

KIRKLAND DOWNTOWN STRATEGIC PLAN

Downtown Condominium Homeowners' Associations Leadership Meeting September 5, 2007

<u>Condominium Association Participants</u>		<u>DAC Attendees and Staff</u>
Bea Nahon, Facilitator		Jeff Trager, Chair
Brezza Condominiums	Rich Mialovich & Dean Little	Jeff Cole
Kirkland Central	Marna Hanneman & Stanley Hill	Gary Harshman
Marina Heights	Jerry Ryles & Rob Sanfilippo	Jeremy McMahan (City staff)
Mariner Condominiums	Kenneth Coke	Glenn Peterson (also as a resident of Kensington House)
Pointe Overlook	Sandy Fredric	
Portsmouth Condominiums	Rob Brown & Tami Moe	
Tiara de Lago	Lawrence Israel, Helga Simmons & Steve Maita	
Townhomes At Kirkland	Scott McClelland & Jessica Friedman	
Waterview Condominiums	Sarah Andeen & Thomas Jeyaseelan	
520 Sixth Avenue	Gerry Ostroff & Gary Edwards	
602 Fifth Avenue	Robert Pringle	

In addition, Mark Eliassen (Moss Bay Neighborhood Association) and Bruce Nahon (resident of Marina Heights) were in attendance.

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Bea Nahon welcomed the group and thanked them for participating. She asked attendees to introduce themselves and reviewed the purpose of the meeting. She noted the success of a recent downtown commercial property owners meeting and saw the need to provide the Downtown Advisory Committee with similar input from downtown condominium owners. To facilitate the discussion, she had invited the presidents and a representative of all of the downtown condominium associations in the CBD and adjacent WF zones.

Jeremy McMahan described the 2001 Downtown Strategic Plan (DSP) and reviewed work to date on that plan. He also discussed the process in place to update the plan and reviewed permitted and potential development projects in the downtown.

Jeff Trager, co-chair of the Downtown Advisory Committee (DAC) talked more about the process of updating the DSP and asked who has been involved in various types of public meetings. Many of the attendees had also attended the July 16th community meeting. He went on to describe the DAC representatives and their responsibilities to the group and to their constituencies. He noted that the project in the assessment stage now,

with analysis devoted to the mix of existing businesses, the sales performance of various business types, and what it takes to create a vibrant community. He discussed the importance of getting involved in the community and working with the City. He noted that the DAC has heard from the downtown commercial property owners and now wants to hear from downtown condominium owners to make sure they are included in the planning process for downtown.

RESOURCES FOR DOWNTOWN RESIDENTS

Mark Eliassen of the Moss Bay Neighborhood Association introduced himself and described the area of the neighborhood, which includes all of downtown. He described how the organization got started opposing a project near downtown and noted their goal of preserving the neighborhood character. He discussed their process of communicating with the City and with developers early in the process to learn about projects. He invited attendees to participate in the neighborhood associations and help get the word out. Mark went on to review various accomplishments of the Association and noted that City Council members always attend and listen. He noted that they do have clout, more so as a group than as individuals. Meetings are on the 3rd Mondays of odd months at Heritage Hall. He suggested that attendees visit their website at www.mossbay.org to learn more.

On behalf of Dick Beazell, who was unable to attend, Glenn Peterson discussed the role and activities of the Kirkland Downtown Association (KDA) as an organization composed of businesses, residents, property owners, restaurants, and others. The KDA sponsors various community events and programs like the Wednesday Market, the downtown flower pots, the 4th of July parade, the car show, and the “Weekend Starts on Thursday” promotion. Their offices are on Park Lane and staff includes Dick Beazell and Julie Metteer.

