

Portland Planning Commission

May 28, 2024

Commissioners Present

Michael Alexander, Wade Lange, Mary-Rain O'Meara, Michael Pouncil, Steph Routh, Eli Spevak, Erica Thompson (virtual)

Commissioners Absent

Nikesh Patel

City Staff

Patricia Diefenderfer, Tom Armstrong, Ariel Kane

Chair O'Meara called the meeting to order at 5:02 p.m. and provided an overview of the agenda.

[Documents and Presentations for today's meeting](#)

Advising Role

Briefing: Patricia Diefenderfer

Presentation

This is a conversation we started at the March retreat. Today we are closing at least part of this conversation in advance of the Housing Production Strategy briefing and comment period today.

We want to define the role and develop the approach to how the Commission can help inform and participate in this advising role. The stated powers and duties of the Planning Commission per the Zoning Code are noted on slide 3.

This really relates to non-legislative items the Planning Commission hears. They are not land use decisions (no public notification needed) and are not appealable. The action City Council takes on these items will generally be in the form of a resolution, not an ordinance.

“The Planning Commission reviews projects to determine if they are consistent with the Comp Plan.”

The suggested approach is noted on slide 5. This shows the Planning Commission will have a briefing and an opportunity to hear from the public and the Planning Commission can provide input, which doesn't have to be a consensus. No vote will be taken because these are not part of the formal legislative process, though staff may make modifications based on commissioners' comments. Commissioner feedback is included in summary of public input, or the Commission

may write letter to City Council. The focus of the letter would be whether the project is consistent with the Comp Plan.

This is germane today because we have the Housing Production Strategy today before the Commission. This is implementing policy, not policy-setting. In this case, there is State statute that says HPS is not a land use decision, so this lends itself to the advisory role – City Council will ultimately adopt HPS by resolution.

We understand there is more discussion to be had to be had about this role particularly with significant transportation projects, which we will dig into at a future retreat. We also plan to incorporate this into the operating procedures document we've discussed and will continue to work on between staff and commissioners.

Chair O'Meara: The HPS item will come back on June 11. So I understand that at that meeting we can discuss if the PC wants to submit a letter to Council.

- Patricia: Correct.

Housing Production Strategy

Briefing / Public Comment: Tom Armstrong, Ariel Kane

Presentation

Disclosures

None.

Tom introduced himself and Ariel. Tonight is a briefing about the project and then to hear from the community. We will return to the Planning Commission on June 11 for a final discussion.

Tom shared the overview of the Housing Production Strategy's (HPS) place in the Comp Plan and the State requirement for cities to plan for housing. Last December, Council adopted the BLI and HNA, which are supporting documents to the Comp Plan – those are land use decisions. The HPS is to be a 5-year action plan – what additional actions are cities taking to enhance housing production.

Chapter 5 of the Comp Plan is focused on housing goals and policies.

Ariel provided an overview of the Housing Needs Analysis (HNA). These are numbers the Planning Commission saw and recommended to Council. This is some background and reminders for where we are moving forward. We also have some new data and way we're showing it included in this set (slides 8-17).

Tom shared the definitions of items in a strategy (slide 19). This is an ongoing cycle, but the timeframe is about prioritization and what we will work on next and/or when we expect to address the issues.

There are 8 broad categories that the strategies are organized under (slide 20). Tom walked through each strategy and specifics (slides 21-28).

Commissioner Routh: Is the education for renter? Owners? Builders?

- Tom: It really could be all of the above. It's more about informing the community (owners, developers, etc) how easy or difficult it can be to add features to an existing or planning out a new home.

Community engagement for the HPS has been extensive. Ariel shared details of work staff has done with and in the community (slides 30-36).

The HSP public comment (oral) will be this evening, and the Map App will be available for further written comments until June 11, which is when the project will return to the Planning Commission. Staff will then integrate the engagement feedback into the strategies and will fine-tune them with our bureau partners. We expect the project to go to City Council in late summer or early fall. We have a State deadline to adopt by the end of this calendar year so we can the focus on the work.

Chair O'Meara: In terms of the developers' feedback, can you elaborate on what types of institutions?

- Ariel: We can clarify this later.

Commissioner Alexander: For the response rate for surveys, the houseless response rate was small.

- Tom: It was online, and we worked with the community groups to access their constituency.

[Written comments](#)

Public Comment

1. David Sweet (in person): Would like to strengthen C1. Be sure to provide resources needed for the strategies. Cully TIF highlighted the need for home ownership as it is transformational for lower-income families. Support homeownership for lower income.
2. Michael Anderson (in person): Launch and staff is more important than "explore". Support the Portland: Neighbors Welcome (P:NW) proposal. Ask Council to commit to staffing the work. *See written testimony.*
3. Peter Finley Fry (in person): Merge PHB and Prosper Portland. How do we build cities that grow with neighborhoods that we want? There is lots of new development, but the housing studies say we have underproduced. We have to empower people who live within the neighborhoods to build so they generate wealth. Get away from the rhetoric and get into the

work. See *written testimony*.

