

Development Commission
5-03-17

**CITY OF ISSAQUAH
DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
MINUTES
May 3, 2017**

City Hall South
Council Chambers

135 E. Sunset Way
Issaquah, WA 98027

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

Richard Sowa, Chair
Mel Morgan, Jr., Vice Chair
Michael Brennan
Randy Harrison
Kevin Price
Robert Bakh, Alt.
Ryan Roeter, Alt.
Richard Sanford, Alt.

STAFF PRESENT

Keith Niven, Economic and Dev. Serv. Director
Lucy Sloman, Land Development Manager

OTHERS PRESENT

Don Arambula, Crandall/Arambula
Jason Graf, Crandall/Arambula

CALL TO ORDER

SOWA, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOVED BY MORGAN, SECONDED BY HARRISON that minutes of the Development Commission meeting on April 19, 2017 be approved as presented. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

OTHER BUSINESS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Sloman introduced two new alternate members (ROETER, SANFORD) present tonight. She noted elections for Commission Chair and Vice Chair will be held at the next Development Commission meeting.

MORATORIUM WORK PLAN: Architectural Fit and Design (Discussion of Character, Architectural Fit, and Urban Design Framework Components)

Niven gave some background on why the Commission is discussing architectural fit and design, including some information on why the Council enacted a moratorium late last year. He referred to the City's Web site on the moratorium, which gives details about the work staff is doing on each of the topics identified by the Council to be explored during the moratorium. He explained why architectural fit and urban design are being addressed by the Development Commission.

He continued with the reasons why consultants, such as Crandall/Arambula, were retained to advise staff and the City on some of the topics in the moratorium. He noted the Council received a six-month extension of the original moratorium closure date from the state, and now the objective is to come to some closure on the items in the moratorium in time to bring the moratorium to an end in September 2017.

MORGAN asked is there a limit on how many times the City can reapply to the state for a moratorium. Niven explained a city can be sued if it has a perpetual moratorium in place. We are doing what we can to bring it to a conclusion, he said, and gave some alternate scenarios that the Council might consider in addressing the September deadline for the moratorium.

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HARRISON said he is aware that Newcastle elected to have a moratorium on new building a year or so ago, and asked are you aware of any others. Niven said Issaquah elected to put a moratorium on new building some years ago due to water supply issues, specifically because it had hit its water capacity limitation. He referred to moratoriums in Newcastle, Mercer Island, Sammamish, and others, and said in general, moratoriums are often a general reaction to the pace and scale of growth.

Don Arambula, Crandall/Arambula, 520 SW Yamhill Street, Suite 4, Portland, Oregon 97204, began the firm's presentation, "Preferences Workshop, Central Issaquah Architectural Fit and Urban Design Project." BRENNAN asked the consultant to comment on what specifically the consultant is looking for from the Commission in terms of comments, suggestions, and feedback. Arambula said we are looking for direction so we can develop a draft document for the City on architectural fit and urban design. He continued tonight we are trying to frame ideas for you that will be translated into that document. We want it to be not just our opinion, but yours and the community's as well, so we are basing it on what we have heard and learned. We are seeking feedback from you at all points in the process of developing the manual, he concluded.

He continued with a discussion of the project schedule, including activities accomplished, those under way, and what is planned, leading to a conclusion in August. He discussed the project tasks and reviewed the work done so far that has led to an initial assessment. Tonight, he continued, we plan to present a framework for further discussion and use your reactions and feedback to guide the development of a manual that can be used to evolve Central Issaquah into a livable, sustainable, and balanced mixed-use area.

He said tonight's presentation will be organized around five principles: *environment, transportation, housing, economic vitality, and sense of community*. The following are highlights of the Commissioner's comments and discussion during the presentation.

Environment

HARRISON spoke of the importance of the Issaquah salmon hatchery and the Issaquah Creek in general to the City, and said any proposed development has to be planned with awareness of the standards and regulations in place to protect those important environmental amenities. He mentioned buffers as being an important feature to preserve and protect the creek environment. Arambula agreed, and said in some cases, we are proposing a front- or side-door orientation to the creek area, not a back-door orientation, something that isn't always present today.

Transportation

Arambula discussed trip counts on major arterials; traffic volumes; the use of Gilman as a regional pass-through street; where development is bifurcated; and how the central district can be characterized now as a place to drive through and not a destination. He spoke of the need to accommodate residential traffic and make central Issaquah more of a destination; more definition of the Green Necklace; rethinking Gilman as more of a signature street; options for an identity for Gilman; and ways to get more street-oriented retail on Gilman.