DISCUSSION OF STRATEGIES FOR DOWNTOWN KIRKLAND

Bea introduced discussion guide topics and got things started by stating that people choose to live in downtown Kirkland in downtown condos. She asked attendees to describe what it is that drove them to purchase here. Attendees responded:

- Everything is so convenient. The waterfront, 24 hour fitness, downtown is walkable
- Convenient by foot and for commuting just about anywhere. Central location near major freeways
- Safe at night, can walk downtown, not so in Seattle
- Small town feel, convenience. European character, shops and services are close and can do most on foot. Like the little stores and galleries. Can do most things by foot. Need more little stores where people can purchase things. Don't need any more real estate offices.
- European flair is attractive - hope core of downtown stays like that. We can lose that European flair if chain stores and the like come to downtown
- Many take buses, don't take cars. Downtown is user friendly

- Originally looked at downtown Bellevue, then ran screaming because liked European, less “corporate” feel of Kirkland
- Smaller feel, great “world class” restaurants, upscale, need more retailers to meet day to day needs. Likes idea of Amazon Fresh. Need to keep funkier retailers to meet day to day needs
- Waterfront access very generous, lots of parks, visual access to waterfront, no dominant buildings
- Small town feel with many local events like Taste, Concourse and the downtown car show. Hard to pull off similar events in Bellevue. Kirkland has smaller, more manageable events, and would like to have more
- Comparisons to Sausalito, like community feeling

ISSUES

The group then discussed issues that they encounter as downtown residents, including:

- Concerned about revolving door of small merchants., parking problems, trees growing up and blocking views, noise and bar scene. The City needs to be more attentive to needs of downtown residents
- The City needs to address parking on perimeter with pedestrian downtown
- Crime has increased dramatically – vandalism, break-in’s, car theft, unpleasant things in Peter Kirk Park, graffiti, not a lot of patrolling in park. Two groups of problems - party goers and teen elements.
- A lot of outsiders can access the Park easily by bus, teen center users not the problem, but peripheral elements are
- City Council and City Manager don’t believe that there is a police problem. Police officers comment that they don’t have the resources. Need more police presence at the dock, Peter Kirk Park, and the Teen Union Building.
- Ground floor retail is forced on developer for extra story, creating stores that have no future
- The requirement for superior retail saddles developer and property owners. Most retail needs more than just foot traffic, need parking. As a property owner, have paid for two Local Improvement Districts for parking and now the City is collecting parking fees
- There is retail turn-over everywhere, Kirkland not unique
- Moved here for unique, funky downtown. Should get together and keep uniqueness.
- Retail does not need the higher ceilings required by the City. It just adds mass to buildings, makes space more expensive, and we lose unique retailers and affordable retail
- Regarding business turn-over – KDA economic development committee and downtown brokers try to make sure tenants have a business plan
- Heard that some retailers had to leave because rent was doubled and property owners wanted a five-year lease.

- In scheme of things, retail has not changed much. Turn-over and rents have not changed that much compared to other cities
- The Central Way traffic calming project is not working
- Arterials into town are congested and that constrains retail and restaurant
- Need better integration of Parkplace and core area. Maybe take more of the traffic and parking out of downtown and put it into Parkplace, make Park Lane a more pedestrian-oriented connection, and provide a shuttle to move people back and forth*
- Do not want big box stores in downtown.
- Have heard that businesses struggle to survive because rent is so high.
- If we can't get home after 3:00 p.m., how can people get in to shop.
- Don't understand the transit center on 3rd Street, nobody wants it there
- Bus routes and transit center- obstacle to connectivity.
- Success of Parkplace key to success of downtown*
- What Parkplace wants is in direct conflict with why we moved here – livability and small town feel*
- Common themes at the community meeting were creating linkages and providing destination retail (e.g. – Grape Choice – 80% of customers are repeat customers),
- Like to see the City have a tree pruning program, not cutting, just pruning to that 2-story height
- Trees are heaving sidewalk, messing up irrigation system. Offered to replace, at his cost, but the City would not let him
- Trees are another example of the City not listening
- Attitude that trees are nature and should not be touched. Downtown trees seem to be going wild, blocking the views of a view community.
- Downtown Kirkland needs to stay unique or it will be the same as everywhere else. This should be a regional destination.

