



Central City 2035 Steering Committee

Meeting Minutes – February 9, 2012, 5:00-7:00pm

CENTRAL CITY 2035 1900 SW 4th Avenue, Room 7A

Group members in attendance: Chet Orloff (Co-chair), Michelle Rudd (Co-chair), Bernie Bottomly, Patricia Gardner, Heather Hoell, James McGrath, Linda Nettekoven, Veronica Rinard, Ethan Seltzer, Bill Scott, Paddy Tillett, Mary Wahl, Michael Zokoych

Group members not in attendance: Andre Baugh, Wink Brooks, Erin Flynn, David Knowles, Amy Lewin, Jeff Miller

Staff in attendance: Shannon Buono, Amy Chomowicz, Troy Doss, Sallie Edmunds, Peter Englander, Elisa Hamblin, Steve Iwata, Kevin Kilduff, Lisa Libby, Karl Lisle, Lindsey Menard, Jonna Papaefthimiou, Mark Raggett, Nan Stark, Joe Zehnder

Public in attendance: Derek Abe, Jeremy Dalton, Debbie Kitchin, Fatoumata Kone, Suzanne Lennard, Danell Norby, Natalie Perrin, Dan Petrusich, Wendy Rahm

Agenda

- Review outline of the Central City 2035 Concept Plan
- Review the first 9-10 pages (Part 1) of the Draft (which is BPS staff's interpretation of the last Steering Committee meeting)

Welcome & Reminder of Purpose

- Co-chair Chet Orloff welcomed the group.
- Joe Zehnder reminded the Steering Committee that the product of this process will be the Central City 2035 Concept Plan, which will include concept-level goals as well as land-use recommendations. The CC2035 Concept Plan will be incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan.
- The first page of the packet is an outline of the product to be produced: the CC2035 Concept Plan.
 - *Part 1 of Concept Plan:* explains why the central city is important, the goals we'd like to accomplish, includes discussion of what we've learned in the first phases of the project, provides context for Concept Plan
 - *Part 2 of Concept Plan:* lays out policy direction (guidelines) that will enable us to accomplish the goals of Part 1
 - *Part 3 of Concept Plan:* brings it to the urban design level, a statement of intent drawn onto the map
 - *Part 4 of the Concept Plan:* provides direction for the quadrant level plans
 - *Part 5 of Concept Plan:* provides direction for the tools (zoning, code, etc.)
- The Steering Committee needs to get through Parts 1-4 now, part 5 can wait for later.

Question & Answer with Planning Staff

- Member Question: Is it correct that the N/NE Quadrant plan, which is a subset of the CC2035 plan, is going to be approved next week, before the CC2035 Concept Plan is approved?

- Staff Response: The N/NE Quadrant is coming to the end of their concept plan phase. Next week there will probably be a thumbs-up from the Stakeholder Advisory Committee on the urban design concept diagrams. The CC2035 Concept Plan is happening simultaneously with the N/NE Quadrant Plan and the N/NE Quadrant Plan will be approved after the Central City Plan. The CC2035 Plan provides guidance for the whole Central City, while the quadrant plans delve into the details of each quadrant. The N/NE Quadrant Plan was driven by the fact that we had a partner in ODOT and an opportunity to plan the freeway project along with the district plan. So even though the projects are slightly out of sync, the project teams are working closely together and the two plans will work together.
- Member Question: Why don't we refer to the Central City as the Central City Quadrant?
 - Staff Response: The Central City is not a separate quadrant. The Central City includes 4 quadrants and the quadrant plans fit within the Central City 2035 Plan. The plan for the city's core used to be referred to as the Downtown Plan, but the name was changed in 1988 to reflect the reality of the Central City encompassing both sides of the river. We will be sure to state this clearly in the CC2035 Concept Plan.
- Member Question: How are we going to interconnect these 4 quadrants in a way they have never been connected before?
 - Staff Response: We will interconnect the 4 quadrants as we identify the overarching themes of the 4 quadrants within the Central City and their relationship with the rest of the city.
- Member Question: Could maps of the Central City and its quadrants be available to Steering Committee members?
 - Response: Yes. [Maps were provided by a BPS staff member.]

