

**CITY OF ISSAQUAH**  
**City Council**  
**Planning, Development & Environment Committee**

6:30 PM  
March 17, 2026

**MINUTES**

Council Chambers, 135 E.  
Sunset Way, Issaquah WA

**COUNCIL AND ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL PRESENT**

*Committee Members:*

Lindsey Walsh, Chair  
Kelly Jiang  
Kevin Nichols

*Administration/Staff:*

Wally Bobkiewicz, City Administrator  
Amanda Jackson, Meeting & Records  
Assistant

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Walsh called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

**PUBLIC COMMENT - NONE**

No members of the public were present.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- a) Minutes of February 3, 2026. There being no changes, the minutes were unanimously approved as presented.

**AGENDA ITEMS**

- a) **COM 0251 - Issaquah Climate Action Plan Proposed Policies & Actions**

*Presented by:*

*Stacy Vynne McKinstry, Sustainability Manager*

The Committee provided the following recommendations to staff:

- **Policy 1 - Parking Minimums:** General agreement to remove parking minimums for new and redevelopment of multifamily buildings.
- **Policy 2 - EV Ready Stalls:** General agreement to require EV Capable instead of EV Ready stalls, with a preference of 100% required but at a level lower than EV Capable (just plumbing, tubes, wires - not oversized electrical service).
- **Policy 3 - EV Charging at Fuel Stations:** General agreement not to require electric vehicle charging at fuel stations.
- **Policy 4 - Transit First Policy:** General agreement to give higher priority to transit opportunities, with further consideration for incorporating transit first strategies into the Mobility Action Plan.
- **Policy 5 - Benchmark Program for Building Energy Performance Standards:** General agreement that this would be best as a state-level policy and did not need to be included in the ICAP.
- **Policy 6 - Energy Scores at Time of Sale:** General agreement that that this should not be included in the ICAP.
- **Policy 7 - Energy Efficiency for Home HVAC Equipment:** General agreement to include in the ICAP, but further discussion needed regarding how to accomplish this.
- **Policy 8 - Dark Sky Ordinance:** General support to include in the ICAP.

Other Committee comments included:

- Being mindful and strategic with building requirements to ensure lower cost to build and affordability with being future-ready.
- Balancing function, placement, and aesthetics of street light design to limit light pollution.
- Desire to include a definition of "Frequent Transit" along with visuals.
- Consideration to revert the Policy 1 recommendation to that presented to the Planning Policy Commission; specifically reducing to 0.2 miles around frequent transit.
- Including the regional growth center boundaries in the policy adoption areas.
- Suggestion to use fixed transit infrastructure instead of bus routes in considerations of parking minimums.
- Desire for priority to be given to transit vehicles in Central Issaquah.
- Desire to reconsider how levels of service are calculated for pedestrians to include time waited, like it is for motorists, to help reduce vehicle miles traveled.
- Desire for staff to seek or create incentive programs and partnerships with other agencies to promote non-motorized transportation and equity in cost sharing for electric utility infrastructure upgrades.
- Mindfulness regarding City resources to implement any requirements proposed.
- Consideration of whether energy-related policies would be more effective as state-level policies that the City could advocate for.
- Discussion regarding requirement of electric HVAC equipment when replacement is needed, not requiring time of sale replacement, and further examination of cost to homeowners of such policies.

b) **COM 0257 - Pathway and Timeline for Climate Action Plan Adoption**

*Presented by:*

*Stacy Vynne McKinstry, Sustainability Manager*

The Committee recommended that the Issaquah Climate Action Plan (ICAP) update review process move to the Committee of the Whole meeting in May.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS - NONE**

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:54 PM.

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T. Cassidy Mueller, Deputy City Clerk



# Staff Report

## COM # 0238 – Promoting Building Investments in Issaquah

**Meeting Date**      May 19, 2026  
**Department**      Community Planning & Development  
**Staff Lead**         Minnie Dhaliwal, CPD Director

### Attachments

- A. Goals and Outcomes of the Proposed 2026-2027 Work Plan
- B. Schedule

### Direction Needed from the Planning, Development & Environment Committee

At the May 19, 2026, meeting, staff will present the draft goals and outcomes for the proposed 2026–2027 work plan items. Council approved the proposed work plan on March 9, 2026. Administration is seeking feedback from the PDE Committee on these goals and outcomes.

### Background

The [Central Issaquah Plan](#) was developed to guide the evolution of Central Issaquah from a collection of strip malls and office buildings into a livable, sustainable, and balanced mixed-use urban area serving everyday essentials to residents, employees, and visitors. Since its 2012 adoption, council members, staff, developers, and the community have continued to devote time and effort toward bringing this vision to reality.

