



MINUTES

PLANNING POLICY COMMISSION 6:30 p.m. – Thursday, April 9, 2026

1. Call to Order

The hybrid meeting was called to order at 6:31 p.m. by CHAIR VOISS.

Commissioners Present: Chair Voiss, Vice-Chair Patterson, Commissioners Adair, Krass, Matthews, Millender-Irwin, and Oliner

Absent: Commissioner Zakharoff (Excused)

Staff Present: Minnie Dhaliwal, CP&D Director
Amanda Jackson, Meeting Assistant
Kate Kaehny, Principal Planner
Christen Leeson, Planning Manager
Andrew Love, Associate Planner

2. Approval of Minutes

a) Minutes of March 26, 2026

With no changes or comments, the Minutes were approved.

3. Public Comments (General)

There were no requests to speak.

4. Regular Business

a) **Title 18 Clarifying Amendments: Review All Proposals (D)** (00:02)

Presented by:

Kate Kaehny, Principal Planner

Kaehny introduced the topic and began the presentation with Site Development Permits.

COMMISSIONER OLINER stated that there should possibly be a time limit for Site Development Permits if a cumulative building element is brought back.

Kaehny continued with Donation Bins.

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CHAIR VOISS stated that the guidelines are good and that 365 day terms makes sense over 180 days.

VICE-CHAIR PATTERSON asked what the process would be to report a nuisance, not necessarily to be included in code but for information purposes. Kaehny replied that there will be information posted regarding how to contact a bin operator directly, and the Code Enforcement Officer will contact the property owner with a warning process and further steps. VICE-CHAIR PATTERSON asked what the bin removal process is and Dhalilwal replied that a courtesy notice and timeline is sent first, but if a violation is severe a Notice of Violation is sent, followed by fines and liens that can be brought; bringing bins into compliance is the goal, however. VICE-CHAIR PATTERSON stated that a short 180 day period should not be necessary given the steps in place to alleviate issues.

CHAIR VOISS asked if signs should be placed on bins with a number to call if the bin needs to be reported. Kaehny replied that the intent is that the owner of the bin will have a clear mode of communication to report.

Kaehny continued with Balloon Signs.

COMMISSIONER MATTHEWS asked, regarding 18.612.030 in code, for clarification regarding possible conflicting verbiage that states that balloons less than 18 inches in diameter with messages are exempt from sign standards. Kaehny replied that the issue would be brought back to the Planner for input. Love replied that the intention of the section was possibly for birthday balloons in neighborhoods, for example, but it is conflicting and the issue will be discussed.

Kaehny continued with Sign Illumination.

COMMISSIONER MATTHEWS stated that verbiage is inconsistent under Monument Signs. Kaehny replied that the issue will be corrected.

Kaehny continued with Temporary Window Signs and there were no comments.

Kaehny stated that the items will be brought back to the Planning Policy Commission for the Public Hearing on May 14, 2026 and for a recommendation to bring to the Planning, Development & Environment (PD&E) Committee and full Council.

b) **Promoting Building Investment Code Amendments: Building Stepback and Multifamily Amenity Space Requirements in Issaquah Central (D) (00:28)**

Presented by:

Christen Leeson, Planning Manager

Leeson began the presentation.

COMMISSIONER ADAIR asked for clarification regarding stepback requirements in Downtown Kirkland and Leeson explained options Kirkland provides.

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COMMISSIONER KRASS asked for clarification regarding possible setback requirements in Ballard. An unidentified speaker replied but not on microphone. Leeson replied that the question would be researched.

Leeson continued the presentation.

COMMISSIONER OLINER asked for clarification regarding a maximum of 20-foot setbacks and Leeson replied that while most cities have a maximum there probably is not a need and gave an example of the Trailhead development.

VICE-CHAIR PATTERSON asked where a Natural Context Area requirement came from, and Leeson replied that the requirement came from the 2016 Moratorium when Council asked for architectural standards and the consultant recommended; there are three State shoreline jurisdictions in Issaquah and any development within 200 feet cannot exceed 35 feet in height in addition to buffers and setbacks.

COMMISSIONER ADAIR asked if Parks would be included in a requirement for walking trails as non-motorized circulation facilities. Leeson replied yes and referred to a map sent to Commissioners today in a link, not in the Power Point.

COMMISSIONER KRASS asked why multiple setbacks would be limited. Leeson replied that multiple setbacks are not being required but allowed and that verbiage would be adjusted for clarification.

COMMISSIONER OLINER stated that there is valid concern from developers regarding loss of square footage and that eliminating a requirement for multiple setbacks should be okay given the scale of Issaquah buildings, but if scale changes a requirement could be useful.

Leeson asked Commissioners if setbacks should be eliminated along Natural Context areas.

COMMISSIONER KRASS asked for clarification that the setback requirement would be eliminated or be prohibited. Leeson replied that the requirement would be eliminated.

COMMISSIONER OLINER stated that developers may want to include an element of setbacks for the advantage of having balconies overlooking Natural Context areas.

