CITY OF ISSAQUAH
Planning Policy Commission

6:30 PM		Council Chambers
November 8, 2018	**MINUTES**	135 E. Sunset Way

COMMISSION AND ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL PRESENT

PPC Commissioners Present: Joan Probala, Chair Ron Faul, Vice Chair Joy Lewis Bill Rinehart Jason Voiss, Alt. (Acting as Voting Member) ***Commissioners Not Present (Excused):*** Lindsey Walsh AJ McGauley, Alt. ***Development Commissioners Present:*** Richard Sowa, Chair Mel Morgan, Jr., Vice Chair Michael Brennan Randy Harrison Kevin Price	***Administration/Staff Present:*** Emily Arteche, Senior Planner Christen Leeson, Senior Planner Brianne Ross, Senior Engineer Keith Niven, Econ. Dev. & Dev. Services Director ***Others Present:*** Nathan Polanski, MIG/SvR, Consultants

1. CALL TO ORDER
PROBALA called the meeting to order at 6:32 PM. She noted that the Development Commission members have been invited to join PPC's discussions tonight, and thanked them for coming.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. MOVED BY LEWIS, SECONDED BY VOISS that minutes of the meeting on October 25, 2018 be approved as presented. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY, 5-0.

3. REGULAR BUSINESS

a. Gilman Blvd. Corridor Concept
Presented by:
Brianne Ross, *Senior Engineer*

Ross made staff's presentation. She outlined the project objectives; the project process and schedule; the results of outreach meetings with stakeholders and the key takeaways from those meetings; the results of a community workshop and the key takeaways; a description of a survey and a summary of the responses received and the results; the community's goals, as determined by the feedback received from the outreach process; existing conditions; and an overview map. She also described several discussion topics intended to receive feedback from the Commissioners, which including the following.

LEWIS said the plan is still too conceptual at this point to be able to answer the first discussion point about aligning changes on Gilman with the Green Necklace, but the plan does appear to be on the right track, in her view. PROBALA spoke in favor of the general concept behind the plan. She said there are a few points that need more clarification, like what having more crosswalks on Gilman will do to traffic. Polanski replied that will be an important part of the Phase II work on this project. The Commissioners briefly discussed potential traffic issues.

FAUL said he would advocate for biking to be an important part of the concept, and said he foresees increased popularity of electric bicycles. He also cautioned that shared bicycle paths where pedestrians and bicycles are both present can be dangerous, and said he'd like to see separated pathways considered. Polanski described the feedback received from public outreach on bicycles. VOISS spoke about his impressions of shared bike/pedestrian roadways in Florida and elsewhere, but said he's not sure there is adequate space here for that. The Commissioners continued to discuss where shared pathways are working locally and where they are not. MORGAN referred to the community feedback received during the outreach process, and said it doesn't sound as though the public would favor giving up a lane of traffic for a bike lane. SOWA noted there will be competing interests, and asked how those interests will be prioritized and evaluated. Polanski referred to the next phase of the project, which will address trade-offs. Ross gave more details about the plan process, leading to Council adoption.

PROBALA asked whether any development is in place now that would change any part of Gilman while the plan is in development. Ross gave details about pending projects and new development of which she is aware. Polanski said that will also be tracked as part of the next phase of the project. PROBALA said this is an opportunity for some creative, out-of-the-box thinking, including how pedestrian access would not necessarily have to follow the vehicle roadway alignment.

BRENNAN said this is a long-range plan, and we should be thinking of when Gilman will have higher density, including where light-rail and its accompanying facilities are going to land. The plan also shows a new I-90 crossing, he continued, and where it lands on Gilman could be a nice feature, as well. So the plan should speak to those future opportunities, he said. MORGAN noted where the map for the plan shows the crossing in a different place than the Central Issaquah Plan. Ross explained the location is conceptual only at this point. MORGAN said the buildings along here will be built to the street, and a 25-mph speed limit seems more appropriate than 35 or 45. He continued a lower speed limit with more continual movement seems warranted, he added.

FAUL said his impression is that more and more people are walking in central Issaquah, and gave examples. HARRISON said this plan gives Issaquah the opportunity to lead the entire region in improving our environment, and said there is no denying the negative impact that street run-off has on salmon. He continued he'd like to see the City become a leader in addressing this critical issue. BRENNAN noted that drainage will mean that not all buildings will be able to be built right up to the street, and said that might be an opportunity to create an amenity. Ross agreed. VOISS said it is important to be sure that Gilman is aesthetically pleasing, such as ensuring a tree canopy, which in turn will attract tourists and others.

MORGAN brought up the issue of where a sound barrier is identified in the plan. Polanski said it is shown in the plan for conceptual purposes only. HARRISON asked where will the sound be deflected. SOWA explained his understanding is that, using texture and other wall features, sound can be deflected back to where it came from. HARRISON expressed concerns he has heard from Squak Mountain residents and others about how a sound wall would work. FAUL brought up the idea of a vegetated sound wall.

LEWIS said she would like to see a raised pedestrian walkway considered, as was mentioned earlier by PROBALA. She also said the work required will be inconvenient and painful for residents and motorists, and the intent in the plan should be to do the work as quickly as possible and not stretch it out any more than is necessary.

Audience Comments

Annette Traeger, 710 7th NW, Issaquah, said she attended the community outreach meetings, and described her use of the trails in and around Gilman as a pedestrian and e-biker. She said the outreach materials and process were very good, and thanked staff and the consultant for being open and transparent with the public. She said pedestrians and bicyclists share space on the Juniper Trail now, and it works very well. She commented that landscaping and other natural features are welcome but they need to be maintained long-term by the City if they are going to be part of the plan. She also gave her thoughts that using a pedestrian overpass would not feel comfortable for her, especially at night.

