



## Central City 2035 Steering Committee

Meeting Minutes – March 8, 2012, 5:00-7:00pm

CENTRAL CITY 2035 1900 SW 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Room 7A

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

**Group members not in attendance:** Andre Baugh, Bernie Bottomly, Wink Brooks, David Knowles, Jeff Miller

**Staff in attendance:** Ricardo Banuelos, Nick Byers, Amy Chomowicz, Troy Doss, Elisa Hamblin, Kevin Kilduff, Lora Lillard, Lindsey Menard, Jonna Papaefthimiou, Nan Stark, Joe Zehnder

**Public in attendance:** Brett, Suzanne Lennard, Wendy Rahm, 2 anonymous (did not sign in nor introduce themselves)

### Agenda

- Introductions
- Brief overview of Revised Chapter 1
- Chapter 2: Planning Framework
- Public Input

### Introductions

- Co-chair Chet Orloff welcomed the group and everyone introduced themselves.
- Orloff introduced the goals of the meeting: review the introduction and then delve into Chapter 2, the planning framework. He reminded the group that there is still editing work to do, so rather than getting bogged down in details, the focus should be with the concepts and content.

### Discussion of Preamble, Introduction, and Chapter 1

- The first chapter now reads as a mini-Portland Plan and it doesn't hit on all the things we've already vetted for the Central City. What happened?
- Co-chair Response: The Mayor's Office requested that we better connect the Portland Plan and Central City 2035, to explicitly demonstrate how the Central City Plan reflects the goals and key issues of the Portland Plan
- Co-chair Response: Since this is the first plan to come out after the Portland Plan, it's important to show a clear connection between CC2035 and the Portland Plan, and we need to make the case that the Central City is key to achieving the goals of the Portland Plan
- There are many 2035 plans out there right now – lots of groups have set 2035 as the end date of a long-range plan. Compared to them, our plan doesn't seem bold enough and it doesn't have a sense of urgency. Our introduction needs to address key demographic and technological changes (aging, economics, increasing ethnic minorities) since the world will be dramatically different in 2035 and it's changing faster than we can keep up with. Phil Knight: "Beware incremental change in a non-incremental world."

- Chapter 1 lacks specificity. Thriving educated youth should be a subsection of a thriving, educated population. It seems watered down by the Portland Plan.
- I understand that a lot of work has been done with the Portland Plan. In a year and a half of meetings we were in a cool place with the Central City process before this version. As I read this I don't see Portland the Central City, the densest part of our state, this is the most unique, special part of our state. I know the preamble is playing on that but the way it's conveyed doesn't excite me like other versions.
- Co-chair Response: The demands of the City are that we express the Portland Plan's intents in the early sections of the Central City 2035 Plan. How that will be crafted, how we will express the role of the Central City, still remains to be done. Waiting till we get more back from the quadrants will help us figure out how to craft that section.
- I was pleased to see that the first chapter is now structured in a way that works. It feels to me like a big step forward.
- Chapter 2 is much more interesting than Chapter 1, so let's put TBD on Chapter 1 and come back to it. Let's dig into Chapter 2 since there's so much more meat there.
- The global, technological, demographic changes need to provide context for CC2035. Whenever I read the Portland Plan I get bogged down. It's so many words and so many charts and it's so hard to cut through it. Let's not do the same with the Central City Plan. It feels belabored, but it doesn't have to be. Here's the summary of the Portland Plan and here's how the four quadrants of the Central City will address it. How I look at this document depends on how this plan will be presented. Do we know yet?
- Staff Response: No, we don't yet know what the presentation will be. Let's treat this as a draft and get into the substance of the plan. What we were trying to do in Chapter 1 was capture some of the overarching ideas: what it means to be the Central City, why it's special, how we got here, why it's important for the region, what does the Portland Plan mean for it? It's a working draft.
- The introduction is important, but by the time we get through with the Quadrant Plans the intro will be very different, so let's table it for now.
- Looking into demographic projections for 2035 we see that our country is aging and we cannot focus just on youth. Our world will be changing radically so reeducation will be important.
- Specific edit suggestions for Chapter 1: add Venture Portland to the partners list, remove line from preamble about borrowing conventional wisdom from other cities and add something about plazas
- Response: plazas are addressed in Chapter 2
- I want to say that I do appreciate the symmetry between Chapter 1 and the Portland Plan. Let's include the three goals and add a fourth goal regarding what's special about the Central City.
- I appreciate the symmetry with the Portland Plan, too. I just want it to be more succinct.
- Aging will be a major issue and we are entirely unprepared for it. PSU is conducting research about aging. The Central City seems particularly key since it's where you can live without a car and be connected and civically engaged and where health care services are available. One of the bold goals for CC2035 could be that the Central City is a great place to be old.
- We haven't yet mined the Portland Plan to see what can be reiterated and expressed in the Portland Plan.
- I like the way this version connected things. What's missing is the interrelation of the pieces. The integration of economic and environmental pieces. I like the idea of skipping the two or three bold things for now. We might want to put our 2-3 bold ideas on the table so we can discuss them, so let's come back to that, but hold off for now.

