

Neighborhood Planning and Vision of the City Update



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INTRODUCTION

Seattle has a long lively history of citizen engagement and neighborhood activism. Seattle's Comprehensive Plan, adopted in 1994, capitalized on that history to embark on an extensive neighborhood planning process. It was a proactive move empowering the residents and business people of this city to shape their own vision of the city through the decisions made in their neighborhoods in compliance with the mandates of the State of Washington's 1990 Growth Management Act (GMA).

Now at the opening of a new decade and a new century, Seattle has garnered national and international recognition for the bold range of its neighborhood planning efforts. (Beatley, 2000) This update will assess the progress of those efforts, with particular attention to the interactions of city and citizens; it will report on the status of individual neighborhoods, and it will explore how neighborhood plan implementation is funded, with an eye to equity.

A HISTORY OF CURRENT PLANNING

Washington's GMA was intended to slow "sprawl," maintain forest and farm land, and sustain the vitality of established cities and towns, where transportation and other services are more readily and efficiently provided. The central strategy of the act was to concentrate growth in or next to urban areas. Concurrent, consistent and comprehensive planning was required at all levels to achieve this. Such plans would include certain elements: land use, transportation, housing, capital facilities, and utilities. Countywide Planning Policies added an economic development element.

Mayor Rice initiated a broad citizen participation process to formulate the basic values held by Seattle citizens in respect to their city. The product of this effort was Seattle's Framework Policies, which enunciated ten basic values: continuity, diversity, economic security, education, environmental quality, freedom, good government, opportunity, health and safety. The ten basic values were further refined into four core values: community, environmental stewardship, social equity, and economic opportunity and security. The Framework Policies were to guide the city in its development of a comprehensive plan, to which was added a neighborhood planning element.

Seattle's Comprehensive Plan (Comp Plan) is a tool for concentrating growth, in keeping with the Puget Sound Regional Council's "Vision 2020" conception of planned growth: i.e., to contain growth in already existent population or activity centers. Seattle developed its urban village strategy accordingly. Its basic tenet is to concentrate growth in "urban villages" or "urban centers," while protecting manufacturing and industrial areas.

Urban centers are composed of one or more urban center villages in dense, pedestrian-oriented communities with direct access to regional high-capacity transit. The five urban centers in Seattle are: First Hill/Capitol Hill, Downtown Seattle, Seattle Center, University Community and Northgate. These centers are intended to accept the greatest growth in the city. Urban villages are the commercial and residential cores (called Hub and Residential Urban Villages, respectively) of historically distinct neighborhoods. Specific growth targets were set for each, in the areas of housing, employment, and open space. Urban villages are intended to be relatively dense, walkable communities, served by local shops and services which are well connected by transit systems.

The Comp Plan proposed that neighborhoods targeted to receive future growth develop their own plans under established guidelines. The plans were to integrate citywide goals and neighborhood goals, address specific neighborhood concerns, and be broadly validated. The Neighborhood Planning Office was created to assist neighborhoods with their planning. Growth would be directed to areas already zoned for it, and zoning would be changed only when the neighborhood and city agreed to the changes.

The mandate was clear: Seattle would accept more housing, jobs, density, and an orientation towards mass transit. The neighborhoods would be helped to plan and rewarded when they did so. The call went out asking for willing neighborhoods. Seattle made its "bottom-up" response to a "top-down" directive; the city expected 14 responses and got 38. The neighborhoods that were to accept the growth got a voice in shaping it and would receive improvements to their areas.

Neighborhood plans were created in two phases. The first phase engaged citizens and organizations living, working and running businesses in the neighborhoods. These participants were asked to identify community issues of concern. Then they addressed those issues by formulating vision statements and objectives and developing a work plan. The second planning phase documented the work plans and the matrixes that would be used to achieve the neighborhoods' objectives. The two phases took several years. Neighborhood volunteers gave thousands of hours to the effort.

"The City's decision to allow the neighborhoods to do their own planning through the Neighborhood Planning Program represented an effort to change the way the City had conducted planning in the past by moving the locus of control from a central planning function toward the neighborhoods, from city staff to volunteer community members." (Neighborhood Planning Program Evaluation, 1996)

CITY PLANNING AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Planning has been a concern of long standing in the City of Seattle. The following dates and events give evidence to citizens' commitment to the process.

In the **early 1900's** Seattleites rejected funding for the Plan of Seattle by Virgil Bogue, which envisioned a rapid transit system (PZN&H, 1992; drawing on a Seattle Times article of Ross Anderson 7/21/1991). Seattle was one of the first cities in the U.S. to adopt a land use zoning plan in 1923. It allowed plats of varying sizes to be sold; smaller plats were affordable to buyers of more limited means. This accommodated the economic conditions of the time, and is sometimes credited with having shaped Seattle's character as a city of home owners (PZN&H, 1992). Seattle residents, meeting in field houses, were already helping park staff to plan activities in the 1920's (NPP Eval, 1996).

The **1950's** saw neighborhood boundaries defined based on the elementary school, with districts comprised of neighborhoods that fed into the secondary (now middle) school. (NP in S, 1990) In 1957 Seattle's first plan was a map showing then-current zoning and indicating areas for future development. It targeted Queen Anne and Capitol Hill for multi-unit complexes, with densities for Seattle set to anticipate a population of one million. "The critical need for apartment units coupled with newly developed efficient construction methods led to bitter battles in long-established hilltop neighborhoods" (PZN&H, 1992, p.3).

In the **1960's and early 1970's**, federally funded programs from the War on Poverty made money available directly to the poorest of neighborhoods, involving citizens in community planning through citizen committees. A federally-funded grant produced an assessment of Seattle neighborhoods called the Seattle Development Program. This program saw its physical development recommendations for street and street-related improvements funded by the Forward Thrust Bond Issue of 1968 (NP in S, 1990). Forward Thrust, a landmark in Seattle planning history, proposed 12 county bond issues, of which seven were approved. It was the first major regional capital funding of Seattle's parks.

The next phase of federally funded urban aid programs channeled money through city governments; in Seattle it coordinated with the Neighborhood Improvement Program (NIP) in the Department of Community Development. These funds sparked a round of intense neighborhood planning, involving about a third of the city's neighborhoods. These plans were largely completed and passed by City Council by 1975. The

successor to NIP was the New Neighborhood Program (NNP), more modestly financed, and covering both planning and public improvements in neighborhoods not yet having received funds. The NNP plans were not adopted, partially because of cutbacks in federal funding (NP in S, 1990, p.S-5)

During this time period, when neighborhood groups were occasionally able to block city actions, the Seattle 2000 Commission constituted the first effort at full comprehensive planning in Seattle. It was comprised of hundreds of citizens from public and private life. Together they worked on a set of goals for Seattle, which were published in 1973 (PZN&H, March, 1992). A major goal was the revision of the comprehensive plan. To mitigate the "over zoning" in the 1957 plan, they recommended that auto-related pressures in neighborhoods be resisted; that owner-occupied property be encouraged, that the existing housing supply be preserved, and that utilities be expanded only when needed (Goals for Seattle 2000, 1973). The Seattle 2000 Commission sought to increase "the number and importance of decisions made directly by citizens on basic issues." Establishing a responsible and accountable government from the neighborhoods' perspective was an objective. Community councils, neighborhood land use review boards tied to the hearing examiner system, and neighborhood centers were tools to implement it. Though the City Council adopted Goals 2000, the neighborhood land use review boards were never realized (NP in S, 1990).

