



City of Seattle Neighborhood Planning Advisory Committee

Key Themes from Interviews

January 27, 2009



The Interview Process

- Interview questions sent in advance
- Interviews completed with 22 of 24 members
- Average length: about an hour
- Confidential
- Candid responses and thoughtful suggestions
- Dynamic mix of “old-timers” and newcomers



Themes categories

- Understanding of the NPAC's purpose
- Members' core interests
- Key issues and concerns
- (Suggestions about the Charter)
- Essential elements for success
- Hopes for process
- Concerns about process



Understanding of the NPAC's purpose

- There is not a broadly-shared understanding of NPAC's responsibilities.



Members' Core Interests

- Long-term sustainability
- Effective communication and community involvement
- Enabling neighborhoods to plan their futures
- An update process that the Committee and communities drive, not the City



Key Issues and Concerns

- Expectations for Status Reports
- Prioritizing neighborhoods for future updates
- Planning for long-term sustainability
- Transportation: more transit, fewer cars
- Implementation of neighborhood plans
- Preservation of community character



Key Issues and Concerns

- Growth projections: where they come from and how they are used
- Integrating Neighborhood Plans into the City's Comprehensive Plan
- Zoning issues:
 - Incentive zoning
 - Implications of preserving so much single-family zoned land
- The role of the City



Suggestions about the Charter

- Your suggestions provided to the Charter Subcommittee
- Subcommittee to provide charter for discussion later in the meeting



Essential Elements for Success

- Clarity about expectations
- Transparency
- City-wide focus
- Charter and ground rules posted at meetings
- Good information
- A schedule to drive the process
- Teamwork and productive deliberation



Essential Elements for Success

- Opportunities for members to become acquainted
- A sense of humor
- Sufficient funding for effective outreach
- Support from neighborhoods
- The Mayor and Council seriously consider NPAC recommendations



Hopes for the Process

Committee process

- Create an environment where new members and “old timers” can collaborate to provide creative ideas
- Maintain mutual respect
- Retain NPAC’s independence



Hopes for the Process

Products

- Clear recommendations to the City
- An efficient and workable update process
- Viable tools that empower neighborhoods to be creative
- A set of “guiding principles” and a complete “menu” of issues neighborhoods should consider to promote consistency across the City



Concerns about the process

Within NPAC

- Members putting their agendas ahead of the groups'
- Members having insufficient information for good analysis and smart recommendations
- Committee rubber-stamping policies the City wants



Concerns about the Process

Other Issues

- Adequacy of resources for an inclusive process
- City making decisions that undercut the Committee's work
- City not taking NPAC's advice seriously
- "Seattle process" delaying and diluting the force of the Committee's recommendations



Conclusions

Causes for optimism

- Common belief that neighborhood planning is vitally important to Seattle's future
- Willingness to commit time and energy to the process
- Willingness to work together collaboratively
- Shared desire for a successful process

