

Development Commission
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CITY OF ISSAQUAH
Development Commission—SPECIAL MEETING
MINUTES
July 26, 2017

City Hall South
Council Chambers

135 E. Sunset Way
Issaquah, WA 98027

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

Richard Sowa, Chair
Mel Morgan, Jr., Vice Chair
Raymond Leong
Kevin Price
Ryan Roeter, Alt.
Richard Sanford, Alt.
Carl Swedberg, 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 7:04 PM.

REVIEW OF DRAFT DESIGN MANUAL, CHAPTER 3

SOWA suggested that Commissioners review Chapter 3 of the draft Central Issaquah Architecture & Urban Design Manual by first asking questions of staff, taking public comment, and then continuing their discussion. The Commissioners agreed.

Sloman began staff's presentation with an overview of the project schedule leading to proposed Council adoption on October 16, 2017, including the opportunity for another Development Commission meeting next Wednesday, August 2. She asked for any questions at this time on the draft.

ROETER said on page 71 of 93, in the "inappropriate" paragraph on Harmony, who has the final call on whether a design is appropriate or not. Sloman said interpretations lie with the City's Development Services Director, and his/her decision can be appealed by the applicant. The description and photos in the manual are intended to provide clarity about what is appropriate, she continued, although staff agrees that the language needs to be fine-tuned. Niven added for permits that come to the Development Commission as the final decision-making body, then the Development Commission's decision is final. However, not all permits come to the Development Commission, he continued. Some are administrative and are decided by City staff. Those decisions could be appealed by the applicant to the Hearing Examiner, he concluded.

SANFORD said it appears that the majority of this chapter applies to all of central Issaquah as well as the area east of Gilman. Sloman replied that is correct.

SWEDBERG asked how block size was determined. He said it's confusing because blocks can't be torn down and built to new dimensions; they already exist. Sloman said although some streets already have blocks in place, there are opportunities for change when blocks are redeveloped. She continued from a planning perspective, a lot of research exists on block size, and gave examples from other cities. When blocks in the City are redeveloped, she said, under these guidelines we would expect super-sized blocks to be subdivided into smaller blocks. She referred to the map on page 69 of 93, and showed examples of how blocks could be redeveloped in a size other than what exists now. She said staff agrees it would be a challenge if, say, only one-half of an existing block was redeveloped. Such an issue would have to be discussed with the

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Development Commission and others. MORGAN asked how would the block-size guideline apply to the Rowley development. Sloman said this grid reflects what is in the Rowley Development Agreement, so that property would be in compliance with this document. Niven used an example of redevelopment where the Century Link property now exists. He said these guidelines would set a framework in a case like that, and can be used as a road map to get to what the consultants, Crandall/Ambula, are putting forth in the draft. MORGAN asked would that situation fit within the 240-foot block size specified in the draft. Sloman explained how the through-block passage requirements would apply, and what the result would be if the draft guidelines from Arambula/Crandall were applied.

LEONG said on page 76 of 93, the text refers to creating “open space amenities,” and asked who would maintain them. Sloman said that has not yet been determined and is still under discussion. LEONG said under “inappropriate,” the text states that “trash enclosures” are not permitted. Where would any residents put garbage and trash, he asked. SANFORD said options include in the alley, or underground. Sloman said those are good options, and there may be others. The point is that staging activities would not be allowed in the through-block passage, she stated.

SANFORD asked are specifications about lane widths, sidewalks, trees, and so on beyond the scope of this manual. Sloman replied yes, and said the Central Issaquah standards would also apply to projects in the urban core. She continued one of the moratorium items is vertical mixed-use, and Arambula/Crandall has a separate contract with the City to address design standards and potential locations for mixed-use. It has not yet been determined whether the results of that work would be part of this manual or be part of the standards. She added making it clear how all the pieces are linked and work together is an important point and staff will be working on it.

MORGAN asked if staff had any information on why the consultants are recommending that “more than one upper floor setbacks that create a tiered ‘wedding cake’ appearance” is inappropriate (page 80 of 93). Sloman replied staff doesn’t know the answer from an aesthetic perspective, and can only speculate. She said it may be that setbacks on upper floors are a structurally complicated design. Niven said the intent of these guidelines is to be very purposeful and not seem random, and it may be that the consultants do not see building heights as something that necessarily needs to be compensated for, which is what a wedding-cake design does. He added staff is seeking clarity from the consultants on that issue.

LEONG said the statement under “description” on page 79 of 93 is confusing. It states “In no instances should buildings be designed to promote an auto-orientation,” yet it refers to a parking structure that is by definition oriented to automobiles. Sloman said the statement refers to parking structures and lots, and is saying that even with a parking structure, the orientation should enhance the public realm for pedestrians. LEONG said he doesn’t agree that the statement makes sense and gave options for changing it. SOWA said the intent is to minimize the appearance of a parking structure, and referred to the list of ways that the appearance would be considered “inappropriate.”

