

# Seattle Neighborhood Planning Advisory Committee

January 19, 2010

The Honorable Sally Clark  
Chair, Built Environment Committee  
Seattle City Council  
PO Box 34025  
Seattle, WA 98124-4025

The Honorable Mike O'Brien  
Chair, Public Utilities and Neighborhoods Committee  
Seattle City Council  
PO Box 34025  
Seattle, WA 98124-4025

## Re: Neighborhood Planning Advisory Committee Report

Dear Councilmembers Clark and O'Brien:

On behalf of the Neighborhood Planning Advisory Committee (NPAC), we are pleased to present this report containing the collected advice and recommendations NPAC has approved during its December 2008 through January 2010 tenure. As you know, Council Resolution 31085 and Ordinance 122799 tasked NPAC with making recommendations and providing on-going guidance to the Executive and Council on the development of the Neighborhood Plan Status Reports and the Neighborhood Plan Update Process.

Below please find a listing, in chronological order, of NPAC's advice and recommendations generated over the course of the past 14 months. Each bullet provides a description of the topic of the approved advice, the date of approval, and the result of the vote that led to approval. Most advice was the product of an NPAC Subcommittee bringing a report to the full Committee for discussion, amendment and approval. If the approval resulted in a report or letter of advice, that document is described below and attached to this letter. Also attached are minority reports, containing opinions of one or more NPAC members.

- **Neighborhood Plan Update Community Outreach.** At its April 2009 meeting, NPAC adopted the Outreach Subcommittee's April 15, 2009 memorandum describing outreach concerns and providing advice on community outreach. The Committee approved the report as amended at the meeting, with 11 members in favor, 6 opposed and no abstentions.
- **Neighborhood Plan Status Report Scope, Content and Format.** On May 19, 2009 NPAC approved by consensus the Status Report Subcommittee's letter of advice to the City (as amended at the April 21 NPAC meeting), containing recommendations regarding neighborhood plan status report content and general format.
- **Neighborhood Plan Status Report Open Houses, First Round.** On May 19, 2009 NPAC approved by consensus the Open House Subcommittee's report and authorized that the Subcommittee work directly with Department of Planning and Development (DPD) and Department of Neighborhoods (DON) staff and the Seattle Planning Commission to prepare for co-hosting a first round of broad public outreach open houses regarding the status report process in June and July 2009. The Seattle Planning Commission produced several summary documents from this round of open houses, which are available at: <http://www.seattle.gov/planningcommission/>.
- **Funding for Neighborhood Planning.** On July 21, 2009 NPAC approved the Neighborhood Plan Updates Subcommittee's letter to the Mayor and City Council regarding funding for

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neighborhood planning in 2010. The motion carried with 16 members in favor, 1 against and no abstentions.

