

PORTLAND CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

Minutes of the Meeting of
May 19, 1987

A special meeting of the Portland City Planning Commission was held on Tuesday, May 19, 1987 in Meeting Room 'A' of The Portland Building, 1120 S.W. Fifth Avenue, Portland, Oregon. The meeting was convened at 6:10 p.m. by President Lawretta Morris.

Planning Commission members present were: Martha Peck Andrews, Joseph Angel, Kevin Kelly, Lawretta Morris, Warren Rosenfeld, and Paul Williams.

Planning Commission members absent were: Betsy Lindsay, Steve Pfeiffer, and David Wu.

Bureau of Planning staff members present were: Norm Abbott, Michael Harrison, and Terry Moore.

Central City Plan Briefings

Mr. Harrison explained that this was the first in a series of briefings on the Central City Plan asked for by the commission at its April 7, 1987 retreat. He delivered copies of four documents to the commission (Final Report and Recommendations, Citizen Steering Committee, Central City Plan, May, 1987; Staff Report on Urban Form for the Central City, May, 1987; Report on Public Review, Period 2, Central City Plan, April, 1987; and Final Reports, Functional Advisory Committees, Central City Plan, Phase II, September, 1986) and introduced Don Stastny, chairman of the Central City Plan Citizen Steering Committee.

Mr. Stastny, 614 S.W. 11th Avenue, Suite 400, 97205, reviewed the recommendations found in the CSC's final report. He also stressed the importance of the work done by the FAC's, saying the reports were a major background document for the final report and were the result of a great deal of thought and effort on the part of the many citizens who had participated on the eight FAC's. Each FAC had been formed to address a specific functional area of the Central City and its membership appointed to give a broad geographic distribution within the FAC subcommittee.

He noted, too, that the final report of the CSC was as "succinct" as the members had thought possible, but he felt future work by planning staff could further simplify the recommendations. He acknowledged that the CSC report was likely to benefit from the work of the professional planners who would put it in its final form.

He summarized the history of the plan, from its "pre-planning" phase to the CSC final report and emphasized the performance-oriented approach the committee and staff had taken in developing the plan. He felt one of Portland's strengths was its performance-oriented codes and guidelines, comparing it favorably to cities like Seattle which used a more prescriptive kind of planning. He thought planning of the latter sort eventually strangled a city by not allowing it to grow or evolve within the framework of the plan.

He cited the Portland Downtown Plan, which had provided the framework on which to hang additional planning elements--e.g., the Downtown Parking and Circulation Plan--, in the years following its creation and adoption by the City Council.

He strongly supported a Central City Plan that imitated the Downtown Plan, saying it should not be a plan that spelled out exactly what would happen block-by-block within the Central City. He also thought the Central City Plan, as proposed by the CSC, was a balanced approach to the future of the Central City, built upon the city's existing strengths.

Mr. Stastny then reviewed the areas of greatest controversy in the final report and asked that the commission look most closely at those as it continued the public evolution of the plan.

Lower Albina Area: The questions as to the future of the area asked if it should remain an industrial sanctuary or move towards a more mixed use area, how it should connect to the river, and how access through it to the river should be provided to the neighborhoods adjacent to it. The CSC had decided that it should develop as a commercial link, down from the housing areas through the area that contained most of the historic buildings, with creation of a major public attractor at the intersection of N. Interstate and Mississippi Avenues. A park should be developed along the riverfront, linking the neighborhoods to the river. If the existing grain elevators on the riverfront were ever to cease their use, the area should be acquired for some public use. Commercial uses would not be encouraged to redevelop at that location, but the plan approved the continued use as grain elevators.

Lloyd Center Area: The plan looked at the area on all four sides of the future convention center and envisioned creation of a unique neighborhood, with access to the river.

Area to the East of Memorial Coliseum: The amount of housing that should be aggressively encouraged in the area was the major point of argument. He thought the commission should carefully review the recommendations of the CSC in the context of the entire plan.

Central Eastside Area: The question of most controversy was whether the area should retain its existing general nature as an industrial sanctuary/warehouse district, or should change to more intensely developed commercial or residential use. The decision of the CSC was to build upon the industrial and service uses in the area and to create the infrastructure that would make those uses "work" well in that area. The second question of controversy was whether the eastbank I-5 Freeway travelling through the area should be relocated away from the river. The final decision of the CSC was that the freeway should be left in its present location, but redesigned and rebuilt to pull it back somewhat from the river and to better serve the transportation needs of the Central Eastside Area industrial businesses. The CSC had felt a decision to move the freeway should be made for a transportationally-functional reason, and not based solely on aesthetics.

