

Minutes of the River Plan Committee – North Reach

May 16, 2006

5pm – 7pm

Portland Bureau of Planning, 1900 SW 4th Avenue, Room 4a (4th floor)

Committee Members Present: Pauline Anderson, Brian Campbell, Jason Graf, Don Hanson

Absent: Bob Naito, Melissa Powers, Greg Wolley, Krystyna Wolniakowski

City Staff Present: Sallie Edmunds, Deborah Stein, Mindy Brooks, Steve Kountz, Arianne Sperry, Matt Lustig, Sarah Selden, Joan Hamilton (Recorder), Planning

Others Present: Steve Durrant, Robert Hamrick, Bob Short, Greg Theisen,

Don Hanson convened the meeting.

1. Committee Business

The Committee deferred approval of the minutes for April 18, 2006 until the next meeting.

2. Updates

Edmunds reported that City Council endorsed the River Concept at a meeting on April 26, 2006, Don Hanson represented the River Committee, and two testifiers included a Port of Portland representative and a trail advocate. Hanson reported that Council members praised the project.

Edmunds anticipated that three task groups will be ready to present recommendations to the River Plan Committee in July and August.

- *Bank Design & Permitting Task Group* has met twice and will draft a proposal.
- *Water-Based Recreation Task Group* has started meeting at the Portland, Oregon Visitors' Association (POVA) office to update the City's inventory on water-based recreation.
- *Trails Task Group* will resume again at the end of June to review a draft proposal

Deborah Stein and Mindy Brooks reported that the *Watershed Health Task Group* has affirmed their mission and identified topics for discussion; they next will look at goals, sites, and opportunities for enhancement; and they will report to the River Plan Committee in September.

Edmunds introduced two new interns helping with the effort: Matt Lustig and Sarah Selden. Edmunds noted that *Oregon Business Magazine* plans a story on updates to the Willamette Greenway Plan and introduced reporter Robert Hamrick.

3. Willamette Greenway Plan, Code and Design Guidelines

Edmunds, and Arianne Sperry provided an overview of Willamette Greenway issues on a Power Point shown and distributed to the Committee (link [Willamette Greenway Plan Update Issues](#)). After providing background on regulations, design guidelines, and the greenway review process, Edmunds and Sperry listed issues that create problems for regulatory reviewers, property owners, and developers. Problems relate to the number of regulatory processes and lack of coordination among local, State, and Federal agencies; regulatory complexity, redundancy and inconsistency; outdated provisions and irrelevancy to

current situations; lack of objective goals; and lengthy, expensive, and cumbersome procedural hurdles. They summarized conclusions that the policy direction of the existing plan to protect, maintain, and enhance natural areas is generally consistent with River Renaissance goals, but implementation tools are unclear and out of date, reviewers at Bureau of Development Services have difficulty implementing code provisions, and there's need for regulations that provide consistency in interpretation and implementation, predictability, expediency, certainty, inspired design, and incentives.

Questions and Comments:

Committee members commented that the list is thorough and captures major issues.

Edmunds responded to questions:

- *Will the permitting task group consider regulatory conflicts among agencies?* The task group consists of people with expertise and experience to identify problems among different jurisdictions.
- *What is the timeline for the greenway project?* It will be necessary to fit together the pieces from all the task groups in preparation for rewriting the plan and guidelines. Staff also will need to coordinate the rewrite with a new approach to code-writing according to the Bureau of Planning's Regulatory Rethink Project, which is a current, ongoing project (Regulatory Rethink Presentation to Planning Commission: [Regulatory Rethink White Paper](#)).
- *Will design guidelines rely on existing resources such as the Willamette Riverbank Design Notebook?* Upcoming site design workshops will draft updated design guidelines that rely on "first-generation" documents such as the design notebook.

Campbell and Hanson endorsed a modern, streamlined, form-based approach to the Greenway Code that will express what is desired rather than what is prohibited, with more graphic examples. They advised against revising the current code and instead recommended using the greenway regulations and design guidelines as a pilot project for the larger code transformation. Graf recommended incorporating graphic elements from the Infill Design Project, and Hanson requested that Regulatory Rethink project staff attend an upcoming River Plan Committee meeting. River Plan Committee members agreed that the greenway project could be a laboratory for exploring modernization of the code.

Greg Theisen, speaking from the audience, provided an example of inconsistent language in the greenway design guidelines that creates problems. He noted there's no requirement for public access in an industrial zone, but the guidelines still require industrial applicants to address their alignment with the greenway trail.