Relationship Between Central City & Portland Plan

- Joe Zehnder explained that the Central City 2035 Plan will work within the framework of the Portland Plan, which is the city's strategic plan for the next 25 years.
- The Central City plays a central role in accomplishing the goals of the Portland Plan, so we will need to consider how the policy guidelines of CC2035 and the unique aspects of the Central City will meet the goals of Portland Plan.
- The overarching goal of Portland Plan is equity, which is supported by three strategies: 1) thriving and educated youth, 2) healthy connected city, 3) economic prosperity
- Since there are multiple plans in motion right now we should ensure that the right aspects end up in each plan (concepts for Central City in CC2035, city-level guidelines in Portland Plan, specific land use plans in Comprehensive Plan, details for Central City in Quadrant Plans)

Discussion of Project Goals & Objectives (comments from committee)

- Staff Introduction: Looking at the Project Goals & Objectives on Page 3 (theme, thesis, vision): there's an essential quality of a Central City that we want to see. The key to Portland's Central City is its ability to foster innovation and exchange (commercially, culturally, and personally).
- Staff Question: There are 6 values/visions/qualities of the Central City from the last discussion that we wanted to have on the table. Right now it is structured as one overarching goal and five supporting objectives. Did we capture the 6 accurately? Is there a hierarchy of the 6?

- The current organization of the draft makes it seem that places for exchange are the ultimate goal and issues like prosperity and livability are in support of places for exchange, but that seems backward to me. What we want to get out of the Central City is prosperity and livability. The areas for exchange are a setting for them.
- As we talked about last time, Portland is a “learning city.” There’s a commitment to learning here, which relates to innovation and exchange. People can learn from each other and be supported by educational institutions and government.
- Equity is not just about fairness. It is also about making this a better place for everyone because we are including everyone. The Central City can contribute to the equity goal of the Portland Plan. If we want Portland to be a rich and livable city, we need to embrace diversity and make the Central City accessible to all kinds of different people.
- Rather than using the six themes, it may make sense to focus in on the goals of the Portland Plan and simplify the CC2035 Concept Plan down to how it can specifically advance the goals of the Portland Plan.

CC2035 Breadth & Scope (comments from committee)

- Staff Question: Is the CC2035 Concept Plan broad enough to capture everything? Does it need to be?
- How we describe Portland (how we brand it) will influence whether visitors will want to come here. Describing Portland as a “learning city” may focus too much attention on education, technology, and design, so it may not be engaging for a wider audience.
- We do not want to define Portland too narrowly. There are 11 business districts included in the Central City and each has a different identity than downtown.
- The Central City will be the densest part of Portland but we do not want the description to be too “tall-building defined.”
- The quality of exchange isn’t about high or low-rises as much as interaction. Let’s not get lost in the words. Let’s keep our focus at the concept level.
- It was helpful to think about exchange as cultural, economic, and personal – not just about trading money or ideas.
- Pages 4 & 5 list supporting objectives which are very similar to the goals of the Portland Plan, so why not just simplify our six themes into three and say that we have the same three goals as the Portland Plan? The Central City intends to be the epicenter of innovation and exchange for Portland, so the Central City 2035 Plan can use the same three goals and intensify them.
- Portland’s Central City is not just about ideas but also about making things. There is access to space for manufacturing and not just in the Central East Side. That proximity to manufacturing and transportation is important to our economy now and it will continue to be in the future. We should also include something about Portland’s willingness to use itself as a laboratory. We are experimental.
- I agree that there should be a mention of the Central City’s manufacturing potential and the traded sector value of business. We should also include diverse economic stability and address how aspects of the economy interact with each other for innovation, exchange, and creativity.
- It’s not just youth that should be thriving and educated, everyone should be. The equity issue sometimes gets lost in discrimination – by trying to help one group you disadvantage another, but if we defend equity for all that becomes the most important initiative.
- What is it that is unique about Central City that helps it accomplish the Portland Plan goals? It seems to me it’s innovation & exchange. The things that support them are

density, design, and mixed uses. Or we could think of it as thinking, doing, living, and making.

