

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

April 2, 2012

Subcommittee Members:

Council Member Sheryl Cole, Chair
Council Member Laura Morrison
Council Member Chris Riley

Call Meeting to Order

1. Approval of minutes from the April 2, 2012, regular subcommittee meeting.

Approved by a vote of 3-0

2. Parking Management Presentation

Council Member Riley, introduced world renowned authority who has extensively studied the subject matter of Municipal Parking Policies. Dr. Donald Shoup is the author of "The High Cost of Free Parking." His influential book, is leading a growing number of cities to charge fair market prices for curb parking and reduce or remove off-street parking requirements.

Dr. Shoup, stated coming from Los Angeles, California he felt embarrassed making suggestions about parking, but wanted to offer some things that might work. Two mistakes in parking policy (1) require lots of off-street parking; cities don't want to build anything without a lot of parking spaces. (2) Keep curb parking free or cheap. Even during the highest crowded/demand hours. Most cities have the highest parking requirements for most drinking establishments assuming that everyone is going to drive there.

Austin's off-street parking requirements has several pages of information, which put's Austin's planners in a position to pretend to know they know about every land use needs. If, you ask any planner in any city how they set that parking requirement, they won't be able to tell you. Surveys of parking lots have shown that half the spaces are empty even during peak parking demands. Even universities charge drivers for parking because you can't charge anyone else. You can't charge the students for it in their tuition because those that are too poor to own a car would still be charged for parking which is not fair. But isn't this how we do the rest of the city? The United States spends over \$2 billion dollars to subsidize for parking.

Downtown Austin has lots of off-street parking. Dr. Shoup believes there are 3 reforms for parking policy that will help address these problems. (1) charge the right price for curb parking. Meaning the lowest prices that will leave one or more vacant spaces on each block – performance-based parking. (2) Return some or all of the meter revenue to the neighborhoods that generate it. Revenue return will make performance-based prices for curb parking politically popular. (3) Reduce or remove off-street parking requirements. Do not require additional parking when a building's use changes. This will give you the freedom from parking requirements which will allow higher density and new uses for old buildings. These Performance Based parking prices will adjust over time to maintain a few vacant spaces. If City Council will set a policy stating we want to see one or two vacant spots on a block from time to time. City Council need to be policy setters not price setters.

These parking benefits will benefit districts. These will become a transportation management tool which will reduce traffic congestion, air pollution and fuel consumption. As an economic development tool it makes curb side parking available, increases sales and property tax revenue, and employs people. So the two goals Dr. Shoup would recommend for Austin are: (1) Keep Austin Weird in which you already have set up, but everyone would eventually have great parking (2) to get Austin wired. A lot of people that are too poor to get Wi-Fi could get it automatically for free at the expense of people who are using public property parking.

Council Member Morrison, stated she enjoyed Dr. Shoup's perspective, but in regards to his parking terms she had a comment to make regarding Whole Foods. When they were building they had a parking request due to the Downtown Mixed Use. Whole Foods changed their parking for more parking even though the City was saying we are limiting you to a certain amount of parking. Council Member Morrison, just wanted to make clear it was the City at this point that was saying minimize your parking and they were saying no this will not work for us.

Dr. Shoup, stated he is not a huge fan of maximum parking limits. In terms of Urban Design it is best to say you do not want curb parking in such a neighborhood or surface parking. If there was surface parking at Whole Foods it would turn into some type of nursery.

Council Member Tovo, thanked Dr. Shoup for his presentation. Permit parking could be a good thing for a neighborhood in regards to protecting the quality of life. But, as for the downtown area, people still do not get the cost of parking as how it does impact their ability of doing other things? So, what might be any other creative things that can be done? What are some ways we might be able to use the meter rate revenues to help others?

Dr. Shoup, stated everyone is impacted by financial increases already. At this point really don't have a good answer for your question on how you could divert revenue from some of the curb parking revenue. But, maybe if you could reduce minimum parking requirements that would make it much cheaper.