On January 31, 2026, a [Council Retreat](#) was held to identify priorities, most of which include removing barriers to housing development. Around the same time, the Mayor met with several developers who identified areas for improvement regarding the City’s permitting processes and Land Use Code.

To promote building investment and transform the City's 900-acre commercial core into a vibrant, sustainable, and walkable mixed-use center, the Administration presented a draft 2026-2027 Work Plan at the [March 9, 2026, City Council Special Meeting](#). At that meeting, the City Council finalized and prioritized seventeen work plan items for 2026-2027.

## Analysis

Discussions with home builders, councils, and the community have resulted in the proposed 2026-2027 Work Plan. Administration has prepared a draft set of goals/outcomes for each of the proposed work plan item for the Planning, Development, and Environment (PDE) Committee's review and input. See Attachment A for the draft goals/outcomes and Attachment B for the proposed schedule.

## Options

The Committee may accept the proposed goals/outcomes as proposed or amend them.

## Impacts – Financial, Policy & Community

Implementing the identified work plan items will help reduce barriers to the redevelopment of Central Issaquah. While there are initial costs, the long-term benefits to the City will far outweigh them.

## Timing & Next Steps

The Planning Policy Commission (PPC) will review each of the proposed code amendments, seek community input, hold a public hearing, and finalize their recommendation to the PDE Committee. The PDE Committee will review the PPC recommended draft and finalize their recommendation for the full Council to adopt the proposed code changes.

The first-round of code amendments will come to the City Council for adoption in June 2026. See Attachment B for the detailed schedule.

## Promoting Building Investment in Central Issaquah

### Part 1-Umbrella Goals

To transform its 900-acre commercial core into a vibrant, sustainable, and walkable urban center, the City’s goal is to remove barriers, streamline processes, and create financial incentives to promote development in the Central Issaquah Plan area.

Key Strategies: Removing Regulatory Barriers, Improving Permit Processes, Creating Incentives, Proactive Investment Marketing

### Part 2-Specific goals of each of the proposed 2026-2027 work plan item

	TOPIC	Issues	Goal/Objectives	Possible Actions
1	Outdoor amenity space requirements	Feedback from developers that Issaquah’s private outdoor space requirements are excessive and requirements for more balconies create water penetration issues for buildings.	Balance outdoor amenity space requirements with development feasibility. Recognize that amenities like rooftop decks, patios, balconies, and plazas foster community and enhance quality of life, facilitating connections among residents and creating a sense of belonging as suburban areas transform into dense urban environments	Reduce private balcony requirements while preserving common outdoor space standards.  Streamline the code to eliminate the need for frequent deviation requests.  Provide flexibility in open space requirements for existing office/hotel buildings to affordable-housing conversions.
2.	Stepback Requirements	Developers noted that stepbacks cause several issues:  Higher Construction Costs: Structural and plumbing alignment challenges.  Reduced Revenue: Lower square footage.  Moisture Risks: Increased penetrations on the building envelope	Reduce multiple stepbacks requirements while still achieving the overall goal of architectural interest along the public realm.	Eliminate multiple stepback requirements  Eliminate stepbacks along natural context areas and only require along public streets.  Allow flexibility in the location of stepbacks.
3	Self-Certification of ADUs	Permitting can be complex and daunting for homeowners who may want to undertake construction of ADUs.	Streamline the process for the construction of detached ADUs	Evaluate self-certification as allowed under <a href="#">HB 1353</a> vs preapproved plans programs similar to <a href="#">Kirkland's preapproved DADU program</a> . Option 1 will require code amendment and Option 2 will require implementation program. Staff recommends Option 2
4	Floor Area Ratio	There is an inconsistency between the base/maximum height and the corresponding FAR requirements. For instance, in the MUR zone, the max FAR is 2 with a base height of 40 feet and a max	Align the height and FAR requirements to get additional affordable units under the Development Density Bonus Program.	Increase FAR requirements in MUR in coordination with #15 Inclusionary Zoning / Development Bonus / Multifamily Tax Exemption item.