Commissioner Discussion

MORGAN said Sammamish is expected to complete the segment of the East Lake Sammamish Trail that runs through Sammamish in 2020, which will likely mean more bicycle traffic coming into downtown Issaquah. He said it would be good to link up Gilman as well.

HARRISON said the siting of Sound Transit's light rail station and facilities will have a huge impact, and it's difficult to proceed with planning for Gilman without knowing more about where the station, parking lots, feeder facilities, and so on, will be. Ross said we expect the station to be in the vicinity of Gilman but we don't know much more than that right now. Staff is trying to balance not having a final location for light rail designated yet with also needing to move forward with a vision for Gilman.

BRENNAN complimented staff and the consultant on the community outreach performed and the process used for gathering information. This is still very conceptual but the framework is an excellent start, he said. LEWIS agreed, and asked when PPC will see the plan again. Ross replied staff will keep all the boards and commissions informed. Niven added the plan will be added to the Comprehensive Plan, so it will come back to PPC in that context.

Commissioner Decision

PROBALA said staff has requested that PPC prepare a letter of support from PPC for the plan as presented tonight, which will be used as part of staff's presentation to City Council.

MOVED BY LEWIS, SECONDED BY FAUL that staff draft a letter for the PPC Chair's signature indicating PPC's endorsement of the work done so far on the NW Gilman Corridor Framework Plan; and while PPC recognizes the plan is still at the conceptual stage, PPC supports the excellent work and documents prepared so far and recommends staff continue in the direction indicated in tonight's presentation. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY, 5-0.

4. PUBLIC HEARING

a. Proposed Amendments to Central Issaquah Development and Design Standards, Table 4.3-A, Levels of Review (D)

Presented by:

Emily Arteche, Senior Planner

Arteche presented a proposed change in levels of review for Central Issaquah, as described in the agenda packet. Her presentation included the existing levels of review and the benefits of updating Table 4.3-A to reflect the proposed changes. She noted that a map would accompany the proposed change so that users can easily see the affected corridors. She concluded her presentation with a description of the review process for the proposed amendment, leading to expected Council action on the proposed development standards amendments in January 2019.

Commission Discussion

PROBALA asked what would the change do to the costs and time required for developers. Arteche said the change to a Level 3 review would require more time because the process would require review and deliberation by the Development Commission. Niven gave some background on why this amendment is being proposed, beginning with the Council's decision to remove most of the Intensive Commercial (IC) zone from Central Issaquah. In the past, a Level 2 review would not require review by the Development Commission, he continued. He used a pending car dealership on East Sammamish as an example that, under the existing regulations, would not require review beyond City staff. This change would mean that projects on certain major corridors in the City would require more than just City review, because the review process would require a public process through the Development Commission, called a Level 3 Review. The result would be increased transparency and opportunities for public involvement and comment, he added. There shouldn't be any cost differences because the code will still be the same code, but it would require a review and decision by the Development Commission rather than a decision by staff. FAUL asked whether this issue has been discussed by the Development Commission. Niven replied as a code amendment, the issue is in PPC's purview.

LEWIS said speaking as a member of the Urban Village Development Commission (UVDC), the UVDC was concerned about the potential dissolution of UVDC due to the end of the Talus and Highlands development agreements. The concern was that losing the UVDC as a forum would result in less community opportunity for input and less oversight of projects generally. The UVDC thought that it would be preferable to have the Development Commission's review rather than just having projects go from the developer to staff without any Commission involvement. She added there was some discussion of possibly expanding the Development Commission to absorb any additional work as a result of the proposed amendment.

MORGAN suggested that the verbiage for Level 3 be included in Table 4.3-A. LEWIS and others agreed. PROBALA said including as much as possible in the table will be helpful for developers, the public, and the Development Commission as well. Staff will make the change.

BRENNAN asked whether staff did any assessment of past Development Commission workload from a workload management standpoint compared with the workload with this new amendment in place. Arteche said staff did take a look at how many parcels would be affected and came up with a number something greater than 100. Niven said in terms of what is in the pipeline, there are only a few upcoming projects for the Development Commission. He added we can always proposed adjustments if necessary.

HARRISON noted that ten years or so ago, the Development Commission routinely reviewed two applications at each of its twice-monthly meetings, a pace that has slowed in the last eight years or so. He said he thinks there is some slack between what used to be the norm for the Development Commission and what has come before the Commission recently, and said an increased workload could be accommodated, in his view. SOWA added the opportunity for more transparency and public input is valuable, and could help generate good feelings toward the City in terms of its responsiveness to the public. MORGAN agreed increased openness and transparency is important.

Public Comments

PROBALA opened the public hearing for comment at 8:05 PM. Hearing no requests to speak, she closed the public hearing at 8:06 PM.

Commissioner Decision

MOVED BY RINEHART, SECONDED BY LEWIS that the PPC Chair be authorized to sign the Findings of Fact affirming PPC's recommendation to Council to approve the Level 3 Review amendment (Table 4.3-A, Levels of Review) to the Central Issaquah Development and Design Standards, as presented tonight. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY, 5-0.

5. OTHER BUSINESS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Leeson gave an update on recent PPC recommendations and the status of those issues in terms of being reviewed and approved by Council.

6. AUDIENCE COMMENTS

None.

7. ADJOURNMENT

HARRISON spoke in favor of more frequent meetings with the Development Commission and PPC on significant issues of mutual interest. Others agreed. With no additional business to conduct, the meeting was adjourned at 8:12 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Lowe
Recording Secretary