

## **Lake City urban design advisory group**

Meeting 7 ~ August 19, 2014

Lake City Community Center

4:00 – 6:00 pm

### **Meeting Notes**

**Welcome & Advisory Group Member Introductions** (see end of document for a list of members present/absent)

#### **Review work to date**

Brian D. Scott reviewed how the urban design framework fits in with the commercial revitalization plan that is also underway. He also briefly summarized work done at previous advisory group meetings.

#### **Existing conditions | 3D model**

Lyle Bicknell showed the 3D model of the hub urban village that he has built that illustrate the existing conditions in neighborhood. The concentration of parking lots and small buildings in the core of Lake City is particularly noticeable in these illustrations. The model also demonstrates that actual development is the inverse of what the zoning allows – the area with the greatest height (85') has the most empty parcels.

Advisory group members asked to include topography and to have the model extend north to NE 145<sup>th</sup> and south to SE 95<sup>th</sup> Streets. DPD agreed that it will help to look at topography in the model. While the Urban Design Framework will include goals and recommendations for the areas to the north and south, DPD recommended focusing on building a solid core first in the urban village area. Participants agreed that it will be important to prioritize specific locations within the broader area. It was mentioned that community-led planning efforts are happening in Wedgwood, and may overlap with the southern end of the Lake City planning area. Katie said she would follow up to get more information about that work.

#### **Building Development Standards for Lake City**

Katie Sheehy reviewed some of the characteristics the group has discussed including:

- More housing, particularly market rate
- Increased services for those who already live in Lake City, particularly kids and seniors
- More parks and open space, as well as a full service community center
- A permanent home for the Farmers Market
- Small, affordable commercial spaces (e.g. Pike Place Market day stalls) that could serve small businesses, particularly from immigrant communities
- Improved pedestrian connections, especially between the civic core, schools, and parks
- Stronger neighborhood identity
- Celebrate Thornton Creek watershed, particularly at gateways to the urban village
- Enhanced tree canopy
- New development has a human scale

Katie then reviewed the following aspects of the zoning code that can influence how buildings look:

- **Relationship to the street** – people generally seemed to prefer buildings constructed to the sidewalk rather than set back behind parking.

- **Massing and bulk** – people also generally seemed to prefer when large projects were broken up into smaller buildings rather than having long, continuous facades although some expressed a strong preference for new development over surface parking lots even without modulation.
- **Continuity** – there wasn't much discussion about encouraging continuity among new buildings.
- **Separation between structures** – people generally agreed that creating space between buildings would be important to create stronger east-west pedestrian connections.
- **Frontage** – people reiterated a preference for active uses at the street with some setbacks for sidewalk cafes and public plazas. It was also suggested that developers be encouraged to allow tenants to have more influence on the design of retail spaces rather than designing them to be all the same. Some participants favor open space between the sidewalk and buildings – others suggested that activity right at the sidewalk is preferable.
- **Street level uses** – people reiterated an interest in having a variety of street level uses in the urban village.
- **Landscaping** – people agreed that landscaping plays a very important role in shaping neighborhood identity. It was suggested that using different types of street trees could help establish distinct identities within various locations along Lake City Way.
- **Height** – Katie explained that recent economic analysis in the University District indicates that high-rise construction isn't economically feasible until average rent per square foot reaches about \$2.85; it's currently about \$2.00 in North Seattle. Mid-rise is typically considered to be up to about 85 feet wood frame construction; it's difficult to construct buildings between 85-120 feet because of the jump in construction costs for concrete construction at these heights. She noted that the analysis of the U District indicated that rents would likely start to support high-rise construction in that neighborhood around the time the light rail station opens in 2021.

People requested more information about when it's feasible to construct below grade parking. They continued to express an interest in changing zoning to allow for the construction of taller buildings, particularly if the Pierre's are willing to finance projects at these heights. [Contract rezones](#) are an option for property owners with a specific proposal to petition City Council to rezone property. The urban design framework could express support for contract rezones if there is widespread support among the rest of the community.

Dave explained a bit about how South Lake Union has developed over the past decade. In 2004, it was designated an urban center (from a hub urban village), which set the stage for the neighborhood as a “regionally significant focus for housing and employment growth<sup>1</sup>”. The first upzone allowed greater height and density at a midrise level – redevelopment moved forward at this scale for 9 years. After a few contract rezones to allow specific projects to include highrise (including Amazon Phase IV and V), it became clear that the neighborhood could attract that kind of development. Only since the 2013 neighborhood rezone has the neighborhood started to see widespread highrise.

---

<sup>1</sup> From Seattle's Comprehensive Plan Urban Center Goal 19.