MORGAN said the list of materials for awnings on page 89 of 93 gives metal, glass and canvas as the only acceptable choices, and specifically says vinyl or other synthetic materials are not appropriate. Sloman said canvas allows light to permeate it, whereas vinyl tends to look inexpensive and kind of shrink-wrapped, so the consultant was probably trying to move away from vinyl awnings. SWEDBERG referred to a synthetic material (Herculon) that is used extensively on ships, and which is more long-lasting than canvas. Canvas is also organic, which means it gets moldy and so on, which synthetics like Herculon do not. Sloman said staff will follow up with the consultant on that question. Niven said in a discussion with the Council last night, an interesting point was raised, specifically that weather protection in the form of awnings

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for tables and chairs means that the awning is not available for weather protection to pedestrians walking by. MORGAN questioned whether the four-foot depth minimum for awnings is appropriate. Sloman said staff will also follow up on that question with the consultant.

MORGAN referred to page 91 of 93 that addresses urban parks. Would the City's Parks Department want to have a say on that, he asked. Sloman said we have brought City Parks Department staff into this discussion, and will be working with them to seek clarification from the consultant on minimum and maximum size of potential park spaces, whether the parks would be City-provided, and so on.

LEONG said on page 89 of 93, the list of inappropriate awnings and canopies includes "oddly shaped." He said he thinks we need to be careful about what is not allowed so that designers are allowed enough flexibility to be creative. Niven said a designer can present their proposal to the Development Commission, and then explain their decision and convince the Commission as to why their design should be considered and approved. ROETER said he likes having a list of what is not appropriate for awnings and canopies, such as not allowing vinyl or oddly shaped awnings. He referred to the University District as having examples of awnings that would fall into this list of "inappropriate," and said he would favor adding color restrictions as well.

SANFORD asked should building heights be referenced on page 80 of 93, Building Edges. Sloman said these guidelines establish a street experience of no more than four stories. That restriction, plus the restrictions that are already outlined in the Architectural Style types, means that the character of new urban core buildings will be predominantly four story buildings at street level. SANFORD asked where would a high-rise building be allowed under the guidelines. He continued he has heard some concern from the public about high-rise buildings in Issaquah, and is questioning whether this manual needs some guidance about building heights, although he also recognizes that such inclusion may be somewhat out of scope for this design manual. Sloman referred to buildings in Vancouver, B.C. that are often three or four stories with another 10-20 stories setback above them. She said given the cost of real estate, it is unlikely that many builders would chose to build a one-story building in the urban core, she continued, and more likely that buildings will be two to four stories. She referred to building height regulations in the Central Issaquah Design Manual. Niven said building heights will not be included in this manual, as the manual is a tool for urban design. The City already has regulations on zoning and building heights, he continued. He suggested that this issue be communicated by staff to Council as an outstanding issue and placed on a "parking lot" list for future discussions.

MORGAN said on page 80 of 93, the text states "Upper floors shall be setback 20 feet...". Does that mean at least 20 feet, or exactly 20 feet, he asked. Sloman said staff will seek clarification from the consultant on that.

LEONG said on page 83 of 93, the use of the terms "stepped back" and "setback" are confusing. Sloman said staff will ask the consultant to look more closely at the language used on page 83. LEONG continued on page 86 of 93, and again on page 87 of 93, there is reference to "blue tinted, reflective or other opaque materials or treatments" as inappropriate, and said he doesn't see a problem with having a strip of reflective or smoked glass that provides privacy for, say, patrons in a restaurant at ground level. Sloman said certain kinds of tinting can improve the transparency of glass used in windows, but this is speaking more to establishing a relationship between buildings and the public realm. She said staff would seek additional comment from the consultant.

SANFORD asked for clarification on page 75 of 93, "For new development, through-block passages shall be provided to break up blocks over 240 feet in length." Does that mean 240 feet

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in length, or 400 feet in width, he asked. Sloman said either dimension of a block, either height or width, that is over 240 feet needs to be broken up by a through-block passage.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Connie Marsh, Squak Mountain resident, said she has been taking photos around the City of existing buildings, which has brought her a new perspective on how these guidelines might function. She referred to difficulties the Development Commission has faced applying City code in the past, and said the Commission needs to be far more firm in saying “no” to developers and staff when designs are presented to the Commission. She said she doesn’t see any language in the draft manual that the Commission could use for that purpose, and is not convinced this manual will help. She said she would like to see a new tool that would lay these guidelines over the CIDDS, and see how the combination would apply to an existing building. She also expressed concern with existing buildings that front critical areas, and said the formula tends to be “critical area, parking, then a building,” which separates people from the City’s natural amenities. She said she would propose getting rid of building setback requirements and bringing buildings right up to the buffer.

