

MINUTES

Eugene City Council
McNutt Room—City Hall
777 Pearl Street—Eugene, Oregon

April 20, 2011
Noon

COUNCILORS PRESENT: Betty Taylor, George Brown, Andrea Ortiz, George Poling, Mike Clark, Alan Zelenka, Pat Farr.

COUNCILORS ABSENT: Chris Pryor.

Her Honor Mayor Kitty Piercy called the April 20, 2011, work session of the Eugene City Council to order.

A. WORK SESSION:
Sustainability Commission/Envision Eugene

The council was joined by Sustainability Commission members Josh Skov, Josh Bruce, Shawn Boles, Howard Bonnett, Steve Newcomb, and Rusty Rexius. Sustainability Liaison Babe O'Sullivan was also present for the event. Mr. Bruce recalled the council's August 2010 direction to the commission to evaluate the results of Envision Eugene. He expressed the commission's general support for the concepts embodied in the plan. He stressed the need for the council to review the recommendations in light of its goals for carbon, fossil fuel and waste reduction. He also emphasized the importance of considering the nexus between land use and transportation.

Mr. Bruce said the commission believed that planning for climate change and energy uncertainty should be incorporated throughout the plan rather than including it as one of the Seven Pillars of Envision Eugene. He emphasized the importance of plan implementation because that was where critical decisions would be made. He cautioned the council against assuming that the generalized strategies presented in Envision Eugene would support its adopted goals when implemented.

Mr. Bruce emphasized the interconnectedness of each of the seven pillars. He offered the following pillar-specific comments:

Provide ample economic opportunities for all community members

- The identified need for industrial land should be accommodated within the urban growth boundary (UGB) to the degree possible through aggregation/consolidation of existing properties.
- UGB expansion for industrial land should align with City objectives for alternative/active transportation options and sustainable infrastructure development. Industrial development should align with the outcomes of the Sustainable Business Initiative.
- The City should define and quantify the economic burden or opportunity posed by transportation and housing options to illustrate the costs of sprawl and the benefits of smart growth more clearly to policy makers and citizens.

Provide affordable housing for all income levels

- Housing affordability should be defined to include opportunities for a true mix of affordable housing types.
- Housing affordability is tied to the issue of school closure and the demographic trends in neighborhoods without a strong mix of housing types.
- Demographic and income diversity is necessary for the long-term health of the schools and neighborhoods.
- Additional affordable housing units should include both multi-family and single-family units.
- UGB expansion areas should be zoned for mixed use and should follow the 20-minute neighborhood model.

Plan for climate change and energy uncertainty

- The concept of 20-minute neighborhoods relates at least as much to other pillars and themes as it does to energy and climate; the overlap between energy/climate issues and other issues highlighted the problems of sequestering energy and climate concerns in a separate pillar.

Promote compact urban development and efficient transportation options

- The community needs more transportation choices to achieve the goal embodied in the pillar.
- Greater urban density requires that people be provided more transportation choices in the form of walking, biking, and public transit; the design of urban spaces should promote low-cost, healthier modes such as walking, biking and transit as the safest and most convenient options available. This highlights the importance of the EmX system, which is needed to preclude pressure to expand the UGB.
- The council will need to fully commit to multi-modal transportation options along all key existing and proposed east-west and north-south transportation corridors to support the corridor development strategy. The foundation of this pillar is full build-out of the bus rapid transit system and the expansion of the infrastructure serving alternate transportation modes.

Protect, repair and enhance neighborhood livability

- Neighborhood compatibility is not the same as “no change.” Diversity could be compatible with neighborhood character.
- The commission’s TBL analysis suggested a need to change the first strategy under the pillar, which is tied to the Infill Compatibility Standards and Opportunity Siting. Neither had been fully vetted. The strategy should be linked to what City Council adopts for these programs rather than the work done by the respective task teams. The strategy should be revised to be more progressive and should frame density in terms of positive objectives to be achieved, not as a prohibition or restriction. This strategy needs to be reviewed through the TBL framework when implemented to avoid unwanted results.

