



MINUTES

PLANNING POLICY COMMISSION 6:30 p.m. – Thursday, June 11, 2026

1. Call to Order

The hybrid meeting was called to order at 6:35 p.m. by CHAIR VOISS.

Commissioners Present: Chair Voiss, Vice-Chair Patterson, Commissioners Adair, Holstrom, Krass, Matthews, Oliner, and Zakharoff

Absent: Commissioner Millender-Irwin (Excused)

Staff Present: Kate Kaehny, Principal Planner
Christen Leeson, Planning Manager
Andrew Love, Associate Planner
Emily Medina, Senior Planner

Due to technical difficulties in recording the May 28, 2026 Meeting there were no Minutes for approval.

2. Public Comments (General)

There were no requests to speak.

3. Regular Business

- a) **Promoting Building Investments in Issaquah: Council Goals and Objectives (D) (00:02)**
Presented by:
Christen Leeson, Planning Manager

Leeson gave the presentation. There were no questions.

- b) **Promoting Building Investment Code Amendments: Proposed Transparency and Natural Context Area Amendments (D) (00:08)**
Presented by:
Emily Medina, Senior Planner

Medina began the presentation with Transparency Requirements.

COMMISSIONER ADAIR asked for clarification regarding transparency percentages and multi-family being broken out, and Medina explained the proposal. COMMISSIONER ADAIR asked for the reason for the change and Medina replied that developers have asked that the standard be lowered overall to 15% for multi-family, and that staff made further reductions.

COMMISSIONER KRASS asked for clarification regarding the definition of commercial in the context of combining. Medina replied that in current code, retail requires 70% transparency, but there is no definition of retail in the code, triggering the amendment. A definition of commercial was discussed. COMMISSIONER KRASS questioned a window requirement for the commercial Darigold factory. Leeson replied that as on Front Street, the use can be specified as identified in the Permitted Uses table. COMMISSIONER KRASS stated that more clarity is needed before a recommendation. Kaehny replied that code is made to implement the goals for the area. COMMISSIONER KRASS stated that more definition will be helpful.

COMMISSIONER ZAKHAROFF asked for further clarification and Leeson replied that a specific definition of retail had been removed from code in favor of a general definition because retail uses change regularly. COMMISSIONER ZAKHAROFF asked if there had been a request from developers to divide multi-family from townhomes, and Medina replied no, that the change came from staff from the idea that an apartment building with a lobby and community space on the ground floor is different than a townhome with a front door and living room windows on the ground floor. COMMISSIONER ZAKHAROFF asked about condominiums, and Medina replied that condominiums are a use in the city that is a legal mechanism, and that other building types can be considered condominiums also. COMMISSIONER ZAKHAROFF replied that there are apartment buildings with units on the ground floor.

COMMISSIONER OLINER asked for clarification regarding a business such as Bevmo or Safeway that covers windows because of shelving placement and a dentist office that covers windows for the privacy of patients, and stated that regulations are well-intended but do not necessarily provide deviation leeway for a developer. Leeson replied that transparency only on street frontages are in question, not wrapping around an entire building.

COMMISSIONER HOLSTROM stated that 70% and 45% seem very high percentages, that a developer would not know the exact use of the ground floor while building, and that one percentage would make sense.

COMMISSIONER MATTHEWS asked how transparency would be managed if parking is on the ground floor. Leeson replied that Trailhead is allowed to receive deviations through a contract with the city from design requirements that are more expensive, and that Central Issaquah requires that ground floor parking be wrapped on the street facades with storefronts. COMMISSIONER MATTHEWS asked about the requirement for store frontages, and Leeson replied that 40% of commercially zoned properties outside of transit-oriented development can be required to be mixed-use on the ground floor, and although there is not a light rail station yet, station areas can also have ground floor commercial requirements.

COMMISSIONER ADAIR stated that multi-story family and townhomes serve a different market and that it is okay to separate in terms of requirements. COMMISSIONER MATTHEWS stated

agreement. Leeson replied that another option could be a ground floor residential unit must meet 15%. COMMISSIONER ADAIR asked that 15% not be specified yet.

CHAIR VOISS stated that regarding the first question, multi-family requires more information.

CHAIR VOISS asked for clarification regarding 45% transparency selected by staff, and Medina replied that the percentage is a compromise between current code and developer requests, as well as 45% being the current standard in the Cultural Business District (CBD) zone successfully.

