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**CITY OF ISSAQUAH  
DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION—SPECIAL MEETING  
MINUTES  
June 8, 2017**

City Hall South  
Council Chambers

135 E. Sunset Way  
Issaquah, WA 98027

**COMMISSIONERS PRESENT**

Mel Morgan, Jr., Vice Chair  
Michael Brennan  
Randy Harrison  
Jasmina Mihova  
Kevin Price  
Robert Bakh, Alt.  
Richard Sanford, Alt.

**STAFF PRESENT**

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

**CALL TO ORDER**

MORGAN, Vice Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM. Sloman introduced new member MIHOVA to the Development Commission.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

MORGAN asked for any corrections or changes to the minutes from the Development Commission meeting on May 3, 2017. SANFORD corrected “BAHR” to “BAKH” in the second paragraph on page 9. MOVED BY BRENNAN, SECONDED BY PRICE that minutes of the Development Commission meeting on May 3, 2017 be approved as corrected. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

**ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

MORGAN asked for nominations for Chair and Vice Chair of the Development Commission for the upcoming term. After confirming that SOWA is willing to serve another term as Chair, MOVED BY BRENNAN, SECONDED BY HARRISON that SOWA be nominated as Chair of the Development Commission. There were no other nominations. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

After confirming that MORGAN is willing to serve another term as Vice Chair, MOVED BY BRENNAN, SECONDED BY HARRISON that MORGAN be nominated as Vice Chair of the Development Commission. There were no other nominations. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

**MORATORIUM WORK PLAN: Architectural Fit and Design (Discussion of the Design Manual’s Outline)**

Sloman asked the Commission to give staff feedback on receiving electronic vs. hard copies of agenda packets. After some discussion, she noted that hard copies will continue to be distributed whenever projects include drawings difficult to see on individual monitors. Commissioners suggested that the e-mailed agenda should include a notation when a hard copy is not being mailed. Sloman said a hard copy can also always be e-mailed upon request to a Commissioner.

Niven made staff’s presentation on the outline for the draft manual being prepared by Arambula/Crandall, consultants from Portland who have met with the Commission during its last few meetings. He said staff’s intent tonight is to have a conversation with the Commission about

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the proposed outline, and to see if there are places where the Commission feels the outline is not on target. He described the proposed outline for the manual, as follows:

Manual Outline:

- Understanding CIP—2 architectural styles
  - Issaquah Style (Arts & Crafts, Craftsman, NW Lodge, Western False Front, Urban Grange)
  - Urban Core Style (urban contemporary)
- Urban Design—4 components
  - Context (district, hillsides/natural areas)
  - Compatibility (harmony, contrast)
  - Site (block size, access, edges, useable open space)
  - Building Form (residential, commercial, industrial, mixed use)
- Implementation—worksheets

He displayed the general format of what the manual will look like and explained how the design review checklists will be used by both staff and the Commission. He displayed a map of where the Issaquah Style and Urban Core Style will be applied. Sloman added staff's first goal tonight is to get confirmation on the proposed outline and structure of the manual. The second goal is to have additional discussion on architectural style, particularly the Urban Core Style, including viewing photos used by the consultants in previous discussions with the Commission.

HARRISON asked staff to clarify the maximum height of buildings allowed in the Central Issaquah Plan (CIP). Sloman referred to Table 4.4 in the CIP Development Standards, which lists the maximum height for the Urban Core as 125 feet; Mixed Use as 85 feet; and all other zoning districts as 65 feet, all subject to certain zoning requirements and conditions.

Sloman continued with a presentation of slides from the May 3 presentation to the Commission showing examples of buildings in each of the styles identified within Issaquah Style and also as Urban Core Style, as referenced in the draft manual.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Steve Pereira, 170 NE Dogwood Street, Issaquah, said the height limitations do not take into consideration the additional height needed for elevators. He said he would like the Development Commission to consider recommending lower height allowances than exist in the code today. He said he is not a fan of the Urban Core Style examples shown in the photos, and would rather see the Issaquah Style applied throughout the City, including the core. He added he would like to see the Issaquah Style in Olde Town follow some established standards just for Olde Town.

MORGAN noted the information staff gave on height allowances in the City was for informational purposes, and is not part of what the Commission has been asked to address tonight.

