



JOINT PLANNING AND DESIGN COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES NOVEMBER 21, 2015

CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Jon Friedman called the special meeting to order at 8:12 AM in the Council Chambers at 9611 SE 36th Street, Mercer Island, Washington.

ROLL CALL:

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

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

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Vice Chair Erwin moved to approve the minutes from the October 21, 2015 Joint Commission meeting. Susanne Foster seconded the motion. The minutes were approved (12-0) as written.

WRITTEN COMMENTS

Bart Dawson's comment suggested better organization of vision statement, which was supported by a number of commissioners.

INFORMATION REQUESTS

Scott Greenberg reviewed the status of information requests made at the last meeting.

WORK PLAN

Scott Greenberg reviewed the proposed parking study scope of work. Commissioners discussed the proposal. Many felt an analysis of existing parking conditions was needed as a foundation for projecting future needs. One commissioner suggested considering how we can improve standards around signage and dimensional standards for parking to make it more accessible. Finally another commissioner noted that we need to separate out site specific parking concerns (parking for a specific building or retailer) from issues that impact the larger area, such as commuter parking.

Direction: Ask council to add an existing conditions analysis back into the scope.

UPDATED VISION STATEMENT

Dan Hubbell presented a draft summary of the vision that was conceived by the Communications Subcommittee for use in public communications. Their intent was to remove items that were more prescriptive about the outcomes of this work and concepts were combined to shorten the vision as well. The subcommittee felt this provides a good entry point for people that are new to this discussion. Commissioners supported the condensed vision and provided feedback on the wording.

Direction: the subcommittee will finesse this vision based on feedback from the joint commission, finalizing it for use in the mailer.

COMMUNICATING THE VISION

Dan Hubbell reviewed 2 mailers created by the Communications Subcommittee to go out to the community. Their intent with the mailers was to keep it simple and ask a question – what is your vision? They have tried to break the message down to a level where people can connect emotionally. The reasoning for doing 2 mailers is to create “rolling thunder” approach to keep this in people’s attention. The mailers will provide a brief summary of the schedule and how to get engaged.

Commissioners provided feedback on the layout and wording of the mailers. The Subcommittee will work with staff to finalize the design and get it to the printers in time for a drop date right after Thanksgiving.

SUB-AREAS AND BUILDING HEIGHTS

Shana Restall provided an overview of the subarea map and proposed building height designations. Commissioners discussed the proposal, asking questions to understand the rationale for the proposed heights in specific locations. They also inquired about how the proposed heights relate to GMA growth targets and affordable housing goals. Several commissioners mentioned the importance of building design and stepped back upper floors in making buildings of 4 and 5 stories “work” in Town Center. Commissioners also debated several adjustments to allowed heights on specific parcels, directing staff to bring back alternative options for several properties.

Direction:

- Staff will evaluate an option to increase heights to 5 stories along both sides of 80th north of 30th St.
- Staff will evaluate decreasing height of parcels (from 5 to 4) between 77th and 78th avenues and 28th and 29th streets (Hines).
- Staff will evaluate increasing the height of the western MF zone (along 76th Ave) to 4 stories
- Staff will provide a visual of a building with stepped back upper floors

SETBACKS AND ARCHITECTURAL BUILDING DESIGN STANDARDS

Travis Saunders provided an overview of the proposed setbacks and architectural design standards. Commissioners discussed the challenges the Design Commission has had in implementing these sections of the code. Their preference is for a code that is less subjective and more prescriptive, but perhaps still allowing an avenue for the Design Commission to grant exceptions when warranted. There are many details that must be discussed and worked out in this section, the commission recommended turning that work over to a subcommittee.

Direction:

- Form architectural design standards subcommittee: Colin Brandt, Hui Tian, Tami Szerlip, Tiffin Goodman. Scope to include building height definition as well as architectural standards.
- Form incentives subcommittee to work with staff to flesh out the incentives program: Hui Tian, Craig Olsen, Richard Weinman.

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION

- Commissioners would like additional research on what other cities are doing. Which elements of their codes have been most helpful in achieving vision of an urban town center with a small town feel? What's working, what's not working? Which incentives have been put in place that were not used and why?
- Direction: form best practices subcommittee: Jenni Mechem, Richard Weinman, Suzanne Skone, Tami Szerlip; Hui Tian to provide input as well

NEXT MEETING:

The next special Joint Commission meeting is scheduled for DECEMBER 2, 2015.

ADJOURNMENT:

Chair Friedman adjourned the Joint Commission meeting at 1:00 PM.