

Central Houghton Neighborhood Association Meeting

October 3, 2012 Houghton Fire Station (#22)

TOPIC: Houghton-Everest Neighborhood Center Plan

Summary of participant comments about the status of the Houghton-Everest Neighborhood Center Plan

Prepared by: Kari Page, Neighborhood Services Coordinator (Facilitator) and Marie Stake, Communications Program Manager (Facilitator)

On October 3, 2012, staff from the Planning & Community Development Department and City Manager's Office attended the Central Houghton Neighborhood Association meeting to provide an update on the Houghton-Everest Neighborhood Center Plan and to facilitate a discussion around participants' concerns and ideas about the planning process. There were over 25 participants.

Angela Ruggeri, Senior Planner, discussed how the study of the Houghton-Everest Neighborhood Center Plan (Business District) came about and that last night the City Council agreed with the City Manager's recommendation to delay the Neighborhood Center plan update. She stated that there is currently no development application (within the Business District) on file with the city.

Ms. Ruggeri explained the purpose of the City's Comprehensive Plan (Comp Plan) as a "vision" document that is intended to plan for growth in Kirkland and that neighborhood plans are a section of the Comp Plan. She explained that an update to the Central Houghton Neighborhood Plan was completed in 2011. The updated Neighborhood Plan only addressed the portion of the Houghton/Everest Neighborhood Center area that is in the Central Houghton Neighborhood (south of NE 68th Street). It stated, however, that the Houghton Neighborhood should coordinate with the Everest Neighborhood to develop a plan for the entire Neighborhood Center. The City has received feedback from both neighborhoods that it is important to look at the Neighborhood Center as a whole.

She recognized that the City was moving quickly on the Neighborhood Center Plan and in response to citizen feedback the Planning Commission and Houghton Community Council recommended to slow down the process. She stated the City Council agreed with the recommendation on October 2 and will be presented with a revised Planning Work Program on October 16.

She stated the City will initiate a 10-Year update to the Comp Plan in 2013 which is a process that takes two years to complete.

Facilitator Stake introduced herself and Kari Page and opened the conversation with the following question: "What is the most important issue the planning process should address?" She explained that question applies to the 10 Year Comp Plan Update, the Houghton-Everest Neighborhood Center Plan update or updates to a Neighborhood Plan. Below is a summary of concerns and questions raised by participants.

Traffic was the greatest concern expressed by most participants. Traffic subthemes included: provide more pedestrian and bicycle safe routes and connections, evaluate parking conditions (now and with future development), and study traffic to and from key destinations and city wide.

Traffic (including pedestrians and bicycle safety)

- Provide surface parking (better for neighborhood).
- Provide free parking (if private developments start charging for parking – it will kill the neighborhood/community feel of this center).
- Slow traffic.
- More pedestrian/bicycle friendly roads and crossings.
- Too much backup during rush hour (east on 68th and north on 108th).
- How can we add more development with existing traffic being so bad now.
- Provide safe place for ICS students to stand and wait for the bus (this helps keep cars off the roads)
- Determine what roadway improvements need to be made if area is fully developed (regional approach – Google, transit oriented development, downtown, Houghton shopping center, etc.)
- Create a walking community
- Schools want more students to walk and bike
- Not enough room for bicycles on NE 68th Street (feel like you get squeezed next to the curb in places).
- We aren't a walking City like Seattle – it isn't going to happen in the suburbs – no matter how much you want it.
- Provide consistent sidewalks and consistent bicycle widths throughout the City and people/families will use them more.
- Create a safe passage corridor (like spokes of a wheel) to schools, neighborhood center, and shopping. Have dedicated bike lanes and sidewalks leading to key points/destinations.
- Look at fixing traffic flow to and from key destinations: I-405, South Kirkland Park and Ride, downtown, Carillon Point, SR520.
- Need better integration with Metro – restore 234 and connect better with Microsoft and Houghton and restore 255 back like it was.
- Consider impacts from Google if they expand.
- There is limited access both in and out of neighborhood as well as in and out of Houghton Shopping Center. Exiting the shopping center during rush hour is hard.
- We need a Pedestrian/Bicycle Commission – not just a Transportation Commission.

Process & Proposed Amendments

- The plan should address the great connections that can be/should be made with Cross Kirkland Corridor (connections to schools, parks, shopping, commercial areas).
- The proposed plan didn't fit into the neighborhood scale or character.
- Was the proposed plan more about Growth Management Act – instead of neighborhood character?
- Consider the traffic impacts – when we appear and feel like we are at capacity now.
- Looking at the entire City first makes the best sense – plan regionally first – then locally.
- Consult businesses who are there now. Neighborhood doesn't want them to move.
- Foster neighborhood scale retail development, diverse businesses, and keep properties affordable for the businesses.
- Height and density is out of scale with what we want and the neighborhood. If you change retail to commercial you will totally change the character of the neighborhood.