North of Burnside Area, East of Union/Grand: The final report recommended a special mixed use designation for the area.

North Macadam Area: The final report recommended that commercial uses be developed along the new transit line to Lake Oswego, with housing development only south of the Ross Island Bridge. The plan also spoke strongly for completion of a transit loop through the Central City and crossing the river to the eastside of the city.

The Downtown: The recommendations of the CSC called for more "carefully tailored things" to occur in the Downtown. It suggested a regional attractor,

modification of the Morrison Bridge ramps, creation of a University District around PSU, and maintenance of the RX zone.

North of Burnside Area ("North Downtown"): The plan called for an extension of the North Park Blocks to the river, establishment of a new residential neighborhood in the existing railyards area, which would include incubator businesses and educational opportunities.

The Willamette River: The plan emphasized public access to the river through whatever use was developed or existed along its banks.

Mr. Stastny concluded his presentation, reiterating that the final CSC plan built on Portland's strengths and proposed change within its strong basic land use and transportation structure. Several major development areas had been identified in the Central City where "real change" could occur in the next 20 years, and some of the proposals addressed concerns that were not strictly related to land use: the cultural, educational, and social service aspects of the Central City. He stressed that the CSC had reached consensus on "almost every word" in the final plan document, and he hoped the commission would build on the plan. It was not, he said, a "throwaway document."

Ms. Morris thanked him for his and the committee's work and asked if he felt the grain elevators on the eastside of the river, near the Lower Albina area of the Central City, could realistically be expected to move in the next 20 years. Mr. Stastny thought it was a remote possibility, but said the opportunity presented by the land should not be overlooked by the plan.

Ms. Morris also wondered if the committee had addressed the many things other than a "label" that were necessary to making an industrial sanctuary work. Mr. Stastny said the industrial sanctuary label would protect an area for industrial uses, but would not bring new life to the area. He listed several necessary things for viable industrial development: the ability to easily get trucks in and out of the area; the availability of larger parcels of land; the criticality of grades (for loading docks, etc.); the provision of parking for employees that would not conflict with the loading of goods; the provision of open space opportunities within the area. He also thought a different street classification system might be necessary for inner-city industrial areas. Appropriate infrastructure was very important, and perhaps unique design guidelines could be provided in the areas to do such things as discourage street trees where they would conflict with the industrial uses.

Ms. Morris asked if it were feasible from an engineering standpoint to put the eastbank I-5 Freeway below ground. Mr. Stastny said it could go underground if the problem of getting over the Marquam Bridge and down to the underground level as quickly as would be necessary could be solved. Mr. Williams asked if there were any other designs for moving the freeway that could more realistically be done. Mr. Stastny said all designs to move the roadway required the acquisition of additional right-of-way. However, if a narrower road were designed in the location of the existing freeway, or if the riverbank were filled and built out into, the approximately 100 feet that were necessary to having a useable public space along the river could be achieved.

Mr. Angel asked why the committee had chosen the option of freeway redesign over relocation (possibly to the area of the Burlington Northern tracks), particularly if the next 100 to 200 years were taken into account. Mr. Stastny said the committee felt inclusion in the plan of the desire to move the freeway would only compound the problems facing the Central City by advocating a large

expenditure for both new freeway construction and the acquisition of additional right-of-way. It would also jeopardize the viability of the Central Eastside area because of the uncertain future the area would have with such a plan imposed on it.

Ms. Andrews asked what sorts of business the committee had meant by "service and industry" that were seen as desirable for the Central Eastside area. Mr. Stastny defined those as "service and distribution" businesses, not so much actual manufacturing operations. Mr. Rosenfeld asked if the committee had not been bothered by the situation where high paying manufacturing jobs would be driven from the Central City. He wondered if there were a place in the plan for businesses like metal fabrication. Mr. Stastny said there had not been a conscious effort to eliminate the opportunity for such jobs from the plan. The committee had wanted to maintain those manufacturing jobs that presently existed in the city, but had not included in the plan initiatives to bring additional such jobs to the Central City. He did not think the committee's final plan chased the jobs from the Central City, but admitted its "fatal flaw" might be the lack of any emphasis on bringing new manufacturing jobs to the study area.