CHAIR VOISS stated, regarding proposed retail and commercial transparency standards, that half of the Commission agreed. COMMISSIONER ADAIR asked for examples to be brought back of 45% versus higher and that how windows will be arranged will be a factor.

VICE CHAIR PATTERSON stated that 70% is too high, and 45% is a good point to start at with examples.

COMMISSIONER KRASS asked to see the actual transparency percentage in Olde Town versus the requirement in examples. CHAIR VOISS gave an example of Fischer Meats and Las Margaritas.

CHAIR VOISS stated that 70% is too high and 15% is too low.

CHAIR VOISS asked if city vision and goals be achieved with a 70% transparency standard to growth and pedestrian areas.

COMMISSIONER MATTHEWS stated that the use must be considered with transparency.

COMMISSIONER KRASS stated that glass may look better to pedestrians versus brick walls despite the use of space inside. Medina replied that windows and signs are only allowed to be covered 25%, and blinds could be used inside. COMMISSIONER KRASS asked if window film is considered a sign and for the definition of a sign. Medina replied that window film is not a sign, but signage itself on windows is not allowed and there is also a dark tint prohibition.

COMMISSIONER ADAIR stated that higher activation streets may need higher transparency, but if the goal is to simplify code, movement in the opposite direction is occurring. Medina replied that long range plans for where future activation should occur are what are being considered.

COMMISSIONER MATTHEWS stated that there are other options besides transparency such as living walls with greenery or artwork.

COMMISSIONER HOLSTROM stated that added construction costs with new state building codes are significant, another code update coming, and asked for a comparison of previous code requirements versus current.

VICE-CHAIR PATTERSON stated that numbers seem to be arbitrarily used and that data driven decision making would be helpful regarding lowering developer costs versus city vision and asked for a cost perspective.

Medina asked how the Commission feels about the Urban Core having a different percentage and higher standard than the rest of the city. The Commissioners generally stated agreement.

Medina continued the presentation with Natural Context Areas.

VICE-CHAIR PATTERSON stated that 150 feet makes sense not to apply to a street or parcel unless a trail, pedestrian path or facing is present.

COMMISSIONER OLINER stated that bicycle paths need to be addressed, that the usage of a path should be considered, and that there needs to be a definition of both street and path. Medina replied that an entire building would need to be oriented.

COMMISSIONER MATTHEWS stated that a residential street should face natural context.

COMMISSIONER ADAIR stated that confusion will occur with the options presented. Medina replied that the intent is meant for an actual street, not a trail or pedestrian path.

COMMISSIONER ADAIR stated that a street will usually include a sidewalk and explained the question further. Medina replied that there are further requirements related to porches and balconies and staff is asking if all requirements must be met if the building is across the street from a natural context area or if all code must be met only if directly adjoining. COMMISSIONER ADAIR stated support for directly adjoining.

COMMISSIONER OLINER stated that apartments should face a natural context area regardless of a street between or not, important to future development with so many natural context areas in Issaquah, and asked if the orientation requirement can be uncoupled so that amenity items are only required when directly adjoining, an undesirable example being a patio placed directly next to a street only because of the natural context area on the other side. Medina replied that code can be created.

COMMISSIONER HOLSTROM stated that the requirements would be extremely challenging for an architect.

COMMISSIONER ZAKHAROFF asked for clarification regarding apartment units that are on the other side of a building frontage and Medina replied that the requirement would be for the front side of the building, not every unit.

COMMISSIONER ADAIR asked if a building would be required to orient toward a natural context area if there is a plat located between it that another building will be built on, blocking the view in the future.

COMMISSIONER OLINER asked for a better definition of orientation. Kaehny replied that an arterial is considered the front, and that other city codes used the verbiage *adjoining*. Leeson

replied that an entryway does not need to face a natural context area, but features need to be oriented towards the front for views, no blank walls.

COMMISSIONER MATTHEWS stated that balconies and views oriented toward a view will be the highest priced units, but a requirement may not make sense if there is a plat available between. Leeson replied that placement of garages and loading bays are in question also.

CHAIR VOISS asked if the Commissioners agree that properties adjoining a natural context area should be oriented to the area, the building working with the area. The Commissioners agreed.