Seattle's Growth Policies were adopted in **1977**, establishing broad directional guidelines for accommodating growth. **Between 1978 and 1989**, a slow zone-by-zone process of developing new land use policies, with their supporting ordinances and codes, went forward. A weak economy held development in check, but with economic recovery a building boom confronted neighborhoods with suddenly increased density and large-scale projects incompatible with the surrounding areas. Citizens raised an outcry. (PSN&H April 1992)

Occasionally, neighborhood groups were able to prevent city action. The Eastlake Community Council prevented the construction of Roanoke Reef Condominiums over Lake Union in **1982**. Their action brought about needed revisions in the City's administration of a zoning ordinance. In subsequent years, more occasions occurred in which neighborhood groups were able to influence developments. The United South Slope Residents, a Queen Anne community group, succeeded in preventing future high rise development at the foot of Queen Anne Hill through a downzone. Vision Seattle, a neighborhood-based group, demanded the refocus of City attention from downtown to the neighborhoods.

In **1986**, the City Council asked the Seattle Planning Commission to study neighborhood planning. The Commission came out with two reports in **1987**: a "Background Report," evaluating planning efforts in Seattle and four other cities, and an "Alternative Report," setting out options available to the city. That same year, Mayor Royer directed the Office of Long-Range Planning to work with certain neighborhoods to re-evaluate the 1982 multi-family housing zoning designation in some areas. (NP in S, 1990)

Once Mayor Royer received the recommendations of the Planning Commission, he sent a proposal to the City Council Land Use Committee. Adopted in **October of 1987**, that proposal created the Neighborhood Planning and Assistance Program (NPAP). NPAP was greeted with mixed feelings: some felt it only created more bureaucracy; others thought it held promise for providing more democratic representation for neighborhoods and districts. (PZN&H, 1992)

The Planning Commission saw the relationship of neighborhood and city as a "partnership." It entailed obligations for each party: the city would recognize neighborhoods as units for service delivery, planning assistance, and capital projects. The neighborhoods would provide a structure for organizing broad-based citizen participation. The **1989** Planning Commission recommendation that the city update its Comprehensive Plan was moved forward by the passage of the State's Growth Management Act in **1990**. (NP in S, 1990)

THE CITY'S PRESENT

The City of Seattle saw neighborhood planning as a tool for implementing its Comp Plan and as an opportunity for citizens to influence the future of their neighborhoods as they experienced the planned growth. Citizens with strong interest could be enlisted to move the Comp Plan forward while gaining a voice in the process of development in their communities.

Upon concluding its five-year neighborhood planning process, the city:

1. Adopted a set of specific goals and policies from each neighborhood plan and placed them into the Comp Plan;
2. Passed a resolution approving a work plan matrix for implementation of specific recommendations from each plan; and,
3. Recognized each plan by resolution as the expression of the vision and desires of the planning community.

Although the plans do not constitute official city policy,

they are looked to by the city in its decision-making and in the allocation of resources.

ISSUES AND CONCLUSIONS

Once the planning was done and the matrixes compiled, a neighborhood representative was needed to see each plan through to its implementation. Persons accepting this role had to make an agreement with the city and commit themselves to the task. They are called "stewards."

As the study committee approached its work, a member of the committee (herself a steward) suggested that we talk to this group. She pointed out that stewards are closer to the actual experience than other potential information sources. Despite the short time and the long list of names, the committee accepted this as an optimal approach. We developed questions intended to elicit the information we sought, but without directing the interviewee by our choice of words. (See Appendix I.) We expected some issues to emerge, but we did not predict or predetermine them.

The issue that appears first on this list occurred with strong consistency. It was perceived (by committee members and stewards alike) to be a failure of the concurrency requirement of the GMA. However, a check of the definition of concurrency revealed that this may not be the case. To be certain of that would require a case-by-case study of the timing of developments and the appearance of the required infrastructure or amenity.

Contrary to what many people expect, concurrency in the GMA does not mandate that infrastructure and required amenities occur simultaneously with development. The definition is presented here to clarify what is required:

"Concurrency, (in this instance), means that the city must have a plan for financing the infrastructure necessary to support any new development, using both public funds and development fees, as required by the Growth Management Act. The financing plan must be in place before construction can occur. The infrastructure must be in place within six years of the development having occurred." (2000 Comprehensive Plan, amended December 1999)

It is worth noting that concurrency in the GMA has to do with all forms of infrastructure. However, the city in practice has chosen to look primarily at roadway capacity as its concurrency mandate.

We have taken note of the issues raised in our research. The stewards who were interviewed mentioned these

issues. We looked for some degree of generality citywide; and we also considered the importance of an issue within a particular sector or community, even though it might not be a general issue. In one instance, the committee raised an issue based on observations and materials encountered in the process outside of the interviews. This fact is stated in the text for that issue. Issues and problems raised in the neighborhood planning process include:

*** Lagging Infrastructure and Amenities**

The lack of transportation infrastructure is an important element that we heard about from almost every neighborhood representative. Seattle planned expecting that infrastructure improvements, especially in transportation, would occur during or directly following the increases in density. Density is increasing, but transportation lags behind.

Increases in open space and green space are also intended to enhance quality of life and “livability” while density is being increased. Even with the Pro-Parks Levy improvements to come, Seattle will remain lacking in quality open space in its densest neighborhoods.

*** Equity and Human Resources**

Many neighborhood stewards pointed out that the skills, time and other resources needed for such tasks as applying for Neighborhood Matching Funds are not evenly available in all neighborhoods. Most participants enthusiastically support the NMF program, but some do not, believing it to be an inequitable way to distribute tax dollars for minor capital improvements they feel should be routinely handled by the city. Many neighborhoods struggle to find people who can afford the unpaid time stewardship involves. Organizing and carrying out projects in neighborhoods with high percentages of renters and transient populations is very difficult. Stewards in these neighborhoods (and even in some more advantaged ones) would like more help from the city.

A skilled staff person in each sector, the Neighborhood Development Manager (often called “Sector Manager”), can assist with grant writing and filling out forms. Some stewards see their sector manager as overburdened. An additional paid staff person could function as an organizer for projects and meetings and, in general, assist in keeping neighborhood groups together and functioning. The city provides training sessions for stewards and other citizens interested in getting involved. Even so, projects take many hours of work in what may be new and uncomfortable areas of experience, foreign to the neighborhood volunteer. Not all city personnel are prepared to work with individuals unaccustomed to city or department practices. Benefits of the process are the gains in skills and relationships

for the participant, and satisfaction and personal empowerment when their work results in palpable improvements.

*** Problems with Open Process**

Certain problems arose from the open process structure of neighborhood planning and stewardship. The makeup of meeting attendees may not always match the neighborhood’s population; people from outside the neighborhood may attend, or send paid representatives to attend meetings and influence their outcomes, while non-English speaking residents may be unrepresented. A related problem comes up when faithful attendees work to arrive at a consensus-based plan and then non-participants who dislike it learn of it and come to meetings long enough to try to block the plan. Thought should be given to creating structures to counter some of these effects, while keeping the process open to new participants.

*** Pace and Scale of Development**

Most of those interviewed by the committee were committed to the goal of increasing density to avoid sprawl and increase transportation efficiency. The discussion raised some interesting questions, however. What will the city do when the density targets are reached? Will the city attempt to slow down development when a neighborhood is reaching its growth targets very quickly? Eastlake reached 66% of its growth target in six years, according to the Seattle Growth Report 2000. The city has a policy to monitor growth so it is paced appropriately, and a special review procedure would be triggered in instances of too-slow or too-rapid development (City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan, Amended 1999).

