CITY OF ISSAQUAH
JOINT MEETING:
Development Commission
and
Planning Policy Commission
(SPECIAL MEETING)

7:00 PM — Council Chambers
February 12, 2020 — **MINUTES** — 135 E. Sunset Way

COMMISSION AND ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL PRESENT

DC Commissioners Present:
Richard Sowa, Chair
Mel Morgan, Vice Chair
Michael Brennan
Kevin Price
Richard Sanford
Arthur Schulte, Alt.
Commissioners Not Present:
Ben Rush (Excused)
Brooke Shore (Excused)

PPC Commissioners Present:
Joan Probala, Chair
Ron Faul, Vice Chair
Janice Carle
Randy Harrison
Joy Lewis
Jason Voiss
Robin Beukers, Alt.
Commissioners Not Present:
Bill Rinehart (Excused)

Administrative/Staff Present:
Trish Heinonen, Planning Policy Mgr.
Christen Leeson, Sr. Planner
Keith Niven, Econ. Dev. & Dev. Srv. Dir.

Others Present:
Samantha Suter, Metta Urban Design

CALL TO ORDER
SOWA, Development Commission Chair, called the joint meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

REGULAR BUSINESS

a) **Proposed Olde Town Architectural Standards/Design Guidelines, (D)**
Presented by:
Christen Leeson, Senior Planner
Samantha Suter, Metta Urban Design

Leeson began staff's presentation of tonight's agenda, including background on the project; proposed updates to existing standards; potential new standards for the single-family district (SF-D); and other topics. She gave an update on the work done on the Olde Town architectural standards to date, including the role of the Development Commission and PPC. She gave a presentation of "how we got here," from 1999 to the present. She explained the Task Force recommendations developed in 2009; the public outreach process that led to the updated Olde Town Plan; goals and policies in the updated Olde Town Plan; an action plan of immediate, short-term and longer-term actions; the existing area of applicability for the standards; the City's Olde Town Design Standards, adopted in 2001; excerpts from the current Olde Town Plan; a new area of applicability; and outreach activities to stakeholders, including the walking tour/workshop held on January 11, 2020.

Suter continued the presentation, beginning with the overall approach taken for this effort. She said the update is intended to (1) increase usability of the standards and guidelines document; (2) make tweaks to a few topics; (3) emphasize standards, not guidelines; (4) add a new section for Single Family-District (SF-D); and (5) freshen up the illustrations. She referred to the outline in the agenda packet, specifically Part 1 (updates) and Part 2 (new content). She gave more details about the chapters in Part 1, and noted which areas need some updating and/or tweaking, such as gateways, landscape elements, and colors. She discussed the Olde Town's existing color palette in more detail, including the need to improve the information available for the public about the allowable color palette. She continued with areas in Part 1 that need updating (scale and massing).

Suter continued with a diagram of the applicable single-family zone, and said we are looking for feedback and input on any refinements to the applicable area. She said the walking tour on January 11 was organized around three main discussion points: (1) the overall size and shape of houses in Olde Town; (2) scaling elements; and (3) the site. She displayed photos of existing houses in Olde Town. The community indicated it wants to focus on preserving the most important characteristics that will maintain Olde Town's character. She showed examples of mass reduction techniques. She described what the community's priorities were for acceptable types of roofs, exterior materials, and the color palette. She showed examples of houses in neutral colors with bright trim and/or accent colors, and examples of houses with bright primary colors with neutral trim colors. She said the community indicated they prefer that some windows and a front door be required on the street-facing façade, and showed examples. She also discussed driveways and garages, and noted the community expressed a preference to prioritize the human experience over cars. She showed examples of garage placement. She discussed the current front yard setback requirement, and showed a diagram indicating that the actual setbacks vary widely on some Olde Town blocks. She showed examples of front doors and porches, and explained the community's divided feedback on requiring porches; the community's preference to not allow privacy fencing; the community's feedback on the presence of natural elements and pervious surfaces; and the community's preference for some landscaping, not just hardscaping.

Leeson asked for feedback from the Commissioners at this point, particularly any areas that seem unenforceable.

SANFORD offered some observations on the advisability of having "appropriate" and "inappropriate" examples in the guidelines, as was done with the Central Issaquah Architecture and Urban Design Manual. He said the Development Commission found it was useful for the manual to provide examples as guidance, and not just prescriptive requirements. Suter made a note of it.

MORGAN initiated a discussion on whether building materials should be subject to regulations, and used plywood on a residence as an example. Suter said we would probably want to create some barriers using language about materials needing to hold up over time. That would mean plywood would not be acceptable, she stated. Leeson said we heard from the community that if the City is going to regulate materials, they should not be expensive. VOISS asked would a log cabin be acceptable. The participants discussed whether a log cabin would be a material or a style. LEWIS used cedar shakes as another example. She said she is seeing some potential conflicts between wanting to honor an eclectic, artistic community while also wanting regulations to restrict extremes. She said while flexibility is important, any regulations would have to be very clear about what is acceptable, while also recognizing that homeowners should be able to do what they want on their own property. VOISS said he has heard Olde Town described as "eclectic" and "artistic" before, but looking around the neighborhood, it seems more uniform than that would imply. LEWIS said her impression is that the community values the historic look and feel of Olde Town and wants to preserve it. At the same time, we don't want it make living in Olde Town unaffordable and force people out of their homes, especially those who want to age in place.