VICE-CHAIR PATTERSON stated that if the requirement is removed there are design preferences and ecological factors and asked why the requirement was made in 2016 to understand.

COMMISSIONER MATTHEWS stated that requiring material changes or subdued colors could be an option, and Leeson replied that modulation in materials and architectural changes are already required.

CHAIR VOISS stated agreement with VICE-CHAIR PATTERSON and that aesthetically pleasing buildings should be able to be built, but time and consideration was put into forming the requirement for a reason that needs to be understood.

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Leeson asked if flexibility should be provided in the location of stepbacks.

COMMISSIONER MATTHEWS stated that in some cases a lower stepbacks is preferable.

COMMISSIONER KRASS asked if location within the city should be a consideration. Leeson replied that the focus now is solely on Central Issaquah, which includes the Urban Core and Mixed-Use. COMMISSIONER KRASS stated that the width of the frontage road may be a factor aesthetically. Leeson replied that Urban Core and Mixed-Use Central Issaquah will be called Core Streets, two drive lanes, parking on each side, and bike lanes. Not all streets in Mixed-Use Residential are required to be Core Streets, being narrower.

COMMISSIONER ADAIR stated agreement with having stepbacks on a lower floor to avoid a canyon effect.

CHAIR VOISS asked if there is a middle ground in which the developer could change materials.

COMMISSIONER KRASS asked for clarification regarding a five-story wood building. COMMISSIONER OLINER replied that there are mass timber buildings that are built higher and COMMISSIONER ADAIR replied that there can also be a five-story or more concrete building. Leeson replied that podium style change is at the material change, and if not podium style change must occur by the second or third floor. COMMISSIONER ADAIR stated that at a change of material could put a stepback very high. Leeson stated understanding that lower is better.

COMMISSIONER MILLENDER-IRWIN asked for clarification regarding developer height bonuses ties to stepbacks. Leeson replied that development bonus is not tied to stepbacks but to base height or Floor Area Ratio (FAR) and explained the options. COMMISSIONER MILLENDER-IRWIN asked if there is a loss of square footage to gain height and Leeson replied no, and that the higher the building, the more density but as affordable housing or fee-in-lieu.

Leeson asked if a minimum depth should be required for stepbacks.

COMMISSIONER ADAIR stated that there should be a minimum and gave an example of a narrow balcony becoming unusable, five feet only being usable for planters, chairs, or a barbeque. COMMISSIONER KRASS stated that a depth best for the environment should be the minimum. Leeson replied that other cities maintain a minimum of five feet. CHAIR VOISS stated that providing and not losing livable area on the floor is a benefit. COMMISSIONER OLINER stated that if usable open space is desired, more than five feet would be chosen by the developer but that the minimum allowed should be no smaller than five feet. COMMISSIONER MATTHEWS stated that five feet is very small, that developers have commented a desire for 30% balconies from 50%, and that seven and a half or eight feet is more usable. COMMISSIONER KRASS stated that stepbacks and balconies are being combined and asked what code is for private outdoor amenity space. Leeson replied that code is for 48 square feet minimum overall. CHAIR VOISS stated that maximizing livability will be beneficial to the builder, and that similar conversations are within stepbacks and balconies but different, and Leeson replied correct. CHAIR VOISS stated that five feet would be okay. COMMISSIONER ADAIR

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asked for clarification that setbacks in current code must be either terrace or community space. Leeson replied that the conversation is actually regarding Open Space, but that the requirement is for 48 square feet of private space plus an additional 100 square feet per unit outdoor common space. COMMISSIONER ADAIR asked if setbacks are required to be accessible as a terrace, and Leeson replied yes, in Natural Context areas. COMMISSIONER ADAIR asked if setbacks in current code are included as Common Space and CHAIR VOISS replied that the 48 square feet private space is non-negotiable, but the 100 square feet common space can be a plaza or outdoor wrap around area, up to the developer. Leeson replied correct and referenced code 18.602, that setbacks must incorporate terraces and outdoor usable space.

Leeson asked if there should be a requirement that setbacks be used as open space.

CHAIR VOISS replied no. COMMISSIONER OLINER stated that a setback can be made with a membrane roof, not walkable, no railings, and no exterior door, less expensive. COMMISSIONER MATTHEWS stated that there may not be enough area on a block for required outdoor space and asked if the requirement could be greater. Leeson replied that amenity space goes toward outdoor space. COMMISSIONER MATTHEWS stated that a setback that becomes an amenity should be deeper, 10-feet. COMMISSIONER OLINER stated that a five-foot balcony is sufficient for small chairs, but larger would be better. COMMISSIONER ADAIR stated support for allowing the option of a setback not being outdoor space for money savings, the outdoor space then elsewhere to meet minimum.

Leeson asked if setbacks should be on all sides or only on street frontages.

COMMISSIONER KRASS stated that canyons should not be created.

Leeson asked if street frontage facades should occupy 100%, or less.

