

City of Seattle Neighborhood Planning Advisory Committee

CHARTER

The City of Seattle Neighborhood Planning Advisory Committee (Committee), Department of Planning and Development (DPD), and Department of Neighborhoods (DON) have agreed to the following charter to guide the Committee's deliberations, interactions and work products. This charter states the purpose of the group as described in Resolution 31085, clarifies roles and responsibilities, and identifies approaches for discussion, decision-making and development of advice and recommendations. It contains agreed-upon ground rules and operating procedures for working together in a group. It clarifies group procedures for conducting meetings, reporting results, resolving differences and accomplishing the tasks of the group. It is intended to develop trust by setting guidelines that are fair, equitable and productive.

Background and Purpose

Neighborhood planning in Seattle got underway in the mid 1990s. Through a planning process that was widely hailed as a model for citizen engagement and participatory community planning, 38 neighborhood plans were completed by 2000. In the years since those plans were completed much has been learned to draw from and significant change has occurred in Seattle:

- Seattle's population has grown both in numbers and in diversity.
- Many neighborhoods throughout the City have experienced significant growth and there continues to be interest in density issues.
- Climate change and other factors have increased interest in improving public transit and promoting the livability and vitality of neighborhoods.
- Significant amendments to the Seattle Comprehensive Plan and changes to the land use code and related SEPA policies have been adopted since 2000.
- The level of capital investment in neighborhoods and plan implementation has varied across the City
- Each neighborhood's experience with neighborhood planning has been unique and the elements included in neighborhood plans have differed, offering lessons learned for future efforts.

These changes, along with the opening of LINK light rail service in 2009 and other planned transit investments, have set the stage for renewed attention to neighborhood planning. In September 2008, through Council Resolution 31085 and Ordinance 122799, the Mayor and the City Council jointly convened the Neighborhood Planning Advisory Committee (Committee).

- Section 1 of the resolution identifies the composition of the 24-member Committee.
- Section 2 indicates that the purpose of the Committee is to "make recommendations and provide on-going guidance to the Executive and Council on the development of the Neighborhood Plan Status Reports and the Neighborhood Plan Update Process." It spells out three specific activities for the Committee relating to the status reports and ten relating to the plan updates.

City of Seattle Neighborhood Planning Advisory Committee Charter

- Section 3 provides latitude to the Committee to determine the frequency of its meetings and specifies that all meetings will be open to the public.
- Section 4 describes the duration of appointments.
- Attachment A of the ordinance specifies that the Committee's role is to "make recommendations and provide on-going guidance to the Executive and Council regarding gathering background data, engaging the community, and the process for updating and implementing the City's Neighborhood Plans." It contrasts this citywide role with work that the communities and the City will perform to update individual Neighborhood Plans.
- Attachment A of the ordinance also describes the general principles that will guide public outreach and engagement for the neighborhood plan update process. It also identifies the following schedule for the neighborhood plan update process:
 - 2008–09
 - Create status reports for 24 existing Neighborhood Plans.
 - Update the following three neighborhood plans in areas that contain LINK Light Rail Stations that are scheduled to open in 2009: 1) MLK Jr. Way @ Holly, 2) North Beacon Hill, and 3) North Rainier.
 - 2010–11
 - Update three additional neighborhood plans, with a focus on neighborhoods containing transit stations (not necessarily LINK Light Rail stations).
 - After 2011
 - Prioritize neighborhood plan updates to reflect new growth targets in the City and other factors yet to be determined.

Composition, Alternates and Terms

The Committee is formed entirely of Seattle residents and business people. As specified in the Resolution, its 24 members include one representative from each of the 13 Neighborhood District Councils (selected by each council), the Chair of the Neighborhood District Council's Planning Committee, two members of the Seattle Planning Commission, and eight at-large appointees (four appointed by the Executive and four by the Chair of the City Council's Planning, Land Use and Neighborhoods Committee [PLUNC]).