Medina stated that there are different types of natural context areas and a true natural area will have a 150 foot buffer with nothing built; the question of adjoining versus adjacent is regarding city parks and public open space, not critical areas.

CHAIR VOISS stated that developers need to take advantage of the views and not block with ingress, loading, and air conditioners, in example, and stated support for adjoining but that adjacent is to be determined.

c) **Promoting Building Investment Code Amendments: Introduction to Parking Reform Amendments and Proposed Updates to Urban Village-Commercial/Retail (UV/COM/RET) Zones (D) (01:15)**

Presented by:

Andrew Love, Associate Planner

Love began the presentation.

COMMISSIONER MATTHEWS asked if a street such as Gilman will be redesigned in the future to add street parking. Leeson replied that there is not a current plan to add parking to existing streets but new streets such as 14th Avenue Northwest will require parking.

COMMISSIONER KRASS asked for clarification that code is being adjusted to state requirements and timing. Love replied yes, and also to look at changes raised by the Planning, Development & Environment Committee. COMMISSIONER KRASS stated that there must be robust transit already in place for success, described a similar situation in San Jose, California, and that the city will need to enforce parking more aggressively, in example, a motor home taking up spots for days at a time. Love replied that lenders will be less likely to fund a development unless parking is included and market determines the number of spaces.

COMMISSIONER MATTHEWS stated having lived in a development with no parking in another city and parking stickers and zones will need to be implemented and enforced to avoid parking in adjoining neighborhoods.

COMMISSIONER ZAKHAROFF stated agreement with COMMISSIONER KRASS that Issaquah is not ready with transit yet, that state requirements should be implemented for now, and not being in support of implementing more than the state minimum but support for more

temporary and time restrictive parking. Love asked if parking maximums should be kept and COMMISSIONER ZAKHAROFF replied yes.

COMMISSIONER OLINER asked if Issaquah would be overregulating or opening the door for questionable development, that tying ecologically sound building to parking may not be productive and stated support for a parking maximum.

VICE-CHAIR PATTERSON stated that the Commission has tended to meet state mandates but not go further, as the mandates are usually restrictive enough, and that if there are no parking minimums there is also no Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) parking required.

COMMISSIONER OLINER stated that as ADA is a federal requirement, there could be a conflict in a state requirement, in example a doctor's office needs ADA parking.

CHAIR VOISS asked if the Commission would like to keep a parking maximum and the Commission indicated yes. CHAIR VOISS asked the Commission if the Urban Core (UC) and Mixed Use - Central Issaquah (MUCI) zones are the correct areas to remove or reduce parking minimums and the Commission indicated reduce. Love replied that state requirements must be met throughout the entire city. CHAIR VOISS asked if the Commission is interested in doing more than state law requires and the Commission indicated no. CHAIR VOISS asked if staff should investigate more temporary or time restricted parking and the Commission indicated yes, particularly enforcement.

VICE-CHAIR PATTERSON stated that loading zone parking for deliveries should be a requirement. Love replied that off street space falls outside of parking requirements, but that both are important.

COMMISSIONER KRASS asked if code will allow private high-story parking garages in the future. Leeson replied that code allows parking garages.

VICE-CHAIR PATTERSON asked if bicycle parking reform will be addressed in the future. Leeson replied that it is not on the agenda currently and can be requested of staff but due to workload later would be preferred.

Love continued the presentation.

Leeson stated that RCW stands for Revised Code of Washington.

COMMISSIONER ADAIR stated that state law is being complied with.

VICE-CHAIR PATTERSON asked for clarification that something could be built in the Highlands without Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions (CC&R) consideration and Leeson replied correct.

CHAIR VOISS asked the Commission if there is enough information to support the staff recommendation on changing the UV/COM retail zones and the Commission indicated yes.

4. Reports**a) Council Update (02:02)**

Leeson stated that there was no Council report.

5 Other Business/Announcements**a) Upcoming Schedule**

Leeson asked Commissioners if a special meeting could be held on August 20, 2026 as August 27, 2026 is a day off. Six Commissioners indicated availability. Leeson replied that a meeting notice would be generated.

Commissioner Oliner stated that a report from EcoNorthwest had been included in the meeting packet and recommended reading. Leeson replied that there will be discussion at the June 25, 2026 meeting.

6. Adjournment

CHAIR VOISS adjourned the meeting at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn Garza, LLC
Recording Secretary