- **Neighborhood Plan Status Reports, Additional Advice.** On August 18, 2009 NPAC approved by consensus additional advice to DPD regarding the neighborhood plan status reports DPD was developing and compiling into a State of the Neighborhoods Report. This advice was provided in a letter dated September 9, 2009 and based on NPAC's experience and observations while serving as co-host for first round of Status Report open houses in June and July 2009.
- **Neighborhood Plan Status Report Open Houses, Second Round.** On September 15, 2009 NPAC approved the Open House Subcommittee's proposed agenda for the second round of open houses regarding the status report process that NPAC was called upon to co-host in November 2009. The motion carried with 14 members in favor, 1 against and no abstentions. NPAC also approved the Subcommittee's recommended structure for the open houses. That motion carried with 13 members in favor, 2 against and no abstentions. NPAC members facilitated conversations with neighborhood residents and stakeholders at these meetings, asking them to think seriously about how neighborhood plans are shaping their communities, what is working, what is not, what positive changes have occurred, and what still needs to be accomplished.
- **Neighborhood Planning in 2010.** At its October 20 and 27, 2009 meetings, NPAC approved by consensus several specific items of advice in response to request for input from the Chair of the City Council's Planning, Land Use and Neighborhoods Committee (PLUNC) on a Council discussion document dated October 14, 2009 and entitled *Issues/Options for Neighborhood Planning 2010 Budget*. A letter containing that advice was provided on November 4, 2009.
- **Neighborhood Plan Updates, General Philosophy and Recommendations.** On November 17, 2009 NPAC adopted Sections I (General Philosophy) and II (Recommendations) of the Neighborhood Plan Update Subcommittee's report with 9 members in favor, 1 opposed, and 2 abstaining. The recommendations also included advice on whether neighborhoods should be allowed to use outside consultants to draft plan updates.
- **Neighborhood Plan Validation.** On December 1, 2009 NPAC approved the Validation Subcommittee's report containing criteria for neighborhood plan validation. The motion carried with 10 members in favor, 0 against and 0 abstentions.
- **Neighborhoods to Receive Plan Updates in 2010.** On December 1, 2009 NPAC made recommendations for two neighborhoods to receive plan updates in 2010. NPAC members first voted to narrow the options down to four neighborhoods – Aurora/Licton Springs, Ballard, Capitol Hill and Rainier Beach. That motion carried with 8 members in favor, 5 against and no abstentions. Each member then voted for two of the four neighborhoods, resulting in Capitol Hill receiving 8 votes; Ballard 7 votes; Rainier Beach 6 votes; and Aurora/Licton Springs 3 votes. Two members abstained from this second vote. The results of the vote were communicated by the NPAC Co-Chairs at a subsequent PLUNC meeting.
- **Neighborhood Plan Updates, Stakeholder Checklist.** On December 15, 2009 NPAC adopted Section III of the revised Neighborhood Plan Update Subcommittee report (Checklist of Topics for Stakeholders to Consider). That motion carried with 13 members in favor, 1 against and 0 abstentions.
- **Neighborhood Selection Criteria, General Criteria.** On December 15, 2009, NPAC approved the Selection Criteria Subcommittee's report providing objective and subjective

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general criteria for selecting neighborhoods for neighborhood plan updates in 2011 and beyond. The motion carried by a vote of 11 members in favor, 1 against, and 2 abstentions.

- **Neighborhood Selection Criteria, Additional Guidance.** On January 19, 2010, NPAC approved the Selection Criteria Subcommittee's report providing more specific guidance for decision makers as they use the general criteria for selecting neighborhoods for neighborhood plan updates in 2011 and beyond. The motion carried with 13 members in favor, 2 against and 1 abstention.

### Summary Observations

NPAC was a relatively large advisory committee (24 at full strength) with a full agenda to address 13 questions in Resolution 31085. It took several months to get our sea legs but following the creation of a subcommittee structure, and with the support of Triangle Associates as facilitators, we accomplished to some degree most of our agenda despite the shortened timeframe for our work. We struggled somewhat over the best way to maintain our independent voice as citizen advisors with a concurrent need to mesh our efforts with city staff activities that had different timeframes and objectives.

Over the past 14 months, NPAC members have had lively debates over the particulars of what constitutes the best approach to neighborhood planning. The attached letters and committee reports capture the details and our decisions and we encourage you to read these documents. We are not attempting to distill NPAC's work into a few sentences, but we do offer the following observations that will be useful as the city proceeds with the 2010 and future neighborhood plan updates:

1. Budget adequately (even generously) for broad community awareness and outreach. Adequacy of stakeholder outreach and ultimate plan validation are conjoined elements of neighborhood planning. Don't rely exclusively on any one means of communication including email narrowcasting to limited DON neighborhood contact lists which are fragmented and no longer maintained in a comprehensive manner. Don't neglect outreach to established neighborhood groups and leaders in favor of any one special population or interest group. Do it all. We are concerned that the inadequate outreach and inability of the city to meet promised deadlines indicate that the plan updates conducted through 2009 were not adequately funded or staffed.
2. While the use of web-based survey tools showed promise to attract large numbers of participants during the Status Report phase, the anonymous nature of these responses was of concern to some NPAC members. We don't reject such tools but caution that safeguards against "ballot stuffing" and influence by non-stakeholders can detract from their value.
3. The independence and strong citizen ownership of the groundbreaking first wave of neighborhood plans still resonates with citizens citywide. NPAC affirms this grassroots basis of neighborhood planning in our advice to allow planning committees to engage outside planning consultants when they revise their neighborhood plans. This is not a comment on the ability of city planning staff; it is recognition of a successful model that should not be abandoned. It may also prove to be equally cost effective and a timely way of updating plans so the process does not stretch out for a decade. Since the North Beacon, North Rainier, and Othello Neighborhood Plans were just published online, NPAC will not have the opportunity to review and comment on them as models for future plan updates.

