



Central City 2035 Steering Committee

Meeting Minutes – December 1, 2011

1900 SW 4th Avenue, Room 7A

Group members in attendance: Chet Orloff (Co-chair), Michelle Rudd (Co-chair), Bernie Bottomly, Wink Brooks, Erin Flynn, Amy Lewin, Linda Nettekoven, Veronica Rinard, Ethan Seltzer, Bill Scott, Patty Tillett, Michael Zokoych,

Group members not in attendance: Andre Baugh, Patricia Gardner, Heather Hoell, David Knowles, Scott Langley, James McGrath, Jeff Miller

Staff in attendance: Shannon Buono, Nick Byers, Troy Doss, Sallie Edmunds, Peter Englander, Diane Hale, Elisa Hamblin, Steve Iwata, Lora Lillard, Karl Lisle, Lindsey Menard, Mark Raggett, Nicholas Starin, Nan Stark, Joe Zehnder

Public in attendance: Wendy Rahm

1. Welcome, Introductions, & Purpose of Meeting

- a. Co-chair Chet Orloff welcomed the group

2. Basis for Proposed Policy Framework

- a. Troy Doss & Joe Zehnder provided background, including introduction of functional & district policies from the 1988 Central City Plan (*see Functional & District Policies handout in packet*)
- b. Policies from the 1988 Central City Plan are outdated, some goals have been accomplished, other issues were not included then and should be addressed now
- c. The proposed policy framework was developed over the past 1½ years through a process that included advisory group meetings, symposiums, and staff meetings
- d. The Central City 2035 Plan will be included in the Comprehensive Plan. Its purpose is to guide Planning and Sustainability Commission & City Council decisions about land use, development, zoning, regulations, and major infrastructure projects.
- e. The policy statements are “what we’re going to do” statements. The more specific ideas may become outdated, but the Central City Plan is the best place to include ideas for long-term planning for the Central City.

3. Proposed Framework: Goals & Policy Sets

- a. Joe Zehnder described the proposed framework (*see Summary of CC2035 Goals handout*)
 - i. The first two goals – Goal 1 (Economic Prosperity) and Goal 2 (Healthy Connected Neighborhoods) – describe the role of the Central City in relation to the rest of the city
 - ii. The last three goals – Goals 3 (Mobility), Goal 4 (Design & Civic Vitality), Goal 5 (Urban Ecosystems) – are more about performance of the Central City
- b. Question: Who is the audience for the Central City Concept Plan? Is it supposed to inspire or is it a checklist for bureaucrats?
- c. Response: It could go either way. No matter how we go about creating the Concept Plan we will translate it for the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability’s purposes. What do you

want it to be? This conversation will shape our approach to the Central City Concept Plan.

4. Proposed Alternate Framework

- a. The committee reviewed Ethan Seltzer's proposal (*see Ethan's proposal in handout*) that the committee evaluate the unique role of the central city by shifting the issues address by the five goals of the proposed policy framework to other documents. Instead he suggests focusing the Central City Concept Plan around 3 goals: Innovation & Exchange, Livability, and Connectivity.
- b. Ethan Seltzer explained that the 1988 Central City plan addressed changes the city was experiencing at the time (downtown not vibrant, downtown-like features and functions had crept across the river), but now many of the activities of the central east side (start-ups, etc.) have crept into downtown because of technological advances. Now, like then, the central theme is how to mix human-scale livability, intensity and density, and economic focus. He sees the Central City Plan as an overlay on the Comprehensive Plan, but not a separate plan. Issues like ecosystems could be addressed at the Comprehensive Plan level and the Central City Plan could focus on what makes the Central City unique (what enables people to engage each other).
- c. Discussion Question: If livability was the defining characteristic for the 1972 plan, what is the defining characteristic for the next 25 years? What does this city want to be? What's our identity going to be? We've done a really good job with livability so, what's next for us? We need to identify that essence.
 - i. Response: Our civic identity has become more defined and we need to be able to articulate it. How do we defend, refine, and expand it?
 - ii. Response: Our identity has been based on being a great place to live.
 - iii. Response: Besides Portland being a great place to live is independence of self – a personal freedom and willingness to do it our way
 - iv. Response: Confidence, authenticity, and creativity were some of the key words that came up in a branding process for Portland.
 - v. Response: Greater Portland, Inc. also included branding and captured the “we're different” quality
 - vi. Response: It's the bundle of characteristics that makes a place unique
- d. Discussion Question: What is it that makes something like food carts happen in a place like Portland but not other places?
 - i. Responses: regulations didn't prohibit them, some people would say they don't look good, “you didn't have to ask”
- e. Comment: We used some of the same words in 1988 but meant something different by it. So when we talk about sustainability in 2035 what will people mean? The real challenge of the Central City Plan is to come up with some strategic initiatives that will continue to mean something, that will keep up with the changing understanding of what we're talking about.
- f. Comment: We need something more inspirational. We've been really successful in Portland. What can we do to improve on that success? Do we need to just stay out of the way to let it happen?
- g. Comment: Downtown works when a lot of people want to be there. It doesn't work when people don't want to be there. From a practical standpoint, if you go and on a given square foot of space downtown, you know the plan's been successful if it's a comfortable place to be – if it's attractive, there are other people around, there is visual interest. There are lots of people who attempt to figure out the alchemy of what makes that sense of comfort but we need to be flexible, rather than too specific, so we don't choke innovation and inspiration. If they don't come downtown we won't have vibrancy.