Commission Discussion

The Commissioners agreed to review the manual page by page and raise issues of concern in addition to those already discussed. Among the comments were the following:

PAGE	COMMENT
69 of 93 (map)	Hillside to be clarified, including percentage The “view question” What is relationship of undeveloped land to hillsides
70 of 93	Definition of hillsides; definition of hillside slope Protecting hillside views is very important to City residents (ROEHL) Consider taking out statement on new development altogether Concern that “large expanses of impermeable ...areas” as inappropriate might preclude people from enjoying, say, a plaza (MORGAN) Concern with “large expanses of manicured landscaped areas” as inappropriate, especially if impermeable areas are also inappropriate (MORGAN)
71 of 93	Concern that “background buildings” is open to interpretation and could lead to uninteresting buildings Need different terminology than “background buildings” (SOWA) Photos of appropriate buildings will be particularly helpful on this issue Concern about too many limitations on creativity for architects and designers (LEONG), but also a recognition that the guidelines in the manual will act as a framework that will force more refinement and quality (PRICE) General agreement that the Maple Street Building is an example that would meet the criteria of a good “background building” and whose design has been well received
72 of 93	Replace photo in middle with photo of Issaquah Library (MORGAN) Signage is not a part of this manual and is addressed elsewhere in the code
	Establishing context may be needed for the first redevelopment project(s) in a given area. Guidelines may be needed that address the “pioneer” developments because, lacking context, they may have more flexibility in their choices than later developments (Niven)
75 of 93	In an area that is already mostly built-out, this guide becomes aspirational. A statement such as “When opportunities present themselves...” may be needed. (SOWA)
	“Partial passage” needs to be better defined (“Inappropriate: Misaligned, disconnected, dead end, or partial passage.”), such as adding the word “permanent” (MORGAN) or “or partial dead-end passage” (Niven).

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	Would the passages be easements or rights of way (PRICE) and whose responsibility would it be for their creation and maintenance (LEONG)
79 of 93	First bullet under “appropriate” is incomplete (MORGAN)
81 of 93	Clarify “Locate window openings above pedestrian sight-lines” to specify how far from the ground windows have to be (ROEHL)
82 of 93	Consider adding “railings” to Appropriate (B) (LEONG)
	Consider removing “landscaped” from Description (B)
85 of 93	Change “through-passage frontages” to “through-block passages” for consistency (SANFORD)
86 of 93	Review whether “glass” should be specified (Niven)
87 of 93	Consider “retail spaces” rather than “retail uses” (SANFORD)
88 of 93	Photo at upper right with blue line showing 40% transparent windows and doors at ground level could be better (MORGAN) as it doesn’t show the ground floor very well
	Second bullet under “appropriate” should be in new section on “inappropriate” (SANFORD)
89 of 93	Suggest using the word “integration” to help ensure that awnings/canopies are consistent with the architecture of the building (PRICE)
	Possibly adding text that refers to weather protection for transit stops (SANFORD)
91 of 93	Is requiring an “accessible block within three blocks of all residents” too prescriptive (MORGAN)
General	“Inappropriate” text and photos missing from multiple pages (SANFORD)
	Final manual will need a thorough edit (SANFORD)
	As the manual gets used, we will all discover what is missing and needs to be added (Niven)
	View protection is also covered in CIDDS

Sloman suggested that Commissioners could spend some time at the next meeting looking at images of local projects for inclusion in the manual. Another option would be to take an existing project that the Development Commission reviewed, and use this draft manual’s checklist and narrative to see how the draft works. SOWA suggested the bulk of the meeting be spent on the second option, and other Commissioners agreed. Sloman said the recently approved apartment projects at Vale or Inneswood would be good options for that exercise, as well as assessing which of the proposed architectural styles discussed last week would most closely fit that project.

Sloman continued another helpful exercise would be to start a list of local buildings that the Commission finds acceptable and/or pleasing, and circulate the list by e-mail. PRICE suggested using images of the buildings as well. Sloman suggested sending an address when listing a building so that others can Google a street-view of the building. MORGAN suggested also including an image of the through-block passage at the townhomes just south of Dick’s Sporting Goods.

OTHER/ANNOUNCEMENTS/ADJOURNMENT

Sloman reminded Commissioners that the next Development Commission meeting will be held at 7:00 PM on Wednesday, August 2. With no additional business to conduct, SOWA adjourned the meeting at 9:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Lowe
Recording Secretary