

**CITY OF MILWAUKIE
PLANNING COMMISSION and CITY COUNCIL
JOIN SESSION MINUTES
Milwaukie City Hall
10722 SE Main Street
TUESDAY, September 23, 2014
6:30 PM**

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

Sine Bone, Chair
Wilda Parks, Vice Chair
Scott Barbur
Greg Hemer
Shaun Lowcock
Gabe Storm

CITY COUNCILORS PRESENT

Jeremy Ferguson, Mayor
David Hedges, Council President
Scott Churchill
Mark Gamba
Mike Miller

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT

Shannah Anderson

STAFF PRESENT

Denny Egner, Planning Director

1.0 Call to Order – Procedural Matters*

Chair Bone called the meeting of the Planning Commission to order at 6:30 p.m. and read the conduct of meeting format into the record.

Mayor Ferguson called the meeting of City Council to order at 6:32 p.m. and read the conduct of meeting format into the record.

***Note:** The information presented constitutes summarized minutes only. The meeting video is available by clicking the Video link at www.milwaukieoregon.gov/meetings.*

2.0 Introductions

Chair Bone welcomed the City Council and members in the audience, and asked for introductions.

- 2.1 Planning Commission
- 2.2 City Council
- 2.3 Moving Forward Milwaukie Project Advisory Committee
- 2.4 Design and Landmarks Committee

3.0 Joint Session

- 3.1 Urban Design Presentation by Matt Arnold of SERA Architects

Chair Bone welcomed Matt Arnold of SERA Architects and noted that the intent of the joint session was to have a conversation about urban design and the Moving Forward Milwaukie project. Questions were welcomed throughout the presentation.

Matt Arnold, SERA Architects, introduced himself as a planner and urban designer, and introduced **Erik Ridenour, SERA Architects**, planner and architect. They gave a presentation

via PowerPoint titled *Downtown Urban Design: Considerations for Design and Development Standards*. Mr. Arnold noted the presentation was to help give examples of how standards could be developed to help define a downtown with regard to the Moving Forward Milwaukie project.

Mr. Arnold described the importance of human scale, which was to design buildings and streetscapes to be appealing to pedestrians. He noted that downtown Milwaukie was already very walkable and pedestrian-scale, but asked whether the potential development with regard to light rail would respect that same scale. Code could be written with pedestrian-oriented features that could be built into the fabric of buildings, streetscapes, and open spaces.

Pedestrian-Oriented Retail Storefronts:

- Street wall – Rather than a parking lot along streets, in order for pedestrians to remain engaged, street walls are needed that provide interactive elements like windows and storefronts. Even certain setbacks can be codified to continue the feel of the street wall. The street rhythm can be maintained through design features and regular spacing of elements like columns and windows/doorways, rather than a blank wall. Glazing and windows are essential, particularly for larger buildings, as blank walls were detrimental for downtowns. He gave an example of 60% ground floor glazing with 30-40% windows for subsequent floors.
 - Regarding setback facades with division of the private and public realms (i.e. cafes with outdoor seating), it can be codified through percentages of buildings with build-to lines with a setback allowance per building.
 - Block-level standards can get complicated; code should apply per building or property rather than per block.
 - Reinforcing the corner of buildings with dynamic entrances at corners is beneficial for small blocks.
 - Weather protection at entrances is important in a northwest environment, but how does it fit into architecture? Awnings block the architecture of buildings; options are either clear or simple horizontal awnings that allow light and views of the buildings above or covered arcades on larger blocks.
 - Signage and lighting oriented to pedestrians rather than only automobiles is key to drawing visual interest.

Mixed Use and Downtown Residential Design:

- Types of building – Different options include vertical mixed use with ground floor commercial storefronts and residential above; mixed use buildings but with step-back stories that alter the perception of building height; rowhouses as downtown residential with vertically-integrated units; live/work units where residential is upstairs and office or retail is downstairs but both have the same property owner (i.e. NW 23rd Ave in Portland and Newbury St in Boston).
- Adaptive Re-use – Repurposing older buildings to fit the current market; addition of new elements (floors) to older buildings. Coffee and bars are frequent first adopters of adaptive re-use which are good community signs. A successful example of re-use was of loading docks repurposed into businesses with open space in front along Mississippi Ave, which demonstrated that an exception to build-to line requirements can create a public amenity. In Portland, build-to lines are required only for new construction or big changes; existing buildings are not required to comply with build-to lines. Outdoor dining or open space is a great example of repurposed parking lots, etc.