- Staff Response: We're answering to a lot of stakeholders: this group, City Council, Planning and Sustainability Commission, the public. I would offer up that we're eager to get to the details. What we come to in Chapter 2 will help us reframe Chapter 1. I hear that there's something missing about urgency in Chapter 1 and there's some discomfort about the Portland Plan being front and center. However, the Portland Plan gives us three very good lenses to look through and we've agreed to do that in this plan and others. Let's test it out - we have a great opportunity to do that. What are the objectives that will make the Central City a center for innovation but also be consistent with the three lenses of the Portland Plan? I would suggest we move on to deal with the substance and see where that takes us.
- The Portland Plan does address aging in addition to its focus on thriving educated youth. The Portland Plan needed to pick some things to focus on and educating youth is critical.
- The biggest implication of aging is that if we don't educate every one of these kids they won't be able to support us.
- Our school system has failed us so why would we trust that same school system to change? There needs to be vision about the specific things that have failed us. This plan does not address those failures and what specific things we can correct for 2035. In the section about industrial sanctuaries we need to say what we're protecting them for, what we're going to do with them, and why they're leaving.
- Co-chair & staff response: These are important issues and they were addressed in the Portland Plan, so let's focus on the Central City. Let's bring forward the Central City angle on these topics.

## Discussion of Chapter 2

- Staff Introduction to Chapter 2: we're moving into the draft policy framework – we've set a goal and broken it down into sub goals and planning objectives, these are draft policy statements. Are we hitting the topics that are critical for the Central City? Are there issues that aren't appropriate for the Central City that we would want to move over to a citywide conversation. Are there elements that belong in the comprehensive plan? We'll be working on the Comp Plan as well. Are some of these elements aspirational but not realistic?
- I feel like this is hard to read. It's dense and maybe there is a different way to make the information flow.
- Economic competitiveness section seems downtown focused – the 11 neighborhood business districts aren't specifically addressed, so let's highlight them and point out that incubation and innovation often happens in neighborhood businesses
- I appreciate the parsing of 5 goals and these are words I use but maybe we can push the environment piece and take a broader look at urban systems rather than honing in on transportation
- Question for the Bureau: what kind of tool does the City need from this effort? What is it the City doesn't have now that will enable it to do something that it can't do right now? All plans are symbolic documents and this one seems to include almost everything. Knowing what the city needs will help us figure out what to include. There's too much specificity here and you can't hold it all in your head. What needs to change and as a consequence of making these changes what will we see?
- Staff Response: This is written from the point of view of a comprehensive planning tool: a set of policy statements that we use to guide land use, investment, and program decisions relevant for the growth and development of the Central City. In the context of the individual decision you are trying to sort through these things that indeed may be

conflicting with each other. You use them to evaluate the benefits and costs, the pros and cons, of that particular decision. That kind of decision making process is where the synergy emerges as we are forced to recognize and resolve those kinds of conflicts.