4. Diana Stuart (in person): Involved in code and development for neighborhood but testifying for myself tonight. We need to plan growth to meet the needs of downtown. The misery we see here is something we have to be focused on addressing. The house is on fire – we need to be studying how to put out the fire. The soft approaches are not the right approaches... we need hard approaches to solve our housing need now. The 0-80% MFI is not enough – we need to be reaching the lowest income folks. Neighborhood associations were not part of the outreach staff did.
5. LaJune Thorson (in person): Downtown NA is very supportive of inclusionary housing and low-income housing. We want people to be able to live downtown who work here, who are service workers, to live near where they work. How does this relate to the Housing Regulatory Relief plan? Developers were involved, but the NAs were not part of the input process. We want all types of housing, but it needs to be sooner than later.
6. Jordan Lewis (in person): Support P:NW inner eastside for all recommendation. Unlock affordable housing, relegalize high-rise in inner eastside to boost the neighborhoods and connecting people to integrate the city. Fund homeownership options to < 80% MFI.
7. David Binnig (virtual): Inner SE Portland. Section C1 should commit to a staff project to rezone high-opportunity areas like mine. We need to change the cycle of displacement.
8. Gerri Witthuhn (virtual): Strong Towns PDX. Get to experience the value of SE Portland. Strong sense of community. We need to upzone the inner southeast. Allocate this as a true project with funding.
9. Eldo Varghese (virtual): We deal with high costs, reduced quality of life. These and other issues can be resolved with some simple steps: allow higher-density housing (zoning); provide high-quality and accessible transit;
10. Sarah Radcliffe (virtual): Proud Ground. Main concern is the strategy is in two separate tracts. We think homeownership inequities should be addressed. Focus on homeownership below 80% MFI. Community land trusts should be a proposed strategy.
11. Heidi Hart (virtual): Support P:NW. Upzone high-opportunity areas. Take concrete steps to open the neighborhoods to all Portlanders. Support Habitat and Proud Ground.
12. Dave Peticolas (virtual): Section C1 should increase and commit to staffing this critical initiative. Translate “study” into tangible actions. Support Habitat and Proud Ground ideas and opportunities. Be bold and forward-thinking.
13. Jennifer Shuch (virtual): NE Portland. P:NW board. Strategy C1 should be strengthened for staff time and resources to upzone the inner eastside. Support Habitat and Proud Ground to fund homeownership options to < 80% MFI and land banking. We believe in a city where people who want to live in a city without a car can do so; people aren’t forced to commute long distances given costs; and small shops can thrive.

14. Robert Galanakis (virtual): Up zoning and density to allow people to age in place. We cannot continue to study – commit to a resource project in C1.
15. Joseph Antonini (virtual): Support P:NW proposal for the inner eastside. Commit staffing and funds to this project.
16. Aaron Brown (virtual): P:NW board president. Greater housing stability is necessary versus having to move due to affordability. Add housing capacity in the inner eastside – greater housing abundance increases housing stability.
17. Ian Meisner (virtual): Member of P:NW – support this call to strengthen C1 to commit a fully staffed project to upzone the inner eastside. This is some of our most desirable housing and neighborhoods. Commit to projects and interventions, not just studies. Create more flexibility in high-opportunity neighborhoods.
18. Matt Tuckerbaum (virtual): P:NW and homeowner in Richmond. Relegalize upzoning in southeast. At least align zoning with corridor definition. Support Habitat and Proud Ground proposals.
19. Tim McCormick (virtual): Pushed out of housing in Portland in the last few years. What is most making feel like I can't move back to Portland is the State work on housing. I have seen an unbridled drive to expand state and government control on income-restricted housing. I've watched Portland and Oregon planning over time, and now it has gone down an extreme track of government but without accountability. Over the last years in discussions, I have been working on an independent initiative to address basic problems raised, for example, over issues with Inclusionary Housing.
20. Jonathan Greenwood (virtual): Advocate for P:NW work. Promoted Section C1 to staffing and resources for this project in the inner eastside, not just centers and corridors. Letter of support to Council.
21. Zachary Leshar (virtual): Support the inner eastside for all (P:NW) campaign. Fully staff projects, not just studies, and expand beyond centers and corridors.
22. Sarah Berry (virtual): Richmond neighborhood; grew up in Nob Hill. Conversion promoted homeownership in large houses that were being broken up into apartments/condos. We now own a large house, which we have discovered is more expensive to convert to a duplex instead of tearing down and rebuilding.
23. Mitch Green (virtual): Homeowner in SW. Candidate for Council District 4. We need a bold approach to an abundance agenda. Support P:NW. Housing scarcity affects us all – as does lack of density. Echo the downtown folks in terms of the urgency needed to make change. Invest resources to promote density in opportunity areas like the inner eastside. Specifically, prioritize the funding ask to Council to move forward with action in C1.
24. Luke Norman (virtual): Support and strengthen C1 as you've heard from many others tonight. Empower BPS staff to legalize more neighborhoods so Portlanders of all incomes

have the opportunity to live in thriving neighborhoods.