The scale of development is a related problem. In residential settings, design review and design guidelines can help with scale. In commercial settings, these tools may not be adequate. Pace and scale issues need monitoring by citizens as well as by the city, to assure that all understand the meaning of “appropriate” in the policy statements, and to keep both pace and scale within some range of comfort for those who live in the neighborhoods.

Despite the pace of development, housing is still unaffordable for working families. Even though housing target goals are being met, housing prices are not coming down, and wages are not going up. This is a frustration for all concerned and a potential problem for the well being of the city as a whole.

*** Independent Entities within Planning Areas**

An issue that arose in several contexts was the difficulty of developing and implementing neighborhood plans when independent entities such as Seattle Public

Schools and the Seattle Public Library exist within the planning area. These entities did not have to participate in planning and sometimes have different agendas and timetables.

Also influencing how much neighborhood planners can accomplish are major institutions that have their own independent planning overlays -- hospitals, colleges and universities, and the Washington State Department of Transportation.

* **Gentrification**

Gentrification of neighborhoods is a complex subject for which no solution to date has been devised. Gentrification occurs when land values rise rapidly, tempting some property owners to sell for the high returns, and causing other property owners to be unable to afford to remain in the area as property taxes and upkeep costs outstrip the ability of residents to pay. There are programs to assist low income and senior residents, but their requirements leave others out. A wave of rising land values can displace whole neighborhoods, dissolving long-standing communities. It can be argued that property owners, who can benefit from them in the sale of their property, universally desire rising land values. Yet a more satisfying form of prosperity for the community might be for residents to be able to prosper where they stand. Businesses may also experience gentrification, resulting in a local commercial area with many high-end restaurants and shops, but lacking in grocery stores, hardware stores and gathering places affordable to long-time residents.

* **Communicating with Governmental Entities**

There was virtually universal agreement among the stewards that the neighborhood planning process was of value in educating citizens in how to work with the city and in establishing essential lines of communication. The effort to do so is greatly appreciated but has not yet reached into all departments. Many stewards have found it difficult to work with some city personnel and some departments. SeaTran (Seattle Transportation Department) was often cited.

There are legitimate complexities involved in government work that are sure to frustrate citizens to whom the requested action or item seems simple. There may also be some genuine differences in meaning: to "enhance" a street may mean to "make it prettier and slower" to a citizen, while a city employee might think it means to move vehicles more swiftly along it. Clear sincere messages and a patient, flexible manner, especially on the part of those with power, help to prevent conflicts. Close attention should be paid, however, to distinguish communication difficulties from unexpressed substantive matters that should be addressed explicitly.

* **Interstices, Borders, and Non-Planned Areas**

What happens to border areas between neighborhoods, between sectors, and to the interstices between planned areas? It is hard to focus city attention on areas or projects that are not mentioned in a neighborhood plan. This can leave the edges of planning areas and areas outside of them subject to neglect. While most neighborhood plans do not conflict with their neighboring planning areas, there are conflicts between some and/or problems that require joint attention. Problems that lie within a single sector are easier to deal with than problems that cross sectors. Linkages between neighborhoods and sectors, and plans that span I-5 have largely been overlooked. Attention needs to be given to assuring that no area of the city is neglected. (See Edges and Interstices Case Study, page 15.)

* **Re-visioning the City**

There is a need for the city to be seen as a whole and to be thoughtfully guided in its evolution. Currently we plan neighborhood-by-neighborhood, section-by-section, and do our permitting building-by-building. We do not plan for the good of the whole or have a means of avoiding cumulative negative impacts. Citizens could contribute to and benefit from a harmonious vision with which to guide growth and change. Citizens would like a means by which the policy goals that they have spent so much time in formulating at the neighborhood level could be given weight and enforcement -- a presence in the city as a whole.

* **Defining Neighborhoods**

Underlying some of the difficulty communities may experience in stewarding the plans of their neighborhoods is the unusual definition of "neighborhood" in some instances. The neighborhoods were permitted some degree of self-definition after the city had selected its planning areas. These areas were targeted for growth because they met certain criteria established by the Countywide Planning Policies. Some of them were "neighborhoods" as commonly defined, and some of them were not. For some of the stewards, the tasks of stewarding included creating a sense of unity and identification with place, which is a natural concomitant of an authentic neighborhood, and difficult to manufacture.

The manufacturing and industrial centers (MIC's) do not see themselves as neighborhoods and feel that the neighborhood planning system not only is unresponsive to their needs, but actually undermines them. While Comp Plan policies protect manufacturing and industrial land use zoning, these areas are continually subject to small incursions on that land base.

Within these MIC's are also neighborhoods in the

traditional sense. These are early settlements that became engulfed over the years by the burgeoning businesses, or communities of workers and their families that developed naturally along with the businesses. The city's policy recognizes the valuable contribution of these businesses, the residential enclaves that survive within these communities, and the need for balance between them. (See Industrial Areas Case Study, page 15.)

Some neighborhoods are home to succeeding waves of immigrants and are accustomed to the degree of change which that provides. For other neighborhoods, a more stable situation is what feels natural. Stability is among the considerations that are rarely voiced but are readily recognized as part of the sense of a home place called a neighborhood. We have created neighborhoods destined for much change. An inherent tension exists between stability and change, and this should not be ignored.

Other areas were not neighborhoods before, but having taken up planning and stewardship, are trying to create themselves as neighborhoods. Expectations and desires have been raised. Ideas of what constitutes a neighborhood may vary widely. However, all neighborhood residents want a place to live and work and places to shop and play that are clean, attractive and safe.

* **Where Are the Children?**

In areas planning for greater density, there is little mention of the need for courtyards, sunny knolls, vacant lots, and other spaces where children can play safely. Stewards did not raise this issue; it has been noticeable to the committee by its absence. It may be thought that the schools and the parents meet these needs. Can they?

The 2000 Census tells us that Seattle is last in the number of children per thousand among similar American cities. Do we want to continue along this course in our city? Perhaps the neighborhoods that have not had planning assistance and those not undergoing dynamic growth are responsible for making space for children. Is this reasonable? We have data that tells us which neighborhoods are attracting and holding families with children. Those areas will need to have access to funds that encourage child-friendly surroundings. We can all make long lists of things for children to do in the city. But children also need places to be. Where are the plans?

* **Equity Issues in the Funding of Neighborhood Plans**

Equity in funding is an important consideration throughout city spending. A cursory examination of the

history of the Department of Neighborhoods' (DON's) Neighborhood Matching Fund (NMF) awards shows how difficult it is to determine what equity is and how to measure it.

NMF grants have at times been awarded to assist social and educational goals. In the early 1990's youth projects combating crime were given some emphasis; in the mid 1990's, under Mayor Rice, a large portion of matching funds flowed to schools. Recently the DON has emphasized outreach and inclusiveness in order to involve communities where few citizens are experienced in participatory citizenship. Although it may appear that certain programs are more likely to receive NMF funding, that is not necessarily indicative of inequity. In all of the above cases, the issues and needs addressed were determined to be of citywide interest.

If equity were judged by the number of dollars allocated to each of the six sectors, we would find that the sectors have not received equal funding over the years. Since 1989 the West/Center City Sector has received awards totaling \$2,501,593; the Northeast Sector \$2,649,867; the Southwest Sector \$2,939,046; the Northwest Sector \$3,737,097; the Southeast Sector \$4,104,482; and the East Sector \$4,595,883.

