



City of Seattle

Department of Planning and Development

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Planning Land Use & Sustainability Committee (PLUS) Briefing Memo

Date: February 4, 2014

To: Committee Chair Mike O'Brien
Councilmembers Tim Burgess, Nick Licata

From: Gary Johnson, Geoff Wentlandt

Subject: **Stadium District Study & Proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendments**

Background:

During 2011 and 2012, the boards of the Public Facilities District (Safeco Field) and the Public Stadium Authority (CenturyLink Field) conducted a "Common Goals" planning effort that produced a vision for increasing uses complementary to sports and entertainment, adding open space, improving the public realm, and better integrating the stadium area with neighborhoods. At the conclusion of their study, the boards requested the City recognize their plan.

In 2013 DPD was directed by Council to conduct a pair of studies called for by a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) among Seattle, King County, and ArenaCo, associated with the proposed basketball arena. A Stadium District Study to consider policy and regulatory changes to better orient the district to the needs of stadium patrons, improve pedestrian connections and streetscapes and an Industrial Lands Study to consider ways to strengthen the protection of industrial uses in the Duwamish Manufacturing/Industrial Center (M/IC).

The recommendations of the Stadium District Study and the Industrial Lands Study were released in tandem in November of 2013 under the previous Administration. Both studies made recommendations for Comprehensive Plan amendments that were included in the annual 2013-14 Comprehensive Plan amendment docket.

Stadium District Study Process & Outreach

During the spring of 2013, DPD assembled a 23 member Stakeholder Advisory Group to encompass a broad range of advisors with direct knowledge of the area and the surrounding neighborhoods. The group included the public boards of the sports stadia; the sports teams; representatives of each

of the Duwamish Manufacturing Industrial Center (M/IC), Pioneer Square, and Chinatown/International District neighborhoods; area property owners and/or business; and representatives of the City's Planning and Design Commissions. The following outreach was conducted:

- 7 Advisory Group Meetings between March and October 2013 (open to the public)
- 2 Walk and Talk events in partnership with Feet First (May and September, 2013)
- Storefront presence at Seattle Design Festival (September, 2013)
- Notice and updates on DPD social media and blog
- Staff-to-staff meetings with Port of Seattle
- Briefings of the Seattle Design Commission and Planning Commission
- Briefing of Pioneer Square Preservation Board

The Stakeholder Advisory Group functioned as a sounding board that DPD could engage with to receive a range of opinions and ideas. The Stadium District Study recommendations are solely the recommendations of DPD, but staff carefully considered the range of opinions expressed when formulating the recommendations.

Stadium District Study: Findings

An overview of major findings of the Stadium District Study is below. For a complete review of findings, please see the DPD November 2013 Stadium District Study report.

Unique Characteristics and Functions

Currently there are more than 6 Million annual visitors and around 250 events that take place in the proposed Stadium District. It is home to three major professional sports teams and an exhibition arena, hosting large numbers of visitors from within the city, the broader region and beyond many times each year. Therefore, the activity pattern in the relatively small (~96 acre) geographic area is unique - with large pulses of event time activity and periods of low activity during non-event times. The area is unlike any other Seattle neighborhood, and does not function like an Urban Village or Center. Though the proposed Stadium District has unique characteristics, the citywide plan for land use policy and growth, the Comprehensive Plan, does recognize or include policy for a stadium district. The area is only recognized in the land use code as the Stadium Transition Area zoning overlay district.

Land Uses not Reflective of M/IC or Downtown Policies

The study found that within the proposed Stadium District boundaries existing use of land and recent new developments are not strongly reflective of either the existing Manufacturing/Industrial Center, or Downtown Urban Center land use designations or policies.

- 62% of the lands are presently occupied by stadium and event centers and their ancillary facilities. If the proposed basketball arena were built that percentage would increase to over 70% of land in use by sports and entertainment facilities.
- In addition to stadiums and event center uses, the area (proposed Stadium District and Pioneer Square ‘panhandle’) contains approximately 120 small businesses, with more than seventy-five percent of those having fewer than 10 employees. The most common businesses aside from the sports and events are wholesalers, motion picture/photography, architecture/engineering, and construction/contractors. In 2011 less than 12 firms in the area reported any involvement in light manufacturing or industrial, and there is no heavy manufacturing or industry in the area. Recent major employment additions to the proposed Stadium District and vicinity include technology firms Real Networks, EMC and Isilon.
- The predominant land use pattern is inconsistent with M/IC policies that place a priority on industrial, maritime and manufacturing uses; and they are not consistent with Downtown Urban Center policies that call for the region’s most intensive mix of office/retail/residential uses.