25. Timothy Slevin-Vegdahl (virtual): Mixed-use neighborhoods are great places to be. Support the staffing and funding for a full project to expand C1.
26. Doug Klotz (virtual): There is plenty of room for more density in the inner eastside – it's a great place to live, and we need to develop it so more people can live here. Rezone for 4-floors and corner stores now.
27. Will Hollingsworth (virtual): Thank you for taking the time for hearing us tonight and to BPS staff. P:NW member. Confirming the need to increase C1 from a study to a fully staffed project to upzone the inner eastside. PC should strongly encourage Council in a letter to put financial teeth into this work to commit to.

Chair O'Meara closed oral comments. The Map App will be open to receive comments through June 11.

Commissioner Comments / Clarifications

Commissioner Pouncil: What does CLT stand for? Revolving loan fund?

- Tom: Community Land Trusts, as a form of non-profit ownership. A revolving loan fund is a lower-interest loan, so the recipient has to pay it back, but the funding continues and gets recirculated with an expectation you can reinvest in new projects.

Commissioner Lange: Do we have minimum parking requirements?

- Tom: Not for residential projects.
- Patricia: There are some areas on the perimeter of the city that have parking maximums.

Commissioner Spevak: We heard about study versus embark on a project.

- Tom: Yes, this is around the tension around what we can commit to now, recognizing the transition moment we're in and what a future Council will fund. We want to up the commitment as we can, as we have heard about lots of tonight. From our standpoint, the original study was just that: we knew we had a grant to study the infrastructure capacity, but it is not yet a fully funded project with staffing.
- Patricia: This was deliberate because the idea was that we know infrastructure can create a challenge, even in areas where the zoning already allows it. This is like a building block to a future rezoning – to understand if we assume certain levels of growth and what it would mean in terms of infrastructure needs will be.

Commissioner Lange: The City declared a housing emergency some time ago, so how does that inform the work you've done here, and what is the urgency placed on the work?

- Tom: Initially in 2015-16, the declaration allowed us to waive certain zoning requirements, particularly around shelters and safe-rest locations. We have done lots in the interim to change zoning (e.g. Shelter-to-Housing project) to make this long-standing. What we've seen from the City as a whole, it is a moment to elevate the issue – affordable housing bond, Metro regional bond, zoning code projects... all with an eye to increase density and increase zoning bonuses for affordable housing. Recently it's led into the permitting

streamlining, so we see this as a continuing process improvement. At the same time, we are subject to larger forces.

Commissioner Thompson: Priority level – can you talk about how this was assigned to each strategy? Is the priority based on impact? What are the linkages across strategies and projects?

- Tom: This gets at the timeline question. A higher-priority project we'll take on in the next 1-2 years that we expect our bureau partners can take on. The further out we get, the murkier it is to see how much of a commitment there is, which is the challenge. The inner eastside zoning revisit is an example – it's been in the BPS strategic plan for a number of years. We haven't done a formal mapping, though we recognize the linkages and crossover. We wanted to make the categories accessible and understandable for the whole community. But we know something like "accessible housing" can land in multiple places. We can start to see this in the low-carbon neighborhood work.

Commissioner Spevak: Expanding Opportunities for Affordable Housing was a terrific project – I'd like to see if this worked out well. Land banking – I agree that we should focus on this as Habitat has done and is knowledgeable about. It's not just land; properties are also selling for much lower than what we can even build. We need to be nimble. Climate-friendly and healthy homes have to do with the building and the edge of building codes... but the real opportunity is about how we power our homes, which is the much larger items. Ariel nailed it with how the City is not projecting much growth in the RCAA in close-in neighborhoods given the zoning capacity. From an equity perspective, this is a glitch. If we had the benefit of the RCAA analysis, we wouldn't have a comment in the Comp Plan versus the actual density we have in inner southeast neighborhoods right now. In terms of timing, some things are rushing through Council right now.

Commissioner Pouncil: I see disability housing as "everybody housing", which is a greater home for the present as well as the future. Can this be expanded as more inclusive housing for everyone?

Commissioner Routh: Agree with *Commissioner Spevak's* comments. I also want to thank everyone for their comments today as well as the written comments we've received. How do we ensure the HPS is actionable and moves us forward? I also want to urge us to look at the 80% MFI as the threshold versus lower to reach more people.

Chair O'Meara: Thank you for the summary of community engagement work. I hear a resounding level of support for affordable housing, which tracks with the data that we need to be building for 0-80% if not 0-30%. I heard that neighborhood associations were not reached out to, so both appreciation for those voices and the advocacy for the very low-income levels.

Chair O'Meara: This agenda item will continue to the June 11 Planning Commission meeting, which starts at 12:30 p.m.

Adjourn

Chair O'Meara adjourned the meeting at 7:36 p.m.