Connie Marsh, resident of Squak Mountain, said she thinks the Commission can make recommendations on maximum building heights as part of its purview on styles for the core district. She said her inference from the consultant's last presentation to the Commission is that they think smaller buildings would be good for Issaquah, especially given that the City is well on track to meeting its growth targets. She said her opinion is that the Urban Core Style being shown is very stark, and is not a good fit with the green hillsides behind the buildings. She said the buildings shown don't seem to have components that would soften their stark impression. She said she thinks the checklist could be a good tool, and it makes sense for the staff to complete the checklist and then have the Commission review it, as staff explained at tonight's meeting. She

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said one thing seems missing from the checklist process, however, and that is how the Commission could use it during the review process to recommend a change to something that would be better than what is being proposed.

Jennine Bingham, 375 SE Andrews Street, Issaquah, expressed her opposition to the Urban Core Style examples of architecture shown tonight, saying that they have no western or country feeling, and do not reflect our City's history or natural beauty. She said she is saddened if these are the only options available, and questioned what they will do to beautiful downtown Issaquah. She also spoke about the parking problems that taller buildings will create, and said maybe Front Street should be closed and turned into a town square.

MORGAN noted the examples we have seen tonight would apply to the City's core only, and not to Front Street. BAKH helped clarify where the Urban Core Style would apply, using one of the slides from staff's presentation.

Debbie Marlow, business owner of Marlow's Fine Jewelry on Gilman Blvd., questioned how Gilman Village would be classified in terms of which architectural style would apply. She also questioned why an Urban Core Style is necessary at all, as it feels stark, cold, and not family- or pedestrian-friendly. She spoke in favor of some of the styles she has seen in the Highlands and Redmond as having nice public spaces with walking corridors, and are retail-friendly at the ground level. She said parking is already an important issue for downtown Issaquah and it will become even more so with some of the buildings proposed in the slides. She spoke in favor of colors and materials that give a natural feeling as being a better fit for Issaquah. She also spoke of the need for something to make NW Gilman more cohesive instead of the little bursts of development that exist there now.

### **Commissioner Questions and Comments**

BAKH spoke in favor of traffic patterns that would allow for more strolling and shopping along Gilman. He also noted that with more transit coming to the urban core area, more carless residents will live there, and the City needs to support those residents with a more walkable community. SANFORD suggested the audience member who commented on the need for a more retail-friendly environment check out the consultant's presentation on that issue at the May 3 Development Commission meeting. BAKH also noted the consultant spoke about the lack of a real town center, such as a central location or landmark, that indicates, "This is Issaquah."

BRENNAN said the Urban Core Style is a contemporary style but doesn't have any known architectural standards associated with it, so the manual will probably need a more exhaustive description and photos to clarify what it is. He said his first impression is that some of the images shown as Urban Core Style seem to lack character. He said another issue for him is how to handle projects that propose blending two or more styles. We don't want to trap architects and developers into abandoning great designs by unnecessarily restricting creativity, he continued, and gave examples of how a proposed design could be a blend. Sloman agreed that most of the public comment she has heard has been about the Urban Core Style, which is not as well known or as favored as a style. She proposed that the Commission look over the examples the consultant has provided toward the end of tonight's meeting and help staff sort out which components of which images are liked and disliked.

BRENNAN noted that the word "contemporary" can be a "lightning rod" and a controversial term. Other Commissioners said the words "core," "contemporary," "style," and "district" seem to be being used interchangeably in the manual and can create confusion. Staff agreed to look at the nomenclature and propose alternate terms that would be more clear.

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In discussing how to make buildings more distinctive, Niven reminded the Commission that the consultants spoke in favor of considering more background buildings that would fade into their surroundings rather than stand out. He continued the consultants favor the concept of contemporary buildings in the core being somewhat bland, which in turn become a backdrop to the mountains, views, and street-level activity going on around them.

HARRISON said he is feeling somewhat concerned as his understanding was that the consultant was brought on board to analyze the CIP, define where there are weaknesses, and make recommendations to the City on where the CIP is not providing the results that the City Council is satisfied with. He said personally he feels the consultant has done a good job with that, but now staff is asking the Commission to look at the draft manual and indicate whether they are “heading in a direction we don’t want them to go.” Sloman clarified the consultant has said they are a proponent of a more prescriptive approach, and they recommend that applicants have a clear idea of what the City wants from the get-go. The CIP was more urban-design focused and less architecturally focused, she continued, and we are moving to having more architectural information in the standards for developers. Niven added this is really the next step in the evolution of the CIP. HARRISON agreed, and said he likes the idea of having standards and enforcing them, recognizing that the City also has to be flexible. He noted the public is wary of all the adjustments the City has allowed for individual projects because of the way the code is written, and the new design standards should result in far fewer AAS (administrative adjustments of standards) granted to applicants.