Study Area

- Where does the Neighborhood begin? (Lakeview Elementary School catchment area all care about this center). Look to everyone who is impacted and how they are impacted to determine who should be involved.
- 8-9 schools in the area – schools should get involved as they are all impacted.

Density

- The plan should be about who is there now (the businesses and the residents). The plan should be about the existing neighborhood (not increasing density).

Neighborhood Character

- Preserve our quality of life.
- Keep pedestrian overpasses across I405.
- Keep/foster/preserve the businesses that are there – they serve the neighborhood.
- Create a community center for the neighborhood.
- Think of neighborhood first – not the businesses.

Public Involvement

- Use post card mailings to residents to keep them informed (especially when there is a proposed development).
- Use schools and PTSA's to help get meeting notices and information out (many people who showed up tonight heard about the meeting through the PTSA at Lakeview).
- (City should) Assume the public is "stupid – like Planning for Dummies." Use word we understand and illustrate to us what you are talking about so we understand.
- Note many people can't attend so many meetings. Can you have fewer but more meaningful/productive meetings?
- Involve us when there are only 3 options or so (boil it down so our time is productive)
- Email is useful.
- Notify us of the process early – not so late in the process.
- Meetings are better than emails as you can really work on issues and hear from your neighbors.
- Summers don't work for residents – many on vacations and neighborhood associations don't meet in the summer.
- Use post cards – small – red – catch our attention.
- Pictures help – maybe do what you did this time – show outlandish diagrams. It worked!
- Web site is good as people can fit reviewing/reading into their own schedules.
- List serves help for getting word out and help to keep people involved who want to stay informed but can't come to meetings.
- Press Releases.
- Non computer users – don't forget them. Use mailings. These are the people who usually can't come to meetings either. Don't leave out their input.
- Kiosks (wish the bus stop was still there).
- Join up with the Kirkland Reporter (public/private partnership) and restate the neighborhood section (as people really liked this – felt it was a great way to stay informed in their neighborhoods – and heard the news from their own people). This also gets the people who aren't connected electronically.

- Before a neighborhood plan is finalized, it would be helpful if the planners summarized the big changes. It is so hard to read through a whole plan and try to figure out what changed and what was significant and what wasn't. Some read the new Houghton Plan but didn't notice the move to allow 5 stories.

Information Requested

- Determine how the proposed zoning and subsequent development will impact the neighborhood. For example, Google has impacted Everest but no one told them how much it would – before they moved in.
- Create a pedestrian/bicycle overlay over the neighborhood plan and strategize ways to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety and circulation (include social paths/trails).
- Are we close to capacity at the intersection of 68th and 108th Avenue NE? How do we get beyond current capacity without widening streets?
- With more development, we get more kids, need more schools, where do we put them? Is someone planning with the school district as zoning changes to bring in more people?
- What if Waddell applied for redevelopment now under the new Central Houghton Neighborhood Plan? Would he be able to build 5 stories? How can we stop this now from happening – if we are going to hold off on the shopping center planning process? Can't afford to wait/sit on the existing Central Houghton neighborhood plan now that it has been changed.
- Will 5 stories be allowed in at the shopping center now?
- What part of the Houghton Shopping Center plan will be part of the Citywide Comprehensive Plan? How do we know where to be involved?

KEY ISSUES THE FUTURE PLANNING PROCESS SHOULD ADDRESS

- How do we know what process to be involved in during the Comprehensive Planning process? What key words do we look for or special meetings that will address traffic and eventually have an impact on what gets planned for the Houghton Shopping Center?
- Need data on demographics, population, school capacities, business plans, traffic flows, etc. Better understand the development impacts on each of these elements before you change the zoning.
- Address pollution of adding development and cars.
- Create a community gathering space (like North Kirkland Community Center).
- Bring people together like tonight – to brainstorm what we want in our neighborhood as you go into the planning process. We didn't know this was done for the Central Houghton Neighborhood Plan.
- Use pictures like you did with the proposed plan – helps us visualize better than reading through a planning document.
- Use words that everyone understands – rather than planning terms.
- Can we relook at the Central Houghton Neighborhood Plan – specifically the Houghton Shopping Center piece. We didn't know it was being changed so dramatically. Would have liked to know this before it was passed by Council.
- Do an economic feasibility of the comprehensive plan changes before they are done. Can we support this level of development (economically) before we change the zone – as we do not want someone to build and leave a ton of vacant space that the economy can't sustain.
- Include PTSA and Schools around the area – as there are so many and they should be part of the planning process as they have to “house” the people who move here. We are an “education center.” (NW University, Lakeview, ICS, Community School, Lake Washington High School, Adventist School, Day Care, Emerson High School, Northstar).