



JOINT PLANNING AND DESIGN COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES DECEMBER 16, 2015

CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Jon Friedman called the meeting to order at 6:07 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, Tiffin Goodman, Jennifer Mechem, Craig Olson, and Suzanne Skone were present. Commissioner Bryan Cairns was absent.

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

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Commissioner Olson moved approval of the November 21 meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Chair Erwin and passed unanimously. Commissioner Hubbell moved approval of the December 2nd meeting minutes with grammatical revisions recommended by the Commission. The motion was seconded by Chair Erwin and passed unanimously.

WRITTEN COMMENTS:

Additional comments received since the packet was produced were handed out in hard copy to the Commission, in addition to those provided in the packet. Commissioners noted the increase in the number of comments since the mailings went out, as well as many commenters that are new to the process.

INFORMATION REQUESTS:

- No new requests

TRANSPORTATION ANALYSIS:

Michael Lapham of KPG provided an overview of the Town Center Traffic Analysis conducted in 2014. Traffic counts were conducted Spring, 2014. Modeling shows that currently most intersections are LOS C or better with one intersection at LOS E and in 2035 most intersections will be LOS C or better and a few will be D. Staff will send out a link to the presentation Michael gave to City Council on the traffic analysis of the whole Island. Commissioners inquired about the mode split used in the analysis (current and 2035) – staff will provide this information at a future meeting.

STREET STANDARDS:

Travis Saunders provided an overview of the proposed street standards. The major discussion items are summarized below.

- Commissioners requested information on the number of angled and parallel parking spaces that can be accommodated on typical streets.
- Commissioners requested some clarification and revisions to the street section diagrams.
- Several commissioners spoke about the need to define what we want in terms of character and user experience for each street. Staff and consultants can then work to design standards that advance those objectives. Safety and ease of use for drivers as well as pedestrian safety should be considerations.
- One commissioner spoke in favor of angled parking – good buffer for sidewalk, easier to use. She felt it was OK to have parking on only one side of the street.
- One commissioner advocated for a mix of parallel and angled parking within one street or block. This could be used to delineate mid-block crossings (e.g. raised crosswalk) and help to break up the longer blocks. This could link to the mid-block connectors.
- A commissioner advocated for at least one north-south bike lane, connecting to transit center. Sharrows are insufficient. She also felt an east-west connection may be needed.
- Another Commissioner provided the context that sharrows were put forward by the stakeholders because they didn't want to dedicate space for bikes since they favored more space for pedestrians.
- One commissioner inquired about requiring larger setbacks to enable wider sidewalks and more parking. Perhaps there can be trade-off in the code to encourage this, such as a reduction in parking requirements for the building.

Direction:

- Staff will develop an updated proposal aimed at encouraging pedestrian access and safety and maximizing on-street parking. A more diverse mix of street types will be considered.

BONUS HEIGHT REQUIREMENTS:

Alison Van Gorp gave an overview of the current proposal on bonus height requirements. The Incentives Subcommittee has recommended a few additions to the elective elements for taller buildings.

Direction:

- Staff will continue to work with the subcommittee and consultants (soon to be hired) to continue to refine the incentives/bonus height requirements. A more detailed proposal will be brought back for review in 2016.
- The Architectural Subcommittee will also work with staff to flesh out the mandatory elements such as setbacks, stepbacks, façade, site design and landscaping features, etc.
- A commissioner recommended that the electives should be boiled down to the top 1 or 2 priorities and other items should be integrated into requirements elsewhere in the code. This recommendation was based on the analysis of peer cities' codes by the Best Practices Subcommittee.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING:

Arthur Sullivan of ARCH gave a presentation on the affordable housing requirements for Town Center. He reviewed the current code provisions as well as providing context on area mean incomes and affordability levels. He provided for consideration options and examples from other cities in east King County. Commissioners inquired about fee-in-lieu options as well as affordability levels required by neighboring cities. Mr. Sullivan plans to continue working with staff and the Joint Commission as the bonus height requirements are formulated.

Direction:

- Commissioners requested that ARCH update the example proforma with values based on the current market rates in Mercer Island.

LAND USES:

Scott Greenberg reviewed the proposal for permitted land uses. Commissioners identified several uses that need further discussion and analysis from the City Attorney (adult entertainment, casino and religious institution). It was also agreed that daycares and schools should be explicitly allowed. Commissioners expressed interest in refining the definition of manufacturing to better fit with business enterprises with hybrid uses such as brew pubs and bakeries. Commissioners agreed that generally the permitted uses should be more consistent across subareas.

Direction:

- Staff will follow up with the City Attorney and update the permitted use chart based on the Joint Commissions feedback.

RETAIL FRONTAGE:

Scott Greenberg reviewed the proposed retail frontage requirements. The proposed primary retail frontage is actually smaller than in the existing code. Commissioners discussed which areas are appropriate for the primary retail area. They also discussed other tools to encourage a mix of sizes and retail uses. One commissioner remains concerned that we are requiring too much retail. Many agreed that we need to wait for the retail consultant's analysis to determine if any revisions are needed to the retail frontage requirements.

Direction:

- Staff will work with consultant to evaluate the proposal.

COMMITTEE UPDATES:

- Commissioner Brandt gave an overview of the Architectural Design Subcommittee's work plan. Commissioners should let Mr. Brandt know if they have questions, comments, suggestions or thoughts on prioritization. He suggested that an outside set of eyes will be needed to review the architectural standards when they are nearing completion to ensure feasibility, clarity, etc.
- Vice-Chair Weinman gave an update on the work of the Best Practices Subcommittee. The subcommittee is analyzing the codes from twelve peer cities and is producing a chart comparing eight relevant code elements. Staff will send out a copy of the chart.
- The Communications Subcommittee will reconvene soon to create a plan for next phase of outreach

NEXT MEETING:

The next special Joint Commission meeting is scheduled for JANUARY 6, 2015.

ADJOURNMENT:

Chair Friedman adjourned the Joint Commission meeting at 9:15 PM.