- What that says is there will be judgments made in the future and we can't tell you how they are going to turn out, but we're going to consider all these things. So why stop at five, let's make sure every conceivable view is represented so that we can assure people that whatever their viewpoint is it will be considered in the context of whatever decisions might be made.
- Staff Response: We are attempting to winnow some of that out to align with the intentionality we want to bring to those future decisions.
- The biggest big idea we can contribute then would be winnowing this down so we can explain not just how we would make a decision but actually what we are trying to achieve. That would be a bold statement: "We want a Central City that does the following things..." We are going to have a comprehensive plan and we have an opportunity to make a statement about what the Central City will accomplish. So it looks more like an overlay than filling the hole in the donut.
- There are matrices in the Portland Plan with items like: the goal is to have this many living wage jobs in this year. Would the Central City Plan say which percentage of those would be in the Central City?
- This plan should promote higher education. The City is clearly prepared to move mountains to accommodate plans for expansion of our higher education and that will be an engine to drive Portland. This plan needs to be explicit about the Central City as a center of higher education as well as early childhood and K-12 education. Portland State is playing a big leadership role in that. Entrepreneurship and innovation is huge here with start ups of all kinds. Part of the reason that's happening is that we've spent the past 40 years making Central Portland the sort of place people want to be. We want to keep that up. So that's my focus: ensure the Central City of Portland is a desirable place to be for people, education, and businesses.
- Staff Response: As we go through, if some of these points are stating something that's not worth stating, that's obvious, let's not say what we don't need to say so we can remain focused. The first section, Economic Competitiveness, sets a target for overall job growth, so once we get into the part of the plan where we are allocating where development takes place this give us something to test ourselves against. The second part B addresses services and industry. The third one picks up on innovation and business start ups and our competitive advantage that's different from your typical chasing of headquarters. D, the Central City is the Center of Government, and there will be moves to decentralize – is that a loss for the Central City or is there a case for keeping that function collected and strong in the Central City? E, Higher Education, if we get the point across here we can turn it into Comp Plan language later.
- We're struggling with wanting this document to be inspirational versus what function it needs to serve politically, bureaucratically, etc. In the Higher Education section we don't even name the institutions. It's so generic! Why not say the vision is to have a world class urban research university and a major West Coast medical hub. That's what I'm struggling with. Does that happen somewhere else?
- Yes, the quadrant plans will spell that out. The CC2035 Concept Plan is the guidepost for those plans. The specificity is in the quadrant plans. Without the Concept Plan they won't have the structure to do the work of the quadrant plans. It makes a whole when it's all put together.
- Staff Response: Just to give a little perspective on how all this came together... We had a series of symposiums over the course of a year and this is a menu list of things we

heard during those symposiums. When we're talking about education, transportation, housing, neighborhoods, or the environment what are the important things? These are the things that came to the top of the list. We've taken a first crack at trying to organize that, but this is by no means the final policy language because it's dense. It's a lot. When we look at the current Central City Plan we have 11 functional policy statements. They're simple. They're one, maybe two sentences. Our sense is that's not enough. We need to be a little more specific, a little more intentional, but that's what we've been working with for years and when we make findings on investment or decision-making in the Central City we are supposed to base our decisions on those policies which are old, dated, and don't really talk about the world we live in. So when we develop new policies and goals for the Central City, they need to embrace these things in some way, but we don't need to include all of them and we need to be more specific about some of them than others. But if you're really going to whittle this down, I'd focus on the goals themselves (in the black boxes) instead of the bulleted objectives.