Catalyst Sites

The Study reviewed all of the lands within the proposed district in detail and observed there are a very limited number of sites that present opportunity for change. However, those limited ‘catalyst sites’ present an exceptional chance to significantly impact the overall function and character of the district. Specifically, the catalyst sites are the 4.2 acre WOSCA site and the 4.5 acre over-tracks area (located above the BNSF railway line). The bulk of the study’s substantive land use recommendations are targeted to these two catalyst sites alone. The study did not envision any significant change in land use regulations for the remainder of the study area, with the exception of allowing lodging throughout the district.

Close Relationship with Adjacent Neighborhoods

Land use in the proposed Stadium District can have important synergies with policies for adjacent neighborhoods. In particular the *Chinatown/ID Neighborhood Strategic Plan* and the *Pioneer Square Neighborhood Plan* call prominently in their policies for: an increase in housing stock to include more moderate income and family housing, and to stimulate private development of middle income housing, respectively. At the same time, those neighborhoods are challenged to accommodate infill development because the pattern of platted properties is very small, and many sites are occupied by historic landmark structures. The Stadium District Study found that allowance of residential uses on very targeted portions of ‘catalyst sites’ only, directly adjacent to Pioneer Square and Chinatown/ID could support goals of those adjacent neighborhoods.

Similarly, the proposed Stadium District has close linkage to the Duwamish M/IC. Common goals with the Duwamish M/IC focus on the need of all users to protect mobility by all modes: including

freight movement in and through the district, as well as for event functions and their staging. The Stadium District Study observed and documented the complex mobility patterns and transportation needs.

Need for Public Realm Improvements and Sense of Place

When compared with successful examples of stadium districts in other major American cities, the study observed that Seattle does not feature as strong a sense of place, level of activity, or improved public realm quality. The area does not capture as much “staying activity” before and after major events as more successful examples, including cities such as Denver, San Diego and Baltimore. Much of the Stadium District Study focused on specific opportunities for enhancing a network of street improvements, potential new open spaces, and public realm quality that could better support patrons and crowds during event days as well as neighborhood uses and other activities during non-event times.

Mobility Crossroads

The study observed that the proposed Stadium District is a mobility “crossroads” for multiple transportation modes, with freight, commuter traffic, event staging and events, including large numbers of pedestrians. All these modes place competing demands on the area’s street network. There are light rail, commuter rail and bus transit connections, and some of the most significant new infrastructure investments in the region, including the ongoing replacement of the SR 99 Viaduct. The study recognized the unique need for sophisticated and coordinated transportation management in the area, and recommended policies be created to encourage improvements in coordinated transportation management.

Stakeholder Collaboration and Partnership

Embodied in the Stadium District Study is support for increased civic engagement and partnership among major stakeholders: particularly the public boards of the existing Stadium facilities, the sports teams, as well as the potential new stakeholders. The study finds that many of the desired outcomes and policies, including but not limited to public realm quality, transportation management, and district scale sustainability could all be better achieved with a significant measure of collaboration and partnership within a District framework.

Stadium District Study: Comprehensive Plan Amendments

Stemming from major findings and observations, DPD formulated a set of proposed Comprehensive Plan amendments for the 2013-14 cycle. The most important policy items are summarized below and reflected in the proposed policies.

Establish an Independent Land Use Category for Stadium District

In recognition of the area’s unique characteristics and functions, and the predominant use of land – establish an independent Stadium District land use category, with clear policy directions and

planning guidance in the Comprehensive Plan. The new designation would be approximately the same area as the existing Stadium Transition Area zoning overlay. It would remove 56 acres of land from the 4,961 acre Duwamish M/IC or about 1%; and 39 acres of the 952 acre Downtown Urban Center, or about 4%. Proposed policies specific to the Stadium District would be contained in a new sub-section of the Land Use Element of the Comprehensive Plan. The Stadium District would appear on the City's Future Land Use Map.