Protect, restore, and enhance natural resources

- The pillar should cast protection, restoration, and enhancement in the context of opportunity.

- Natural resources, when used and managed correctly, are more than just “attractive” assets and could act as fundamental infrastructure for the city and reduce capital construction and long-term maintenance costs.

Provide for adaptable, flexible and collaborative implementation

- This pillar should be framed in the context of resilience. Recent natural hazards are reminders that the best laid plans “go right out the window” when communities face catastrophic change. Avoid implementing the vision in a manner that limits the community’s ability to recover from a wide variety of impacts.
- Trends that concern the Sustainability Commission are not easily discernible from today’s data. Those trends will become more visible and understandable over time, and the community needs a process to revisit the issues addressed in the plan at regular intervals.

Mayor Piercy commended the commission’s thoughtful presentation. She said the commission was asking the council to think more deeply, to make more connections, and to consider the future. She believed the commission’s recommendations would require some back and forth conversation between the council and commission.

Mr. Clark expressed appreciation for the work of the commission. Speaking to the commission’s concerns about trends, he asked if the commission thought the City’s population projection should be increased due to the potential of climate migration. Mr. Bruce said no. Rather, the commission was recommending the City consider the issue in terms of uncertainty. The City could employ approaches that built resilience into the system in a manner that allowed it to accommodate such growth, while other approaches could make it more challenging to accommodate such uncertainties.

Mr. Boles added that another element of the recommendation was the need to monitor the long-term consequences of implementing the plan. That required tracking population estimates, and one of the drivers for population increases could be related to climate. Mr. Clark concurred about the need for monitoring. Mr. Boles noted the Technical Resource Group formed by City Manager Ruiz to assist staff in developing a monitoring plan.

Mr. Clark determined from Mr. Bruce that the commission preferred the City accommodate its need for industrial lands inside the UGB, but the commission recognized that the City might have to go outside the UGB to meet that demand. Mr. Clark observed that the Eugene Comprehensive Land Assessment identified a need for 1,800 acres of residential land and 400 acres of commercial land. While it might be possible to accommodate the need for commercial land inside the UGB, he did not think the same was true of residential. He believed the commission’s recommendation for mixed-use development in the expansion areas would accommodate commercial development. Mr. Bruce concurred. He said it made no sense to pursue a mixed-use strategy inside the UGB and then abandon it outside the UGB. He anticipated any such development would be in the context of a 20-minute neighborhood, and that development in the expansion area would be mutually supportive to avoid a separation of uses. Mr. Clark concurred as to the need for some commercial development in those areas.

Mr. Clark asked if the commission discussed what represented the core of the community. Mr. Bruce said no. He encouraged the council to avoid thinking about a single core. While Eugene had downtown to consider, mixed use development was predicated on there being many centers of activity.

Ms. Ortiz determined from Mr. Bruce that the commission had discussed the role of schools when it discussed the transportation corridor strategy. Mr. Bruce suggested that the community was seeing the results of what he termed a “single demographic” in the development pattern that resulted in school-age children leaving when they grew up. He said diversity in housing types as well as population types and income levels was necessary.

Speaking to the strategy related to 20-minute neighborhoods, Ms. Ortiz observed that there were few commercial retail businesses within walking distance of the Four Corners area. She asked how the City could realize that strategy in such neighborhoods in light of the pillar related to protection of neighborhood livability. Mr. Bruce responded that compatibility did not mean there would be no change. However, he believed the neighborhood could accommodate a range of uses that would be compatible both with what was in place today and tomorrow.

Mr. Zelenka commended the way the presentation encouraged the council to think about the long-term and make more connections. He asked how the commission proposed that the City integrate the pillar related to climate change and energy uncertainty into the other pillars. Mr. Skov said the commission did not propose that the document be revised at this late date. The commission was more concerned about the need for more integrated thinking than about changes to the document. Mr. Boles concurred. He said the commission did not propose to eliminate the pillar, but wanted the council to recognize, when considering its decisions about other pillars, that they must be anchored in the realities of climate and energy uncertainty.