Numerous factors influence the awarding of funds, including the period of time over which equity is to be achieved, the base of fundamental needs, the population size and income level of various neighborhoods, the varying abilities of neighborhood residents to work the system, the project type, and the area-wide value of, for example, a park project located in a specific neighborhood. Also to be considered is the amount of the match that is to be gained. Some projects enable large leveraging opportunities resulting in a substantial gain in city assets.

The NMF's goals themselves can promote equity. They are: 1) To foster ways for residents and business people to initiate and carry out small-scale neighborhood improvements; 2) To promote active cooperation between residents, business people, neighborhoods and the City of Seattle; 3) To increase public and private investments in all Seattle's neighborhoods; and 4) To promote neighborhood activities that reflect the racial, ethnic and economic diversity of Seattle's neighborhoods.

The Department of Neighborhoods appears to be attempting to achieve new levels of equity across planned and unplanned areas of the city. It will be for citizens to inform city government departments of ignored, forgotten or unperceived equity issues.

There were positive effects of the neighborhood planning experience as well. They include:

The involvement of more people more consistently. Because we addressed our questions primarily to stewards who continue to be engaged in the process, it may be that we have missed those who have been discouraged from continuing. It is apparent, however, that most of the current stewards are very involved. Stewards are spending time and energy on these projects, sometimes despite their expressed disappointments.

Neighborhood organizations in Seattle have a vitality that is not dependent on the city government; yet even with its limitations, the existence of so widespread a “partnership” of neighborhoods and city presents an opportunity for all Seattle citizens to share responsibility in creating the world we live in.

The Growth Management Act faced strong vocal opposition at first but has come to be much more widely accepted. Perhaps the planning process has supported that acceptance in Seattle. At the same time, difficulties raised by the terms of the GMA need to be dealt with and resolved if the consensus-building process is to continue.

The broad base of citizen participation is a boon to democracy, for the planning areas, certainly, but also for those areas of the city not included within the 38 “neighborhoods.” The high visibility, the ready accessibility, and the multiplying numbers of citizens who are knowledgeable and interested provide an opportunity to all city residents to be more vigilant and more conscious of our municipal life.

Improved communication among and between neighborhoods and the city. Communication between the city and the citizens now exists, where in the past this was not always the case. Structural support, in the form of advisory or consulting committees and groups from all city departments have made it possible for citizens to address their concerns to all departments involved, by working through their Community Service Coordinators or their sector managers.

As neighborhood participants engage with each other, they begin to explore commonalities; in some instances, coordinated neighborhood planning was intentionally undertaken from the start. These efforts do generally result in more satisfying experiences, although there can be exceptions.

In one of our earliest interviews, the stewards present all would have been happy to have had the city’s help in organizing opportunities for stewards to meet. They

want to talk about their experiences. Stewards wished that the city would organize a meeting of stewards from throughout the city to allow them to exchange ideas.

The use of e-mail sites for neighborhoods throughout the city. These can be found on the Department of Neighborhood’s general website.

Some neighborhood empowerment did take place, and some entrenched ideas were shifted. Some people who were usually somewhat cynical were pleasantly surprised. They suspected the city was only reaching out in order to validate its already formed decisions. However, they saw a real effort was made to involve the citizens in the process.

Neighborhood planning efforts attempted to get citizens to take responsibility and to become more pro-active, rather than reactive. Director of Department of Neighborhoods Jim Diers said that he believes that “we have created a healthier organism.” He readily acknowledged shortcomings and neighborhood disappointments. He admits that the city has “backed away from controversy.” This has sometimes left neighborhood planners feeling abandoned or that their efforts had been wasted. But he is very patient. He says, “It takes time.” It also takes the pressure of the citizens themselves, continuing to attend, participate, question and push. In one of the earliest interviews, a steward said that what he sought to accomplish for the people in his district was to build relationships. That done, he believed, all else would follow.

If it is true that building relationships will lead to success, then perhaps a start has been made.

THE NEIGHBORHOODS IN THEIR SECTORS: SECTOR REPORTS

In moving toward implementation, it was necessary to formulate some practical approach to managing 38 unique and separate sets of recommended actions. Using an earlier Parks Department division of the city into three broad east-west bands, Mayor Schell followed the line of I-5 to divide these into six sectors. He appointed a Neighborhood Development, or Sector, Manager for each sector, who would work with the communities in their sector and directly with the mayor and other key staff to implement the plans and the Comp Plan.

Representatives from the Mayor’s Office, the City Council, the Planning Commission, the Department of Neighborhoods and the Strategic Planning Office created a system for stewardship of the Comprehensive Plan/Neighborhood Plans. As set out in a memo dated February 8, 2000, the city intended to create an

integrated system with the following goals:

- Maintain a focus on neighborhood plan implementation by maintaining a system for accountability within the City of Seattle and providing continuity of process.
- Ensure that neighborhood plans are integrated into the overall goals and strategies of the city and that the goals and strategies are taken into account in implementation.
- Guide the city's policy decisions and actions toward Comprehensive Plan and neighborhood plan visions.
- Strengthen the relationship between the neighborhoods and the City of Seattle.
- Engage citizens in the implementation of neighborhood plans. (Council Resolution 30011 established expectations for citizen stewardship.)

To assist in stewardship and provide a forum for the variety of interests involved, the Neighborhood Planning Implementation Advisory Committee was formed. It has about 25 members representing the neighborhoods, city departments, small businesses, historic districts, manufacturing and industrial areas, and major institutions.

The work program and the stewardship system established the broad framework of funding needs and enabled the city to draw on many public and private sources to meet those needs.

To assure that implementation would move forward, a system of stewardship was devised, and neighborhood representatives committed themselves to shepherding their plans and visions into reality. The stewards work with the Neighborhood Development, or Sector Managers and with Community Service Center Coordinators to get things done. The Sector Managers provide a direct route to the Mayor and to city government for the neighborhood. They help the volunteers in preparation of grant writing and matching fund projects, and act as facilitators within and outside their neighborhoods.

THE NORTHEAST SECTOR

Neighborhoods:

Northgate Urban Center
 Lake City/North Neighborhoods
 University Community Urban Center
 Roosevelt Residential Urban Village

Neighborhoods in this sector are challenged by large institutions and developments with the ability to command attention: University of Washington, University Village, Northgate Mall, and North Seattle Community College. With considerable influence,

they are seen by some citizens as dominating the discussions of what is important and achievable in the neighborhood plans. Another challenge is the major thoroughfare Lake City Way NE (Highway 522).

Plan Implementation:

Seven projects have been completed in this sector. They are:

- Community Design Guidelines for Roosevelt and the University Community Urban Center;
- NE 30th Demonstration Sidewalks that have a gravel drainage "creek" with a planting strip so they can handle rainfall and run-off more naturally;
- A walking tour brochure describing art and culture in the "U District";
- Signature mosaics of multicolored marbles wrapped around the utility poles in Roosevelt;
- a small park in Lake City fitted with children's play structures and including an open field for unstructured play;
- a short-term parking lot in Lake City; and
- Ravenna Woods preserved, with Matching Fund money and a boost from Mayor Schell.

Lake City has begun developing design guidelines and is completing a community vision for civic developments -- a library and a new neighborhood service center. Three workshops at Northgate have been co-sponsored by the city with Sound Transit, Metro, Parks, Seattle Public Utilities and Seattle Public Library, as a start toward a town center. Lake City and Ravenna Woods have acquired new open space parcels, with additional enhancements planned.