- Human Scale - He noted the preferred human scale of building height to street width is a ratio of 1:2 or 1:3; smaller travel lanes allow for more human scale.

Building Design:

- Basic architectural elements include a base, middle, and a top. An approach to ensure elements of interest is to codify a menu of features for development permits, with an additional option of points for additional features. Elements to think about included:
 - Tripartite façade – Basic elements include a defined base, middle, and top and could include elaborate cornices for the top of building. Projecting cornice lines and top floors are becoming popular; however, some newer buildings with modern style had no cornices. Balconies and bays provide eyes on the street for first couple of stories.
 - Materials – Materials that are durable give a feeling of permanence (i.e. brick and concrete). Stick frame was being used in Portland recently and seemed to be successful. It is important to allow for what the market could bring to development and to not make code too restrictive.
 - **Commissioner Hemer** asked about imitation materials, like Hardie plank for wood shingles, etc.
 - Although those materials are frequently used and durable, it came down to aesthetic of the material. It can be important to set up practices for long-lasting buildings with real materials.
 - Also many downtown and Main Street facades that were made with the best faux materials at the time look very bad now; however, those buildings made with brick, wood, etc., hold up better and are more durable and long-lasting.
 - Colors – Colors are a hot-topic issue. It is important for colors to be compatible with existing urban fabric but overregulating them and being too conservative could result in a taupe feeling, which could be detrimental particularly in a rainy climate. It is important to have an open community discussion on the color issue; there is a broad range of palettes and accent colors that could work without being garish.
 - Complimentary Building Design – Create development design code that assured that new buildings will fit and complement existing buildings by incorporating the best of historical/traditional elements that tend to fit in context, adding exceptions where they fit. It is also important to leave some room in the code for vision and creativity but that still fit within context.

Pedestrian-Oriented Streetscapes

- There are a number of different approaches to be complimentary to the buildings.
- Cross-section Rules of Thumb - Sidewalk of 10-15 ft minimum for Main Streets; on-street parking and scaled auto and bike facilities; and pedestrian-scaled sidewalk amenities. There are different ways to render out amenities and furniture. Reinforcing the corner is important as corners are often gathering or meeting places for people. Another feature was to define a gateway into a community.
 - Enhancing identity through design – This can be the result of dramatic changes like restored historical buildings; or subtle features that give character like columns, lighting, medallions, including history into features, creative stormwater features, etc.

3.2 Group Discussion

Jesse Canelos, owner of Wine:30, noted that regarding outdoor seating, a customer had said to him that they felt safer walking on the street when there was outdoor seating in the area. Did the presenters have data that correlated outdoor seating and safer neighborhoods?

- **Mr. Arnold** responded that the safer feeling wasn't necessarily about the actual seating, it was about the presence of people. Also lighting comes with outdoor seating and adds to safety as well as the added eyes on the street.
- **Mr. Ridenour** noted the increase in parklets and added outdoor seating in Portland and other cities with successful downtowns.

Commissioner Lowcock asked about the impact of closed-in streetscapes that resulted in increased wind and sound, such as SE Division St in Portland.

- **Mr. Arnold** – Wind analysis needed to be done locally to increase or decrease wind, but that might not apply to Milwaukie's downtown since the consideration for building height was pretty low, i.e. 1-3 stories. The building and apartment boom that was happening on Division St was unprecedented.
- **Mr. Ridenour** responded regarding mitigating sounds, some options included a line of trees that, together with some wind, may help to block some traffic noise, or generally more soft spaces, more landscaping, water features, etc. The more fragmented the materials and geometry of the buildings, the better for breaking up the reverb rather than a flat wall, etc. There were also advances in glass that help reduce sound for interior spaces.

David Aschenbrenner noted that McLoughlin Blvd separated downtown from the riverfront. He asked what kind of building design the presenters would recommend to make McLoughlin Blvd pedestrian-friendly enough to help connectivity with the riverfront.

