

Development Commission
7-19-17

**CITY OF ISSAQUAH
DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
MINUTES
July 19, 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
Raymond Leong
Kevin Price
Ryan Roeter, Alt.
Richard Sanford, Alt.

STAFF PRESENT

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

CALL TO ORDER

SOWA, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOVED BY MORGAN, SECONDED BY BRENNAN that minutes of the Development Commission meeting on June 8, 2017 be approved as presented. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

REVIEW OF DRAFT DESIGN MANUAL, CHAPTERS 1 AND 2

SOWA suggested each chapter be reviewed individually with staff, including any questions from the Commissioners. Then Commissioners can hear public comment and proceed with their discussion. The Commissioners agreed to this approach.

Sloman made staff's presentation on the draft Design Manual prepared by Arambula/Crandall. She gave some background on the history of this work plan item, including the Council's decision to enact a moratorium in September 2016. She explained why a consultant team was brought on board and the history of meetings held with the consultant team and Development Commission to date. She continued with the proposed work plan schedule for the Design Manual, including a review of Chapter 3 at the July 26 meeting and a meeting on August 2 for "parking lot" and outstanding issues if necessary. In the interest of time, she asked that any minor wordsmithing kinds of suggestions be e-mailed to her rather than addressed during tonight's discussion. She also noted that Chapter 3 will be e-mailed and/or sent to Commissioners in the next day or two. She described how the Council will conduct their own review of the material. She also showed a schedule of additional upcoming reviews by the Land and Shore Committee and a joint meeting with the Planning Policy Commission, leading to proposed Council adoption in mid-October.

Design Manual, Chapter 1: Introduction

HARRISON asked that "Design Commission" in the paragraph on Visual Examples on page 1 be changed to "Development Commission."

LEONG asked for clarification of PPC's role in reviewing this document. Has the Development Commission been doing the bulk of the review, he asked. Sloman replied that is correct. PPC will be taking a look at it from their perspective on planning and policy. LEONG asked how a joint meeting with the Development Commission and PPC in mid-September, as noted earlier in the

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proposed work plan schedule, would work. Sloman said we will know more about how to involve both commissions after the Development Commission's meeting next week.

BRENNAN said page 17 of 75 explains the role of the Design Manual as prescriptive, not discretionary, yet the way this is drafted it is more of a discretionary set of guidelines than prescriptive. He said the introduction also indicates that the Design Manual guidelines should take precedence over City code, and asked whether that was correct. Sloman said staff has also brought the prescriptive vs. discretionary issue to the consultant because staff had the same question. HARRISON said he had the same reaction, and asked BRENNAN to amplify his remarks. BRENNAN said his concern is how the construct of regulations will be applied in central Issaquah, specifically the hierarchy of how the code and guidelines will work together, which takes precedence, and so on. It sounds like staff is already looking at it, he added. Sloman said how the central Issaquah standards and this document with work together is a question that staff believes can be resolved in the future. This Design Manual is stated as being prescriptive, she continued, yet much of the language is not, and that is a concern for staff. She gave examples from the draft guidelines. Our concern is that the language achieves the result that is intended, she concluded.

HARRISON said his understanding of the City's impetus for undertaking this effort is because the results achieved under the CIP were not completely what the Council was anticipating. So a consultant was hired and asked to look at whether the existing standards were too nebulous and did not give the City enough of a prescriptive approach to evaluate proposed projects. Sloman said she would mostly agree with that assessment, although the CIP standards were not originally written to directly address architectural styles, colors, materials, and so on. We want to identify those things that are important to and valued by the community, she continued, yet architecture is a design and not a formula. The question is how to communicate that without creating a formula, and where there is some ability to respond with uniqueness while also addressing what is valued. The problem with a very prescriptive code is that there is no legal basis for enforcing it.

SANFORD said in both Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, the document does restrict design in the Urban Core District to just one style, which is Northwest Contemporary Style. He said previous Development Commission discussions included the option of allowing Issaquah Style within the Urban Core District. Sloman replied we did discuss that issue with the consultant and they did not have a concern with it. She continued it is her understanding that the consultant is going to propose a way to do that in future iterations of the draft.

BRENNAN referred to an e-mail from Mary Lynch with suggestions for additional definitions to the Introduction. If there are some on her list that would be useful to users of the document, he continued, it might be worthwhile to look at whether they should be included. Sloman agreed, and said some definitions are also in the Central Issaquah standards. BRENNAN said perhaps the manual could make note of definitions that are not here but are available elsewhere in the code. SANFORD suggested adding definitions for "CIDDS" and "mullion."