Participants continued to discuss how and whether building materials should be regulated. The discussion included these comments and observations:

- It might be easier to tackle specifying which building materials to prohibit because we don't know what future trends will be.
- Some building materials used in the Highlands wouldn't be appropriate in Olde Town, and in fact are failing.

- We need to be careful about articulating what building materials wouldn't work for Olde Town houses; it could be appropriate if the rest of the design matched other aspects of what we want to preserve.
- Stucco, for example, might be a good candidate for a building material that would be prohibited.
- Vinyl is an example of a material that might not be durable enough, depending on the installation.
- It would be difficult to regulate porches, particularly requiring them.
- The City could reach out to the Highlands and see how their building materials regulations have worked for them.
- Given the City's objectives of becoming carbon neutral, energy efficiency might be part of the regulations on building materials.
- There are two philosophies in approach to establishing regulations on something like building materials. The first is to be prescriptive and clear about what is and isn't allowed. The other is to not get too specific, and focus on what the regulations are trying to accomplish. The latter gives people more flexibility and the regulations can always be changed if they aren't accomplishing what was intended.
- What is the existing character we want to preserve in Olde Town, and what do we want to encourage in new development in Olde Town. We want to be cautious about what we start with, like building scale, and also have broad discretion on other things. But we would also need tools if things start going off track; if we aren't getting what we want, we can always tighten the regulations. Be careful about getting too restrictive in the beginning.
- What about performance and sustainability features like solar panels; should they be allowed, or even rewarded or incentivized?
- A section on sustainability should be added to the Olde Town Architectural Standards/Design Guidelines.
- The use of "encourage" can cause confusion unless it is very clear. We should be clear and unambiguous in any regulations, and "encourage" is not well defined.

Leeson and Suter initiated a discussion of Goal A, "Placemaking—Gateways to Olde Town." The participants discussed the goal to "design gateway features to mark north, south, east, and west entrances to Olde Town." The discussion included these comments and observations:

Gateway—North:

- A good starting point for gateways to Olde Town is where buildings are "old."
- The Creek could be a good starting point.
- It could be problematic to start at a specific point, like the Creek, if a modern building was eventually built there.
- The corner of Front Street and Gilman seems like the right place to mark the north entrance to Olde Town; it is often where community banners are placed.
- What is the function and purpose of a gateway?
- Are these gateways to Olde Town, or to Issaquah, or both?
- Why are gateways necessary? Why is it important to make a clear delineation when moving from one neighborhood to the next? The contents of the streets will change over time anyway. Why do people need to be told when something is different?
- The community seems to favor having gateways or otherwise marking that Olde Town is a specific neighborhood.
- Gateways can also serve as a way to protect the distinct character of Olde Town.
- A gateway is more than a utility; it is a way to enhance the "customer experience" of a place.

- The bridge over the Creek, then southward from there, seems like the beginning of Olde Town.
- There are lots of forms that gateways could take, from arches to art installations to signage.
- It seems more appropriate to have the gateway be a municipal responsibility, with some oversight by the City.
- Gateways could transform over time, rather than be static.
- The gateway should be something that refers to Issaquah's unique role in the salmon migration cycle. That is what makes Issaquah unique from all other places.
- The Arts Commission should be involved in the concept and/or the implementation of gateways.
- An archway or art that reflects Issaquah, Olde Town, and salmon holds lots of possibilities.

Gateway-West

- The fish hatchery seems like a good place to have a west gateway.
- There isn't much traffic at the site displayed for a west gateway.
- The City could put an arch featuring salmon over the bridge both here and at the north gateway, which would echo what is going on beneath the bridge.
- A combination of architecture and redevelopment, as well as a marker or sign, is what will really create a transition from one area to another.

Gateways, General Comments

- Should each gateway have a separate message or theme, or should there be a common message that is carried out in all four gateway installations?
- Thinking about marking a neighborhood as unique, it seems less effective to have different symbols and messages than to have one unified gateway theme.
- Should Olde Town have a theme? What is it?
- The City's boards and commissions, as well as the public, should be on board about how to "brand" Olde Town.
- Do we want to create a public project to determine gateways for Olde Town, or should the City create standards for private development? Explore both private and public projects?
- The Arts Commission should be involved, but it isn't their job to determine what the theme should be. It is our job to make recommendations about that to the City Council, and then ask the Arts Commission to assist in implementing their decision.
- Gateways for Issaquah could be different from the gateways to Olde Town.