MORGAN asked staff to respond to BRENNAN’s point about integrating two or more styles. After some discussion of how two or more styles could be used in a single building, and how it would be addressed in the worksheets, Sloman suggested the consultant be given an opportunity to respond. The Commission agreed.

The Commission also discussed how an iconic corporate style, like Krispy Kreme, could fit into the proposed architectural styles. Niven said we are not at that level of detail yet. Sloman noted many corporations have an urban package and a suburban package for their storefront in terms of style. In the past, Issaquah has tended to get the suburban version of a corporation’s architectural style, but we are moving to a more urban character, she said. Many businesses already have a good idea of how to transition their storefront to a more urban style, she concluded.

PRICE said he likes the proposed structure and organization of the manual, but questions whether the separate designated areas for Urban Core Style and Issaquah Style could create an abrupt transition from one area to another. He spoke in favor of providing some area of transition where the styles could be more blended. He also spoke in favor of allowing development in the Issaquah Style area to move into the urban core area but not allowing development in the urban core area to move into the Issaquah Style area. MIHOVA agreed, and referred to her experience in Canada that successfully blended other styles into the contemporary urban area. She also spoke in favor of a color chart that would be helpful for blending different building styles together and avoiding an abrupt change from one building to the next.

SANFORD spoke to the proposed Urban Grange Style within the Issaquah Style classification. Sloman noted the end of Gilman, sometimes called Old Highway 10, is unique, and the consultant’s original proposal showed a more industrial-looking style for that area. However, some long-standing businesses like Boehm’s are not really industrial in nature, and it seemed to make more sense for a more diverse style for the Old Highway 10 area.

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The Commissioners again discussed how the nomenclature to be used in the manual could be improved to be less confusing. After additional discussion, staff proposed that additional Development Commission meetings be scheduled to allow the Commissioners more opportunities to review the draft manual narrative and examples. Commissioners agreed, noting that the summer season can also present challenges in terms of having sufficient time to really study and understand what is being proposed.

MORGAN said another issue raised earlier is whether Issaquah Style should be allowed throughout the urban core area. Sloman noted the urban core has some minimum density requirements, and so some styles will not fit the parameters of what is allowed within the urban core. BRENNAN noted it would be useful for the Commission to have a description of all the tools in the code that would influence where and whether these styles would fit. Niven noted looking at, say, building heights is not part of this moratorium item requested by the City Council, but the Development Commission could make a recommendation about maximum building heights being used by the consultant in many of the examples we have looked at tonight. BRENNAN said he would like to have a way of evaluating all the things in the City's code that could influence what a building could look like, not just what is in the design standards. Sloman added parking has also been identified as needing to be addressed, and staff is tracking and benefitting from what we are learning during this process about parking, but it is not specifically one of the areas that the Council asked be part of the moratorium analysis.

MORGAN asked Commissioners to respond generally to three options regarding having distinctly separate areas for Issaquah Style and Urban Core Style. He continued the three options are to (1) leave it as has been proposed by the consultant; (2) determine some kind of buffer zone that would allow for some overlap; and (3) allow Issaquah Style within the Urban Core Style area (but not vice versa).

SANFORD said he tends to favor option (3), so long as FAR (floor-to-area ratio) requirements are met. MIHOVA said she favors both (2) and (3) because both would result in a blend or mix of styles and avoid an abrupt change. PRICE said he favors option (3) with conditions on height and provided that the building met FAR requirements. HARRISON and BAKH said they favor (2). BRENNAN said he favors a little of all three options, with a preference to allow flexibility so something creative and unique can be created where appropriate. MORGAN said he favors (3), especially give the vast majority of public feedback he has heard that favors Issaquah Style over Urban Core Style.

MORGAN asked about the wedge-shaped piece of Urban Core Style area in the upper right of the schematic being used to show where styles would apply. He continued he would like the consultant to reconsider whether that should be Issaquah Style instead, given its location as an entryway to the City from the North. HARRISON agreed. Sloman said the consultant probably included that as Urban Core Style because of the number of office and mixed-use buildings already there. Staff made a note of it for the consultant's response.

MORGAN asked for clarification about the formatting of the worksheet. Sloman made a note to check with the consultant about their reasoning behind proposing that the worksheet be formatted as we see it tonight.

MORGAN noted retail uses don't seem to be covered in the examples of buildings shown in the slides; most are residential and office buildings. Sloman agreed that more photos, especially of

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mixed-use buildings, would help everyone better understand and implement the design standards. MORGAN continued the Old Highway 10 district also doesn't seem to be covered adequately in the materials we have seen so far, and gave examples of how buildings that already exist there are not covered in the style description.