Inspirational Possibilities of CC2035 (comments from committee)

- Staff Question: As you bring CC2035 back to the constituencies you are representing, consider “Is it going to be compelling?”
- We have isolated the part of Portland called Central City because it is important and somehow different than rest of the city. Our role is to recognize what is authentically unique about Central City and what role it will play. The Central City is an important location with qualities we need to advance in a new way. It’s time to make a new statement about the Central City.
- We need to talk about not just what makes a Central City different from its surrounding city but what makes *Portland’s* Central City unique. For instance, we have small blocks so Portland is a walkable city, thanks to the pedestrian focus of the Downtown Plan of the 1970s. What statement we can make about the Central City in our time?
- There’s something unique about the alchemy of Portland that positions us to take new leaps. Bringing people together for innovation and exchange is what every Central City does. Considering why and how we do it better will enable us to always be a step beyond the other Central Cities of the world.
- How does the alchemy of the Central City take the projects we’ve been working on (such as eco-districts) to the next level?
- How will we measure and track our progress? We made giant leaps in 1970s. Are we planning to take any giant leaps in this plan? What can we learn from the 1988 Central City Plan as we project ourselves forward into the future? How does the Central City interface with surrounding neighborhoods as it grows and changes? What happens at the edges? How do we keep it from getting scary and impersonal? How do we manage density effectively?
- The accumulation of people’s values have shaped the area and these values have impacted planning in the region. We have the park blocks because of our value for open space. Senate Bill 100 affirmed the importance of natural resource conservation. Those events still echo in the decisions we make as well as the physical space the city has become. The effort is to recognize the cycle of reflection and projection and try to project it further into 2035 and understand how, if at all, we want to redirect it.
- What is the cultural infrastructure of the city? Are we looking for some grand approach? Not necessarily. We have not only a legacy but an asset, so we can take what we already have and build upon it as we plan for the future.
- If we are looking ahead to 2035 we can also imagine back to 1986 which is 25 years ago. Have we accomplished what we set out to in the 1988 Central City Plan? The Central City is the heart of Portland, but many people are not familiar with the values or the history of Central City planning in Portland. We may need to make the case for the Central City: why care about it now and in 2035? We should strengthen why the document is important and why the Central City is important. The idea of excellence not necessarily captured. If we want Portland to be a competitive place in 2035, design and innovation excellence should be pushed. (We should not accept “background buildings.”) We need to be more aspirational and consider not just what’s already here but what we want to have here.
- There is also an important connection between people and jobs. Portland is a city of workers, not just “the city that works.” We can focus on bringing the manufacturing element back into the city. The interconnectivity of white and blue collar in the Central

City can serve as a model for neighborhoods. CC2035 should reflect our motivation to bring balance to the city by accommodating manufacturing within the Central city.

- Many people are cautious about density, but if we cannot be dense in Central City we are in trouble. Density is important to a Central City because of the exchange it can foster.

Recap from Planning Staff

- We hear that we should bring in the six themes prosperity, affordability, education/learning, equity, connectedness, and livability.
- The Central City as center of innovation and exchange is a critical element of the goals and it can be described better.
- What we have not answered is what makes Portland's Central City distinctive, so let's discuss that.