Responding to a question from Mr. Zelenka, Mr. Bruce clarified that the commission’s recommendations about housing affordability spoke to its concerns about what appeared to a focus on rental housing as affordable housing.

Mr. Zelenka said the comment he heard most frequently from constituents was about the pillars related to the status of the Opportunity Siting and Infill Compatibility Standards projects. People wanted to know what the council was going to do, and he believed that was something the council needed to address soon.

Mr. Farr recalled a discussion about the housing mix he had participated in as a member of the Community Resource Group that touched on the lack of diversity of the housing mix and the housing types used in other communities that were not widely available here, such as row housing developments. Those few row housing developments that had happened were very expensive. He believed the community needed to provide residents with lower cost home ownership opportunities that were not single-house, single-lot developments. Mr. Farr called for further discussion of the issue. He also suggested the council needed to consider the needs of those who could not afford any housing.

Mr. Bruce believed Mr. Farr’s remarks reinforced the importance of the implementation strategies.

Mr. Skov emphasized the importance of considering other factors such as energy costs when discussing housing affordability. He suggested that 20-minute neighborhoods were a housing affordability strategy. He also suggested that the lack of transportation choices was an affordability issue as well as a health issue. He questioned whether those issues would be fully addressed through the transportation system plan update and urged the council to ask those responsible for that plan to discuss how they were dealing with integrated land use and transportation issues as well as health issues.

Ms. Taylor advocated for inclusionary zoning to create income diversity in neighborhoods. She believed the City should attempt to repeal the State law prohibiting inclusionary zoning. She thought a mixture of housing types lent itself to a mixture of income levels.

Ms. Taylor said that the commission appeared to be suggesting that the Infill Compatibility Standards were not a good thing. Mr. Bruce clarified that the commission was suggesting that the City did not yet know if they were a good thing. The council had adopted four infill compatibility standards that the commission discussed at length and which many commissioners did not find sustainable. The commission was asking the council to review the standards through the TBL framework to ensure it was getting the desired results. Some compatibility measures might be compatible from a neighborhood perspective but not from a sustainability perspective.

Ms. Taylor believed it was important that the City consider compatibility. She thought residents had the right to continue in the kind of neighborhood they bargained for. Mr. Skov said the commission wanted to highlight that the Infill Compatibility Standards and Opportunity Siting processes were focused on specific issues and areas and needed more work before being incorporated into a citywide plan. He said none of the plan recommendations would receive support if the result was neighborhoods where people do not want to live.

Ms. Taylor believed the City also needed to consider people's property values. She was aware of a situation where an otherwise desirable house was not selling because of unattractive infill development directly adjacent.

Mayor Piercy acknowledged that the City Council frequently had conflicting goals that it must work through. She emphasized the importance of establishing benchmarks to measure progress. She also stressed the importance of monitoring plan implementation so that document continued to be relevant. Mayor Piercy also reiterated the issues that the commission should address in follow up discussions with the council including affordable housing, definition of "core" and how it relates to greater density, and inclusionary zoning.

**B. WORK SESSION:
Arts and Business Alliance of Eugene**

The council was joined by Alan Evans, Chair of the Arts and Business Alliance. Library, Recreation, and Cultural Services Director Renee Grube and Community Events Manager Billy Moser were also present for the item. Ms. Grube provided a brief presentation on the work of the alliance, which was sponsored by the City of Eugene, University of Oregon, Travel Lane County, the Eugene Area Chamber of Commerce, and Lane Community College. The alliance was formed to coordinate and strengthen the efforts of private, public, and nonprofit culture sectors and foster civic leadership in support of the arts.

Ms. Moser shared the website "Eugeneagogo.com" with the council and demonstrated its features.

Mayor Piercy adjourned the work session at 1:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Beth Forrest
City Recorder

(Recorded by Kimberly Young)