Transportation improvements include a demonstration sidewalk development in Lake City and plans underway to revitalize sidewalks in the University "Ave" commercial area. Four multimodal and Sound Transit projects have begun planning in 2001.

Three future projects for the sector have been identified in the 2000 Neighborhood Plan Implementation Report.

THE NORTHWEST SECTOR

Neighborhoods:

Aurora/Licton
 Ballard/Interbay/Northend Manufacturing & Industrial Center (BINMIC)
 Broadview-Bitter Lake-Haller Lake
 Crown Hill/Ballard
 Fremont
 Green Lake
 Greenwood/Phinney
 Wallingford

Large institutions and developments also challenge neighborhoods in this sector: North Seattle Community College, Wilson Pacific School, and the large commercial establishments along Aurora Avenue North. With considerable influence, they are seen by some as dominating the discussions of what is important and achievable in neighborhood plans. Aurora Avenue North is a major transport corridor, with attendant impact on traffic congestion, noise, and air quality. Additionally, the aging structures, shallow commercial-zoned lots and lack of buffers between commercial- and residential-zoned areas are a problem. Regional and citywide attractions, Woodland Park Zoo and Green Lake, bring visitors and traffic. Residential developments press the manufacturing and maritime services areas in Fremont and BINMIC. Gentrification is occurring in Fremont.

Plan Implementation:

- In its 2000 Neighborhood Plan Implementation Report, the city has highlighted completion of Community Design Guidelines for Green Lake and Wallingford, and completion of the Ballard Civic Center Master Plan.
- There are seven transportation related projects including alternative paving and street-edge designs in Greenwood and Broadview.
- Ballard is looking to future redesign of the pedestrian environment (including lighting, landscaping and street furniture) and improvement of transportation flow in selected areas.

Acquisition of new park and open space has been prioritized, with several new projects in the design phase, including a new Greenwood Park at the site of a former nursery, trail improvements in Carkeek Park, and redeveloped pedestrian connections and grassy play areas in Gasworks Park.

Fourteen new projects have been identified in the 2000 Neighborhood Plan Implementation Report.

THE EAST SECTOR

Neighborhoods:

First Hill
 Capitol Hill
 Pike/Pine
 Central Area
 12th Avenue
 23rd & Jackson
 23rd & Union
 Madison/Miller

East Sector neighborhoods are home to a large number of major institutions: Swedish, Virginia Mason, and Harborview Hospitals on First Hill; Providence Hospital in the Central Area, and Group Health Hospital on

Capitol Hill; educational institutions, Seattle University and Seattle Central Community College, impact Capitol Hill. This sector is a multi-ethnic, mixed income sector. Other challenges are gentrification; inadequate open space; density outstripping mitigation, transportation improvements and infrastructure development; concentration of special needs institutions; pockets of high unemployment and children in poverty; lack of moderate income housing; a very high proportion of renters vulnerable to rising rents; and lack of available volunteers to implement plans.

Plan Implementation:

The following projects have been completed in the East Sector:

- Jackson Street Pedestrian Improvements in the vicinity of 23rd Avenue;
- Central Gateway Pedestrian Improvements at 12th Avenue near Boren;
- 12th Avenue Sidewalk improvement adjacent to new Seattle University Law School;
- Terry/Hubble Place Pedestrian Pathway repairs and lighting;
- 23rd and Union Public Safety action plan to reduce crime;
- Extensive Yesler Terrace Stairway safety improvements;
- First Hill Public Safety project relating to Therapeutic Health Services Clinic, the methadone treatment center;
- Yesler Terrace Playfield structures and Judkins Playfield infrastructure improvements;
- the Pike/Pine Neighborhood kiosks;
- two mixed-use developments -- the Main Street Project and Seneca I Project add housing units and commercial spaces;
- The Central Area Community News Web site (www.eastunion.org) was constructed and launched in 2000.

THE WEST SECTOR / CENTER CITY

Neighborhoods:

Chinatown/International District
 Pioneer Square
 Commercial Core/Downtown Urban Center (DUCPG)
 Belltown
 Denny Triangle
 Queen Anne/Uptown Urban Center
 South Lake Union
 Eastlake

Street related challenges such as safety and sanitation, parking, mobility, and the need for pedestrian space confront the West Sector, with its Center City

neighborhoods. Other challenges are social services, development pressure and lack of green space. There is a lack of affordable housing, and infrastructure capacity seems low. Continuing issues are protection of shorelines, of working waterfronts and of views. Regional attractions Safeco Field, the football stadium, King Street Station and Union Station bring traffic and parking problems. This sector faces high concentrations of homeless, low-income and special needs people.

Plan Implementation:

Implementation projects completed in this sector are:

- the Uptown Urban Center Streetscape and Design Guidelines;
- Fortson Square Improvements;
- Downtown Urban Center Wayfinding Demonstration Project;
- Franklin Avenue Green Street;
- West Police Precinct and Downtown Neighborhood Service Center;
- Belltown Neighborhood Center;
- Metropolitan Improvement District (MID) Drop-In Station;
- Downtown Cleanscapes Program;
- Downtown Art Installations;
- Belltown Gateways Project;
- Eastlake Cornerstones and Tiles Project.

(See the 2000 Neighborhood Plan Implementation Report.)

THE SOUTHEAST SECTOR

Neighborhoods:

North Beacon Hill
 North Rainier Valley
 Columbia City/Hillman City/Genesee
 Martin Luther King, Jr. @ Holly (MLK@ Holly)
 Rainier Beach

The major regional thoroughfares of Rainier Avenue and Martin Luther King, Jr. Way run north-south through the sector. Aside from the neighborhoods that skirt Lake Washington and a couple of other pockets, the Southeast Sector has a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual populace with lower than average incomes. Uncertainty about Sound Transit continues to be an issue. Incursion in some areas of concentrations of special social needs institutions, and a long-term lack of investment are the challenges faced here.

Plan Implementation:

Projects completed in the sector are:

- Speed Control on M. L. King, Jr. Way South;
- Hillman City Public Art;
- Courtland Planting Strip Reclamation;
- South Alaska Street Sidewalk;
- Lighthouse for the Blind and Center Park Sidewalk Improvements;

- Rainier Beach Business District Sidewalks;
- Jefferson Park Useful Space Expansion; and
- the First Annual Southeast Sector Community Event.

There are nine projects in progress, most notably a new branch library in Beacon Hill. (See the 2000 Neighborhood Plan Implementation Report.)

THE SOUTHWEST SECTOR

Neighborhoods:

Admiral
 Alaska Junction
 Morgan Junction
 Westwood/Highland Park
 Delridge
 South Park
 Georgetown
 Greater Duwamish Manufacturing & Industrial Center

Many of the Southwest Sector communities want to preserve most of the single-family areas in their neighborhoods, even as they plan for growth. Some out-of-scale developments, increasing traffic congestion, and parking are problems in some areas, while concentrations of poverty and special-needs populations, crime and environmental degradation are challenges in others. Early settlement residential areas and the manufacturing and industrial areas surrounding them have contending needs which must be reconciled.

Plan Implementation:

The Southwest Sector has completed nine projects and has eleven in progress. The completed projects are:

- the Cesar Chavez Park Planting Strip;
- the creation of the Georgetown Open Space;
- Hiawatha Community Center Access Improvements;
- California Avenue Sidewalk Replacement;
- Sidewalks in South Park;
- completion of a portion of the Longfellow Creek Legacy Trail;
- Delridge South Node Implementation Plan;
- the Yancy Street Project; and
- completion of the Webster Street Detention Pond Project.

