

Summary Meeting Notes

Economic Development Policy Expert Group (EDPEG)

Meeting Date: March 20, 2013

Time: 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Location: 1900 SW 4th Ave, Portland, Conference Room 7a

Attendees: Steve Abel, Betsy Clapp, David Ellis, Jon French, Peter Finley Fry, Carol Gossett, Bob Hillier, Karen Homolac, Mike Houck, Debbie Kitchin, Steve Kountz, Susie Lahsene, Judith Mowry, Anne Naito-Campbell, Kirk Olsen, Ted Reid, Marty Stiven

Guests: Justin Douglas (PDC), Bob Sallinger (Audubon Society)

Facilitator: Joe Hertzberg, Solid Ground Consulting, assisted by Kazmiera Taylor

Working Draft

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss goals and policies in the Working Draft relevant to Economic Development. Members were encouraged to submit written comments in addition to PEG discussion.

Steve Kountz began with an overview. Economic Development policies previously reviewed by the PEG did not change much in the Working Draft, though some items were moved to different chapters. An independent consultant conducted an equity review and added new Economic Development Policy 3.15: "Development impacts. Protect historically underrepresented communities from disparities in adverse development impacts." A definition of "underrepresented communities" will be added to the Glossary.

Steve noted that the Commentary sections may not end up in the final Plan. He asked members to note Commentary items of particular importance that should be preserved.

Looking through the lens of economic development, what concerns and opportunities are raised by draft goals and policies?

NOTE: The purpose of the discussion was to provide input to staff, not to achieve agreement in the Working Group. Some of the following comments were made by one member, some were echoed by more than one, and some reflected viewpoints that were widely shared.

General comments

- Once again as in past discussions, the group was torn between clarity, specificity, and consistency on the one hand and flexibility or nimbleness on the other.
- Several members like the idea of a summary or consolidation chapter.
- In general, members argued for simplicity, succinctness, and clarity.

Economic Development – Chapter 3

- One member argued that "job growth" should be called out more explicitly in the chapter introduction.
- Role of the City
 - ◆ One member noted that the Working Draft does not speak about the City being "business-friendly," with an attitude of problem-solving, customer-service, and responsiveness. "Nimble" development review was specifically highlighted.

- ◆ Staff pointed out that business climate provisions of the earlier draft were moved to the Implementation chapter. Several members suggested that these policies should be in the Economic Development chapter as well as the Implementation chapter, even at the risk of redundancy.
- Economic Justice
 - ◆ One Member suggested adding health to the list of public program targets cited in Policy 3.25: Poverty reduction and “connecting the dots to indicate how the pieces fit together.”
 - ◆ One member noted that the Poverty reduction policy is consistent with the Portland Plan and Multnomah County Anti-Poverty strategy.
 - ◆ “We need to encourage development without displacement.”
 - ◆ One member noted the unfortunate reality that the Comprehensive Plan serves some people better than others because some cannot afford lawyers.
- Brownfields (Policy 3.10: Brownfield redevelopment)
 - ◆ One member said that 80 percent seems to be aspirational. This is fine, but in addition to the “strive” language, the Plan should also have a “count-on” goal.”
 - ◆ “We must be clear about Goal 9.”
- One member suggested that the definition of “traded sector” should appear in the text, not just in the Glossary, and that it should include all five target cluster industries. Staff noted that target industries will continue to evolve within the 20-year planning horizon.
- Innovation
 - ◆ One member suggested an explicit discussion of the connection between Watershed Health policies (“protect, enhance, restore”) and Policy 3.4: Business innovation. Several others expressed agreement in principle but questioned how it can be done in practice.
 - ◆ One member referenced Policy 3.6: Central City and asked, “Is Central City growth consistent with other strategies and other parts of the city?” Several members said that the Plan should encourage taking advantage of innovation wherever it sprouts.
- Hospitality industry
 - ◆ One member pointed out that this important industry is omitted and suggested a supportive policy statement. Staff pointed out the hospitality is now addressed in the Central City Plan.
 - ◆ One member pointed out that many jobs in the hospitality industry do not provide a living wage.

Implementation – Chapter 8

Again the group addressed the policies in this chapter from the perspective of Economic Development.

