodstock, frequent service on SE 52nd, new service on SE 72nd), but there were system-wide considerations and some things TriMet was not entirely comfortable with, especially given limited resources. There are opportunities to continue to be persistent about needed transit connections that could be more feasible in the future.

Other discussion

Nancy Chapin – I'm wondering if there is an underlining value about taking care of the needs of older people, such as their needing to get around by car. I don't see how we are addressing these needs and their ability to get places, especially given that we are expecting an aging population.

Bill related that an age-friendly city that works for people of all ages and abilities is an underling value, with adopted policies supportive of this orientation. How you deliver on this is a continuing discussion, while area agencies such as TriMet have long committed to providing accessible transit. Bill indicated that the plan is not itself recommending the removal of on-street parking, which is considered during the design phase of projects.

Shane shared that PBOT does work toward transportation facilities that provide "8 to 80" accessibility that works for a wide range of ages. Things PBOT is doing in the design of streets for people who are driving include making streets more predictable, higher visibility, slowing speeds – which help provide greater safety given the slower reaction times of many older drivers. PSU research has found that active transportation safety improvements make streets safer for everybody, including drivers.

Tim Williams – How does BPS and PBOT address concerns about parking? Do people need more education about parking issues?

Bill shared that there have been recent state mandates for reducing parking requirements (which adds substantial costs especially for higher-density housing). Residential development generally does not need to provide off-street parking, although off-street parking is allowed and is often provided. Given Portland's climate action objectives, Portland's emphasis has not been to mandate parking, but to make it easier to get around in ways that do not require a car.

Anna Weichsel – There is a lot of cultural change that is related to things like parking, affordable housing, and higher-density housing. How to transfer what is in the zoning code or are policy aspirations

into a cultural discussion, what is in the building code, implementation, etc.? How to provide a better understanding of such issues and what are next steps? Solutions do not always seem well thought out.

Bill related that government will likely not be able to bring cultural change on its own. However, much of what is in the plan is intended to make it easier to get around in the plan area, such as providing more opportunities for local services and transportation projects that make it easier and safer to get around without a car. The plan is more about facilitating other ways of getting around, rather than stopping people from getting around by car.

Valeria Vidal – Support the idea that we have to offer people other attractive options for getting around in order to facilitate cultural shifts away from dependence on cars. There was a lot of support for building sidewalks. Will right-of-way acquisition be feasible to provide for more sidewalks?

Shane responded that PBOT does not necessarily need more right-of-way for sidewalks. Typically don't need right-of-way acquisition for sidewalk projects. There are identified sidewalk infill projects on SE 52nd and Flavel Drive that will not require expanding the right-of-way. Bill added that new higher-density development is often required to provide frontage improvements that include wider sidewalks and space for street trees, providing other ways of improving sidewalks over time.

Kathy Brock (from chat) – Living on 72nd near Flavel I can say the parking in front of my home is frequently all taken up by clients of the nearby food carts. That's without any new business.

Review of Focus Group Feedback

Bill Cunningham and Hector Rodriguez-Ruiz (BPS) presented

Focus group discussions were held July in partnership with community partners with members from the Vietnamese-, Chinese-, and Spanish-language communities to broaden who staff is hearing from. Bill shared feedback received from focus group discussions with members of the Vietnamese- and Chinese-language communities. As with other community feedback, focus group participants generally supported the plan's land use and transportation proposals, but had concerns about the details of implementation, such as the need to include housing that is affordable to lower-income people, and had concerns about new development bringing additional traffic and not providing sufficient parking.

Hector shared information on feedback received from the Spanish-language focus group discussion (held last night), which was facilitated by Latino Network. Participants lived in the area and were very excited for and supportive of the plan, especially regarding transit and other transportation improvements in the area. There were concerns about how to keep the affordability of housing in the area and how to make sure the increasing numbers of businesses don't create safety issues for students walking in the area. Participants would like to see more housing in the area, as well as social gathering places.

Ideas on refinements to the plan based on public feedback (discussion)

Tim Williams – It is important to recognize that the plan is just a start, has no budget, people will not be building homes right away, so it seems people are getting bogged down in concerns about the details of future implementation.

Shane – The plan is actually already doing some of what it was intended to do, in terms of bringing internal City attention to the needs in the area. Opportunities have already been found to find funding for crossings identified by the community as priorities. Education may be needed to clarify “what’s next” for what’s in the plan.