The appointing authorities may also designate an alternate member if desired, after notification of the member, the Executive (DON and DPD), or the Chair of the Seattle City Council PLUNC.

The Executive, in consultation with the Chair of the Seattle City Council PLUNC, has determined that all Committee members and alternates will serve two-year terms, unless removed by the appointing authority that made the original selection. If a Committee member or alternate steps down during his/her term, a replacement will be selected by that appointing authority. If the Committee process extends beyond two years, the appointing authorities will be asked to either appoint member/alternates to a second term or select new members/alternates.

City of Seattle Neighborhood Planning Advisory Committee Charter

Roles and Responsibilities of the Committee/Committee Members

As specified in the resolution, the Committee will make recommendations and provide on-going guidance to the Executive and City Council on the development of the Neighborhood Plan Status Reports and the Neighborhood Plan Update Process. The Committee will develop and maintain a Committee work plan and meeting schedule (including meeting dates, issues to be discussed, presentations/materials requested and anticipated products) that allow it to provide advice and recommendations to the City consistent with the City's neighborhood planning schedule and milestones. Committee members will have the following responsibilities:

- Members will focus on citywide neighborhood planning issues and the goals of the neighborhood planning update process, while acknowledging the different perspectives of each District and individual interest areas.
- Members will keep the organizations they represent informed on what is happening at Committee meetings and get input on issues discussed. At-large members will seek to do the same in their communities and at other relevant opportunities.
- Members will place a high priority on reading materials in advance so they come prepared for discussion, attending and actively participating in Committee meetings. Members will arrive on time and avoid leaving early.
- If a member misses three consecutive Committee or Subcommittee meetings without compelling reason, the chair(s) may recommend that the appointing authority appoint a new member or designate the alternate (if one exists) as the member or remove the member from the Subcommittee.
- If a member has an alternate, only the member or the alternate (not both) will sit at the table and engage in the Committee's discussion or decision-making at a given time. The representative not at the table will participate in the meeting as an observer, similar to members of the public, speaking only at times designated for public comment, unless specifically asked to comment by the Committee.
- Alternates are strongly encouraged to attend Committee meetings and to communicate regularly with their member, so that there is consistency between the member's and the alternate's perspective and level of knowledge. The member is obligated to ensure that the alternate is adequately prepared to represent the member.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Facilitator

The facilitator is an impartial individual who guides the process, including facilitating Committee meetings, and possibly subcommittee meetings (if subcommittees are formed). The responsibility of the facilitator is to help the Committee focus on agreed-upon tasks, suggest ideas, strategies, approaches, alternative methods and procedures, keep discussions moving forward, encourage participation by all Committee members, document decisions and action items, and enforce the ground rules. Specific facilitator tasks include:

- Work with the Committee, its Chair(s) and the City (DON and DPD) to prepare meeting agendas and other materials.
- Ensure that meetings are productive and accomplish the goals and purposes of the Committee by focusing the Committee on agreed-upon tasks.

City of Seattle Neighborhood Planning Advisory Committee Charter

- Provide facilitation, note-taking and time-keeping as necessary at Committee meetings.
- Interact with Committee members between meetings when needed to identify issues, opportunities, concerns, strategies and alternatives for meeting the Committee's goals and purposes.
- Debrief with the Chair(s) and the City after each meeting.
- Prepare meeting summaries and decisions/action item lists.
- Help draft Committee products.
- Assist in keeping communication open between the Committee and the City.
- Assure that relevant information is provided to the Committee in a timely and effective manner relative to the advice the Committee is asked to provide.
- Ensure with the Chair(s) that meeting business is conducted in a timely and efficient manner, and that each member has the opportunity to contribute and be heard.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Chair(s)

The Chair of the Seattle City Council PLUNC, in consultation with DON and DPD, has appointed Acting Co-Chairs to help provide leadership for the Committee during its early meetings. The Committee may, if it desires, extend the appointment of these Co-Chairs or select a different Chair/Co-Chairs from amongst its membership. The Committee may also, if it desires, specify that the Chair(s) be drawn from particular membership sectors (the District Councils, City Neighborhood Council, Seattle Planning Commission and/or At-Large members). These decisions will be made consistent with the decision-making procedures described elsewhere in this charter.