HARRISON asked how Gilman Village would figure into this concept, noting that when he moved here in 1989, Gilman Village was considered a tourist attraction. It still seems viable but also somehow isolated, he continued, although those people who know about it seem to love it.

MORGAN said he likes the idea of Gilman as a signature street that is a more personable street for pedestrians, with more separation from I-90. He noted it is likely classified now as a parkway. Arambula noted the City has enough capacity on a lot of its other streets, and is not under any

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more obligation to provide more capacity to people moving through the community. He showed where he thinks the real gateways to central Issaquah are on a diagram, on either end of Gilman.

BRENNAN said he also likes the idea of Gilman Blvd. being a signature street. He continued one challenge will be that Gilman handles a lot of traffic, and all that traffic will have to go somewhere, creating more congestion elsewhere. He noted there are also environmental challenges in building on the south side, as we learned with the Atlas Apartments. He said he likes the idea of gateways to frame the experience of both coming into and leaving central Issaquah, and that it might be easier to locate a gateway at Front Street rather than at the intersection with I-90, which would require a lot of investment and rethinking how the area is now used.

MORGAN said at the last PPC meeting, the Commission discussed the proposed Olde Town Subarea Plan Update, which included a recommendation from staff to change the Olde Town boundary. The change, which was not in the Commission's recommendation, would have reduced Olde Town and moved the boundary further south. Part of their discussion was the location of a gateway to Olde Town, he continued, and it's interesting to think about the option of a double gateway to both Olde Town and central Issaquah. PRICE said he likes the idea of considering a third gateway, and noted that development is moving in the direction of East Lake Sammamish. Arambula said we can take a look at that.

HARRISON said there was a lot of citizen concern about trees that needed to be removed on Front Street during work on the water main. He said he would suggest that preservation of trees on Gilman will be important, and if they need to be taken down, to be sure the public gets clear messages about how that change would be accommodated. Arambula said he understands that would be an issue of concern, and noted that different segments of Gilman might be treated differently.

He continued his presentation on issues related to pedestrian and bicycle connections; light rail as a result of ST3; and a potential light rail alignment and stations. He said all of this is subject to change, but it is important to get out ahead of light rail coming to Issaquah, and be proactive rather than reactive. He showed the potential light rail alignment on a diagram and noted that Issaquah would be a terminus point.

HARRISON said during the discussion at the April 5 meeting, you indicated that the Highlands seemed like an obvious terminus. Arambula said going to the Highlands and having the terminus being in the Pickering Barn area is a strong idea as well. He continued his presentation on the value of creating ideal TOD (transit oriented development) opportunities. BRENNAN said he agreed that light rail will bring a new range of opportunities for TOD, and noted that ST3 was not on the radar when the CIP was being developed. He said we need to build in some tools to effectively prepare for when light rail gets here, and to be able to make quick adjustments. Arambula agreed.

HARRISON asked what are the differences in parking requirements for transit stations that are mid-way on the alignment and a station that is at the end of the alignment. Arambula said that depends on commuters' origins and destinations, and noted that people tend to drive as close to their final destination as possible rather than drive and park at the very end. He said that would be a bigger discussion, and while a significant park-and-ride (P&R) facility would be needed at the end point, it may not need to be the largest P&R in the region. MORGAN mentioned the option of having P&R lots near Preston and Highway 18 that would bring commuters in shuttles to the light rail station in Issaquah. Arambula said that's an option, although it discourages commuters every time they are required to change modes. MORGAN said his thinking is that we

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don't want to focus too much just on making it convenient for non-resident commuters to access light rail in Issaquah. Arambula agreed.

Housing

Arambula discussed the importance of establishing a grid that will help lead to more ideal housing neighborhoods. He showed a diagram of the grid concept overlaid on a map of the central Issaquah area, with no blocks longer than 400 feet or wider than 240 feet. He also showed where pedestrian circulation streets could exist on large blocks. Arambula said the ideal housing environment would be no more than three blocks from an urban amenity, such as a trail, park, and so on. So the result would be housing satellites around amenities and transit.

Economic Vitality

Arambula showed a grid diagram of where retail should be focused, and said retail is the most important element in each district. He said retail doesn't have to be the same type in each district, but all should be street- and pedestrian-oriented. He said a signature street like we are thinking for Gilman needs hubs of retail, with places for outdoor dining and curbside parking. He said hubs of retail will give you the 18-hour environment you are seeking, and will encourage housing without necessarily having to require it. Graf referred to the Fremont neighborhood in Seattle as an example of aggregate commercial uses. Arambula noted that the big-box retail environment is changing, but street-oriented neighborhood retail is still strong. HARRISON asked what is an example of how the City might require where retail needs to be located. Arambula said the intent would be to streamline the requirements and give a basic framework for where mixed-use should go. It's been a moving target for the City so far, and the goal is to design an urban design framework that will create a successful retail environment. He spoke in favor of thinking about mixed use less in vertical terms than in horizontal terms. He said his firm will translate these concepts into a guiding document for the City that will give that general direction, so that developers can match or do better than what is in the guidelines.

