

**CITY OF ISSAQUAH
City Council Special Meeting – Social Gathering**

6:30 PM
December 14, 2021

MINUTES

Big Fish Grill
984 NE Park Dr.

COUNCIL AND ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL PRESENT

Councilmembers Present:
Barbara de Michele
Stacy Goodman
Zach Hall
Victoria Hunt, Mayor Pro Tem
Lindsey Walsh

Administration/Staff Present:
Wally Bobkiewicz, City Administrator
Andrea Snyder, Deputy City Administrator
Christine Eggers, Chief of Staff
Tisha Gieser, City Clerk
Rachel Bender Turpin, Incoming City Attorney

Russell Joe, Councilmember-elect

Certain attendees also brought a guest.

SOCIAL GATHERING

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Pro Tem Victoria Hunt at 6:35 PM.

The purpose of this special meeting was to allow the City Councilmembers to meet socially to share a meal at a local restaurant.

Mayor Pro Tem Hunt made opening comments, and a meal was shared.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 PM.

Tisha Gieser, City Clerk

Victoria Hunt, Mayor Pro Tem



CITY COUNCIL
AGENDA BILL

City Council Regular Meeting - 03 Jan 2022

UPDATED
AB 8303 -

Consent Calendar

Central Issaquah Step Back Standards in Title 18 **Proposed Council Action:**
Refer to Planning Policy Commission

DEPARTMENT OF	Executive Department Gene Paul
OTHER COUNCIL MEETINGS	Dec. 6, 2021
COMP PLAN POLICY NOS.	n/a
OTHER POLICIES	n/a
EXHIBITS	A. Current Step Back Requirements from Central Issaquah Development and Design Standards B. Transit-Oriented Development Conceptual Design C. Presentation, Dec. 6

SUMMARY STATEMENT

Introduction

~~This agenda bill seeks City Council authorization to pursue an amendment of the step back standards found in the Central Issaquah Development & Design Standards separate from the Title 18 land use code update project.~~

This agenda bill seeks City Council referral of an amendment of the step back standards found in the Central Issaquah Development & Design Standards to the Planning Policy Commission (PPC) for a recommendation. See Update section for the latest information.

Background

The Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) project would be the first mixed-use project developed since the adoption of the Central Issaquah Development and Design Standards (CIDDS). These standards were adopted after the City issued the Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Request for Proposals and selected both a developer and TOD concept. The development team has identified a number of standards that challenge the original concept (such standards are listed in the [draft Memorandum of Understanding \(MOU\)](#) that was discussed at the March 15, 2021 Council meeting) and they have requested some code amendments to resolve these challenges. The Administration has evaluated all their requests and proposes only moving forward with one code revision to the step back requirement.

The current version of CIDDS Chapter 18, the Architecture & Urban Design Manual, identifies a number of step back requirements that are relevant for the TOD project. The relevant pages are provided as Exhibit A but summarized here:

- For Northwest Contemporary Style buildings, “if taller than five (5) floors, step back above fifth (5th) floor”
- “For buildings within Central Issaquah’s Natural Context Zone (defined in UD.1.1.1), provide a minimum step back of ten (10) feet and maximum of twenty (20) feet for all floors above the fourth that face the natural area.”

The TOD project developers currently envision a project concept that would have a step back beginning after 25 feet, or the first three floors. The visualization of this concept, Exhibit B, depicts a 5-foot step back on the right-hand side of the drawing.

Modern mixed-use developments above four stories will commonly have a concrete podium for the first one or two stories and wood construction above. This type of construction will increase in the Central Issaquah area. As a particular example, the TOD concept has a concrete podium structure for the first three floors before transitioning (with a step back) to a wooden-frame residential structure for the rest of the building. The most cost-effective construction would be to stack the residential units and maintain uniform walls throughout the upper building. Accommodating another step back at a different level than the third would decrease the size and number of both affordable and market-rate residential units and increase construction costs. The step back at a higher floor decreases the size of the floor plate, which would also likely mean that planned family-size units would be converted to one-bedroom or studio apartments.

The Administration believes step backs at the third floor would better achieve the City’s objective of using articulation to reduce the perceived building massing and enhance the pedestrian experience. Therefore, the Administration is proposing a code amendment similar to the City of Redmond’s Overlake Village Zone Standards ([Redmond Municipal Code 21.62.030.E.2.b](#)). In Redmond, for buildings over six stories, the “step back shall begin by floor seven and may begin as low as floor two.” Applying this flexibility to step backs in the CIDDS would allow step backs to begin at the fourth

or fifth floor but also at the third. During the process of the code revision, the Administration would also explore whether the community's goals of reduced perceived building massing could still be achieved by a 5-foot step back instead of the current 10-feet.

