



Memorandum

DATE: August 27, 2007

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Steven Cohn, Senior Planner

RE: Speaker Series Wrap Up

We heard from five presenters in the Shoreline 2010 Speakers Series. While each presenter had his own focus, there were a number of common threads and themes. This memo reflects the themes heard by staff and summarizes the ideas of each speaker. The Speakers Series can be accessed via online streaming video. If you would like to view any of the presentations, the URL is:
www.cityofshoreline.com/cityhall/departments/planning/speakerseries/

At your next meeting, we will further discuss the major concepts we heard and ask you to add your ideas. This discussion will help the Commission prepare for the joint City Council/Planning Commission workshop to be held September 24.

Themes from the Speaker Series

The five speakers offered a large number of ideas, covering a wide range of topics. Reviewing the series as a whole, there were several common themes. As staff reflects on them, we believe that they can help shape the Commission's perspective in planning Shoreline's future. Major themes include:

1. Demographics are changing. The "typical" household of the future is more likely to be composed of singles, separated individuals, married couples without children or starters (married with very young children) than be a family of two parents with school-age kids. This change has important implications: it will reduce the demand for single family homes on larger lots and increase demand for smaller units that are more affordable and easier to maintain.
2. Walkability is important. This is due to a confluence of factors: increasing energy prices, traffic congestion, health benefits, changing tastes, and others. More emphasis being placed on walkability will result in an increased demand for walkways, people wanting to live closer to goods and service providers, and emphasis on making roadways safer for vehicles, bicyclists and pedestrians through the implementation of concepts such as "road diets".

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3. Increased awareness/emphasis on the environment. Environmental sustainability is an idea that has gained significant traction over the last decade. This concept manifests itself in several ways: walking and bicycling as an alternative to driving, using roundabouts instead of stop signs or stop lights to reduce air pollution, creating local places that draw people (via a short drive or walk) as an alternatives to regional shopping centers, “green” building practices, and better ways to deal with surface water management.
4. Instilling a sense of community through placemaking and development of “third places” encourages vibrant neighborhoods. From the 1940s through the 1970s, the neighborhood school was the place where community gathered and created a social network. The school gave the neighborhood an identity. With changing demographics, schools no longer serve the same purpose. However, people still need to feel part of a social network and form a “sense of community”. One way to facilitate this is through the development of “third places”, places apart from home or work where people can congregate and make connections. Third places can be formal or informal, indoors or outdoors. A neighborhood coffee shop or small grocery can be a third place. Or it could be larger like Third Place Books in Lake Forest Park or Green Lake Park in Seattle. The important factors are: creating a sense of security and having a destination where people want to return. Third places can happen by accident, but they can also be encouraged through joint cooperation of the private and public sectors.

Summary of Speakers’ Ideas

Gene Duvernoy of the Cascade Land Conservancy spoke about a need for a 100-year vision for the Puget Sound region that preserves close-in open space. To make this a reality, people are going to need to be drawn to this area’s cities and towns. This opens up the opportunity to create “Great Cities”, cities with amenities that will provide a reason for living there. Among these amenities are “third places”, where people can interact with others and find a sense of belonging and community. Great cities also need to provide multi-modal transportation options. There needs to be a variety of ways to get from one spot to another so that people do not have to rely on their automobiles.

Following Mr. Duvernoy’s presentation, the City Council adopted Resolution No. 260 that declared Shoreline’s intent to participate in the Cascade Agenda City and Green City Partnership programs. (See attachment, Resolution 260.)

Mark Hinshaw discussed demographic trends and current and future land use development that respond to these trends. He noted that the existing demographics show that 50% of households are groups in one of the four S’s: singles, single-parents, seniors, and start-ups. Two-parent households with children (the traditional “family”) represent only 1 in 4 households. And this number will shrink as a percentage of the total.

As the baby boomers age, the number of senior households will grow. However, many will want to continue to work, but will be faced with losing some of their mobility as 1) fuel costs continue to rise and 2) driving will not be an option for some. There will be a renewed emphasis on walkability.

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Mr. Hinshaw sees new opportunities for home-grown businesses to be located in areas in or near single-family neighborhoods. These businesses must be structures that fit with the scale and character of the neighborhoods - achievable through the implementation of design standards.

The public sector should be willing to make strategic public investments in order to encourage and stimulate investment by the private sector.

Tom Von Schrader and Amalia Leighton from SvR Design spoke about Creating and Implementing Green Infrastructure. Green infrastructure consists of open spaces, parks, forests, and wetlands, usually connected in some manner. Complete streets are part of a green infrastructure program. Complete streets often include drainage swales. Swales reduce pollutants from streets and lawns, and allow for sediment to settle out. In addition swales can reduce storm runoff peaks from small storm events and improve habitats. Green street concepts can be integrated in retrofits of urban areas, such as the upgrade of Aurora Avenue.

The High Point redevelopment in West Seattle uses a number of green infrastructure ideas including porous street and sidewalks, pervious parking areas, and rain gardens. These ideas don't need to wait for a large project like High Point; they can be incorporated into smaller projects, both in the public and private realms.

Ron Sher, CEO of Third Place Books and Crossroads Bellevue offered a multitude of ideas about "Third Places". He spoke of the history of shopping centers: neighborhood centers, community centers, and regional centers. He believes that regional centers draw dollars out of local communities as people shop for price and selection. A good question for a neighborhood or community to ask is "how can we create a smaller retail center that satisfies the community's needs?" In Mr. Sher's model, new centers won't just contain retail shops, but also contain other amenities that serve as "conversation starters" and places to congregate. Restaurants can serve this purpose, as can chessboards, and a stage for entertainment or presentations. It is important that there be amenities that draw people back, and that the area feels safe.

