



# JOINT PLANNING AND DESIGN COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES APRIL 6, 2016

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## **CALL TO ORDER:**

Chair Jon Friedman called the meeting to order at 6:02 PM in the Council Chambers at 9611 SE 36th Street, Mercer Island, Washington.

## **ROLL CALL:**

Planning Commission - Chair Jon Friedman; Vice Chair Richard Weinman; Commissioners Craig Olson, and Suzanne Skone were present. Commissioner Bryan Cairns was absent. Commissioner

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

Staff was represented by Kirsten Taylor, Assistant City Manager; Alison Van Gorp, Administrative Services Manager and Ombudsman; Travis Saunders, Senior Planner; Yvonne Defty Administrative Assistant and Scott Greenberg via phone.

Commissioner Goodman arrived at 6:03

## **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Commissioner Olson moved approval of the March 2 meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Chair Erwin and was passed unanimously. Chair Friedman moved approval of the March 16<sup>th</sup> meeting minutes. Commissioner Szerlip seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously.

## **COMMENT DISCUSSION SUMMARY:**

Alison Van Gorp informed Commissioners that there were Google maps without comments in the packets received from Bart Dawson depicting 4 different commercial districts, all much more compact than Mercer Island's Town Center. Comments received in the last couple of days have been provided to the Commission in hard copy. She then introduced consultant Karen Reed to give summary of comments received by the Joint Commission.

Karen summarized her analysis of all public input from two time periods, prior to the first hearing in January and everything after. During Period 2, 203 separate comments were received, and 57 individuals have submitted more than one comment. Karen reviewed common themes from the comments and answered questions from the Commission.

## **DRAFT CODE DISCUSSION:**

Alison Van Gorp led a discussion of several key sections of the draft code, asking the Joint Commission to provide direction to staff. The discussion and decisions made by the Joint Commission are summarized below.

**Building Height:** The Joint Commission reviewed the “Hybrid option” subarea/height limit map proposed by the Code Subcommittee. A few commissioners expressed a concern that the height limits were too low; they favored a 5 story limit throughout Town Center. Several others supported the Hybrid Option as a compromise that reflected all of the input received by the Joint Commission. The Hybrid Option received majority support from the Joint Commission.

The Joint Commission then discussed how building height will be measured, particularly on sloping sites. The proposed method uses a combination of a façade height limit (measured from the sidewalk) and average building elevation. This combined height limit received unanimous support from the Commission.

Next, the Joint Commission discussed the maximum height limits for each of the subareas. For 5 story buildings, 63’ is the maximum height limit. For 4 story buildings it is 51’, for 3 story buildings, 39’ and for 2 story, 27’. For 1-story buildings, there will be a minimum requirement of 18’ and the maximum will be the 2 story building limit of 27’. These height limits received unanimous support from the Joint Commission.

Finally, the Joint Commission had unanimous agreement that in multi-story buildings the ground floor must be a minimum of 15’. There are no other floor height requirements.

Chair Friedman initiated a break at 7:19 and the Commission was reconvened at 7:32 at which point the Draft Code Discussion resumed.

#### **Bonus Height Requirements:**

The Commission unanimously supported the use of the Average Daylight Plane (ADP) concept for upper floor setbacks along street facing facades. The ADP will be a 45 degree angle above the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor and will be measured from the property line. The Commission directed staff to develop updated code language to more clearly describe the debit/credit system. Through block connections would be excluded from the ADP requirement, as would rear and side property lines that do not face on a street. The Commission asked the Code Subcommittee to discuss and bring back a proposal for how to address small/oddly shaped sites with the ADP. They also asked that some Design Commission discretion be included in the code language in regards to application of the ADP and treatment of blank walls along abutting properties.

#### **Plaza and open space 8:00**

The Code Subcommittee proposed striking the 4,000 sq.ft minimum in the current draft of the code, in favor of a straight 3% requirement, which is then scalable to the size of the lot. This concept received support from the Commission. The Commission then discussed in detail whether the through block connection requirement could count towards the plaza requirements and opinions were mixed. Some felt that the economics of development would require some “relief” from all of the requirements the Commission is piling onto some sites. Others felt that it was important to meet both the through block connection and plaza requirements to get the aesthetic result the community is looking for. The Commission asked the Code Subcommittee to discuss this issue further and to bring back a recommendation at the next meeting.

#### **Though block connections:**

The Joint Commission unanimously supported the concept that through-block connections could be created in a number of configurations – curved, jogged or angled, as well as straight. The commission then discussed whether responsibility for providing a connection could be shared across parcel boundaries. Also discussed was whether the connections should be required outright for all

developments, or whether they should be a part of the bonus height requirements for buildings over 2 stories. Some commissioners expressed concerns around requiring the connections outright. Along with the earlier question of whether through block connections could count towards a plaza requirement, the Commission asked the Code Subcommittee to discuss these issues further and bring back recommendations. They also asked staff and the subcommittee to consider whether the city should play a role in creating or maintaining the connections.

### **Affordable housing**

The Joint Commission discussed expanding the affordability requirement beyond what was agreed to at a prior meeting (15% of gross floor areas of floors 4 & 5 should be affordable to those earning 60% AMI). Several Commissioners spoke about the importance of providing affordable housing in the town center and expressed support for a larger requirement. After discussion of whether to expand the requirements to include commercial space (which did not gain a majority of support), the Commission decided to require 15% of all residential units be affordable to 60% AMI. They also decided that a fee-in-lieu option would not be offered. These decisions all received majority support from the Commission.

### **Bonus height requirements:**

Staff inquired whether it is okay to raise the bar so high there is no development in the near term (3-5 years). A slight majority agreed with this statement, while others felt it would be preferable for development to happen at a faster pace.

Staff then asked about 3 story buildings – should these buildings be required to meet the same bonus height requirements as 4 and 5 Story buildings. After some discussion, it was agreed that the Average Daylight Plane requirement scales to the size of the building, so this question primarily applies to the plaza requirement, which only scales to the size of the lot. The Commission directed the Code Subcommittee to discuss this further.

On the question of allowing relief from affordable housing requirements in exchange for provision of the through block connection, a majority of Commissioners did not support trading away affordability requirements.

### **Green Building**

A majority of Commissioners supported a requirement that all buildings be certified LEED Gold or Build Green 4 star.

### **NEXT MEETING:**

The next regular Joint Commission meeting is scheduled for April 20, 2016.

### **ADJOURNMENT:**

Chair Friedman adjourned the Joint Commission meeting at 9:09 PM.