Sense of Community

Arambula continued his presentation by discussing five elements that are important in creating a checklist that the City can use in aiding project design that will fulfill City's expectations in terms of architectural fit. Those five elements are form, massing, scale, materials, and color. He said we are thinking of three different types of design guidelines that would be specific to the central Issaquah location, and are looking for your feedback tonight so we will know which ones to pursue and which are less favored.

He continued with a discussion of three proposed styles for redevelopment and new development, including showing extensive examples and photos of each: Urban Core Style; Issaquah Style; and Industrial Style. He noted that what they are defining as Issaquah Style would consist of four subcategories of "historic eclecticism"--Craftsman; Arts and Crafts; Northwest Lodge; and Western False Front.

He concluded his presentation on the next steps in creating a draft document for further discussion with the City that will address the grid concept in more detail as well as street hierarchy, standards for ground-floor retail, maximum building heights, parks and greenways, and so on. He said the idea is to reduce all these ideas to diagrams that can be used in making decisions on development proposals.

Commissioner Discussion

SOWA said he appreciates the notion of being more prescriptive on style; right now, we seem to be expecting everything everywhere, and getting nothing anywhere. We said the pictorial

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presentation was particularly helpful. Some of the Urban Core style examples look a little stark to him, he said, but in context he can see where they make sense. Arambula said the goal is to create consistency and not be overly prescriptive. He spoke in favor of buildings that are mostly dark or light, and become “background buildings.” The overall composition of the neighborhood takes precedence over any single building. A background building approach also helps emphasize greenery and open space, he continued, and appears less chaotic.

BAHR referred to the pleasing pedestrian experience of walking on a straight walkway on a grid near the Dicks’ Sporting Goods in the Highlands. He added his reservation about the Arts and Crafts style is that it could appear too much like Leavenworth, whereas he sees Issaquah’s historical context as more western/logging/mining. MORGAN said he agreed. Arambula said the Craftsman style can be difficult to work with for large-size buildings. MORGAN asked would the Northwest Lodge style work well on larger buildings. Arambula said yes. He said the beauty of your Olde Town is its variety, and we offered Arts and Crafts as an option so that developers weren’t too boxed in, but we have no problem taking that off the table. PRICE said he doesn’t have a problem with keeping the Arts and Crafts style as an option, and thinks its inclusion can add to the overall richness. He added the City’s agricultural history is also an important part of its past and could also be referenced. Arambula said that’s a good idea and we will pursue it.

HARRISON said he would like to receive materials, such as what was shown in the slides tonight, in advance if possible so that he can have an opportunity to look at them and not just react to what is presented at the meeting. Arambula said they will work with staff to accomplish that for the next meeting. HARRISON asked will the information to be presented at the next meeting give us an idea of what is being proposed for properties adjacent to Issaquah Creek. Arambula replied yes.

He continued with more information about the project schedule.

HARRISON asked whether the consultants have had an opportunity to see citizen surveys undertaken by the City that indicate what citizens indicate are priorities. MORGAN agreed, and said there was a recent survey on Olde Town that could be very useful in looking at other parts of the City as well. Staff made a note of it and said they will get that information to the consultants.

MORGAN said he likes the idea of having buildings that are light and dark. He said he agreed that a few of the depictions for the Urban Core Style seemed a bit stark, and asked about including balconies. Arambula said we can discuss that in more detail; the depictions we chose to show you don’t include balconies because they tend to distract from the concept we wanted to present to you tonight.

SOWA added we have heard public comment that the City isn’t building anything really distinctive or unique to our community, and the Industrial and Issaquah Style examples could really help alleviate that.

MORGAN asked about the historical district on the east part of Gilman and Front Street, where the Triple XXX Rootbeer Drive-In is located, which has had a “historical highway” style. He asked how that would fit with the ideas about Industrial Style. Arambula said it sounds like you are referring to a kind of “Route 66” look, and added we are still looking at the land uses there. PRICE referred to Boehm’s as another important landmark, as well as The Grange. Arambula said one approach would be to try to morph those areas into the eclectic Issaquah Style. He said we can definitely take a closer look at all those suggestions, and said he is especially interested in the agricultural suggestion.