Among the projects in progress are new branch libraries for both South Park and Delridge, renovation of the historic Georgetown City Hall and a new police precinct facility for West Seattle in Delridge. (See the 2000 Neighborhood Plan Implementation Report.)

FUNDING THE IMPLEMENTATION

OF NEIGHBORHOOD PLANS

The Seattle neighborhoods that undertook planning in the mid 1990s did so with the understanding that the city would work diligently to implement those plans, and the neighborhoods would receive \$50,000 each in Early Implementation Funds (EIF). Thirty-eight "neighborhoods," large or small, received the same amount. Most spent the money on more than one project ranging from structural items to further planning. This enabled the neighborhood planners, future stewards, and residents to see some reward for their hours and years of work. The EIF totaled \$1,900,000.

The plans were adapted into matrixes organizing them into a standard format. This enabled the city to set up a work program responding to the activities proposed in each plan. It would also allow actions identified for implementation to be factored into future work plans and tracked over time.

The price tag put on the twenty-year process of implementation, based on the activities in the matrixes, was \$1.3 billion. There was considerable pressure to implement the plans in view of the amount of citizen involvement they represented and obligations to meet Comprehensive Plan goals. A letter from Jim Diers, Director of the Department of Neighborhoods (DON), in response to an article in the August 21, 2001, Seattle Post-Intelligencer contains a capsule summary of the complex funding picture:

"[A]ction on more than 1,000 neighborhood plan recommendations is already underway or completed, some with the help of the [Neighborhood] Matching Fund as well as voter-approved funding measures, but also due to the reorganization of city departments and budget reprioritization. At the same time the \$1.3 billion price tag was determined, it was estimated that city departments would make \$263 million in neighborhood improvements through existing budgets. As a result of neighborhood planning, these improvements will be more closely aligned with each neighborhood's wishes."

Implementing the neighborhood plans involved more complicated matters than funding individual concrete projects. Policy issues were raised in the review of the plans, and the Strategic Planning Office (SPO) produced a Neighborhood Planning Policy Docket in January of 2000. The docket "lays out a brief summary of the issues raised, a listing of neighborhoods that have recommendations contingent upon the policy directive, the expected work product and date for presentation for [City] Council action, the Council committees which may want to review the work product, and the lead department that will bring forward recommendations

for policy change or clarification."

There are 28 items on the **Policy Docket**, including the recently passed resolution directing the Executive to explore and find non-traditional buildings for use as community centers in neighborhoods that do not and will not have traditional community centers. The docket is updated via quarterly reports that include status tables. It is an important means by which neighborhood visions, as opposed to concrete projects, can come to fruition.

Funding for the implementation of neighborhood plans comes primarily from the following sources:

Levies/Bond Issues:

- Libraries for All Bond Measure, \$196 million (primarily financing for \$239.5 million project) passed in 1998;
- Seattle Center/Neighborhood Center Levy, \$72 million, passed in 1999;
- ProParks Levy, \$198.2 million, passed in 2000.

The impetus for these three recent ballot proposals arose largely from the neighborhood planning process. These funding measures included projects recommended in the neighborhood plans but were not limited to them.

Neighborhood Matching Funds:

The Neighborhood Matching Fund (NMF), administered by the Department of Neighborhoods, predates neighborhood planning. It began funding projects in 1989.

In the years since the neighborhood plans were adopted, 1999 to September 2001, the NMF has contributed to 413 projects. Thirty-nine percent (39%) of those are projects called for in neighborhood plans. A total of \$10,637,938 in awards has been made, and neighborhood plan projects drew 48% of those funds.

While the NMF is an impressive source of funding for neighborhood plan projects, those projects have no special priority. They do, however, often fit well into the NMF's goals and have a history of activism behind them.

Matching funds are available across planned and unplanned areas of the city to community-based organizations of residents or businesses and non-neighborhood based organizations advocating for people of color. Except for the Outreach Fund of small grants, organizations may make any number of requests. All projects must (1) provide a public benefit, (2) result in a neighborhood-based product, and (3) involve community people in identifying, planning, executing, and contributing at least half of the project's

resources. Awards must be matched, dollar-for-dollar, by neighborhood contributions of volunteer labor, donated professional services or materials, or cash. (There are limited exceptions to this: planning and design projects are often hard to match and may have a lower match or be exempted from this requirement; community-organizing projects for low- and moderate-income groups are exempt.) The NMF cannot be used for maintenance or basic services.

The two major pools of money in the NMF are the Large Projects Fund, awarded twice a year, for projects requesting over \$10,000 (no specified upper limit) that can be completed in one year, and the Small and Simple Projects Fund, awarded six times a year, for projects requesting up to \$10,000 that can be completed in six months.

In addition there is the Neighborhood Outreach Fund for one-time awards of up to \$750 for outreach or leadership development available to neighborhood organizations with budgets under \$20,000, and the Tree Fund which provides training and delivery of free trees for planting by volunteers along residential planting strips or city parks.

Opportunity Fund:

The Opportunity Fund is the only fund specifically created for, and dedicated to, neighborhood plan implementation. It came into existence in 2000, via Resolution 30094, specifically for high-priority neighborhood plan projects that are time-sensitive and where use of the Opportunity Fund is an important factor in enabling implementation of the project. Additional weight is given to projects that include leveraging opportunities, benefit more than one planning area and/or are supported by stewardship organizations from more than one neighborhood. The project cannot be an existing or planned project in a city department's budget.

The amount of money available for opportunity funding has sharply declined since its inception in 2000 when \$1,400,000 was available; in 2001 \$509,000 was available, and in 2002 around \$400,000 will be available.

As of July 2001, the neighborhoods receiving Opportunity Fund money are: Central Area, Georgetown, Wallingford, Belltown, Denny Triangle, Beacon Hill, Greenwood/Phinney (2), Ballard (2), Center City (2), Northgate, North Rainier, Roosevelt, North, Capitol Hill, Morgan Junction, Alaska Junction, Admiral, Rainier Beach, and University District.

Combined Neighborhood Street Fund and Cumulative Reserve Subfund (NSF/CRS):

Starting in 2001, two sources of funds were given a joint application and review process administered by Department of Neighborhoods. This was done by staff from DON and SeaTran and representatives from the City Neighborhood Council in order to save time and enable opportunities to fund larger projects within communities. The application process for these funds starts in individual neighborhoods and moves through the District Councils where it is expected that the neighborhood planning perspective will be included. The final decision regarding what to fund and the amount resides with the Department of Neighborhoods, the City Budget Office, Parks and SeaTran. Successful projects become part of the next proposed budget.

Although Neighborhood Street Fund/Cumulative Reserve Subfund money, \$1.5 million in 2001 and 2002, is not dedicated to the implementation of neighborhood plan projects, the \$1 million CRS fund is earmarked for use in neighborhood planning areas.

The Cumulative Reserve Subfund (\$1,000,000 available for each of 2001 and 2002) is used for repairing or restoring existing facilities in neighborhood planning areas (e.g., sidewalk repairs).

The Neighborhood Street Fund (\$500,000 available for each of 2001 and 2002) is used for citywide transportation improvements (e.g., traffic circles, curb bulbs and pedestrian safety additions).

Other City Sources:

There are myriad possibilities for finding funding for parts of neighborhood plan projects.

