



CITY OF SNOHOMISH

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MIDTOWN TASK FORCE MEETING #4 February 9, 2021

TASK FORCE MEMBER ATTENDANCE:

Alice Armstrong	Thomas Kreinbring
Gordon Cole	Ethan Martez
Ray Cook	Jeanette Pop
Mitch Cornelison	Kyle Stevens
Paula Denney	Kat Thompson
Rio Ingram, Chair	

Task Force Members Absent: Karl Houtman, Van Tormohlen

There were 13 other meeting attendees from the public, City staff, and consultants.

REMAINING STEPS IN THE PLANNING PROCESS

Mr. Pickus said the Task Force is moving toward finalizing recommendations at this meeting and continuing on the 23rd, although additional meetings may be scheduled if necessary. The Task Force recommendations will be in the form of a memorandum to the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission will then translate the recommendations into Comprehensive Plan policies, regulations and design standards. This work will take them multiple meetings, likely beginning in April and concluding with a public hearing in July and August. The Planning Commission will then forward their recommendation to the City Council to decide on ordinances to adopt the codes and policies. Task Force members are encouraged to continue participating at Planning Commission and City Council meetings even after they complete their final recommendations to the Planning Commission.

3-PRONG OPEN HOUSE BRIEFING

The public open house was held throughout the month of January. A story map—or, virtual self-guided tour—was open during the month with embedded links to surveys. There were over 500 visits to the story map and more than 30 individuals completed the surveys. One of the surveys focused on the efficacy of the online experience and it received very positive responses from participants. A zoom presentation was also offered twice on January 20th, once in the morning and once in the evening. One in-person meeting was also requested, and that was held on January 19th. The same survey questions were asked of all participants; those responses and comments were tallied and are presented together.

OPEN HOUSE SURVEY RESULTS

The surveys were split into six categories: Comprehensive Plan, Land Uses and Density, Building Height, Parking, Building and Site Design, and Open Space.

Mr. Pickus presented survey results to the Task Force.

Mr. Cornelison asked how the questions were developed. Mr. Pickus answered they are the same questions that were asked of the Task Force in their previous meetings. Mr. Cornelison was concerned that none of the questions focused on the uniqueness of Snohomish.

PUBLIC COMMENTS RECEIVED

Consultant Bill Trimm went over a comparison of the public responses to the survey questions to the Task Force's responses. In most cases the responses were the same or similar.

Mr. Trimm showed the Snohomish County conceptual site design alternatives (A and B) to the Task Force. The alternatives were developed in consideration of the general trend of the Task Force discussions and the market study that was conducted for the site by the County. He noted the alternatives are non-binding, and just examples of how the site could be developed while following the standards that have been discussed by the Task Force.

The Task Force generally agreed that both alternatives were acceptable, however many members would prefer to see more commercial uses. They discussed a potential requirement for commercial uses on the ground floor level of the Avenue D frontage, and noted the importance of providing sufficient parking on the site to support the commercial businesses.

There was not a common response to which alternative was preferred by the Task Force, as some members liked the idea of flex/tech space on the Bonneville Avenue frontage and some preferred the residential option.

Building height was discussed and the Task Force agreed that measuring height in feet was preferred over measuring it in stories.

Open space and green space was discussed and the Task Force agreed a percentage of the site should be required as green space with a public access element. Several Task Force members noted the water quality element shown in both alternatives could be used as a recreational or aesthetic amenity, if it is a pond rather than a vault. Mr. Stevens stated that if it is a vault, a park element could still be built over the top of it.

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATION MEMO TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION

A draft memorandum was provided to the Task Force to show the format of how their recommendations will be presented to the Planning Commission. The final content will be determined by the Task Force. An in-depth discussion to determine the Task Force's final recommendations for development and design regulations is planned for the next meeting.

Mr. Trimm went over the proposed Comprehensive Plan policies in the draft memo. By consensus, the Task Force showed its support for draft Land Use policies LU 2.12, LU 2.13, and LU 2.14.

The Task Force also supported with draft policy MF 5.5, but few members understood the multi-family property tax exemption process, and so questioned whether policy MF 5.6 should remain in the memo. The Task Force agreed that the need for affordable and senior housing should be emphasized in some other way. Mr. Pickus said he would provide more information about the multi-family property tax exemption program, and ultimately the Task Force will determine whether the policy proposal should be removed or replaced with something more general.

Several Task Force members had questions about the multi-family tax exemption program. Mr. Pickus stated it was recently adopted for use the Pilchuck District and has been used one time. If adopted, a tax program must refer to a geographic area, so it would be the whole of Midtown.

Mr. Pickus urged all Task Force members to review the draft memorandum and send detailed comments via email within the next week so that they can be consolidated and provided to the Task Force in time for the next meeting. Ideally the next draft of the memo will be sent out as well, to make the next meeting as productive as possible.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Morgan Davis expressed concerned about the multi-family tax exemption. He asserted it has only been used one time in the Pilchuck District for the old car wash site with no low-income strings attached. He believes this is gentrification. The developer doesn't have to pay school, fire, library, or City taxes for eight years. Mr. Davis has an apartment building and had to pay full fare. The most expensive operating costs for a landlord are taxes, and he asserted that giving that away means everyone else has to foot the bill for those kids to go to school. Mr. Davis mentioned Mr. Trimm was involved in the high density area of Mill Creek when he was director for the city, which has high rises like Lynnwood. He doesn't understand why the Task Force is micromanaging Midtown. He asserted it will ruin the character and has everything already. He asserted the Midtown project is a predetermined thing for a developer.

Mr. Davis was still speaking when he was muted when he reached the three-minute limit for public comments.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.