CHAIR VOISS stated that aesthetically, breaking up the façade is positive. COMMISSIONER OLINER stated that there are aesthetics and economics that are not always equal, and setbacks typically do not occur facing an alley or against another building. CHAIR VOISS stated that the code should be user-friendly. Leeson asked again if the requirement should be for 100% of street frontage, and CHAIR VOISS replied that a lesser percentage would provide more design options and flexibility. COMMISSIONER ADAIR asked if maximum lengths are in code currently and Leeson replied there are options to break up the façade. COMMISSIONER ADAIR stated that a concern is a long building. COMMISSIONER KRASS asked what other cities are doing and Leeson replied with examples. COMMISSIONER MATTHEWS stated being okay with a minimum of 75% and that the remaining 25% could be spread into different areas. COMMISSIONER ADAIR suggested a requirement that a street frontage cannot be more than a particular length without a setback.

Leeson replied that at the next presentation, draft code will be brought back but still with options.

Leeson continued with Open Space.

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Leeson asked if code should be amended to add options rather than allowing applicants to request deviations.

COMMISSIONER KRASS asked for clarification regarding Option 1B, private and common area not broken out, and Leeson replied yes. CHAIR VOISS stated that Option 1A is current code. COMMISSIONER KRASS asked if larger balconies and smaller common area would be an option and Leeson replied no, that common space is important for community and play areas. COMMISSIONER MATTHEWS stated support for an option for 30% of units only with balconies, the amount of residents that appear to generally even use the private space, but more allotted for common space. COMMISSIONER ADAIR clarified the Options. COMMISSIONER MILLENDER-IRWIN stated that Option 1C appears to be the most comprehensive. CHAIR VOISS repeated that the question was if options over deviations is preferred and the Commissioners agreed that options would be preferable. VICE-CHAIR PATTERSON asked if developers could be asked if a specific option would always be chosen in the interest of simplicity. COMMISSIONER OLINER asked for clarification regarding Option 1C, the most desirable to a developer, and Commissioners replied although not on microphone. COMMISSIONER MATTHEWS asked for clarification regarding first floor patios and common space and Leeson replied that fenced patios are considered private. COMMISSIONER MATTHEWS suggested that there be a minimum criteria rather than options. COMMISSIONER ADAIR stated that private space could be specified as above ground floor or a minimum. COMMISSIONER KRASS asked that if the city intent is to require private space. Leeson replied that Comprehensive Plan policy is to provide common spaces for a sense of community. Dhaliwal replied with a timeline of common space requirement changes. COMMISSIONER KRASS asked if the city point of view is that private space should be required and Dhaliwal replied that an option for livability is achieved at 30%. COMMISSIONER ADAIR asked if developers had expressed that 50% was too much when that percentage was approved, and Dhaliwal replied that there had been a public process but with no input regarding 50%. COMMISSIONER ADAIR asked if there is an advantage for people with disabilities to have a private outdoor space. COMMISSIONER MILLENDER-IRWIN stated agreement with COMMISSIONER ADAIR and stated that multi-family housing includes multiple demographics and Option 1C would be attractive to developers because of the marketing variability. COMMISSIONER OLINER stated that flexibility is good and that inward-facing balconies may be more desirable. Dhaliwal replied that code specifies private outdoor space and not balconies or patios only, which could include, for example, a gardening space. VICE-CHAIR PATTERSON stated that outside space is a need, but a balcony is a nice amenity, and that 30% will help developers develop. CHAIR VOISS stated that 30% is good and asked if the other 70% could be at 148 square feet, and Leeson replied that this is the current deviation. CHAIR VOISS stated that Issaquah has hit housing targets and asked why there is a push for development at this time, and that there should not be a competition with other cities. COMMISSIONER OLINER stated that there are other factors than balconies to encourage development such as cost of land. COMMISSIONER ADAIR stated support for creating flexible options but stated agreement with COMMISSIONER OLINER that there are other factors involved.

Leeson asked if a maximum should be added.

COMMISSIONER MATTHEWS asked if Open Space should be calculated based on the building square footage or plot of land. Leeson replied that the plot will include parking spaces,

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driveways, critical areas, and required landscaping, and that calculating based on the building will reflect the number of people using Open Space more than the site itself. COMMISSIONER MATTHEWS stated that a developing a small block may not be conducive to creating Open Space. CHAIR VOISS asked if there would be any negatives to having a maximum. Leeson replied being aware of only one other city with a maximum, 20%. COMMISSIONER OLINER stated not being aware of any downside to a maximum.

Leeson stated that code will be brought back for review on April 23, 2026, the Public Hearing on May 14, 2026, to the PD&E Committee June 2, 2026, and to Council June 29, 2026 for action.

5. Reports

a) Council Update (01:53)

Leeson stated that a second roundtable with developers was held on April 1, 2026.

Dhaliwal stated that the Work Plan will be brought to the PD&E Committee on May 19, 2026.

6. Other Business/Announcements

a) Upcoming Schedule

Leeson stated that the meeting on April 23, 2026 will begin at 5:30 p.m. and that Commissioners should inform staff of any attendance issues due to the need for a quorum.

7. Adjournment

CHAIR VOISS adjourned the meeting at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn Garza, LLC
Recording Secretary