* designates comments which were made subsequent to Jeff Cole's remarks about Parkplace as described below

During the course of the group discussion, DAC member Jeff Cole explained his experience with Parkplace as it relates to the retail issues discussed by the group. He noted that while retail in Parkplace struggles mightily, the restaurants do quite well. The problem with the national tenants is that they want an aggressive deal because they argue that they are a draw. However, unless Parkplace or downtown has a critical mass of retail that can take advantage of that draw, then they can't take advantage of it. To make successful retail come, it needs vehicles, parking, and density. He suggested that what would make retail work in Kirkland is to stop the leakage by creating adequate retail sizes (e.g. 2,400 square foot spaces rather than little awkward spaces) and providing parking.

Jeff outlined the Parkplace redevelopment proposal being put forward by Touchstone.

VISION

Bea asked attendees to describe their vision for the perfect downtown. Ideas from the group included:

- Kirkland is a mish mash of signs and storefronts. Some communities like Leavenworth identified a unifying theme. Maybe we should consider a unifying design theme, particularly on the waterfront
- Lakeshore Plaza project needs to be brought back to bring people up from the water into the community. Like the Concourse idea from the waterfront to Parkplace
- Why not take advantage of strengths and use concerts, galleries, the KPC, and the new hotel to turn downtown into a destination art venue
- Like Shuttle idea – park your car on the perimeter and walk around downtown. Might be more important in 10 years with green initiatives, pollution issues.
- Although opposed the development at Lake & Central, still feel that the 2001 DSP is an excellent plan and the 5 guiding principles are still relevant. The issue is that the DSP has been open to interpretation.. My vision very much echos those principles, but need more specificity.
- Can't do any of these things unless parking and traffic is solved. Otherwise can't be livable
- We probably spend 90% of our money outside of Kirkland, how do we turn that around?
- If you want downtown residents to shop in downtown, need to create retail that provides the things that people want
- Don't destroy what we have – there is a reason that Google etc. seek Kirkland. Keep the scale down to the water.
- Save the little core with short buildings. If we don't want people to go to Bellevue, we have our own mall in Totem Lake to serve that retail demand without doing it in our downtown
- The City needs to listen to the residents, and it could be a win-win
- We want to accentuate the natural beauty.

CONCLUSIONS

Bea explained that the DAC has received disparate input about density downtown – some commenters assert a need for more density to achieve economic critical mass to whereas other commenters assert that there is sufficient density and that there should not be any more condominiums downtown. She asked attendees for their opinion on condominium density. Eight attendees thought the density of condos in downtown was just right, three attendees think there are already too many condominiums, and no attendees thought that there were not enough condominiums. Bea then asked for opinions on building heights in the downtown, but withdrew the question when it was clear that attendees did not all understand existing height rules as to feet, stories, mix of housing/retail/office, etc.

NEXT STEPS

Bea summarized the meeting, encouraged attendees to stay involved, and encouraged better communications with City of Kirkland. She noted that there are challenges to provide outreach to condominium leadership and residents, because of the hesitance of some managing agents to act as conduits of information and because individual condominium residents do not receive City utility bills (which is a commonly used method of postal delivery of information from the city). Accordingly, it is important for the condominium leadership to stay involved, sign up for city e-mail lists, etc. and to encourage their residents to do the same. Sarah Andeen offered to take the e-mail list of condominium leadership that Bea had assembled and create a listserve of downtown condos association boards as a way to communicate and to exchange ideas. Attendees all agreed that there was a need for that.

Other associations

For the record, it should be noted that Bea also sent invitations to the following associations which either were not able to send a representative, or which did not respond:

Boulevard
French Quarter
Moss Bay
Park Avenue
Park 34
Plaza on State
Soho