- Reconciliation among policies
 - ◆ Many group members asked for more clarity, prioritization, direction, and specific directives. Tough decisions will have to be made in the future, and it will be helpful if policy-makers have clear direction from the Plan.
 - ◆ “As time goes on, policy-makers will be less connected to a Plan they didn’t have a hand in.”
 - ◆ “Tough challenges demand clarity rather than ‘Portland nice.’”
 - ◆ “So far, this looks like all things to all people.”

- ◆ "The Comp Plan is used to test development proposals. It must adapt to changing market demands."
- One member asked for clarification of the "mishmash" of items in Policies 8.16-8.20. Staff responded that these are implementation tools that don't fit elsewhere. Several members suggested that these tools should more strongly encourage private investment.
- One member argued that small business should be more explicitly supported. It should be easier to do business in Portland. Issues of communication and fees were cited. Immigrants were specifically called out and several members highlighted the importance of diversity awareness in policy implementation.
- The group discussed the impacts of the Urban Growth Boundary and how it should be addressed in the Plan. Members agreed that UGB has huge impacts, and not just economic. One member suggested that the reference in Policy 8.2 to "tight Urban Growth Boundary" is not as helpful as a discussion of "compact urban form."

Watershed Health and the Environment – Chapter 4

- Once again, the need was raised for tools and criteria to resolve conflicts among policies.
- Policy 4.12: Impact mitigation
 - ◆ Specific concerns about the use of the words "outside of the city" when jurisdictional boundaries do not always match other system boundaries or definitions.
 - ◆ One group member expressed concern over the word "require" and suggested that "prioritize" would provide more flexibility and discretion
- One person felt that Goal 4A is "human-centric" and another suggested that "maintain nature for its intrinsic value" should come first. A third member responded that the "critter versus people" argument was not productive and others agreed.
- The issue of language disparity between Chapters 3 and 4 was raised. Strong verbs were pointed out in both chapters 3 and 4 that are not reconciled.
- One member noted that a lot of discretion in the implementation of environmental policies will create more risk for development. Another member pointed out the conundrum between reducing risk and allowing flexibility.

Urban Design – Chapter 5

- GOAL 5.C: Portland's system of centers
 - ◆ One member noted that Portland is a "construction of neighborhoods" and expressed the opinion that the notion of "centers" is not a reflection of Portland. "The centers focus does a disservice to neighborhoods." Others agreed, but noted that "centers" may be necessary for some funding opportunities.
 - ◆ Another member suggested, "Policies need to promote development of centers, rather than set unattainable standards." He noted that the Plan doesn't set up public investments needed to make centers development feasible in the market.
- Transitions
 - ◆ Several members are concerned that policies make institutions responsible for edges and transitions.
 - ◆ One member expressed a desire for more flexible policies to allow for transitions to occur off-campus.
 - ◆ One person was concerned that Policy 5.33.c: Protect non-industrial lands conflicts with the non-conforming housing rules in industrial areas.

- Corridors and connections
 - ◆ Policy 5.25: Transit station areas. One member suggested that this policy should include employment areas as well as residential areas.
 - ◆ Policy 5.26: Greenways. A few members expressed concern about SE 7th as a greenway.
- Several members raised concerns around freight corridors and the lack of policies addressing them. They cited 5.24: Civic Corridors and 5.27: Streets as public spaces as examples of policies that should consider freight movement and their fit on major freight corridors.
- Members discussed the importance of protecting industrial lands and preexisting industrial activity from residential development associated with the civic corridor designation.

Transportation – Chapter 7

- Policy 7.6: Green and active transportation hierarchy
 - ◆ Several members expressed serious concerns. One size does not fit all. Each street is different and must be considered on its own characteristics.
 - ◆ Several members supported the suggestion that the whole chapter needs to be reframed in the context of the Transportation System Plan. “Transportation should serve land use, not the opposite.” This orientation is reflected in Policy 7.29: District Policies.
- Once again, members considered the challenge of balancing flexibility vs. consistency and vagueness vs. certainty, as well as expressing concerns about resolving conflicts among policies.

Next Steps

Steve Kountz presented an overview of upcoming PEG meetings and Working Draft Part 2.

- As we move toward the end of this process, we will make time on our agenda for topics members feel need to be raised.
- The comment period for the Working Draft remains open until May 1.
- The next three PEG meetings will address map changes and capital projects.
- Part 2 of the Working Draft will come out in the summer, including map, project list, capital project list, and plan. We will meet in September to review this draft.
- Different PEGs are on different schedules, and some may be finished between May and September.

For more information, please contact:

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