These other city sources include the Seattle Arts Commission's ArtsUp (Artist Residencies Transforming Seattle's Urban Places) launched in 2001, that funds collaborative projects between artists and communities. Three of nine projects approved in 2001 involved geographically based Seattle neighborhood groups (Courtland Action Team, Friends of Belltown P-Patch and Georgetown Crime Prevention and Community Council). However ArtsUp is not charged to implement neighborhood plan projects. Only one current project, in Belltown, appears in their plan. Rather, art is used as a vehicle to explore community and neighborhood concerns. ArtsUp reflects the heightened awareness of the role of neighborhoods in Seattle's life but it sees its mission as developing ideas of community, a larger subject.

The Neighborhood Leadership Program (sponsored by Department of Neighborhoods) offers free workshops that help participants become effective advocates for their communities, coordinate neighborhood projects and neighborhood plans, mobilize assets, and build

productive partnerships.

The city offers a variety of special programs that may

be used to assist in implementing neighborhood plan projects. These include Involving All Neighbors, an initiative aimed at reaching out to disabled citizens; the

CASE STUDIES

This study demonstrates how difficult it can be to garner support for a project that “falls between the cracks.” A number of neighborhoods and traffic transiting the area will benefit from this development, but the area under consideration formed a boundary for two planning areas. This development failed to become a top priority for either of the neighborhoods. The city was able to act on its recognition of the value of the project to all of the nearby neighborhoods.

The Edges and Interstices Case Study

The borderlands, where neighborhoods and sectors meet or almost meet, are inclined to be overlooked. It is assumed that someone else is taking care of them, or the problems seem so intractable that groups choose projects more doable. At an East Sector edge there is a recent effort to improve the large awkward six-way intersection on Madison, where 12th Avenue and East Union cross it. Called Madison-Union Gateway Project, its citizen planners, led capably by new landowner on the block Liz Dunn, formed a committee that represented the area, and obtained a city grant to hire an urban designer. The aim was to “enhance the character of the neighborhood for pedestrians and encourage foot traffic . . . making the streets safer to cross, functional, interesting and attractive to pedestrians.” Ten kinds of improvements, from re-timing traffic lights through installing curb bulbs to streetscaping, are contemplated. Concepts from the two adjacent but dissimilar local planning efforts are incorporated, including results of stakeholder interviews and the rating of options by participants. Many of the improvements can be installed and funded separately. The 32-page proposal (plus appendices) did not get the support it needed from the bordering communities to make a neighborhood fund priority list but was deemed so successful that the city recently decided to fund portions of it separately.

Advocates for the industrial areas point out that industries may no longer be able to leave the city, as they have done in the past when land becomes too expensive or regulations too cumbersome. Confined within the urban growth boundary, such manufacturing concerns and industries may have no option but to go out of business. Representatives of these businesses express concern for the loss of living wage jobs and of local productive capacity that would be sacrificed if such businesses were to close.

Industrial Areas

Included in the neighborhood planning areas were the two major manufacturing and industrial areas in Seattle—the Ballard Interbay North Manufacturing Industrial Area (BINMIC) and the Greater Duwamish Industrial Area in the south. The neighborhood planning process has not been an easy fit for them. There are inherent conflicts between the industrial areas, the residential areas and the commercial areas. Because the League of Women Voters of Seattle has covered the industrial areas in *Emerging Vision of the City, Part II*, this report will only attempt to highlight a few issues that emerged through our review of the plans and in interviews.

The passage of the Growth Management Act affected the manufacturing and industrial areas in several ways. As part of the Seattle neighborhood planning effort, plans were required to be produced according to the requirements of the Comp Plan. The Countywide Planning Policies also required local governments to develop new strategies to support industrial employment centers on the one hand and on the other mandated that rural areas be protected. The latter requirement has meant that if zoning changes or other pressures forced a business to move, there might be no place to go outside of the city. Also, zoning restrictions in the city can prevent relocations or expansions. For the manufacturing and industrial businesses, further zoning changes could mean closing down of existing businesses with the resulting loss of family-wage jobs. These pressures have always existed. Landowners and real estate developers always want to find the highest and best use for their property, so they can generate more money from it. Building tall office buildings is more profitable than building factories when land supply shrinks and property values rise.

BINMIC and Duwamish's completed neighborhood plans have many similarities in their identification of goals and issues. The BINMIC area contains over 1,000 businesses, about 560 of these are considered industrial or manufacturing. There are three industrial clusters: the fishing and maritime industry, small manufacturing and industrial operations, and an emerging high technology business base. The BINMIC plan identifies the following as issues: transportation, surface street mobility, rail and marine intermodal movement, the importance of retaining industrial uses, city regulatory and permitting burdens, environmental cleanup, and regulations that may affect future development.

The Greater Duwamish Manufacturing and Industrial Center contains over 3,300 businesses providing more than 60,000 jobs within its boundaries. The plan identifies as issues: jobs and economic development, increased pressure on industrial land for other uses, transportation, utilities, public safety and environmental cleanup.

Advocates in both areas think that neighborhood planning with its emphasis on density, green space, and commercial development has resulted in less time and money being spent by the city on industrial issues and may make it more difficult for these businesses to remain viable. The current economic downturn will lessen development pressures for a time, but the basic conflicts between public waterfront access and industrial uses, walking trails and freight mobility, gentrification and affordable housing for workers will remain.

The Northgate case is an illustration of the many factors that converge to the point of neighborhood planning. The problems encountered by Northgate neighborhood activists are beyond those of city-citizen relations. An integrated regional economy that does not have an integrated regional governance structure is one underlying convergence of factors.

Another factor is the discovery of the value to residents' well-being of environmental protections, together with the realization that while it is possible to place a few streams in culverts without permanent damage to the ecosystem, it is not possible to do so extensively, as the new patterns of suburban and exurban settlement would seem to suggest.

The persistence of neighborhood activists in Northgate has brought these planning conflicts near to resolution. It would be a fine example of success if that could be.

The Northgate Case Study

In September of 1993, the City of Seattle Planning Department published the Northgate Area Comprehensive Plan (NACP). The NACP study was initiated by the City Council in 1989 to plan for projected dramatic growth in the Northgate area and to address continued deterioration of traffic congestion. An Environmental Impact Statement supplemented the NACP, and significant portions of the plan were enacted as part of the city's Land Use Code (SMC 23.71).

At the heart of the plan was the desire to plan carefully for any redevelopment of large parcels of land, the largest of which is Northgate Mall itself, which including the south parking lot comprises almost 69 acres. The major planning tool, as codified in the Municipal Code, is the requirement that prior to making application for any building permits for any development of 6 acres or more, the developer must prepare a General Development Plan. This GDP requirement is unique to Northgate, and in its application has proved to be a daunting process for developers and the public. At present, no other neighborhood plan has been codified, but the saga of the attempts to develop Northgate may be instructive for every neighborhood in the city.

The Northgate Comprehensive Plan is structured within 16 policies, which are further explained and refined by specific implementation guidelines. At its essence, however, the community understood the plan captured a vision of transit and pedestrian oriented (as opposed to auto oriented) development with significant public open space to offset and partially mitigate the new density, and significant restoration and enhancement of Thornton Creek. The new development is expected to "create" an urban core or Town Center with a vibrant pedestrian environment, which provides numerous incentives to live where you work, or at least to enjoy the area without needing a car.

Mall Redevelopment Challenged

The initial concept for expansion of Northgate Mall was reported in the Seattle P-I on May 6, 1998: "The owner of Seattle's Northgate Mall wants to jazz up the nearly half-century old shopping center by doubling its size and adding new stores, restaurants, offices, apartment buildings and a 100,000 square foot movie theater complex. But first its plans have to pass muster in the city's public hearings process."