Mr. Kelly asked if the creation of housing on the properties owned by the Reidel, Ziddell, and Schnitzer corporations was key to the committee's plan. Mr. Stastny said the plan called for the creation of 4700 new housing units to be built in the Central City over the next 20 years. The Ross Island Bridge had seemed a convenient cut-off point--with construction of housing to the south due to the extreme noise problems in the northern area. There was also the concern that housing would be the most private of uses that could be constructed along the river, and if improved public access to the river were a goal of the plan, then some use other than housing was preferable. The final decisions for those areas were driven equally by what the property owners wanted to do.

Mr. Kelly felt housing built over the past several years in the Central City had not been "overwhelmingly successful", no matter what income level was targeted. Mr. Angel asked if any thought as to creating incentives for construction of downtown housing as part of the plan had been considered. Mr. Stastny said those had been considered and the committee felt that some sort of public subsidy or incentive would be necessary over the span of 20 years to achieve the desired housing levels.

Mr. Stastny then introduced the several chairmen or representatives of the eight plan Functional Advisory Committees, who each spoke briefly to the commission as to the conclusions found in their reports to the CSC. (See document dated September, 1986.)

Jean Meddaugh, Oregon Environmental Council, 2147 N.E. 14th Avenue, 97210 summarized the recommendations of the Parks, Recreation, and Natural Environment FAC. (See statement attached to these minutes.)

Mr. Rosenfeld asked if the subcommittee had meant to include "hazardous materials" in its discussion, or just "hazardous wastes." Ms. Meddaugh said the subcommittee felt the potential harm to the Central City region would be just as great from spilled or burning hazardous materials as it would be from hazardous wastes. It had therefore consciously included "materials" in its recommendations. Mr. Rosenfeld was concerned that such a statement would make it difficult for some businesses to continue operation in the Central City area, businesses using inks or dry cleaning solvents, for example.

Regarding the discussion of future parks, Ms. Andrews asked what the reaction of the city's Bureau of Parks would be to the recommendation that pocket parks be established throughout the Central City. Ms. Meddaugh responded that the FAC was being "visionary" in its thinking and did not base its recommendations on the current position of the Parks Bureau which did not favor that sort of city park.

Mr. Angel asked of what exactly the "green paths" mentioned in the recommendations would consist. Ms. Meddaugh said the recommendations envisioned a network of connecting pedestrian pathways throughout the Central City, but one which used sidewalks with street trees as well as paths such as found along the Willamette River.

Dave Fredrickson, Portland General Electric, 121 S.W. Salmon, 97204 reported the recommendations of the Economic Development FAC for chairman Michael Powell. The recommendations stressed that the Central City should remain the economic center of the region, with the highest density development along the transit corridors. The subcommittee had struggled not so much with where it wanted the Central City to be in 20 years, but how it should go about getting there, particularly as that related to competition with suburban office and commercial development. He said the city should work to change the perception that automobile parking was inadequate in the Central City and should make the transportation system easy to understand.

Another problem to solve was the perception that the Central City was the home for homeless people and had a high crime rate. He said there were major opportunity areas for development in the Central City once those problems were addressed. Those areas were: the Lloyd Center/Convention Center area, the North Macadam area, the Station L area, and the railyards on the west side of the river. A major disagreement his subcommittee had with the final CSC report was with the need for housing in the Central City. Particularly in the railyard area, the subcommittee had felt the land should be reserved for high tech business development.

The subcommittee also wanted to maintain the industrial sanctuary area in the Central Eastside, west of Union Avenue. He felt the plan should be written with "what we can pay for" in mind, and then negotiations as to what the money would be spent on would lead to the final plan. He emphasized that the planning process should be clear and fair and that the plan should encourage development creativity on the part of the private sector.

Ms. Andrews asked if the subcommittee had addressed whether high- or low-paying jobs should be encouraged in the Central City. Mr. Fredrickson said the subcommittee felt a mix of jobs should be retained by the plan. Mr. Williams asked if the subcommittee had discussed the need for people in the Central City during all hours of the day (and night) in order to make it a safe and economically viable area, and how inclusion of housing in the plan affected that. Mr. Fredrickson said the subcommittee had not totally ruled out housing development, but had recognized that its construction would have to be subsidized. They felt that if jobs in the Central City had to be sacrificed for housing, they would favor job creation. He felt that it was the entertainment industry that brought people downtown at night, not the fact that people lived in the Central City.