Bill – Related to next steps, the plan includes a Community Stabilization section that identifies future actions desired by the community, such as the need for community economic development efforts to support small businesses and approaches to bring more resources for affordable housing, which are things the community can advocate for. There is also the Build A Better 82nd Plan, which includes a community stabilization component that could help address issues in the near term.

Anna Weichsel – I really like the plan and like to hear the multi-layered feedback. Appreciate the opportunity to address both scales and everything in between. What is needed is continuing communication about the next steps, what the needs are, and about ideas to make things happen.

Scott Goodman – Also very much in favor of what is being said in these discussions. Appreciate the housing first approach of this project. If there is anything further we can do to advance this, we should push in that direction. Appreciate the work of this group, acknowledging the long process of 12 meetings, and the dedicated people providing good ideas on long-term visions for housing and what needs to happen. My hope is that we can continue to work on this as neighborhood champions. Would be good to have input from the City about useful next steps, how to continue as a group to push for these things – especially housing.

Valeria Vidal – I second everything Scott mentioned. To me the plan looks great and aligns with City goals for things like economic development, housing, and also climate change planning. The plan lays a good foundation and direction for what is to come. Exciting that 82nd Avenue will have some funding. Will be good to prioritize how we can be involved in some of these opportunities and leverage other things that are happening that could align with the plan.

Kathy Brock – I don’t see how the plan protects homeowners, especially on 72nd. My property will become commercial and my neighbors are not excited about this either. What I say doesn’t seem to make a difference. If the plan is very successful and it becomes like Hawthorne, I’ll be forced out of my home – don’t want to be next to a 4-5 story building with no parking.

Bill related that these concerns have been heard and staff has kept the larger-scale zoning very limited. Shane related that there have been different layers of conversation, with people broadly supportive of proposals, but with the conversations very different for people most directly impacted by zone changes. We need to continue these conversations and staff needs to listen. Bill shared that such zone changes are very much long term and incremental in terms of actual development, with some areas having had commercial zoning for decades but only recently seeing new development.

Tim Williams – It important for people to continue to speak up. There will need to be continued neighborhood efforts and communication about the future of the area over the next 10 years. It is not a given that the area will become like Hawthorne or Division.

Nick Sauvie – I really support the plan and the increased housing density. We have a shortage of tens of thousands of units across the region and we need places to put housing. We cannot maintain the status quo - the status quo is that we have thousands of people who are houseless.

Tim Williams – Interested in how opposing views were addressed in other projects.

Bill related that it is always a balancing act between priorities. An example is that the zoning code addresses concerns about the scale of higher-density projects by requiring buildings to step-down in scale next to lower-density zones to provide a transition, balancing priorities for allowing larger amounts of housing with concerns about building scale. It has also been important to clarify to homeowners that zone changes do not require them to change anything, but primarily expand options for how their property can be used or developed in the future. Some positive things to consider are the idea of community events in the emerging neighborhood center, such as having outdoor market events to cultivate the area as a hub for the community.

Tim Williams (from chat) – Just to be clear - I'm not anti-plan! But it's just the first step - I just hope we can address potential opposition to the ideas.

Shane (from chat) – It's a great comment Tim, and something we need to think more about. We don't always do a great job at the city of explaining what we are doing and defending the proposals and the community mandate we have to advance them

Anna Weichsel – Would be good to provide opportunities for community members to voice their ideas for what they are interested in, what they would like to have happen. Would be good if the City could help implement programs for small business development. Bill related that some of these potential next steps are included in the Community Stabilization section of the plan. The proposed new center has key community anchors, such as Whitman Elementary and Flavel Park that could a basis for activity.

Nancy Chapin (from chat) – Woodstock Gives Back will be on Sept. 10th.

Bill invited people to email staff with any additional comments.

Next Steps

- Staff will refine Draft Plan based community feedback
- Public release of Proposed Draft – originally aimed for late August, now aiming for September 8
- Planning Commission Hearing – originally aimed for September 26, now scheduled for October 10 (5 pm)
- City Council – TBD

Bill shared that staff will look into having someone from the PAC as part of invited testimony near the beginning of the Planning Commission public hearing, highlighting the importance of community voice in this project. PAC members expressed support for this. Pam stated interest in presenting.

Final PAC get together? This will likely be the final PAC meeting. PAC members expressed interest in an informal get together. Suggestions were that it would be good to meet somewhere in the core of the plan area. Bill indicated he would follow up on this (where and when).

Meeting ended at 8:30 pm