PRICE said he would like to see a process for departing from the standards built into the outline. Sloman said that is an outstanding question at this point in developing the manual. HARRISON said for example, if a business with a distinct brand image, such as Sonic Drive-in, wanted to develop a presence across from Triple XXX, under the design standards in this manual, would they have to pick one of the Issaquah Styles. Sloman replied yes. BAKH noted large businesses do take community standards into account when they propose to develop in an existing community. As long as they can use their corporate signage and colors, they can usually accommodate a city's architectural style requirements, he added.

BRENNAN spoke in favor of having a process for applications that depart from the style guidelines and requirements.

The Commission briefly discussed instances in the past when the Development Commission voted to not approve an application, and the value of Community Conferences in helping applicants understand the concerns of the community.

BRENNAN said in terms of the outline, he thinks the proposed organization is good. He noted the worksheets are a tool we will want to look at more closely as the details become available, noting that the Commission has used a variety of checklist-type tools over the years, some more successfully than others. Sloman noted this is intended to be a living document, and it can be tweaked as needed after using it for a while. HARRISON, MORGAN, and PRICE all agreed that we will want to revisit both the manual and the worksheets. SANFORD asked will the consultant be delivering the final product as a source file that can be maintained by the City. Niven replied yes, that is his assumption.

MORGAN asked for any further discussion or thoughts on the proposed Urban Core Style.

HARRISON said the word that comes most often to his mind is "stark," which is something to be avoided. PRICE said looking at the Urban Core Style examples, and recognizing that our goal is to establish an identity for Issaquah, he questions whether what we are seeing in those slides is what we want for our City's identity. He spoke in favor of the careful use of materials to soften the contemporary look of some of the examples. SANFORD said the main elements in many of the slides can be expressed in a number of ways, such as choices in materials, and said other images may be useful in helping see and visualize other ways of expressing those elements. BRENNAN said like PRICE, he questions what is the identity we want to reflect. He, too, spoke in favor of careful use of natural materials, such as stone, wood, and brick, and avoiding reflective glass and hard edges as not compatible with Issaquah. At the same time, he continued, we want some edginess, too, all of which is hard to translate into cogent design standards.

MORGAN referred to the first image in the CIP and other images throughout the document. SANFORD referred to an image on page 20. MORGAN said these images show taller buildings with modulated bases and stepped-back buildings with balconies. He continued feedback received during the CIP public process would support both modulation and balconies as features that many people favor, and asked Commissioners for any last thoughts. BAKH noted that some buildings have to be background, "non-special" buildings or the overall effect is too exhausting. HARRISON said the overall building height is also really important, even though it is not part of

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our purview here tonight. BRENNAN said it is important to have at least a quick understanding of all the layers of City code that would impact buildings in each district, such as setbacks, height restrictions, and so on.

SANFORD said during their presentation to the Commission, the consultants stressed the importance of a grid to achieving a cohesive vision, and asked how will achieving that grid approach be influenced by the City's code. Sloman said the consultants will address that as part of the manual, and referred to the section on block size as an example.

#### **Slide Presentation/Examples of Architectural Styles**

Sloman presented slides of each of the architectural styles the consultant has identified, and asked Commissioners for their reactions so those reactions could be transmitted to the consultants as they continue their work. Commissioners indicated "yes" and "no" to each image presented, and offered observations about what they liked and did not like about each example, including color, materials, modulation, setbacks, windows and window coverings, gables, balconies, rooflines, style, design elements, the pedestrian experience from street level, overhangs and awnings, corner treatments, building heights, courtyards, and so on. MORGAN noted additional photos of retail applications would be helpful.

#### **OTHER/ADJOURNMENT**

HARRISON noted indications in the media are that brick-and-mortar retail seems to be declining, and asked staff for their perspective on buildings under the CIP that may be in place for 50 years, given that trend. Niven explained under the tax structure in this state, it definitely benefits the City to have retail. He referred to the influences on development in the core and what the City is likely to get in terms of retail development. He spoke about the City's desire to get a balance of development, including office space in central Issaquah, which in turn will drive daytime retail development. He said going forward, stand-alone retail may not be as big a piece of the puzzle as it once was, but there are good reasons to not want to lose too much of our retail. HARRISON asked would alternative forms of taxes have to be found to replace the loss of revenue to the City from retail. Niven replied yes, and gave examples of how that revenue might be generated by the City.

With no further business to conduct, MORGAN adjourned the meeting at 10:30 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.)*