- **Mr. Arnold** said he wasn't convinced that spending time and money on humanizing McLoughlin Blvd was the best option. However, making a few key intersections and entryways attractive and noticeable, with street lighting and gateway elements, could help draw auto traffic into downtown and help the auto users understand they are coming into a downtown with amenities.
- **Commissioner Lowcock** noted that since there were only two entry points into downtown, often by the time you drive by the first entry, you're already nearing or past the last one – does the median hurt access to downtown for southbound traffic? That in itself was a challenge. He noted that business owners had mentioned to him that Milwaukie was not capitalizing on southbound traffic.
- **Mr. Arnold** agreed that those questions should be asked. Many Oregon communities have highways going right through them. McLoughlin Blvd was a commuter highway, so the trick was to make Milwaukie a place to go to outside of their commute or stop on the way home. Start with serving the citizens of Milwaukie and then interest in downtown would grow to those driving through.

Councilor Gamba liked the features like the dragonfly bike rack and the wavy stormdrain in the presentation; he asked how that type of design could be codified in such a way to keep from being overly prescriptive and allow for creative features.

- **Mr. Ridenour** responded that one approach was to have a two-tiered approach with a set of prescriptive standards but also have performance criteria describing the intent of features and discretionary standards. Where this approach had succeeded the most were places that have developed a pattern book or high graphical language to demonstrate what the intent was.
- **Mr. Arnold** noted the next development cycle that would come first to Milwaukie would

probably be the most challenging to manage since new developers would be more cautious with investment.

Councilor Hedges asked how to market downtown in such a way to draw those citizens that live east of downtown to come to downtown for shopping and amenities rather than heading east to 82nd Ave and Clackamas Town Center, etc.

- **Mr. Arnold** noted that there wasn't much to do about people that were going to shop at big box stores; however, what could be done was to create something different in downtown. What Milwaukie doesn't have that other smaller scale areas have in Portland was human scale, pedestrian-oriented commercial areas. The City should look to those other areas to copy that have a mix of uses and activity level to aim for. To be successful, it was not just about design and development standards, it was also about parks, programming, special events, branding, public investments in infrastructure, etc. He emphasized that Milwaukie had something in the building and street structure of downtown that was different than anything that can be found anywhere along Hwy 224, and that was what needed to be played up. Those areas around small commercial areas in Portland had the highest home values; walkability and proximity to amenities increased desirability and home values greatly. He added there were many resources available to help in the process, but it took a lot of work and time and pieces to create a vibrant downtown.

Mayor Ferguson noted that he really liked the community feel of Sisters, Oregon, and added that there was a great visitor's center. There were many features to help visitors engage with the downtown. He felt that other communities were successful when they had an active Chamber, an active business association, etc.; was that what the presenters experienced as well? It was not just the City taking action.

- **Mr. Arnold** noted that the visitor's center was operated by the Chamber of Commerce rather than a business association; the business association was actually quite divided. What they were seeing across the state and country was a level of dysfunction between business owners and business associations; it was confusing to him as well that business owners could not working together was beneficial for all businesses. He agreed that although the government had a clear role in influencing the success of a community, the majority of the effort should fall to the businesses.
- **Mr. Ridenour** reminded that although there was temptation to focus on retail, well-functioning areas have other components such as housing near retail/commercial, and also keep in mind other civic uses and events that bring people into the area.
- **Commissioner Lowcock** noted that there was a regional perception that Milwaukie was where the car dealerships were and often needed to correct people as to where the city of Milwaukie was. He added that he had met other entrepreneurs that like Milwaukie and those were the people that the city needed to reach out to and bring awareness to them of the benefits of Milwaukie.
- **Commissioner Storm** agreed, noting that currently the City had no economic development strategy to attract businesses.
 - **Mr. Egner** noted that there was an economic development strategy and that economic development updates were provided to the Council and suggested that staff provide an update to the Commission in the near future.
 - **Commissioner Storm** clarified that he was referring to the longer history; he participated in the Main Street program some years ago and the message that it boiled down to was that change and growth had to come from inside, from the businesses, but it seemed that nobody wanted to invest the time or money. It was important to make it a friendly atmosphere for businesses but it should not be only tax dollars used for

business development.