Mr. Sher believes that third places create "bridge social capital" in a community - a network of people that work together to effectively get things done.

What does a "third place" need to be successful? It needs committed partners from the private, public, and non-profit sectors. It needs to provide something that keep people coming back—programmed events are helpful (Farmer's Markets or concerts), but there can be un-programmed areas as well with chessboards or movable tables and chairs. There needs to be a feeling that a person does not have to spend money to be able to use the facility. Branch libraries or youth and senior centers help bring people in and can provide programming, but it needs to be attractive to a variety of groups. If one group takes over others may feel intimidated or left out; everybody needs to feel comfortable.

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Dan Burden, the Executive Director of Walkable Communities Inc., was the most recent speaker. His presentation focused on “Walkable and Pedestrian Friendly Communities”. He believes that it is important to create a “sense of place” - a place where people have good experiences and feel safe and secure. Five elements that add to the success of places are: security, convenience, efficiency, comfort and sense of welcome.

Placemaking is about planning and building correctly. A “place” should be walkable and one that people want to return to, knowing that they’ll be rewarded each time they come back. Creating additional density in buildings placed strategically and scaled appropriately brings the place alive. In this case, density is not the problem rather is often the solution to a problem.

More connectivity for autos and pedestrians results in more traffic dispersion and fewer traffic impacts. Prioritize where sidewalks get built by looking at where people want to go. These are the areas that are critical for walking. When building trails or sidewalks, it is useful to consider siting stores, restaurants and plenty of lighting along the path. The more “eyes on the street”, the safer people will feel.

“Road Diets” can be used to make roads safer for cars and pedestrians and can result in efficient traffic movement. Mr. Burden encourages the use of roundabouts and colored pavement that offer visual signals to motorists to look for pedestrians.

New ideas such as roundabouts and road diet street sections appear, at first glance, to be counter-intuitive and may make people uncomfortable. However, in places where they have been implemented they have proven to be safer, less expensive, more efficient in moving vehicles, and environmentally sustainable.

Closing Thoughts

The Speaker Series is now in hiatus, but staff will continue to bring speakers in as the opportunity arises. It is our intent to bring new ideas to the community through the continuation of this series, and our expectation that many of the ideas will resonate with the themes that we have already heard.

Attachments

Attachment 1: Resolution No.260

RESOLUTION NO. 260

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL, CITY OF SHORELINE, WASHINGTON, ENDORSING THE PRINCIPLES OF THE CASCADE AGENDA, OBSERVING THAT THE CITY COUNCIL GOALS FOR 2007-2008 REFLECT THE OBJECTIVES OF THE CASCADE AGENDA CITIES PROGRAM, AND DECLARING THE CITY'S INTENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE "CASCADE AGENDA CITY" AND "GREEN CITY PARTNERSHIP" PROGRAMS.

WHEREAS, the Cascade Agenda is a century-long vision for the Central Cascade region of King, Pierce, Snohomish and Kittitas counties, and sets forth goals and strategies to conserve this region's natural character, create vibrant cities and towns, and ensure a strong economy, and

WHEREAS, the Cascade Land Conservancy has launched both the "Cascade Agenda City Program" and the "Green City Partnership Program" to recognize the relationship between the creation of great communities and the conservation of this region's ecology and working landscapes, and

WHEREAS, the population of the Central Puget Sound region is forecasted to grow from 3.3 million today to 5 million by the year 2040, with a corresponding increase in the population in central cities such as Shoreline, and

WHEREAS, in the face of significant long-term growth, the City of Shoreline's choices are not whether to grow or how much to grow, but rather how to manage growth in a way that maintains and enhances Shoreline's quality of life, and

WHEREAS, the core principles and objectives of the Cascade Agenda City Program are reflected in the City Council's adopted goals for 2007-2008, including:

- Goal 1 Complete the projects approved in the 2006 Parks Bond
- Goal 2 Implement the Economic Development Strategic Plan
- Goal 3 Implement an affordable civic center/city hall project
- Goal 4 Complete the Aurora improvements from N.165th Street to N. 205th Street, including, but not limited to, sidewalks, drainage, and transit
- Goal 5 Develop a comprehensive housing strategy
- Goal 6 Create an "environmentally sustainable community"
- Goal 7 Provide safe and affordable transportation options to support land use Plans including walking, bicycling, transit and vehicular options
- Goal 8 Develop a Fircrest Master Plan in partnership with the State

and,

WHEREAS, the Shoreline Planning Commission and Parks Board received a presentation on the Cascade Agenda on September 7, 2006 and the City Council received

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presentations regarding the Cascade Agenda and the Cascade Agenda City and Green City Partnership programs on March 19, 2007, and May 21, 2007, and

WHEREAS, the long-term economic vitality, environmental health and natural beauty of the Central Cascades region is a vital interest to the citizens of Shoreline.

NOW, THEREFORE, THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SHORELINE, WASHINGTON, HEREBY RESOLVES AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. The City of Shoreline endorses the vision articulated in the Cascade Agenda and shall pursue partnership with the Cascade Land Conservancy in both the “Cascade Agenda City” and “Green City Partnership” programs as a strategy to increase public awareness of and support for the implementation of Shoreline City Council Goals 1 through 8.

Section 2. The City of Shoreline will seek to align its policies and programs on community development, housing, transportation, parks, and open space with the strategies and approaches of the Cascade Agenda.

Section 3. The City Manager shall appoint a staff representative to act as the City’s primary liaison with respect to Cascade Agenda related activities and shall provide periodic reports to the City Council.

ADOPTED BY THE CITY COUNCIL ON JUNE 11, 2007.

Robert L. Ransom, Mayor

ATTEST:

Scott Passey, City Clerk