Allow Lodging Uses

Lodging (hotels) is recommended to be a permitted use throughout the Stadium District. The intent is to support the large number of out-of-area visitors to events, and to contribute to a more balanced activity pattern in the district by encouraging vitality at more times of the day. Such activity can help support a broader range of businesses and services. Lodging uses are already allowed within the Duwamish M/IC, and within the Downtown Urban Center, but are excluded from the stadium area by the current zoning overlay. The "peninsula" of Pioneer Square zoning has allowed the development of the Silver Cloud hotel deep within the stadium area. Allowing lodging uses within the Stadium District was supported by a majority of stakeholders.

Best Use of Catalyst Sites

As noted above, the majority of land use recommendations focus on the WOSCA and the Over-tracks sites. The study recommends crafting very specific land use standards to encourage and incentivize a mix of land uses, open spaces and public realm connections on the catalyst sites. The study included detailed urban design concepts and scenario analysis for the two catalyst sites, and it included a residual land value economic analysis for reuse of the WOSCA site.

- **WOSCA:** The WOSCA site is currently owned by the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) for construction and staging for SR99 replacement. The site will be surplus by the State in about 2018 after SR99 construction is complete. The WOSCA site is approximately 4.2 acres in size, about 120 feet deep by about 1,375 feet long. WSDOT is required by State law to receive fair market value for the WOSCA site. Scenarios explored for reuse of the site were reviewed for whether they would preserve current land value.

Existing Industrial Commercial (IC) zoning of the WOSCA site could allow up to approximately 750,000 square feet of office and ground floor commercial space on the site. The Stadium District study recommends a mix of uses that would respond to specific conditions and opportunities in the immediate area, as well as respond to desired elements as expressed by stakeholders and adjacent neighborhoods. (*See study document and presentation materials for proposed scenario*). These include allowing limited residential development on the northern most portion of the site only through an incentive program that would require the development of a significant district open space. A majority of the Advisory Group support this proposal. The Port of Seattle opposes residential at WOSCA fearing complaints about marine port activities at T-46. DPD proposes to conduct additional

analysis during the zoning development phase and identify development standards and other tools to mitigate potential conflicts.

- **Over-tracks:** The air rights located above the BNSF railway lines between 4th Ave. S. and the proposed Stadium District south of King Street Station include an area totaling about 4.5 acres. Here too, the study recommends consideration of a careful arrangement of mixed use development responsive to specific conditions and opportunities in the area. Most notably, new connections could be provided, allowing for walkways and linkages between the Chinatown/ID and the Stadium District. Any use of air rights would require complex engineering, as well as legal arrangement with the railroad. The study recommends pursuing such arrangements, and allowing for flexibility in land use regulations to incentivize over-tracks development. The recommendations for Over-tracks development were strongly supported by Advisory Group members.

Public Realm / Streetscape Improvements

Though not resulting in direct land use policy recommendations, a significant element of the Stadium District Study focused on designs for a network of public realm improvements. Ideas for public realm improvements have been incorporated in a streetscape concept plan for Occidental Ave. S. and 1st Ave. South within the study area, in partnership with SDOT. The concept plan establishes schematic design for improvements that can be implemented over time either through adjacent private development, major stakeholder investment, or public capital projects. In particular, the streetscape plans focus on strong opportunity for improvement of Occidental Ave. S. as a shared street that can improve the urban design quality of the area and help to better organize activities and vending during event times. The Occidental Ave. S. concept is closely linked with the improvements designed for Waterfront Seattle's southern extension along Railroad Way.

Possible Deferral to 2015:

We are aware that Council is considering deferring consideration of proposed Stadium District Comp Plan amendments until the 2015 cycle. DPD is generally supportive of the recommendation to defer the Stadium District Comprehensive Plan amendments to 2015. Deferral will allow for the proposal to be informed by an Industrial Access and Freight Master Plan studies that SDOT will move forward this year and provide an opportunity to complete a draft zoning regulations for the area. We want to highlight a concern that, should Council move forward with consideration of Comp Plan amendment associated with the Industrial Lands study, that future consideration of creation of a Stadium District not be precluded.