The Chair(s) will have the following responsibilities:

- Develop draft meeting agendas after consulting with Committee members, the facilitator and the City (DON and DPD).
- Participate in planning and debrief meetings with the City and the facilitator.
- Ensure that meeting business is conducted in a timely and efficient manner, and that each member has the opportunity to contribute and be heard.
- Designate Committee members to perform assignments and/or form ad hoc subcommittees or task teams to address specific topics. Each subcommittee or task team should have a designated lead, responsible for overseeing completion of the task. Subcommittees may include experts from outside the Committee.
- Act as the Committee spokesperson(s) or designate another member to serve as alternate spokesperson when the Chair(s) are not available. Public statements by the Chair(s) or designated spokesperson should reflect Committee recommendations and positions.

Roles and Responsibilities of the City

- The City (DON and DPD) will provide administrative and communications assistance to the Committee. This will include meeting logistics and making Committee meeting notices, agendas, summaries, presentations and products available from the website and other appropriate communications vehicles in a timely fashion.

City of Seattle Neighborhood Planning Advisory Committee Charter

- The City will assist the Committee to prepare a work plan to accomplish the purposes of the Committee.
- The City will attend the Committee meetings and participate in Committee discussions as requested. However, these City representatives will not take part in the Committee's decision-making process, except when requested to provide information or perspective.
- Other City representatives will participate in the meeting similar to members of the public, speaking only at times designated for public comment, unless specifically asked to comment by the Committee.
- The City will provide and/or prepare background materials and arrange presentations on relevant subject matter and develop fact sheets on specific issues as requested by the Committee.
- The City will respond in writing in a timely manner and with direct dialogue to written Committee recommendations, providing its rationale for accepting, not accepting and/or suggesting modifications to those recommendations.
- The City will facilitate communications between the Committee and other agencies, governments and other departments (internal and external to the City).
- The City will maintain a glossary of terms defining jargon and/or acronyms that may arise during meetings.
- The City will secure the services and/or contribution of technical experts if requested for specific issues, as allowed by time and budget.

Meetings

- The Committee will determine the frequency and location of its meetings based on the work plan it adopts and the preferences of its members.
- Meeting times and locations will be publicized in advance and open to the public.
- Meetings will begin and end on time.
- Meetings will be task-oriented with an agenda and materials prepared and distributed in advance, to support informed discussion.
- Meetings will be opened, conducted and adjourned by the Chair(s) using *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*,¹ pursuant to this charter and with assistance from the facilitator.
- Members will provide questions or issues for inclusion on the agenda to the Chair(s). The Chair(s) will work with the facilitator and the City to incorporate these items as appropriate. Time will also be set aside at the conclusion of each meeting for members to identify agenda items for the next meeting.
- The Committee may consider alternative meeting formats (such as small groups, open space discussions, etc) in order to encourage in-depth discussion and contribution from members who are less likely to speak up in a full group conversation.
- The Committee may create subcommittees to carry out specific assignments between Committee meetings. Subcommittees will present reports of their discussions and findings and recommendations, if any, at subsequent meetings.

¹ Henry M. Robert III and others, *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*, 10th ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Perseus Publishing, 2000).