Discussion of What Makes Portland's Central City Unique (comments from committee)

- Portlanders connect to a sense of place and the places that people identify with are often their neighborhood or their business district, not necessarily the Central City. But Portland's Central City incorporates all the things that make this city great (neighborhoods, tall buildings, etc.). The Central Cities of many places are not as rich as Portland's; entrepreneurship happens because of this richness.
- We made great leaps in the 1970s such as Pioneer Courthouse Square and Waterfront Park. What is the equivalent now? Our university connection and the focus on learning is supportive of the economy and the values of the Portland Plan, but no one was thinking about this 40 years ago. Big commitments have been made by the universities. Manufacturing in the Central City also sets us apart. We have creative industries, warehouses, offices, technologies, and designs that are different than in other places.
- Portland is less ethnically diverse than other metros in the country, but our commitment to equity is unique. We are also making a bigger commitment to equity than other cities are making. Hopefully our commitment to equity will move us towards more diversity.
- So here are some distinctive qualities we can pull out: manufacturing, diversity, clustering of uses, education, excellence, and our process (the way we do what we do).
- Historically, Portland made a leap in connecting land use and transportation. Now we're making a huge leap in understanding the connections and complexity of equity and social issues. We understand the connection between food deserts and kids doing poorly in school because they are hungry.
- We need to bring equity to the forefront in Central City 2035 Plan. We need to determine what's feasible so we can reinforce what's working.
- Why take bold leaps? In pursuit of what? Let's start by identifying the ultimate goal, then people can absorb and understand the strategies. We need to make the goals explicit.
- The purpose is very clear: the Central City 2035 Plan should maximize potential for achieving the goals and strategies set out by Portland Plan. When Harbor Way was closed to make Waterfront Park the progress created confidence as people realized they could make a difference. What we achieve and how we achieve it will be colored by recent successes as well as resources we do not know what to do with yet. For instance, there is a cohort of young creatives. What will their role be? How can we maximize our potential to achieve the three goals?
- How can we assemble the words of the Central City 2035 Plan in a way that everyone understands it. Let's make it shorter, lighter, and nimbler, leaving no ambiguity about our purpose or direction.

- Portland is known as a not-very-diverse city, but there's great diversity among our school-aged children.
- Many of our innovations are largely of preservation (such as our human scale blocks, our waterfront, beaches, forest, and farms). It's not about coming up with something no one else has ever thought of, but looking carefully at the hand we were dealt and preserving the best parts of it. How can we do a better job of recognizing what we have and using it effectively? In the 70s, 80s, & 90s we focused on arranging things in space, and we did that really well. Now we are focused on recognizing social relations and impacts on specific populations. I'd like for us to be seen in 30 years as the city that figured out how to deal with the equity question in a way no other city has.
- It seems our big leap is about social relations and the way our resources are shared. The learning community means not only life-long learning for residents, but also that we are a city that learns from our own mistakes. We live in a state that doesn't fund education and the situation is dire. Our innovative future depends on creativity and access to education.
- Let's intensify the goals of the Portland Plan in the role that's unique to the Central City.
- So, is this congealing concept? Twenty-five years from now we want to be the city that figured out how to distribute the goods across the entire city and hung onto all of the stuff that made us as vital as we are.

Timeline & Next Steps

- BPS staff will turn around a draft and meet in 3 weeks and again in 3 weeks, we will have rethought the structure of Part 2 so that we can focus on Part 2 at the meeting in 6 weeks. The next meeting will include time for unbundling of the Portland Plan so we can talk about and what's in it for the Central City.

Public Comment

- Suzanne Lennard of Making Cities Livable Conferences likes the statement about innovation, but says she finds that inspirational goal for Central City does not seem to be reflected in the details later on in the document. She says innovation will require public places believes that Portland has done a good job of creating public places, so she recommends emphasizing urban design throughout the CC2035 Plan.
- Wendy Rohm has several comments she will email. A hole she sees in the Concept Plan is the lack of discussion about seismic upgrading and earthquake preparedness. She recommends that a visionary document such as this address seismic upgrades of culturally valuable buildings. She also recommends defining density and heights for emergency planning.