SOWA said the real discussion seems to be about how prescriptive we want this manual to be. What is the general sense of Commissioners, he asked. SANFORD noted the draft manual does state that this document will rule if there are conflicts with other City regulations. HARRISON said his thinking is that the draft manual is going in the right direction and will result in a better process and projects for the City. He said he thinks it should be more rather than less prescriptive; the need for a more prescriptive approach is what is driving this entire effort, he added. SOWA agreed. HARRISON noted in discussions he has had with residents and other interested parties,

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he hasn't heard anyone voice an objection, and in fact everyone has indicated they favor a prescriptive approach.

SANFORD said if a developer complies with the guidelines, their proposal is more likely to be acceptable, whereas those that do not comply will be subject to more scrutiny. SOWA said the draft manual will give developers the right tool before they get to the proposal stage, which will help eliminate frustration for them. LEONG agreed, and said the manual will save designers time and effort and will also help staff and the Development Commission in their project review.

Niven said the question is how exact should the manual be. In other words, how much latitude should be given to developers. He continued the City is assuming that compliance with the guidelines will be mandatory, and that is why examples of what is "appropriate" and "inappropriate" are provided. The question is whether the picture painted in the manual is clear enough, or do we need to ask the consultants to be even more prescriptive. He used the example of steep pitched roofs in the Definitions Section on page 23 of 75 as an example of more prescriptive language that evolved during discussions with the consultant, and said staff is asking the consultant for more clarity around terms like "wide," "low," and so on.

HARRISON said none of us favor a mandatory, cookie-cutter approach, but he thinks that being more prescriptive is the right direction and will reduce confusion.

MORGAN said on page 68 of 75, the reference to "If taller than four to five floors..." should be specific, either four or five, to be truly prescriptive. He said in reading through the guidelines and thinking about existing buildings in downtown Issaquah, he wondered where a building like the Issaquah Library would fit into these guidelines. He said he started feeling concerned that we could end up with buildings that all look alike. He said the same was true when he started thinking about the colors that are being proposed as inappropriate and appropriate. We would not want to end up with a monotone central Issaquah area, he stated. Sloman said we did ask the consultant to add some Issaquah images that are compliant in their view, including some contemporary examples of compliance with styles under Issaquah Style rather than historic examples.

LEONG raised the issue of the color palette choices in the manual. He said perhaps the manual could set a standard but also give the designer some latitude. Sloman said it is important that the City be very clear so that legal challenges can be met, and photos are very important in clarifying what is intended by words like "vivid," "muted," and so on.

MORGAN said to be truly prescriptive, perhaps the terms "appropriate and "inappropriate" should be changed to "allowed" and "not allowed," or "acceptable" and "not acceptable."

BRENNAN said normally prescriptive requirements are set in the City code, but this tool is really about defining the characteristics of development. It will give developers a tool, but also give the City and the Development Commission some tools to push back on proposed designs that meet code but are not really reflective of what might be most suitable for the City.

SANFORD said perhaps a proposed palette or Pantone range of acceptable and accent colors, as is often used in corporate settings, would be useful. BRENNAN said the manual does speak to "colors... shall fit in with Issaquah's natural environment of hillsides and creeks" (page 52 of 75). MORGAN said the manual also states that bold and vivid colors are only allowed as accent colors on the Urban Grange Style. He said he has some concern that we could end up with a monotone palette of colors for buildings, but then again he is not in favor of allowing "Atlas Apartments blue" either. Sloman said staff has also had questions about the color palette, such as what "natural"

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means, and will work with the consultant on that issue. SANFORD said he would favor specifying that no bright or vivid colors be used except conservatively as accent colors.

SOWA said the general sense he is getting from the Commission is that the manual should be as prescriptive as possible but not so prescriptive that it creates buildings with a cookie-cutter appearance.

SANFORD questioned whether the Design Review Checklist should appear in the back rather than the front of the manual (page 20 of 75). Both MORGAN and BRENNAN said they tend to favor it in the front of the manual, as proposed in the draft.

Design Manual, Chapter 2: Architecture

Sloman noted the district map shown on page 26 of 75 will be updated. LEONG asked whether Gilman would be part of the Urban Core. Sloman replied yes, part of it, and described more of what will be contained in the Urban Core and Traditional Issaquah districts.

SANFORD said the use of the term “district” is confusing when talking about Urban Core District/Traditional Issaquah District and also the architectural style districts. Sloman said her understanding is that districts in central Issaquah are being renamed as “neighborhoods,” so that issue may resolve itself. She said staff agrees that clear nomenclature is important. Niven suggested adding that comment to the list of “parking lot” issues.