Mark Levenson, 1906 S.W. Edgewood Road, 97201 summarized the recommendations of the Culture, Entertainment, and Education FAC. He said many of the group's findings were not things that would show on a land use map, but were important

to the future of the Central City. The subcommittee had found a great lack of cooperation and coordination among the city's arts groups, as well as a need for greater funding of cultural and entertainment opportunities in the city. He noted that the cultural and entertainment resources faced the same future problems and presented the same future potential as did added housing and business development in the Central City. The subcommittee had felt the city could take the lead in a three-way partnership between arts groups, the private sector, and the public. The Central City should also better market the activities of its arts sector.

He explained the map provided by the FAC and noted that the CSC's land use concept map had not adequately shown its adoption of the subcommittee's recommendations.

Ms. Andrews asked if the five day care centers shown on the FAC map would be adequate over the next 20 years. Mr. Levenson said the subcommittee had found available day care space in existing facilities in the Central City, but admitted demand could rise beyond the space included in the recommendations.

Ms. Morris asked if there were really the demand projected for artists' loft space. Mr. Levenson said the subcommittee had found the demand to be "inelastic" and said additional loft and studio space could act as an attractor to the Central City. Mr. Angel asked what sorts of incentive the subcommittee had considered to encourage the private funding of public art. Mr. Levenson suggested things like zoning waivers or low interest loans.

Mr. Rosenfeld left the meeting at this point.

Rick Michaelson, 2227 N.W. Johnson, 97210 summarized the recommendations of the Housing FAC. He spoke mainly to the reasons and strategies leading to the FAC recommendations, rather than the exact map locations where housing development was recommended. The subcommittee had viewed housing as important to the people living in it and as a major economic development strategy for the Central City area. Housing close to jobs and shopping was a significant means of providing customers and employees. Housing that was adjacent to jobs also helped the city save on infrastructure costs; it "really was cheaper to subsidize housing than to build commuter facilities to get people in and out."

The major elements of the subcommittee's strategy for increasing housing in the Central City were: 1) concentrate enough housing units in one area to provide a sense of neighborhood; 2) focus housing around special features that were unique to the Central City--parks, water, shopping centers; and, 3) look seriously at converting industrial land to residential land due to the similarity of land values between the two uses, rather than allowing unused industrial land to be zoned for commercial uses.

Mr. Angel asked if the recommended housing would be achieved through developer incentives or through zoning regulations. Mr. Michaelson said the easiest way to assure housing development was through zoning, and that would be especially important in areas like the railyards. The city might also use the transfer of development rights, but on an area-by-area basis, and not building-by-building.

Robert Liberty, 1000 Friends of Oregon, 534 S.W. Third Avenue, 97204 reported the recommendations of the Riverfront FAC for its chairman, Barbara Walker. He was assisted by Howard Loucks, a subcommittee member. The recommendations were based on two important goals: public access to the riverfront, especially on the east side of the city; and, public access to the water surface.

The subcommittee had also felt it was important to the Central City to have a diversity of uses adjacent to the river, but the density of development and its "bulk" must be controlled by setback and FAR requirements. The subcommittee had specifically addressed the future of Tom McCall Waterfront Park and felt it should remain an open space available for large public gatherings. Private development (like a bandshell or belltower) could occur on either edge of the park, however. The subcommittee also recommended that additional marina space, with appropriate support services, be developed within the Central City.

He also listed some specific projects that should be included in the final plan: extension of the Willamette River Greenway Trail, bringing it down to the river whenever uses changed; completion of a Greenway Loop project from Waterfront Park to the Eastside Esplanade; completion of the Eastside Esplanade and access to it from the eastside neighborhoods; development of a riverfront park in Lower Albina to allow fishing and viewing of shipping; provision of a link to the river from the Convention Center; creation of a regional park or water feature connected to the river in the railyard area; siting of a regional active park near the Schnitzer/Ziddell properties or in the railyards (as perhaps the site of an aquarium, large fountains, etc.); and, improvement of access from the Downtown to Waterfront Park by sinking Front Avenue near the bridgeheads.

Mr. Loucks stressed the importance of the Lower Albina area as an opportunity to develop public access to the river for the adjacent and nearby neighborhoods.

Mr. Angel asked why the subcommittee had not recommended relocation of the east bank freeway away from the river's edge. Mr. Liberty explained that the subcommittee had not been truly excited by the prospect due to the enormous costs and unavailability of money in the shortrun. Finally, they had decided to keep relocation in mind when designing the projects included in their recommendations, but not to actively advocate relocation in the next 20 years. The subcommittee was "certainly not opposed" to moving the freeway, but had concentrated on projects that did not require the relocation.