- h. Question: Pioneer Square is proof that if you think about programming the public realm, you can activate the public realm. What can we do to activate the street level to improve the pedestrian environment? Many of the things we know work have not been developed very far or haven't been taken to scale. What would we call that and how would we get on with it?
 - i. Response: The point of the central city is to facilitate interactions because that's where wealth comes from ultimately. Part of what we could do with the Central City plan is to think about how we can promote an environment in which people can hang out and communicate with each other. The goals should be driven by a desire to promote the kind of interaction that creative entrepreneurs and artists need.
- i. Comment: The Portland Plan is so much it doesn't send a clear message. The conversation tonight has been: what's our message and who's our audience. Over the past year and a half we've defined the hopes and dreams of the Central City at a very real level, but I'd like for the group to take these three themes Ethan suggested and figuring out the relationship between these themes and goals.
- j. Comment: Design often discourages interaction (1950s high schools) but it can also be used to facilitate interaction (spots on new college campuses for impromptu conversations). Roads are designed for traffic to move along and police to be able to clear them easily, but maybe that's not what we want. Maybe one clue is to focus on enabling rather than preventative design.
- k. Question: What roles are PSU and OHSU going to play in the city?
 - i. We could think of the Central City as an environment for learning
- l. Comment: The five goals are a way of organizing the material and the 3 themes permeate the goal areas, similar to how equity is the overarching level for the Portland Plan and the lens through which the plan is viewed
- m. Comment: There's elegance to Ethan's 3 themes and a practicality for the 5 goals. I think that prosperity belongs here somewhere as well and it's connected to education. There's an interest in a reflection about where we've come from that helps explain where we're going.
- n. "A great city offers the prospect of both serendipity and reflection. Serendipity in that you can't know all the things you might encounter, but you expect to be delighted by what you haven't anticipated... They compliment each other, serendipity and reflection. This active encounter of something you can't define, but you know it's up ahead. And at the same time the notion that it will occur in an environment where you can relax." – Ethan Seltzer
- o. Comment: The word that seems to run through all of this is engagement. Rather than going somewhere just to be entertained, visitors come here to do what we do, to engage in the things we engage in. We need downtown to be an engaging place.
- p. Comment: Portland is a city that is willing to learn from trying. It's a learning city. We try stuff, we're critical of it, we make it better, then others pick up on it. It's a quality that makes Portland special.
 - i. Response: On the 25th anniversary of the city, in 1869, Thomas Lamb Elliot, who founded major institutions in Portland said I want this city to be always learning.
 - ii. "Learning city, knowledge economy"
 - iii. We'll need to be careful to explain learning because we don't mean to imply that Portland is a college town – it has great colleges but it's not a college town
- q. Comment: The Portland Plan has to be interwoven into this plan. As we think about what makes the Central City unique we should keep the three key goals of the Portland Plan in mind: Healthy Connected City, Thriving Educated Youth, and Economic Prosperity & Affordability.
 - i. Response: We're a livable city, but we need to consider equity and affordability.

- ii. Response: What does it mean for a community to take care of its citizens vs. providing them with opportunities?
- r. Comment: The list of words we've been writing on the board can help to create the story.
 - i. Words written on the board: Innovation, Exchange, Livability, Connectivity, Flexibility, Intention, Identity, Confidence, Prosperity, Engagement, Inclusive, Reflection, Serendipity, Authenticity, Ingenuity, Partnerships, Intensity, Opportunity

5. Goal 1: Economic Prosperity in the Region's Center

- a. The group did not discuss Goal 1 during this meeting

6. Public Input

- a. None

Homework:

- Veronica Rinard will share marketing materials developed during Travel Portland's branding work (see video: http://youtu.be/B1B2_r6Azvg)
- Watch Greater Portland, Inc. (<http://greaterportlandinc.com/>)