- **Mayor Ferguson** noted that there had been attempts at business associations in the past but they fizzled out; it was difficult as an elected official to find the balance of involvement.

Councilor Hedges noted that many of the examples given in the presentation were more stand-alone towns that have a core of citizens that have to go to those commercial areas for their needs. Milwaukie was not like that - it was part of a metro area so it had area competition. What needed to be done for Milwaukie's downtown when it was in competition with nearby commercial districts?

- **Mr. Arnold** responded that there were few areas in the region where there truly was a separate downtown from Portland; although Milwaukie was an independent municipality, a strategy may need to be more like a Portland neighborhood commercial-style node rather than an entirely separate city. Milwaukie was part of a metropolitan region and so the city should take advantage of it and feed off of the proximity to higher density areas, and have different features that would attract people that occur but nowhere else. It could be a part of a "string a pearls" of vibrant commercial areas from Belmont through Moreland into Milwaukie; that was a very valid and viable approach while remaining unique.

Chair Bone stated that she felt there was a great opportunity with light rail coming, and since there wasn't a park and ride, it was more of a destination. There was an opportunity to spin that toward Milwaukie's advantage.

- **Mr. Ridenour** noted that although Milwaukie could be an extension neighborhood of Portland, it still was its own entity and therefore had the opportunity to be more nimble and move much more quickly in different ways.
- **Mr. Arnold** reminded that there were many commercial areas to look at for examples, and success didn't have to come only through an economic development strategy; it could come through feeding off of light rail, of partnering with Portland to make access between southeast Portland and Milwaukie easier, etc.

Commissioner Hemer asked, regarding different modes of transportation, what was the right mix of auto, bike, ped, etc., for a sustainable future?

- **Mr. Arnold** noted the Green Triangle where pedestrians were the top and vehicles at the bottom, realizing that pedestrian was the most universal mode of travel. It was important to build a community around the pedestrian first, with connections possible in all directions, with clustered services with housing and employment. Next in order was robust bicycle infrastructure, public transportation facilities, and then finally auto infrastructure. How could connections be made for those facilities to the commercial and industrial areas, i.e. higher-employment areas?
- **Mr. Ridenour** added to be deliberate with how autos were managed and how they played their role; building the system and parking around the district rather than per business so that people walk past other businesses, which can add to a vibrant downtown/commercial district. Different strategies were available to manage parking at a district level, and parking management was a good role for a business association to be involved in. Development cost was going up and a big part of the cost was residential parking; if parking could be managed for a district, the cost per development goes down.

Commissioner Hemer asked about the best ways to handle parking requirements for residential in downtown.

- **Mr. Arnold** responded that parking was a political and economic issue, and there were

reasons for not providing parking. Car ownership was declining on a generational basis; the apartment boom in Portland that doesn't provide parking in recent years was unforeseen and was the result of a perfect confluence of events. There were different ways of transportation management with new development to help the impact, i.e. transportation passes, bike parking, car sharing, etc. With Milwaukie's location, multiple dynamics were in play: to the east was the sprawl of Clackamas County, to the north was urban Portland.

- **Commissioner Lowcock** noted a strategy of an apartment building on SE Division St where they have two cars available to residents to rent and that was successful.
- **Mr. Ridenour** added that decoupling the cost of development and parking was a key strategy, which would involve residents buying parking spots separately.

Mr. Egner thanked Constance Beaumont with the Department of Land Conservation and Development who helped coordinate funding for this presentation through the Transportation and Growth Management grant.

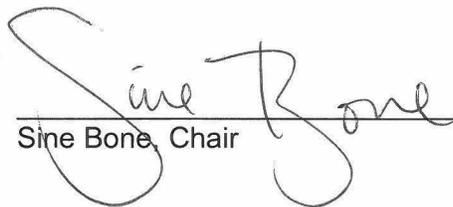
Chair Bone thanked Mr. Arnold and Mr. Ridenour for their presentation and discussion.

4.0 Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at approximately 8:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Alicia Martin, Administrative Specialist II


Sine Bone, Chair