BRENNAN said on page 33 of 75, the allowable scale in the Arts and Crafts Style is described as “two to five stories.” What if the zone allows six stories; could these guidelines be more restrictive than the code allows. Niven replied what it means is that if the zone allows for six stories and the developer wants a six-story building, then they have to choose a style other than Arts and Crafts, which is limited to two to five stories. Sloman referred to the Style Summary Chart on page 74, and said the proposed style will be self-selecting in some cases.

MORGAN said in looking at the chart, would all buildings outside the Urban Core that were five stories or more have to be designed in the Northwest Lodge Style. Sloman replied yes. She gave examples of potential designs and how the restrictions in the Style Summary Chart would apply. Commissioners discussed other potential designs and whether they would be allowed under the proposed guidelines, including building heights.

LEONG said on page 44 of 75, what is the rationale for the Craftsman Style roof materials shown. Niven replied that is the consultants’ suggestion for roofs in the Craftsman Style. If a developer wanted a different roof, they could select a different style. HARRISON questioned why “no wood shingles/shakes” is considered “inappropriate” for Craftsman Style buildings. PRICE agreed. HARRISON said maintenance might also be an issue for the developer, and this seems too restrictive. LEONG agreed that restricting roofs on Craftsman Style buildings to just asphalt seems too restrictive. Sloman said staff has also asked the consultant for clarity on that issue and expects to receive their answer soon.

HARRISON asked what is “inappropriate” about the standing seam metal roofing shown in the “inappropriate” Arts and Crafts Style photo on page 37 of 75. Sloman replied the consultant may be trying to make distinct looks among styles by creating more distinctions in both color and materials.

SANFORD said he questions whether it would be appropriate to allow Northwest Contemporary Style outside the Urban Core District, specifically in the Gateway District, which would allow more building options, particularly in terms of building heights. Sloman said allowing Northwest

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Contemporary outside the urban core might not be the only solution, and said staff can ask the consultant to do more thinking about that.

PRICE raised the issue of where any departures from the standards would be addressed in the draft manual. The Commission discussed how Administrative Adjustments of Standards (AAS) have been used in the past. Sloman explained what elements cannot be adjusted.

Niven said the consultants are proposing that there be two distinct districts and that a definite architectural style be used for the Urban Core District. Does the Commission still favor that approach, he asked. If the Commission does favor holding a true line there, then there is not likely to be much opportunity for departures, he added.

The Commission discussed whether architecture in the Urban Core District should be distinct from architecture in other parts of the City, including the Traditional Issaquah District. HARRISON said he thought that there was already consensus that such a distinction was a good idea in order to protect neighborhoods and guide growth into specific parts of the City in specific ways. He said he is somewhat leery of straying from that approach. PRICE said the element of time is also a factor; it may be 20 or 30 years before the style choices become highly identifiable. He said he is somewhat concerned that restricting design in the Urban Core to Northwest Contemporary Style only could prohibit interesting buildings like the Hot Pot Doughnut building. SOWA said he tends to fall on the side of keeping architecture in the Urban Core District distinct by limiting it to Northwest Contemporary Style only. BRENNAN said he likes the idea of creating a true City center in the Urban Core, but also thinks there needs to be some way for unique and creative ideas to receive consideration. Sloman referred to Chapter 3 on Urban Design, which will be discussed at the next meeting, and said the consultants tend to feel that not every building needs to stand out and be “look at me” buildings, except civic buildings.

LEONG asked what would happen if we just combined the two districts into one rather than having separate districts for Urban Core and Traditional Issaquah. Sloman said the two districts tend to follow established zoning lines, and described what is included in each. LEONG said one option would be to just make it all “core.”

ROETER said he favors having a distinction between architectural styles in the two districts.

SANFORD said he is not opposed to allowing Contemporary Northwest Style outside the Urban Core District, especially in the Gateway area.

LEONG said he tends to favor blending architectural styles in the two districts.

Sloman noted that Northwest Contemporary Style may be the style most architects and designers are familiar with because it is the most familiar, and may become the default style they will choose.

BRENNAN said he tends to favor a definite distinction, but also allowances for some unique application of architectural standards.

Niven said staff can ask the consultant to explore expanding “stand out” buildings beyond just civic buildings to include other prominent buildings.

MORGAN said he would be okay with bringing Traditional Issaquah Style into the Urban Core Area. He said he is thinking of how affordable housing could be affected outside the Urban Core if

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the only option for an 85-foot building is Northwest Lodge. Sloman said the City is concurrently undergoing discussions now to develop a housing strategy, including affordable housing.