Gateway—East

- Moving through the east entrance to Olde Town, we want to give the impression that this is a special place, partly so that drivers will slow down. So it could serve not just as a symbol or explanation of who we are but also serve an important function.
- What has the Olde Town neighborhood said they think about what it means to live or be in Olde Town? Have they been asked?
- The east and north gateway locations are so close to I-90 that they essentially function as gateways to the City as well.
- Working with building developers on co-branding opportunities is also an option.

Gateway—South

- The south gateway would be somewhere around the community pool.

Leeson presented information about possible approaches to accessory dwelling units and additions in Olde Town, including whether they should be regulated based on value or size. She

showed photos of houses with additions. Participants offered the following comments and observations:

- Requiring compliance with some context or character seems like a better approach than to base approval on square footage or value.
- An approach that makes sense is to focus on what is visible from the front.
- Treat all sides of the property equally. Neighbors' views of adjacent properties are important, too.
- The appearance from all elevations should be considered.
- It is important to encourage ADUs, but there should be some continuity when ADUs are added to a neighborhood as they can quickly change the neighborhood's character.
- Most existing homes won't comply with single-family standards for Olde Town. So any additions to existing houses would have to be in compliance with the existing home and out of compliance with new regulations, be out of compliance with the existing home and in compliance with the new regulations, or the entire home and addition would have to be changed to make the whole house comply. All three of those choices also have implications for cost and aesthetics.
- Assuming a proposed addition would not go to the Development Commission for review, then City staff would be responsible to review it only as to whether it met code, not at the aesthetics of the addition.
- Who would review any limitations that City regulations of ADUs or additions would have on residents, including the cost implications?
- Choices for reviewing proposed additions and ADUs in Olde Town are staff, the Development Commission, or a homeowners' association-type of organization made up of Olde Town residents.
- The question seems to be how much do we want to allow to change and how much to preserve. We might want to set a threshold that could be tripped so that we could drive toward setting new standards as necessary.
- Having staff do the review would be my recommendation.
- The Development Commission's workload is changing due to absorption of work previously assigned to the Urban Village Development Commission. The Evergreen Ford dealership project and the Issaquah Lofts project are examples of two projects that have received review by the Development Commission since the Central Issaquah Architecture and Urban Design Manual was put in place. Both projects were instructive about the strengths and limitations of having clear guidelines.
- Determining what aspects of Olde Town are the most important to preserve could then become the guiding principles for developing new regulations.

Leeson discussed the next steps in the review process, including a draft available for public review on June 4, another DC/PPC joint meeting on June 11, a public hearing at PPC on July 19, and eventual incorporation into the City's Title 18 update now under way.

REPORTS (PPC)

a) Olde Town:
    1. On Jan. 11, 2020, PPC and community members participated in the walking tour and workshop on Olde Town Architectural Standards and Design Guidelines.
    2. On Feb. 12, 2020, the City will host a drop-in open house on Olde Town Traffic Calming from 5:30-7:00 PM in the Eagle Room, 130 E. Sunset Way.
    3. On Feb. 25, 2020, the City Council will meet for a study session on Olde Town Land Use Code Amendments recommended by PPC on Sept. 26, 2019. Council action is anticipated on Mar. 16, 2020. At the same meeting, potential traffic calming solutions,

data, and community feedback will be presented to the City Council.

OTHER BUSINESS / ANNOUNCEMENTS

a) None.

AUDIENCE COMMENTS

Bill Frisinger, Olde Town, Bush Street resident, said he would favor thinking carefully about what is being required, particularly color requirements. He said the colors in the example shown of a "rainbow-colored" house might be acceptable if just one of those colors was used for the body of the house and one as trim. He continued he would want to emphasize requirements that allowed for a wide choice of colors, and spoke in favor of requirements that offer flexibility.

Ryan Yee, property owner at 245 Sunset Way, Issaquah, said he is looking into redeveloping his entire property now, currently doing business as Better Health at Sunset. He asked how many commissioners here today live in Olde Town, and/or have an Asian and/or African background. He spoke of having his residence above his wife's acupuncture business on Sunset Way. He asked what are you wanting to attract to Front Street and Sunset Way, and noted that with one or two exceptions, the buildings there are all small. He explained how City regulations impact the cost of remodeling, which is his primary business, and gave examples. He said flexibility in regulations is important. Someone might want to incorporate cultural aspects into their building using a feng shui approach, and gave an example of an existing spa in Olde Town that reflects certain Japanese aesthetics but which might not fit with the kind of regulations being discussed. He continued with a description of the approval process he has encountered with the City for signage in front of his business, which he said was complicated, and the difficulty and expense that would be required under City regulations to build a ramp. He spoke about the impact on businesses all along Sunset Way of code changes, parking lot requirements, and other City regulations, all of which impact the viability of Olde Town businesses.

ADJOURNMENT

With no additional business to conduct, SOWA adjourned the meeting at 9:05 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Lowe
Recording Secretary