The reporter then described the first public viewing of the project at a local design review committee meeting: "The meeting lasted for three hours as the neighborhood residents picked apart the project, expressing concerns about everything from the traffic generated by all these new stores, offices and residences, to the big box-like appearance of a 4,000 seat cinema. . . . If the shopping center were built out as Simon (the mall owner) proposes, it would eventually expand to about 2 million square feet, double its current size. The company predicts that traffic to the mall would increase by 60 to 70 percent. . . . The number of parking spaces would increase from about 5,600 to about 8,600, the company said."

As it turned out, the P-I's May 1998 report that residents of the neighborhood "picked apart the project" was just the tip of the iceberg. Simon Properties submitted its General Development Plan on September 2, 1998 (with later supplements to November 1998). By the time of the final submittal, the theater complex had grown to 6,000 seats. In both the version seen at Design Review and the GDP version, the theater complex dominated the south parking lot, a 12.5-acre parcel just south of the main mall.

Frustrated by the time limitations for public comment to a proposal of this size, citizens reached out to each other and formed new coalitions to demand more opportunity for review and comment. In an extended series of meetings, a significant number of citizens attended and submitted oral and written comment, primarily critical of the project. Two significant new groups formed from the citizens who attended the meetings: Citizens for a Livable Northgate, concerned about the traffic, pedestrian and open space issues presented by the General Development Plan, and the Thornton Creek Legal Defense Fund, concerned about impacts to the creek and the watershed.

As the public meetings were extended, two main themes emerged. First, this project was not pedestrian oriented, as specified in the Northgate Area Comprehensive Plan, and it significantly increased the traffic and parking burden upon the community; and second, the massive development on the south lot completely covered the entire parcel and would forever preclude daylighting of Thornton Creek, a salmon bearing stream which was placed into a pipe in the mid 1960's when the south lot was filled and paved. The city had previously designated Thornton Creek in its Critical Areas Ordinance. The Growth Management Act requires cities and counties to designate environmentally critical areas.

When the city's Department of Design, Construction and Land Use approved the General Development Plan, the Maple Leaf Community Council, the Thornton Creek Legal Defense Fund, and mall neighbor Sue Geving filed citizen appeals. Despite over 50 separate alleged violations of the Northgate Area Comprehensive Plan (NACP) or other codes/ordinances, the hearing Examiner rejected the bulk of the arguments presented. Ultimately, however, she reversed DCLU's approval of the General Development Plan because the codes did not give DCLU the power to approve a GDP with conditions to be fulfilled at a later date.

In later appeals to the Superior Court the judge held that the hearing examiner was correct. More importantly, he ruled that the proposed development in the south parking lot will have significant environmental impacts, which were not addressed in the Environmental Impact Statement, which supplemented the Northgate Area Comprehensive Plan in 1993, and therefore a new EIS for creek and drainage impacts was required.

A second General Development Plan and a second round of appeals by Thornton Creek Legal Defense Fund and Citizens for a Livable Northgate ended with the same result. On September 7, 2001 Simon (the mall owner) and the city filed further appeals to the State Court of Appeals and the State Supreme Court, seeking to vacate

the new Environment Impact Statement requirement.

A New Development Proposal

In March 2001, Simon Properties announced that it had given an option to purchase the south lot to Security Properties, a Seattle based housing developer. Seeking to work with the community and in particular the litigants, against the first two General Development Plans, Simon has sought very specific community input before commencing work on a GDP, and specifically, has proposed a development which includes a daylighted Thornton Creek. At the invitation of the new developers, Citizens for a Livable Northgate and the Thornton Creek Legal Defense Fund have collaborated with the developer's team of architects to jointly achieve a layout for development, which would maximize open space and stream corridor protections while simultaneously reaching the developer's overall goals for the property. The new plan incorporates the Northgate Area Comprehensive Plan and current citizen goals for a pedestrian and transit oriented mixed-use development on the site.

Public-Private Partnership is Proposed

On September 7, 2001, the same day the city and Simon Properties filed their new appeals of the citizens' victory, Security Properties, Citizens for a Livable Northgate and Thornton Creek Legal Defense Fund made a joint presentation of a new development plan to the city. If built, the Security Properties proposal would incorporate a larger creek corridor, the new Northgate Library, housing, retail and office space. The Citizens for a Livable Northgate and Thornton Creek Legal Defense Fund have agreed to refrain from further litigation if the development is built in accordance with the new joint plan.

After almost ten years, during which almost no new development has occurred, the City of Seattle now has an opportunity to bring this plan to fruition. It would seem advisable for the city to support this new development plan. It meets many of the Northgate Area Comprehensive Plan's stated objectives; it already has the stamp of approval from influential community groups, and it has the promise of completely revitalizing a long neglected segment of the city.

Can we learn from Northgate?

The Northgate experience may be very instructive of how difficult it is to bring the vision statements of neighborhood plans to reality. Many neighborhood activists argue for strong code language to enable citizens to demand adherence.

In a widely circulated 1999 document entitled "Report from Northgate: Citizens for a Livable Northgate Meet Godzilla," five area activists critique the cumbersome process. Excerpts from a passage is worthy of consideration as applicable to all neighborhoods:

"We talk about planning but we turn over much of the decision making to the developers. Our design review boards and citizen advisory committees cannot make enforceable recommendations. The participants don't get to vote or veto. Our comprehensive plan was filled with imprecise "implementation guidelines" that were often little more than collective wishes. We end up with just half a plan that then depends upon the kindness of strangers. The real influence and control is not in the communities that must live with the outcomes."

It is not good enough. We need to insist upon tailored code provisions which will stand the test of time to enforce our neighborhood plans. In our 38 neighborhoods, we have had the stomach to look at our problems honestly, and the forthrightness to suggest real solutions. If we don't have the confidence in our plans to demand that they be translated into enforceable code provisions, then we have just squandered years of our lives.

The lesson we are learning at Northgate is that we need elected officials who will write and pass the codes that will give us the results we have planned for. Whether the city acts by code or by active investment in civic amenities, it may be argued that direct action is needed to make the neighborhood plans a reality.

APPENDIX I

Interview Questions for Stewards

1. Tell us about the most satisfying development that has come out of the planning process for your neighborhood.
2. This question gets to be pretty lengthy because it applies to a number of different issues and concerns in Seattle. What has changed, or not changed, in how city government deals with your neighborhood regarding:
 - Green space, for example acquiring new green space and defining its use and upkeep?
 - Handling NIMBY projects by insuring equitable distribution and respecting your neighborhood's guidelines?
 - Respecting the individuality of your neighborhood?
 - Distribution of funds? Do you feel your neighborhood got a fair share?
 - The hostility level toward the city?
3. Are there any unifying factors, or a common chord, shared by most, or all, of the neighborhoods in your sector?
4. What do you think the neighborhoods should do next? What do you think the city should do next? What issues were not addressed in the planning for your neighborhood?
5. It has been said that the neighborhoods are competing with their fellow neighborhoods for project monies and for the attention of the Neighborhood Development Managers. Have you found that to be true? In either case? In both?
6. Do you know of any areas near the boundaries of your neighborhood that were not included in the planning? Does your neighborhood plan integrate with that of the adjacent neighborhood(s)?
7. Who else in your neighborhood do you think we should be sure to talk with (including gadflies)?

APPENDIX II

APPENDIX III

APPENDIX IV

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