Title 18 Ad Hoc Council Committee Review

At the March 15, 2021 City Council meeting, the Council adopted [Resolution 2021-06](#) establishing a procedure and criteria for considering changes to Title 18 outside of the update project. This procedure was a three-step process that included:

- The Administration providing information to the Ad Hoc committee based on the established criteria
- The Ad Hoc committee making a recommendation based on the criteria
- The City Council ultimately approving, denying or approving the recommendation with modifications.

At the Nov. 10 Ad Hoc Committee meeting, the Administration presented the following information based on the criteria found in Resolution 2021-06:

- Is there urgency or time sensitivity? The current TOD project timeline expects the purchase and sale agreement (PSA) to close in the January-February 2022 timeframe. Following the PSA, the developers will engage with their architects and update designs before applying for permits in the June-July timeframe. Therefore, there is time sensitivity as the developers need clarity around the design standards in the first quarter of 2022. Construction financing timelines do not allow for a six-month or more delay in the design phase.
- What is the budgetary and/or resource (staff) impact? Any proposed code amendments to the CIDDs will be handled by existing city staff.
- Is there other planned work that would be delayed as a result? The Administration believes this is a very simple code amendment and should not take a lot of resources or time to process. The code amendment process would require the review and approval of the Planning Policy Commission (PPC) if the City Council authorized this item for a separate track. The code amendment could be added to the PPC calendar in January with the educational sessions on Building and Design concepts in Title 18, but there is the possibility that other Title 18 work could be somewhat delayed as a result of PPC focusing on this code amendment.
- What benefit (public or otherwise) would be gained (conversely, what is lost by not pulling the topic out)? By not considering the code amendment on a separate track, the TOD project would likely face increased construction costs and decrease the size and number of both affordable and market-rate residential units. Although it is difficult to estimate without further architectural design, there is also a possibility where a smaller building size could make the project financially infeasible.
Taking a step back from the specific TOD project, other future projects and the community could also benefit from the code amendment. The code amendment could preserve the pedestrian experience and views that the original code intended while also providing increased flexibility to developers in Central Issaquah.
- Are there tradeoffs or potential conflicts with other parts of Title 18? No tradeoffs or potential conflicts have been identified. If any conflicts are identified in the revision process, staff can cross reference and make notes for those sections that may have overlap and those could be addressed later with Title 18 update.
- Other relevant considerations: None.

The three Councilmembers of the committee unanimously agreed that in their opinion, this topic met the criteria for considering on a separate track. Their recommendation to full Council is for the step back code amendment to be considered separately and in advance of the rest of the Title 18 update.

Proposal

The Administration is proposing that the City Council consider the Ad Hoc Committee's recommendation and approve the step back standards found in the CIDDs for a separate track from the Title 18 land use code update project.

Next Steps

At the Dec. 6 City Council meeting, the Administration will provide a presentation prior to requesting Council consideration of the recommendation for this topic's separate track from the Title 18 update. If the City Council approves the recommendation, the Administration intends to add this item to the Planning Policy Commission's calendar in January 2022.

In terms of the TOD project itself, negotiations continue between the property owner and the City's chosen developer team. The purchase and sale agreement is anticipated to be signed by the end of 2021 and would be followed by a 90-day feasibility period before the sale is final. The following are all of the anticipated Council actions relating to the TOD project:

1. The potential code revision to the step back requirement. (Anticipated Spring 2022)
2. The condominium agreement for the Opportunity Center space between the City and King County Housing Authority. (Anticipated Summer 2022)

3. The rental agreement with HeathPoint to provide services from the a Opportunity Center space. (Anticipated Summer of 2022)

Financial Information

There would be no impacts to the budget since any proposed code amendments to the CIDDs will be handled by existing city staff.

Administration's Recommendation

~~The Administration recommends the City Council approve the placement of the step back standards found in the Central Issaquah Development & Design Standards on a separate track from the Title 18 land use code update project.~~

The Administration recommends the City Council refer the topic of amendments to the step back standards found in the Central Issaquah Development & Design Standards to the Planning Policy Commission for review and recommendation, returning to the City Council in the first quarter of 2022.