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PRICE said on the issue of implementation, what comes first; gateways and then infrastructures. Also, how do we handle something like the massive blocks in the Home Depot area, he asked. Arambula said there is nothing in the CIP that says the City doesn't want to have more big-box stores, but we can give suggestions for softening the look of buildings such as Home Depot. Doing so, however, does tend to keep them there longer. There is also the issue of working with corporate identity for some of those large chain stores, he continued. HARRISON said so in the case of the Home Depot/Fred Meyer area, is the City looking for guidance for the future or for dealing with what is there now. Arambula said the City's hasn't asked us to look at what's already in place, but rather to help define what it should look like if there is a market-driven change to its present use.

BRENNAN said the consultant has given us a lot of information to think about tonight, some of which represents some pretty big changes, and said he's also wondering what items are realistic to be advanced. Arambula said the City has a lot of policy in place, from which it has created standards and guidelines, but it kind of skipped the step of creating a framework. He continued with his perception of how the consultant will work with the Commission and staff to create that framework for presentation to the Council. He noted he understands that there hasn't been any public discussion of it.

BRENNAN said he likes the idea of integrating designs that face Issaquah Creek and the natural environment, whereas now we have some buildings that face the other direction. He said he also likes the idea of separated pedestrian connections and housing that is within three blocks of a public amenity. He said he also likes the idea of defining where employers, such as Costco, are located. He continued with some comments on how this framework and the resulting manual will be useful for the Development Commission, and said it has been confusing to us in reviewing past applications because of a lack of clarity in the regulations about building form, style, image, and so on. He said he also likes the focus on durable materials that give a sense of longevity like brick and stone. Arambula said it is our intention to be really prescriptive about those things, and to show what is not appropriate as well as what is.

SANFORD asked are you thinking of specifying an acceptable color palette, or would that be too constraining. Arambula said we are open for discussion on that, but his tendency is to say yes. He said we would favor limiting colors with an emphasis on darks and lights, plus maybe silver, and try to eliminate red, orange, bright blue, and so on. He said the objective is to have more background buildings than special buildings that are part of the fabric of the neighborhoods, are contextual, and are respectful of their surroundings.

MORGAN said some of the buildings in the photos shown tonight seem more box-like and lack sloped elements that tie into the Issaquah Alps that surround and define the City. Arambula said larger buildings have mechanical equipment that typically is designed on the roof, so they often have flat roofs. MORGAN said it seems important to break up vertical mass, even with window coverings and other methods. Arambula said he agrees, but that can be a slippery slope that leads to appliqué and other details. The design needs to show restraint, he continued, and said we can discuss this further at our next meeting.

HARRISON said he was enthusiastic about where this effort is going, and saw nothing tonight that he would call a negative. He said we need to be very clear about how traffic will connect to these ideas, he continued, and be sure that at the very least we maintain the traffic situation we have now and not make it worse. Arambula agreed, and said reclaiming the urban core and using a grid concept can help with that.

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PRICE said one concern is that communities with tools such as what we are discussing, like Palo Alto, Boulder, and Carmel, can become very self-selecting communities that force lower-income people out and become precious, boutique-like places. How does that get addressed, he asked. Arambula said that is beyond the scope of our work, but agrees that it needs to be addressed through City zoning, policy, funding, and so on.

SOWA asked what steps will be taken to make sure people understand what is being proposed and to have public involvement. Niven explained that some of the concepts are consistent with the CIP, while others are not. Staff will be working with the Council to determine how to determine how to proceed, including hearing from the Commission on which pieces the Commission wants to affect change. He continued with information about how the consultant's work on architectural style and design fits into the overall work on the elements identified by the Council that need work during the moratorium.

ROETER asked whether the consultant has any suggestions for connecting the areas north and south of I-90. Arambula replied yes, and we can address that. We have thought about it, and think there are at least two crossings that the City should implement. He said we can talk more about that at a future meeting.

MORGAN said having a checklist of “applies” and “complies” would be a very useful tool for the Commission. HARRISON agreed, and said he hopes the result of this process will allow him to have to make far fewer reluctant decisions as a Commissioner.

BRENNAN said the biggest change you are suggesting so far seems to be the grid concept, which will require some big policy decisions. Arambula said in his view, the City will continue to struggle if a grid concept is not applied.

SOWA thanked the consultants for their presentation, and said the Commission is looking forward to its next conversation with you.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to conduct, SOWA adjourned the meeting at 9:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Lowe
Recording Secretary

(Note: Alternate Members did not vote at tonight's meeting as there was a quorum of Regular Members present.)