Mr. Angel asked if the subcommittee had taken into consideration the costs associated with the aging of the existing freeway and the fact that it would have to be maintained over the period of the plan. Mr. Liberty said the subcommittee had not had the figures necessary for a complete discussion of the issue. He was also concerned personally about the effective ending of the Central Eastside as a big employment center for the kinds of activities presently housed in the area if the freeway were moved. Moving of those uses to the suburbs would have a great effect on the people who presently lived in the nearby neighborhoods and worked in the area.

Richard Levy, 2611 N.E. 17th Avenue, 97212 summarized the recommendations of the Human Services and Public Safety FAC. Recommendations for improved public safety over the next 20 years included: creation of storefront police precincts; expansion of neighborhood crime prevention programs; increase of walking police beats; and encouragement of more entertainment and retail activities in the Central City with hours into the late night.

Recommendations in the area of human services that should find their way into the final Central City Plan were: provision of adequate opportunities for low and no-income residents of the Central City, with appropriate services for those people; provision of community centers located throughout the Central City (not just in the area north of Burnside Street) where special needs people could

receive counseling and services; assurance that all facilities and services were accessible to people with physical, hearing, or visual disabilities.

Mr. Kelly asked if the subcommittee had addressed the dilemma that occurred when services were provided to the undesirable special needs people in one area with the goal of not dispersing them (and hence eliminating the need for duplicate services) and the attractiveness such service provision had for people not presently living in the area. Mr. Levy said the subcommittee felt that, as plans were made for new development in the Central City area (particularly in the area called "North Downtown"), consideration should be given to how the special needs people would cohabit the space that would be used by the new development.

Ms. Andrews asked what strategy the subcommittee had recommended to prevent the demolition of the city's existing SRO hotel resource. Mr. Levy said the matter had been addressed by the Housing FAC, and not his. The members did feel, however, that it was important to retain as much of that housing in the Central City as possible, and to encourage the co-location of retail (on the groundfloor) and housing in the older buildings.

Mr. Angel noted that many of the present complaints about the special needs population in the downtown were due to the concentration of those people in one area. He asked if the subcommittee had felt it best to concentrate or disperse such a population. Mr. Levy responded that the recommendation for several community service centers in the different neighborhoods of the Central City had meant to address the problem of concentration. The committee did not, however, want to see the people simply moved (in concentration) to an area of the Central City outside the North Downtown area.

At the request of Pamela Kambur, and due to the lateness of the hour, the report of the Transportation FAC was postponed to June 9, 1987 at 12:00, noon.

Rudy Barton, 2656 S.W. Ravensview, 97201 reported for the Urban Design and Historic Preservation FAC. The subcommittee was mostly supportive of the CSC final plan document, except for its discussion of a strong focus on the river in the Central City. The subcommittee felt the CSC's final plan had weakened the goals for the river. The issue of greatest dissent was the relocation of the east bank freeway away from the river's edge, which the subcommittee strongly supported as being in the long-term best interest of the city.

The subcommittee felt the city's existing historic preservation programs worked well and could work better with additional money for staff to carry out more designations and better enforcement and administration of the programs.

He stressed the importance to the subcommittee of a "two-sided city", with the eastside being much more than just a place to look back at the westside, and with a very strong focus on the river. They also felt the decision to keep the eastbank freeway in its present location was made on the basis of short-term financial considerations and inadequate information. He wanted a true cost/benefit analysis to be done for the relocation that would involve the "cost differential" of keeping the freeway in its present location over the period of the plan. It would be necessary, therefore, to include the capital maintenance costs in its present location, the possible recouping of monies from the sale of the land where it was, and, the increased tax revenues that might accrue to the city over a 20 to 50-year period. He hoped the commission would be able to take the time to come up with an accurate picture of what costs would really be involved in relocation of the freeway away from the river.

The subcommittee had also, based on the recommendation to relocate the freeway, suggested that the land in the Central Eastside area, west of the Union/Grand corridor, be gradually changed to mixed uses from its industrial sanctuary. The subcommittee went as far as saying that the change should occur even if the freeway were not relocated.

Ms. Andrews asked if the subcommittee had discussed future development of the bridges across the river and had a position on future redesign, construction, or replacement of existing bridges. Mr. Barton said future bridge construction or reconstruction should include access from the bridges to the riverfront, as well as pedestrian and bicycle access across the river on the bridge.

Mr. Angel asked where the subcommittee saw the freeway moving. Mr Barton said it should be reconstructed in the corridor between S.E. 8th and 9th Avenues.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:55 p.m.

tshm/3 June 1987
Portland City Planning Commission
Minutes--May 19, 1987
Page □