City of Seattle Neighborhood Planning Advisory Committee Charter

Decision Making

Because the Committee is charged with providing advice and recommendations to the City, it is important that it has a clear and effective process for making decisions on the content of that advice, as well as on other Committee business. The Committee intends to balance the value of providing advice to the City with the need to recognize and respect diversity of opinion and to make decisions and provide advice and recommendations in a timely and organized fashion. Therefore, the Committee's decision-making process will be as follows:

- With input from Committee members and alternates, the Chair(s), facilitator and City will organize a thorough and balanced discussion of the issue at hand at a regularly-scheduled Committee meeting.
- After discussion of an issue, the Chair(s) and facilitator will check to see if any areas of consensus have emerged on advice and recommendations to the City or other decisions. Committee members may state what, if any, areas of consensus they believe may exist.
- The Chair(s) and facilitator will then ask Committee members to indicate (by a show of hands and/or thumbs up/down/middle) whether they are in consensus (in full agreement or not in full agreement, but can "live with" the position of the group).
- If there is consensus, this will be reported as the position of the group.
- Where consensus on an issue cannot be established in a timely manner, decisions will be made by majority rule, using *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*.²
- Where majority rule is used, the majority position will be reported as the position of the group, but the minority position may be reported if desired by the minority, as will the rationale behind both perspectives.
- The Committee will not revisit topics upon which it has already held a discussion and made a decision unless there is a properly made motion and majority vote to reopen the issue.
- On minor issues, the Committee's decision will be recorded in the meeting summary, which will be reviewed and approved by all members.
- On major issues, a separate statement of advice may be prepared including both a majority and minority report (if any). The Committee will review and approve the advice before it is submitted to the City.
- A simple majority of the Committee is necessary to constitute a quorum. A quorum is necessary for the Committee to make decisions or recommendations. If a quorum is not present, electronic polling (via phone and/or electronic mail) will be acceptable for ensuring a simple majority at or after a meeting as long as background information is provided.
- Amendments to this charter may be proposed by any Committee member. Consideration of those amendments will occur through the decision making process described above, but requires at least 7 days advance notice and a 2/3 majority of members present and constituting a quorum.

Products

² Ibid.

City of Seattle Neighborhood Planning Advisory Committee Charter

- A draft written summary of discussion from each meeting will be prepared by the facilitator and reviewed by the Committee and the City before being considered final. The final summary will provide Committee members and members of the interested public with a concise and clear record of the Committee's meeting, including synopses of presentations, discussions and decisions, and reference to related materials available from the website. It will not attempt to capture each statement or comment, such as would be found in a meeting transcript.
- The summary will report Committee advice and recommendations, describe areas of agreement and disagreement, and seek to state points of view fairly and clearly.
- The facilitator will provide Committee members with a list of decisions, action items and assignments from each meeting.
- Meeting summaries and decision lists will be sent to Committee members electronically. Summaries will also be posted on the City's website. Committee members, observers and other interested individuals lacking Internet access may ask to receive summaries by fax or US mail.
- City staff will draft periodic reports including majority and minority reports to the Mayor and City Council compiling the advice provided by the Committee. This report will be shared with the Committee in draft form for feedback and refinement before it is submitted to the Mayor and City Council.

Public Involvement/Communication/Media

Public outreach and engagement of affected communities will lay the foundation for engaging a broad and diverse cross-section of neighborhood stakeholders during the neighborhood plan update process. DON and DPD will be primarily responsible for development, coordination and implementation of community outreach and engagement. The Committee has an important role to play in making the public outreach and engagement program a success:

- The Committee will provide advice on community outreach and involvement strategies, including how to best reach under-represented communities and the general public.
- Committee meetings will be open to the public. Observers are welcome at all Committee meetings, but will not be seated at the table nor participate in discussions. Time will be set aside on the agenda of each meeting for public comments.
- Members of the Committee accept the responsibility to keep the organizations they represent informed of the progress of the discussions and to seek advice and comments. At-large members will seek to do the same in their communities and at other relevant opportunities.
- The City will establish and maintain a website for the Committee, including background information, links to related sites, and meeting dates, times, locations, agendas, materials, presentations and summaries.
- The City will strive to make audio and/or video recordings of meetings available to Committee members and the public.
- If necessary, the City will develop joint statements for media release with the Committee.
- The City will implement the public outreach program consistent with the general principles for public outreach and engagement contained in Ordinance 122799.