3. Discussion on Affordable Housing Siting Policies

Rebecca Guillo, Assistant Director, Neighborhood Housing and Community Development, briefed on the policy resolution from City Council on December 15, 2011 which directed the City Manager to work with the Community Development Commission and other stakeholders to develop recommendations for additional strategies of achieving geographic dispersion of affordable housing. The affordable housing has 3 core values (1) long term affordability, (2) geographic dispersion and (3) deeper levels of affordability.

Kelly Nichols, Policy Manager, Neighborhood Housing and Community Development, discussed the definition of Housing Siting Policy is a policy that directs the deliberate investment of public funding used to achieve desired outcomes. Why would we want to do this? The research of national review of policies and practices are focused on peer cities, identified cities, communities based on comparable constraints and opportunities. There are three categories of practices, strategies, policies which are goal based – sets a target or goal, capacity based – creates a formula and strategic directed investment. The goal base approaches are for a pre-defined geographic area based on a needs analysis of the area or regions. The capacity based approaches creates a formula by which to exempt communities and/or geographic areas from an affordable housing requirement if they can demonstrate they have already reached a quota based on a formulaic capacity. The strategic approaches are a place-based approach in which the jurisdiction targets investment in affordable housing in specific geographic areas. Often this investment is aligned with other systems to ensure maximum efficiency in affordable housing siting.

Council Member Morrison, appreciated staff for coming and presenting to council. Council Member had one comment in regards to the Feasibility Assessment from you list it seems as if this will pretty much be a yes/no type of thing. That these will be very complexed discussions.

Council Member Riley, thanked Rebecca for all the important work on this project. Understanding that there are 3 major goals and we are in the strategic part of the process. But staff is still exploring all the different approaches?

Rebecca stated she feels what is important that we recognize that there could be more than one approach as to what we have looked at with Mueller which could be more of a goal base.

Council Member Cole, asked that Rebecca contact their offices in regards to upcoming events so they may help get the word out to the communities.

Stuart Hersh, Community Housing Development Organization Roundtable, stated thanks for allowing him to share ideas and how these ideas can make difference pertaining to the different issues with the current frame work can evaluate those issues. Taking the old examples and use those in the new method to see how they may work out. The fact that council is not restraining them to have all of their work done by March really gives the community a chance to see how people may be affected.

4. Discussion on E 12th Street Market Study/Neighborhood Side Design Standards

Sandra Harkins, Project Coordinator, Neighborhood Housing and Community Development, stated the East 11th and 12th street goals were to provide a “road map” for implementation of revitalization. The process is the review of existing conditions, stakeholder outreach, identify near-term opportunities and constraints and research and recommend methods for moving forward. There were several recommendations from the study due to these meetings which are development regulations, infrastructure needs, retail and commercial development, housing, public land disposition, parking and East 12th and Chicon. The specific one we are speaking on today is development regulations. The issues are overlap of multiple regulatory documents and approval of projects that don’t meet all documented regulations steps and cost. The strategy is to reconfirm or remove most restrictive requirements where they still exist, update Urban Renewal Plan as a single document reflecting most current information and create specific streetscape plans rather than complying with the general ones in Commercial Design Standards.

Council Member Cole, questioned could we just focus on the next steps?

Sandra Harkins stated, the next steps are to modify the process of East 11th and 12th Streets Urban Renewal Plan. On March 19, 2012, Urban Renewal Board directed staff to amend URP by removing references to ARA as it relates the URP modification process and/or redevelopment controls, replace with current modification process, provide opportunity for stakeholders to discuss concerns related to compatibility, staff to seek, City initiated, NCCD modification.

5. Citizen Communication

Eric Chance, stated there are a number of negative issues in that area that he would like to see compacted. When the NCDD passed these plans there were

no functional neighbor committees in Keiling and David Thompson to bring people together to discuss these standards. People are not happy when they learn of new development behind their house but wasn't able to have input. We really appreciate council's focus on that corridor there and the redevelopment of it.

Council Member Morrison, stated in regards to Item #6 the Staff Update on Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan which we do not have time for. There have been some great discussions from staff providing response to citizens.

Meeting adjourned at 4:03 p.m.