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4. The driver of neighborhood (subarea) plans under the Washington state Growth Management Act (GMA) is growth projections. During the initial round of neighborhood planning, assigned "targets" were not evaluated by planning committees. NPAC is recommending that for future neighborhood plans, this be changed and informed stakeholders have a say in the targets. Doing so will shed light on the mechanics of the forecast methods and allow stakeholders to make adjustments based on the adequacy of physical and social infrastructure to meet targets and their knowledge of property ownership and development trends.
5. NPAC has recommended that updated neighborhood plans should include chapters or sections that parallel each of the main "Elements" in the Seattle Comprehensive Plan, but they should also address issues of unique or particular significance to each neighborhood. The goal of neighborhood planning is not merely to check the GMA compliance box. Neighborhood plans should identify the assets of each neighborhood and recommend ways of preserving or enhancing desired characteristics that support Seattle's enviable reputation as a city of unique and beloved neighborhoods, not a homogenous metropolplex.

We are pleased to offer you this collection of NPAC's advice. As citizen volunteers serving on NPAC, we are dedicated to keeping Seattle's neighborhood plans alive and current. In this spirit, we request that you ensure the City provides wide distribution of this report, electronically and otherwise, especially to neighborhood stewardship, planning and other groups, perhaps through DON and its network of neighborhood outreach coordinators. It is important that citizens, stakeholders and policy makers and implementers are aware of and informed by these recommendations as they address neighborhood plan updates and related issues in the coming years.

Please see the following page for the signatures of additional NPAC members who wished to be signatories to this letter. Do not hesitate to contact us if we can answer any questions or provide additional information. We are willing and interested in briefing Mayor McGinn, his staff and members of the City Council, about NPAC's recommendation at your invitation.

Sincerely,



Amalia Leighton  
NPAC Co-Chair



Irene Wall  
NPAC Co-Chair

Cc: The Honorable Mike McGinn  
Diane Sugimura, DPD  
Stella Chao, DON  
Ray Gastil, DPD  
Lyle Bicknell, DPD  
Kimberlee Archie, DON  
Veronica Sherman-King, DON

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**NPAC Members**



Boaz Ashkenazy  
At large member

Adrienne Bailey  
Central Area District Council  
(electronic approval received 2/16/10)



John Coney  
Magnolia-Queen Anne District Council



Christie Coxley  
Southeast District Council



Judith Edwards  
Greater Duwamish District Council



Ashley Harris  
Ballard District Council



Kay Knapton  
Seattle Planning Commission



Sharonn Meeks  
Southwest District Council



Heidi Oien  
At large member



Catherine Stanford  
Downtown District Council



Kate Stineback  
At large member



Toby Thaler  
Lake Union District Council

**Not Signing**

Jeannie Hale, Northeast District Council  
Maria Ramirez, Delridge District Council  
Dennis Saxman, East District Council  
David Miller, North District Council  
Diana Vergis Vinh, At large member

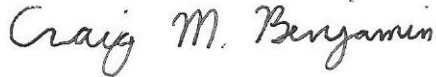
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**NPAC Alternates**



Cindi Barker  
City Neighborhood Council Neighborhood  
Planning Committee



Craig Benjamin  
Ballard District Council



George Counts  
Magnolia-Queen Anne District Council



Kate Joncas  
Downtown District Council

**Not Signing**

Josh Brower, Seattle Planning Commission  
Robert Hinrix, Greater Duwamish District Council  
Denise Lathrop, Council Alternate  
Mona Lee, Southeast District Council  
Blayne McAftertey, Northwest District Council  
Sandra Melo, Delridge District Council  
Brian Ramey, Lake Union District Council  
Mark Wainwright, Southwest District Council