### **Case Study: Joule & Brix**

Two buildings in Capitol Hill, “Joule” and “Brix,” help illustrate different approaches to 65’ midrise development that influence how well they are received by neighbors.

Eliot Mueting compared and contrasted the two projects, as illustrated in the slide show. Overall, people also preferred how the Brix was broken up into three distinct buildings and the courtyard was more visible from the street, where as the Joule was more monolithic and has an elevated courtyard. “Donut plans” that have buildings out around the edges and courtyards in the middle were discussed as less preferable than “horseshoe plans” that have courtyards that open up to the street. It was mentioned that even when courtyards aren’t accessible to the public, they can be a benefit to the neighborhood because children can be heard playing, among other things.

The following discussion questions were posed, but the group discussion didn’t directly respond to them individually:

- If current research on market conditions appears not to support high-rise development, how can we get what we want from low-rise and mid-rise development?
- What qualities in other neighborhoods would you like to see in Lake City?
- How can new development best fill in the gaps in Lake City’s urban fabric?
- How can development standards encourage human-scaled buildings on large blocks?

A couple of key points that came up during this discussion include the need for gathering spaces that get people out of the car and that the design guidelines need to be really specific about the vision for Lake City, including pedestrian connections. The development of retail space in malls was offered as a suggestion for what might work better in mixed use buildings so that individual businesses could develop retail spaces more tailored to their needs. It was brought up that a lot of small businesses couldn’t afford those sorts of building improvements, but perhaps the developers could still help pay for that buildout, it would just be designed with specific input from specific tenants. 30 foot widths were mentioned as being really good for retail tenants.

### **Ideas from Mark & Ray**

Mark and Ray presented some draft ideas that they recently started working. These include marking significant nodes at major intersections from NE 105<sup>th</sup> St to NE 130<sup>th</sup> St. There could be a broad community process to establish the specific identity of each node, rather than just calling out the number of the street. A light rail station and transit hub could be established around the intersection of LCW and NE 125<sup>th</sup> St. Something mimicking a bridge where LCW crosses Thornton Creek at NE 120<sup>th</sup> St could also help establish a strong gateway into the urban village.

### **Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned shortly after 6:00pm, though a number of members stayed around to discuss Mark and Ray’s design concepts.



### **Advisory Group Members Present**

Marty Curry, *UW faculty leading student/community design studies for the Pierre family, Lake City neighbor*

Dan Hickey, *resident Victory Heights/Pinehurst (aka Victoryhurst), LCNA, parent*

Don Moody, *Pierre family representative*

Tim Motzer, *LCNA, South Cedar Park Good Neighbors Association, North District Council, Lake City Neighbors for Environmental Justice, Friends of the Conservatory, resident since 1981*

Eddie Plana, *UW student visioning work, Lake City Greenways, Lake City neighbor (Shoreline)*

Ray Robinson, *resident (Olympic Hills / Victory Heights), small business owner, consultant for original neighborhood plan*

Phillip Shack, *20-year Lake City resident & 10-year Cedar Park resident*

Annie Stocker, *resident (Olympic Hills / Victory Heights), small business owner (Two Dog Yoga)*

Amber Trout, *North Seattle Family Center & UW CBE PhD candidate*

Mark vonWalter, *28-year Cedar Park resident, LCNA member, retired architect*

### **City Staff/Consultants Present**

Lyle Bicknell, *Senior Urban Designer, DPD*

Christa Dumpys, *North District Coordinator, DON*

Dave LaClergue, *Area Planning Manager, DPD*

Eliot Mueting, *BDS Planning & Urban Design*

Brian Scott, *Principal, BDS Planning & Urban Design*

Katie Sheehy, *Senior Planner, DPD*

### **Advisory Group Members Absent**

Mariela Fletcher, *North Seattle Chamber of Commerce (Board Member), Cedar Park / Meadowbrook resident*

Colie Hough-Beck, *Seattle Planning Commission, Landscape Architect & Urban Designer/Planner*

Danielle Loeding, *Olympic Hills Neighborhood Council (Chair), Olympic Hills Elementary School SDAT team*

Mark Mendez, *Lake City resident, LCNA member, 35-year resident, Youth Trainer at Goodwill*

Dave Morris, *Lake City resident, LCNA, business owner, Douglas Park Cooperative*

Sarajane Siegfriedt, *Lake City resident since 1997 and housing advocate*

### **Advisory Group Purpose**

*The Lake City urban design advisory group is composed of people throughout the North Neighborhoods who will meet throughout 2014. Members of the group will work together to provide ideas and recommendations to:*

- (1) The Lake City commercial revitalization steering committee and*
- (2) The City regarding future development, particularly on commercial land in-and around the urban village.*

*Group members will also reach out and collect ideas from people throughout Lake City and the North Neighborhoods.*