Update

At the Dec. 6 2021 City Council meeting, the Administration provided a presentation on the proposal to place the step back standards on a separate track from the Title 18 land use code update project. The City Council directed the Administration to add the topic of the proposed change to the Consent Calendar at the first Council meeting in January for referral to the Planning Policy Commission (PPC) and then approved the placement of the step back standards on a separate track from the Title 18 land use code update project. The Administration intends to present the topic at a January PPC meeting and obtain the PPC recommendation at a second meeting in the first quarter of 2022. Pending the recommendation from PPC, the item will return to the City Council for action in the first quarter of 2022.

Alternative(s)

- ~~1) Do not approve the separate track for the step back standards. (Impact: The TOD project will likely not be able to wait for the Title 18 update project before final design and permit application. Accommodating another step back at a higher story than the third would decrease the size and number of both affordable and market rate residential units and increase construction costs.)~~
- ~~2) Approve the recommendation to consider this code amendment in advance of the other Title 18 updates with additional modifications or considerations.~~
- ~~3) Postpone the approval to a future City Council meeting. (Impact: The Administration would not be able to begin the code revision process with the Planning Policy Commission in January when the relevant Title 18 topics are scheduled.)~~

RECOMMENDATION

Administration / Executive Department:

MOVE TO:

~~Approve the placement of the step back standards found in the Central Issaquah Development & Design Standards on a separate track from the Title 18 land use code update project.~~

MOVE TO: Refer the topic of amendments to the step back standards found in the Central Issaquah Development & Design Standards to the Planning Policy Commission for review and recommendation, returning to the City Council in the first quarter of 2022.

Attachment A

2.0 ARCHITECTURE

Central Issaquah Architecture & Urban Design Manual

A.2.1.2 | NORTHWEST CONTEMPORARY STYLE

Scale

Objective

Use step backs and facade articulation to reduce the perceived building size. Avoid monolithic buildings.

Description

Variation and articulation can be applied across the facade both vertically and horizontally to create rhythm and visual interest to break up the building mass. This will help larger buildings appear less massive and more modestly proportioned. This Style is well suited for buildings five (5) stories or higher, but any allowed height is acceptable from one story to the maximum height allowed in the underlying zone.



Appropriate: Large building articulated as smaller individual buildings
(Image: Mosaic Homes)

Appropriate

- a. Building lengths less than 250 feet
- b. Tripartite composition required for buildings greater than five stories, optional for shorter buildings
- c. If taller than five (5) floors, step back floors above fifth (5th) floor (step back minimum five (5) feet, maximum twenty (20) feet)
- d. Top floor as penthouse floor
- e. For buildings longer than 100 feet, use vertical articulation of facade (e.g., material and/or plane change) approximately every twenty-five (25) feet or aligning with structural bays
- f. Vertical facade articulation through plane change or indentation/projection shall be a minimum depth of twelve (12) inches



Appropriate: Change of materials and step back above four floors
(Image: Crandall Arantula)

Inappropriate

- g. Buildings that are four (4) floors or less that incorporate more than one upper floor step back, degrading the street wall
- h. Multiple changes in facade height creating a chaotic rhythm



Appropriate: Long street wall articulated with subtle rhythmic change of materials and indentations or setbacks
(Images: Crandall Arantula)

URBAN CORE

Attachment A

3.0 URBAN DESIGN

Central Issaquah Architecture & Urban Design Manual

UD.2.3.2.3 BUILDING EDGES

Setbacks and Step Backs | Natural Areas

Objective

Buildings in the "Natural Context Zone" shall be stepped back to provide visual relief between the natural and built environments. Setback areas shall connect the building(s) and site uses to the natural area rather than divide them.

Description

For buildings within Central Issaquah's Natural Context Zone (defined in UD.1.1.1), provide a minimum step back of ten (10) feet and maximum of twenty (20) feet for all floors above the fourth floor that face the natural area. Place uses and activities in the setback from the natural area, to orient to and build on its presence, rather than divide the site from the natural area.



Appropriate: Building oriented to natural area (Image: Flickr: La Citta Vita)



Inappropriate: Parking located between buildings and natural area (Image: Crandall Avambula)

Appropriate

- a. All native plant material landscape transitions and upper floor building step backs that foster a graceful transition between the built and natural environments
- b. Balconies, stoops, and porches facing natural areas
- c. Terraces on stepped-back upper floors
- d. Public access—walkways between regulated creek or wetland open space and the building frontage

Inappropriate

- e. Driveways, parking, loading, or storage areas between buildings and open spaces
- f. Parking lots abutting natural areas
- g. Parking structures and building service areas oriented to natural areas

SITE