- We're all busy people and we do the best we can with the information available to us. As someone who lives in the densest part of Portland I'm aware of urban issues like the bar going in around the corner that will create noise until 2AM, so when I read about matching density and livability (4.2.D) it's complex. I'd like to see a better definition of full development potential because the zoning map is one thing and what your building is adjacent to is something else. Looking at block patterns (4.2.B) and talk of getting rid of small block in the Central Eastside and put in superblocks, if it needs to be there, let's put in something about super blocks, because otherwise there will be tough decision points 50 years from now.
- The great success of the Downtown Plan was that it was really pretty simple. It had about a half dozen concepts about how we make Downtown a better place. Everybody could grasp them and we implemented most of them. The great failure of the Central City Plan was that tried to be specific about everything. It tried to take away the political inconvenience of having to use one's judgment about what was a good idea and what was a bad idea by regulating everything. It became such a massive structure that it became a challenge to get your brain around it. So being of the bird-brained variety, and they can generally count up to three eggs or maybe four, I'd like to keep it simple in that way. I think the process is the right one: we've got the 11 goals and a mass of data underneath it. We're in the middle of the process and the next step is to go through and make sure we really mean what we say here. The example of super blocks is a good one. Do we really think it's a good idea to introduce superblocks? In Transportation (3.1.B): "provide a clear street hierarchy." Is that what we really want? That's what Phoenix has. What we have is a grid system and what we want is a street system that maximizes accessibility to the destinations within it. Further down we say that pedestrians are a priority so if we are putting pedestrians first we need to design for them, then transit, then service vehicles. What we need to do with all of these is to test if we really mean what it says, then to prioritize them, and then to simplify them as far as we possibly can. We need to take the time to make this shorter so we can really understand it.
- What I'd like to propose is going back to the headline and specific goals and strip away everything below that. Then we can consider the best way to achieve the goals. Don't tell us everything we could consider, tell us what you think we should consider so we can determine whether they are the right goals. Let's take the goals and consider how to make them so.
- Staff Response: Looking at Goal 1.1, this list of topics is our suggestion for how we would get there. It's not specific and we can make it more so if it's too generic. If they are

so baseline they don't need to be said, that's another way of chopping things out. Let's amp up the parts that need more attention. There are some pieces we want to be sure to retain.

- Most central city plans would say we want to be the economic engine of the metro region and the state and cultural hub of the city. There are certain roles and functions the Central City plays. We know that. Those are maintenance. We're already doing that and we'll continue to do that. But they do not define where we're headed. They do not define the future. And they are also things we have done pretty well. So when I think about what is unique and distinctive about Portland and where it could be in 2035 there are three themes I think of: we could be a model for the world in green infrastructure and urban systems. That's a huge distinct advantage that this city has and we should make sure we stay ahead of the curve. Creativity and innovation: there's a unique creative energy in Portland and our economic future depends on how we leverage and capitalize on that. Higher Education: building these institutions that intersect with creativity and innovation and sustainable systems. If I were to pick three things those would be mine and everything is organized under those categories. It's simple, it's powerful, and people get it. I'm not saying those are the three things, those are my three things, but I think we're looking for that kind of parsimony.
- We're dying for the lack of a good introduction. We're spinning in a circle. We're going from high to details to more details. I'm afraid to leave anything out because others may not "get it." We can't assume everyone knows that the Central City is where government and culture are centered. We have to remember who the final document is for. Let's take it in order, point 1.1, point 1.2 to see if we've hit everything.
- Staff Response: Let's identify what Portland's Central City needs to do beyond the maintenance role.
- This conversation is interesting but not linear enough for me. Let's march down the page to make sure we don't miss something.
- Taking the time to make it simpler is really important. I think we're going to start to micromanage raw data. What I would really like is a focus. We won't lose anything. Our role isn't to make a document for everybody. Our role is to give the Council and the Planning Commission our best sense of what the Central City needs. The political process will take this document and make it what it will. It's not as if the words on the page will never change. So our best contribution will be to focus and simplify. Whatever we take out will be brought back up and back in at some point.
- Staff Response: Rather than marching down the page, focus on specific goals. Let's stay at that level. If you asked me to thin this down, I'd take away all the details and get back to the overarching goals.
- It's not about making everyone comfortable, it's about education. It's about making sure that people know the importance of the Central City.
- When I read Goal 1.5.B Visual Accessibility I think about the broadband tower on my block. Maybe this doesn't need to be there. Noise policies may be important with more people living in the Central City, too.