4. River Plan Site Design Workshops

Documents Distributed:

- The River Plan Site Design Workshops: How the exercise works
- Site Design Workshop Worksheet: Site Information
- Planning for the Site Design Workshops

Steve Durrant, River Plan consultant, announced plans to organize a 2-day site design workshop in late October, at the University of Oregon's urban architecture studio. He explained the intention to develop and test site guidelines and implementation measures. He is working with staff to identify a few sites in the North Reach to use as case studies. He

described plans to meet with the selected property owners often, explained that workshops will include tours on land and water as well as presentations by experts, and invited River Plan Committee members to participate in the workshops.

Durrant concluded that by October, there will be abundant information to inform the briefings for workshop participants because proposals from River Plan task groups will be available to workshop participations:

- Steve Kountz reported that staff is finishing interviews and writing the report for the Working Harbor Reinvestment Strategy. He said the next step will be infrastructure analysis conducted by three city bureaus – Bureau of Environmental Services, Water Bureau, and Office of Transportation to 1) forecast growth and types of infrastructure needed for upgrading the City’s capital improvements program; 2) examine vacant, underutilized sites to address infrastructure challenges and ways to make sites easier to develop; and 3) consider catalyst infrastructure projects for the districts that would promote development.
- Deborah Stein reported that the Watershed Health Task Group will be able to report on natural areas that provide opportunities for integration of watershed functions with a built environment.
- Edmunds reported that other task groups also will be finished by October, including Water-Based Recreation, Riverbank Design & Permitting, and the Trails group. It will be possible to study how proposals apply on real sites.
- Mindy Brooks reported that the citywide National Resources Inventory update should be ready at the end of summer as an available tool.

Questions & Comments

Durrant invited suggestions for how to prioritize issues at the workshops.

- *Who will participate in the studio?* Durrant named a landscape architect, a professor in the University of Oregon Urban Architecture Program, a URS subconsultant, himself, and staff from the Planning Bureau and other city bureaus; he also said specialists will make presentations.
- *Are two days enough time for the workshop?* Graf indicated the length of the workshop relates to the quality of the briefing and the compactness of the study area so that people can get around. Graf recommended a 15-70-15 approach, with 15% of time on background information, 70% on problem-solving, and 15% for refinements.
- Hanson noted experience with workshops at which participants spend the first day learning about sites, making decisions, and communicating and spend the second day on design work and more communications. He recommended a half-day’s cushion. Durrant anticipated a half-day at the beginning to accommodate travel, but noted there will be long, 12-hr. days with a product at the end.
- Hanson recommended selecting complex test sites that would serve as catalysts and demonstrate the future of how projects will be built on the river. He suggested full briefings for designers in advance to produce better content at the workshop and more successful outcomes.
- Hanson and Graf recommended additional issues for consideration at the workshops: 1) interface of trails and viewpoints at secured, heavy industrial worksites; 2) interface between active working waterfront sites and a productive habitat; 3) open space as habitat and/or aesthetic resource; 4) development of a continuous trail

system that moves in and away from the waterfront depending on circumstances on the waterfront; and 5) characteristics for trails that move back into the neighborhoods but still remain part of the trail system.

- *How will property owners get involved?* Durrant said it would be ideal to attract an open-minded owner/client who would offer property for a test site. Hanson noted that the interviews from Kountz's project indicate vigorous, growth-minded, adaptable businesses on the waterfront; he recommended offering to advise the owner of an existing business how to grow and change on the site in return for access. Durrant said the upside for the owner would be input into rewriting the Greenway Code and free advice.

Commissioners expressed excitement for a project that will apply ideas to real situations.

5. Public Comments

- Greg Theisen asked how the Natural Resources Inventory will inform the River Plan North Reach. Stein and Brooks explained that a technical advisory group is tailoring methodology from Metro's inventory to respond to Portland-specific issues, and the update of the Willamette River Inventory Report will include resources and model rankings that can be integrated with other projects.
- Theisen announced that the Port of Portland has been working with the EPA to design a solution for contaminants in the river off Terminal 4; there were three options available, and EPA has notified the Port that their preferred alternative is a disposal facility at Terminal 4. He noted there will be bank design issues. Committee members suggested the Port might offer their site as a site design example.

Next Meetings

June 20 (now canceled)

July 18

August 15

Meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

[Minutes to be approved at River Plan
Committee meeting on July 18, 2006]