HARRISON asked for clarification of the AAS provisions in the Development Standards. He said the Development Commission has been presented with requests for AAS almost as a matter of routine, and the way the standards are written, it seems that almost anything could fall into what could be the subject of an AAS. Sloman clarified areas of the code where requests for AAS could not be applied.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Connie Marsh, Squak Mountain resident, said the question here is how do we create a City that we recognize and that is better than what we have now, and still absorb growth. She said she can't disagree that we will lose what Issaquah has been because the new forms are not what Issaquah once was. She cautioned pushing too far into a future "look" for the urban core. She said she would not necessarily be in favor of allowing exceptions to the guidelines, but she also would favor having a bit more variation reflected in them. She said the manual itself needs a better numbering system. Her other concerns with the manual included the lack of discussion about uses of buildings; situational placement and whether a particular building fits into a particular neighborhood or sequence of adjacent buildings; interface with landscaping; what articulation means in the photos; and more work on the issue of colors. She said the concept of Northwest Contemporary Style needs to look more like the City Library building on Front Street and Sunset Way. She also said some of the photos are reminiscent of a sheep-herding setting rather than a Northwest look.

Mary Lynch, 2690 Oak Crest Drive, Issaquah, said her recollection from community meetings was attendees favored keeping the lower portion of what is shown as Urban Core District as Traditional Issaquah District. She referred to the area around Fred Meyer/Home Depot, which is captured in the Traditional Issaquah District in the manual, and said the City should look at its Urban Core boundaries and review what the public favored for boundaries. She said other issues that need attention in the manual are urban schools that reflect the proposed architectural standards, rooftops on large buildings, green roofs, and protecting views from utilities.

Commissioner Discussion

LEONG said he appreciates all the work that has gone into this effort and thinks that the result will be a valuable tool for the design community, City staff, and the Development Commission.

MORGAN said a good point was raised in public comment about the Fred Meyer/Home Depot area being in the Traditional Issaquah District. On page 26 of 75, he continued, the text reads, "The Traditional Issaquah areas are primarily composed of residential neighborhoods," and said that paragraph needs to be re-examined to see whether another style would work better there.

HARRISON said he is happy with the process and pace of this work plan item, is proud of the process, and likes the product being developed.

MORGAN said on page 29 of 75, the goals for the Northwest Contemporary Style are stated as "consistency, unity, and timelessness." He questioned whether that description was accurate, and said there is no reference in the description that follows to the Northwest, except maybe the word "durable." There is also no mention of balconies, he continued, and he is not impressed with any of the three photos shown as examples on that page, particularly the third one.

HARRISON said he also thinks the northwestern part of the Traditional Issaquah District that houses Fred Meyer/Home Depot should be classified as Urban Core. MORGAN agreed.

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MORGAN and SANFORD indicated they like the third “appropriate” example of Northwest Contemporary Style on page 68 of 75 and that the reference to “four to five floors” on page 68 of 75 should be clarified.

SANFORD asked whether the two middle photos on page 71 of 75 depict doors or windows. Staff made a note of it.

MORGAN asked why the consultant specified that “sloped roofs shall only be used for residential buildings” in Northwest Contemporary Style (page 67 of 75) and not for commercial buildings. He also suggested that “Pickering Barn red” be specified instead of “traditional barn red” on page 66 of 75. On that same page, SANFORD asked whether black was appropriate as an option for a wall color. Niven referred to a recent remodel of a storefront on Front Street that has black walls.

SANFORD asked whether any additional content would be forthcoming on page 58 of 75, Roofs for Western False Front Style. Sloman said roofs would not be visible, so probably not.

MORGAN suggested adding “garage-style doors with glass to expand the sense of space” on page 64 of 75. On page 46 of 75, MORGAN said the two “appropriate” photos are not as appropriate, in his view, as the photo selected as “inappropriate.” Other agreed. HARRISON suggested that the consultant be asked to use more photos selected from actual buildings in Issaquah. Sloman made a note of it.

MORGAN said the choice of colors for the Arts and Craft Style on page 38 of 75 (warm whites, grays, tans, and olive tones) seems limited. PRICE agreed, and said he would favor an allowance for darker colors as well, such as dark grey.

BRENNAN said he hopes this manual will be useful for design professionals and staff, but knows it will be very helpful for the Development Commission. He thanked staff for their hard work and attention to the Development Commission’s comments during the review process.

LEONG raised the issue of how solar equipment on roofs will be incorporated into these guidelines. Sloman made a note of it.

Sloman asked that any other edits, including wordsmithing-type suggestions, be e-mailed to staff.

OTHER/ADJOURNMENT

Sloman noted the Commission’s next meeting is Wednesday July 26, at which time the Commission will address Chapter 3 of the Design Manual. With no further business to conduct, SOWA adjourned the meeting at 9:20 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.)