### **Discussion of Regional Center Goal**

- Staff and co-chair Introduction to Regional Center Goal: Let's focus in on the Regional Center goal and scan through to see which pieces need to be in here. Let's focus on black boxes and anything underneath it. Lots of smart people helped get us here and they agreed to it. It was by consensus, so let's put the details aside for now and if anything below the specific goals needs attention, just write it down for now. Let's focus on the black boxes and stick to that level.

- On point 1.3 (Economic Competitiveness) let's clarify that Central City is not the only place for new businesses, 2/3 of the jobs are elsewhere
- Somewhere under 1.1 there should be something about maintaining the user experience of Portland's Central City, we're the acknowledged leader at this
- If we need a clear structure for the black boxes and everything underneath it, I think we should bag everything that states the obvious and emphasize the differentiators we'll have a vital document that can do some good. Stating the obvious creates an enormous amount of noise and prevents you from getting at the really important stuff.
- Under 1.1 C, E, F, & H are the things that make us unique
- It's easy to assume that because we have something now we'll be able to preserve it, but we shouldn't assume that everything happens automatically, things like retail vitality require intention and stewardship. The user experience is important. The experience of people asking for money and asking you to sign petitions is something we hear about even when we travel abroad – it's something people associate with Portland. There are still some issues to address.
- One thing that's going to make us economically competitive is a study of a tax and permitting structure. This is the main reason we're losing business.
- Let's add G – Retail Vitality – ours is vibrant and that's important
- Can 1.3 collapse into 1.2?
- We may not need 1.2
- It seems creativity and innovation and higher education are throughout the document already but green infrastructure does not seem to be and it should be if it's one of our three guiding big ideas
- When you think about the delegations that come to Portland they want to learn about our green infrastructure so let's elevate that, a goal for 2035 could be that Portland's Central City is the most realized eco-district in the country, everybody comes to our Central City to learn about eco-districts, let's reorient the advantage we have today and make it an advantage in 2035 and use it for our economic competitiveness
- The river is also important – the environment doesn't need to trump anything else, but let's build the river and the natural systems into the document, it's one of the pieces of our economic competitiveness, I could write down how to include it, do you want me to write this down?
- Staff Response: Yes, we can sit down and walk through the document with you to show you where the river is, but if you have additions and ideas, do write them down and email them to Troy
- Zoning changes should be established on the river and we should consider the river as an economic resource as well, it could be in the black box under economic competitiveness
- We can add in sustainability throughout the document
- I disagree and think environment should be separated out and river should be, too
- When I think of sustainability it's not just environment – it's also from a business perspective and I would add energy under 1.1.B with solar

### **Staff Recap**

- We will try to simplify the presentation of what it is we're talking so we can see the whole picture more clearly and take a look at the pieces we've embedded underneath the specific goals to identify the things that the group would like us to emphasize more than just the baseline, so we can sharpen the point of the document.
- I encourage people to take a look at the specifics and share feedback with us over email

- We can build a story around that and take a step back to make sure all the pieces are holding together
- We will continue working our way through the first goal in our next meeting, focusing on the black boxes
- Tell us the drivers of change
- Also look for details that raise red flags for you
- We'll work with an outline next time since what we're hearing overall is "consolidation"
- Troy will be the storehouse for feedback
- Suggestion to start at the bottom and work backwards next time so we don't keep rehashing the first category and neglecting the rest

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