		height of 65 feet. However, depending on the shape and size of the lot, a max FAR of 2 likely means only 40-foot buildings will be constructed. Consequently, no one will utilize the Development Density Bonus Program, resulting in no affordable units being added.		
5	Parking Requirements	Parking is not land's highest and best use and generates negative impacts such as dirty stormwater, aesthetic "dead" zones, etc. Majority of Central Issaquah is surface parking lots.	Early adoption of state law changes, significantly lowering parking requirements and bringing the city into compliance with <a href="#">SB 5184</a>	Adopt minimum parking required per <a href="#">SB 5184</a>  Eliminate or keep current maximum parking requirements  Establish minimum accessible parking requirements prior to the guidance from the State Building Code Council.
6	Natural Context Areas / Transparency Requirements	It is difficult to meet energy code requirements with significantly large windows (over 30% of the façade).	Provide flexibility in transparency requirements along natural context areas.	Eliminate/reduce transparency requirements along natural context areas.
7	Allow multifamily in UV-COM/RET	<a href="#">SB 6026</a> requires cities to allow multifamily in all commercial zones. Issaquah allows multi-family in all commercial zones except UV-COM/RET	Comply with <a href="#">SB 6026</a>	Allow multifamily in UV-COM/RET
8	Architectural/Design Standards	Lack of flexibility for architectural/design standards	Provide flexibility in design standards while still meeting the vision of the <a href="#">Central Issaquah Plan</a> that was developed "to guide the evolution of Central Issaquah from a collection of strip malls and office buildings into a more livable, sustainable and balanced mixed use urban area serving everyday essentials to residents, employees and visitors."	Provide a menu of options/guidelines to meet the objective of architecturally well-designed buildings.
9	Variances/Deviations	Developers have requested additional flexibility with an expanded list of deviations.	Balance flexibility and predictability, ensuring land use decisions are based on code criteria, not arbitrary or capricious reasoning.	Seek input from developers on specific standards that need flexibility.  Create specific code criteria for any additional standards that are added to the allowed deviations list.
10	Through Block Connectors	Additional flexibility is desired in the location of through block connectors	Allow pedestrian and bike connectivity on the valley floor while facilitating building placement and taking site specific conditions into consideration.	Add flexibility for the location of through block connectors.
11	Peer Review	Developers have questioned the need for peer review of technical studies submitted as part of the permit application.	While maintaining public safety goals, look for opportunities to reduce costs associated with peer review, which are covered by the applicant.	Eliminate peer review of reports such as lighting and landscaping inspection review that can be handled by internal staff with additional training.

				For peer review of critical area studies and geotechnical reports-explore if a selected list of technical professionals can be created by the city and if the applicant selects one from the city's preselected consultant list, if the city could forgo peer review.  Conduct a Request for Proposals process to select peer reviewers.
12	Ways to mitigate redevelopment if close to/within paved buffers to increase developability	Large existing parking areas lie within stream and wetland buffers, preventing the owner from redeveloping them. As a result, there is no incentive for redevelopment, resulting in no improvements to stormwater or buffer functions.	Create incentives for redevelopment of paved areas within wetland/stream buffers while improving environmental conditions resulting in net environmental gain	Allow expansion in paved areas while requiring stormwater improvements and other ecological improvements within the unpaved buffer.
13	More options to meet Sustainable Development Standards <a href="#">IMC18.602.050.K</a>	Affordable housing developments must meet Evergreen Sustainable Development Standard (ESDS) requirements. Therefore, requiring additional LEED Platinum certification adds costs without significantly improving sustainability goals. Developers have requested that LEED Platinum or an equivalent standard be allowed.	Provide a clear pathway for demonstrating sustainable design; ensure consistent and objective verification processes meeting industry standards.	Provide a menu of options for sustainable certifications.
14	Structured Parking Retail Frontage Requirement	Feedback from developers that this requirement adds costs and results in empty retail storefronts.	Provide flexibility on how best to activate/design structured parking front along the public realm	Add other options for façade activation along sidewalks such as art, murals, modulation etc.
15	Inclusionary Zoning / Development Bonus / Multifamily Tax Exemption (EcoNW Report)	The EcoNW report recommends adjusting inclusionary zoning and the Dev Bonus Program to ensure market feasibility. Currently, only the first two projects under the Pioneer program allow for the MFTE. In addition, the TOD-OC project and the Shelter Development Agreement allow for MFTE participation.	Recalibrate Inclusionary Zoning / Development Bonus incentive to help improve development feasibility while meeting city's affordable housing goals.	Establish MFTE program with right sizing inclusionary/dev bonus/FAR requirements.
16	Right Size Impact Fees	The last impact fee study was done in 2019. The feedback from developers is that Issaquah's impact fees are a big regulatory burden and project feasibility is severely impacted.	Right-size impact fees for new growth to ensure they pay a pro-rata share of their impact to fund the city's capital facilities needs	Further conversations are needed to identify next steps, particularly how to coordinate transportation and parks long term planning efforts with impact fee study.
17	Potential use of AI to aid in Permitting	How best to utilize the latest technology to streamline permitting process?	Find ways to incorporate AI in permitting to improve business processes and make them more efficient, consistent and predictable.	Explore options for collaborating with e-city gov alliance.  Explore options for completeness reviews and rapid responses to frequently asked questions.