



JOINT PLANNING AND DESIGN COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES DECEMBER 2, 2015

CALL TO ORDER:

Vice Chair Richard Weinman called the special meeting to order at 6:07 PM in the Council Chambers at 9611 SE 36th Street, Mercer Island, Washington.

ROLL CALL:

Planning Commission - Vice Chair Richard Weinman, Commissioners Bryan Cairns, Tiffin Goodman, Jennifer Mechem, Craig Olson, and Suzanne Skone were present. Chair Jon Friedman was absent

Design Commission - Chair Richard Erwin, Vice Chair Colin Brandt, Commissioners Susanne Foster, Daniel Hubbell, Tami Szerlip were present. Commissioners Lara Sanderson and Hui Tian were absent.

Staff was represented by Scott Greenberg, Development Services Group Director, Alison Van Gorp, Administrative Services Manager and Ombudsman, Shana Restall, Principal Planner, and Travis Saunders, Senior Planner.

WRITTEN COMMENTS

Additional comments received today were handed out in hard copy to the Commission, in addition to those provided in the packet.

INFORMATION REQUESTS

Scott Greenberg reviewed the information requests from the last meeting

- The 2014 traffic study will be presented at the next meeting
- Staff has not yet contacted Sound Transit about funding for parking
- Parking impacts from transit will potentially be included in parking study (needs Council approval for funding)
- Mr. Greenberg reviewed growth target data included in the meeting packet cover memo. There is an error in one number – a revised chart will be provided for next meeting
- Mr. Greenberg reviewed affordable housing goals; commissioners discussed existing affordable housing buildings in Town Center

INCENTIVES PROGRAM

Alison Van Gorp provided a summary of how the incentives chart was developed with stakeholders and revised with subcommittee. Shana Restall gave an overview of the current proposal. Commissioners discussed the proposal, offering the following questions and suggestions.

- On commissioner suggested that calling this an incentive program is a misnomer, it should be renamed since it is more of a set of zoning designations and standards.
- If the requirements for height bonuses are directly linked to zones/sub-areas it will drive developers to only build the largest possible building. Perhaps economics would do that anyway? The

Pagliaci proposal is a good example of something that may not be able to be built with this approach. It makes more sense to link requirement to increments of building height.

- Commissioners discussed the merits of smaller open spaces at each development site compared to larger plazas or open spaces that would be built and maintained by the city. The discussion favored a mix of both. Commissioners also recommended that staff pursue further discussion and analysis with the City Attorney around the legal risk and structure of a fee-in-lieu type system of developer contributions.
- Commissioners discussed the right balance between a stronger, more prescriptive code that would give the Design Commission a more effective tool for requiring things of developers and the need for flexibility to enable creative and exceptional ideas to move forward.
- One commissioner suggested that a Town Center Master Plan should be tied to what we are asking of developers in terms of amenities and green features. The plan should address Town Center in a fine grained level - block by block and area by area.
- Commissioners then discussed the changes proposed by the Incentives Subcommittee. One recommendation was to eliminate the affordable retail requirement due to infeasibility. Subcommittee members recommended other strategies to support small, local retail, such as the proposal to require small retail spaces along street fronts and perhaps capping the size of retail spaces. Live work units were also discussed as a favorable option. Limiting chain retail is another option. Shared work space or a business incubator would also be compelling. The public market idea also continues to generate a lot of interest – that would need to be pursued by private interests, perhaps with support from the city (zoning, funding, etc). These are all ways to achieve the goal of affordable retail without requiring developers to subsidize rents.

Direction:

- Rename the incentives the Bonus Height Requirements
- The Incentives Subcommittee should work with staff to refine the Bonus Height Requirements and develop a scope of work for consultant analysis of feasibility.
- The timing of the proposed developer panel should be coordinated with the consultant work on the economic study.

OPEN SPACE

Travis Saunders reviewed the proposed code and opportunity site map. Commissioners discussed the merits of including the opportunity site map in the code as opposed to a policy document like the Comprehensive Plan. Many felt it would be inappropriate to include it in the code – it does not leave flexibility for future opportunities and creates a false expectation that these major open spaces can be achieved with incentives alone. The Commissioners also discussed expanding the opportunity areas to create more flexibility or eliminating the map altogether to keep options open in the future.

Direction:

- Move the opportunity site map to the Comprehensive Plan (do not include in code).
- The portion of the event space north of Sunset Highway should be removed from the map.
- Expand the Walgreens site boundary down to 29th

Chair Erwin left the meeting at 8:21

SUB-AREAS AND BUILDING HEIGHTS

Shana Restall and Scott Greenberg presented the revised subarea map reviewing the changes suggested at the last meeting. Commissioners discussed various options for height limits on specific parcels.

Direction: keep this map and the previous one as two separate height alternatives for further analysis. Commissioners will give direction on heights in the future.

NEXT MEETING:

The next special Joint Commission meeting is scheduled for DECEMBER 16, 2015.

ADJOURNMENT:

Vice Chair Weinman adjourned the Joint Commission meeting at 8:50 PM.