

PLANNING BOARD MINUTES

October 22, 2003

Chair Crim called the regular meeting of the Planning Board to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers, Public Safety Complex, 250 – 5th Avenue North.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Jim Crim, Chair
James Young, Vice Chair
Cary Guenther
Janice Freeman
Ronald Hopkins

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

John Dewhirst
Judith Works
Virginia Cassutt

STAFF PRESENT

Rob Chave, Planning Division Manager
Steve Bullock, Senior Planner
Karin Noyes, Recorder

READING/APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Chave referred to the second full paragraph on Page 3. He asked that an addendum be added to the minutes to reflect what his correct response should have been to Ms. Mantooth's reference to property across the street. His recollection, at the last meeting, was that the property had not been rezoned. However, after further research, he found that there was a split zoning done for this property. The City Council approved the Comprehensive Plan amendment changing the land use designation to multi-family. But they turned down the rezone application.

BOARD MEMBER GUENTHER MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF OCTOBER 8, 2003 AS CORRECTED. BOARD MEMBER YOUNG SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF AGENDA

Mr. Chave advised that in addition to the presentation and review of the downtown parking study, the Board would also have a discussion regarding downtown planning and zoning as a follow up to a recent City Council discussion.

REQUESTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Karen Wiggins, Downtown Edmonds Parking Committee Chair and 37-year construction contractor in Edmonds, said she would be speaking with both hats. She said the parking committee is very pleased with the study that was completed by the consultant. It addresses most of the issues that the parking committee has been discussing for the past six or seven years. However, as a construction contractor in the City, she is concerned about the parking requirements for the downtown mixed-use zone. She said that in expensive condominiums, which is what the majority of the development in the downtown will be, it is not really necessary to provide two parking spaces per unit, or one for every 500 square feet of space. She recalled that the two-space requirement was created in 1993 when the City decided to reduce the size of the spaces required by allowing some of them to be compact spaces. She suggested that this requirement be changed to one space for every 600 square feet of space, instead. Even with a 600 square foot requirement, it would be very difficult to construct a 100 percent office building. He noted that no one could afford to build a level below ground because of the height limits and because of water problems. Therefore, she suggested that there should be a separate parking standard for buildings that are 100 percent business.

Ms. Wiggins referred to the employee parking permit recommendations that were identified in the study. She said she knows some of the employees have to pay for the parking permits, themselves. However, she would still recommend that the cost of the permit be increased to \$50, perhaps on a sliding scale that would not hit the employees all at once. She said it is also important to encourage the employers to pay for the employee parking permits.

Roger Hertrich, 1020 Puget Drive, said he has attended many, but not all, of the parking committee meetings. He has listened to the consultant speak and has read all of the information provided. He referred the Board to the literature that was provided from Aglow International regarding the parking issue, dated July 4, 2003. Item 7 in their submittal discusses the possibility of changing the code for new commercial development to provide one parking space for every 200 square feet of commercial space. The current code requires one space for every 200 square feet. This would be a significant reduction in the parking requirement, and their comment appears to be anti-productive to him. Many have expressed concern about having space available to park in Edmonds, and new development should be required to provide more space not less.

Next, Mr. Hertrich referred to Item 8 in the letter from Aglow International. They expressed concern about the recommendation that the parking requirement for new residential development be one space per unit rather than the current requirement of two spaces per unit. Mr. Hertrich recalled that the size of the parking spaces for mixed-use development has also been reduced. Aglow International does a lot of business in Edmonds, and Mr. Hertrich felt the Board and staff should seriously consider their thoughts.

PRESENTATION AND REVIEW OF DRAFT DOWNTOWN PARKING STUDY

Steve Bullock, Senior Planner, emphasized that the Downtown Parking Study was really designed to address the parking situation in the downtown BC zone. He said that, because the Board has had the document before them for quite some time and have had the opportunity to read through it, he would rather not provide a lengthy presentation. However, the consultant did divide his recommendations into two separate groups, the first being parking management strategies and what to do with the existing parking supply in the downtown area—especially the on-street parking supply. The consultant has presented ideas for making the parking more efficient in its use for the retail core in the downtown area. In addition, the consultant has provided some recommendations for addressing parking issues as they spill out into other surrounding zones.

Mr. Bullock referred the Board to Page 29, which provides a list of the consultant's recommendations. He said a number of them relate to the management of the on-street parking supply. The City currently has some management strategies, but they have not really coordinated these strategies as recommended by the consultant. The City already has an employee parking permit program in place. Employees or employers can purchase permits for parking in the downtown area for up to 75 percent of a businesses' workforce. A permit allows an individual to park in outlying areas of the downtown that are currently designated as three-hour parking. With a pass, an employee can park in the space all day. He referred to the maps that were provided to identify the locations of the employee parking areas. He emphasized that the passes can only be used in select areas.

Mr. Bullock advised that the City has sold about 350 employee parking permits this year, and they have about 500 spaces available for employee parking. The consultant has recommended that the City allow employees and employers to obtain permits for all employees. The consultant also recommended that the City consider selling more employee parking permits than they currently have spaces because many employees who work in the retail businesses are not full-time workers.

Mr. Bullock said the current fee for an employee parking permit is \$25 per year, and the consultant is recommending that this fee be increased to \$50 per year. The parking committee has indicated their support for the increase in fee, as well. The committee has also recommended that the streets that are identified as primary customer streets for retail businesses should prohibit employee parking to make sure the spaces are always available for customers.

Mr. Bullock advised that the consultant has recommended that the City provide a way to track employees by their license plate numbers. When these employees are found parking in the areas designated for customers only, they should receive a fine. The committee is also recommending that the fine for parking in the prime retail area during their work shift should be

increased. The cost of a standard parking ticket, even for customers, should also be increased in the downtown zone from \$20 to \$30.

Mr. Bullock recalled that the City currently has a parking lot on Fourth Avenue South that they rent to people on a monthly basis. The consultant has recommended that the City make this parking available to short term customers instead of monthly leases. The consultant has also recommended that the City improve their signage for all of the public parking lots available in the downtown. This would apply to the Fourth Avenue South lot, as well as the public parking lot available at the public safety building.

Mr. Bullock asked that the Board provide feedback regarding the consultant's parking management recommendations. In addition, the Board members should feel free to provide additional recommendations.

Board Member Guenther inquired how the City staff intends to police the employee parking permits. Mr. Bullock said the City currently has a combined animal control/parking enforcement officer. The staff has discussed the option of providing some small equipment for this officer to use when tracking the employee parking areas. Once the license plate numbers are loaded into the device, the officer would be able to check to make sure the employees are following the rules. In addition, the current officer has a good knowledge of the people who work in the downtown area, as well as the consistent violators. This, along with some kind of tracking device, would enable the officer to enforce the downtown employee parking requirements. Without the new equipment, it would be difficult for the staff to enforce the requirements.

Board Member Crim said it appears that the basic premise of Perteet Engineers report is that the City does not have a parking problem in the downtown area, and they should ease up on their parking requirements for new development. Yet he said he is hearing differently from many citizens. He inquired how the two conflicting opinions came about. He questioned if reducing the parking requirement would work long-term to the City's benefit.

Mr. Bullock explained that two separate parking studies were conducted. The first was an inventory and parking vacancy study, which was done in the morning, at noon, and in the evening on about 20 different weekdays throughout the 2001 summer months (the busiest time of the year). In addition, two weekend samples were taken. This study provided the City with a good idea of how much the parking is being used and how many stalls are available on a day-to-day basis. But the study did not provide information about the turn over rate of the vehicles and parking stalls. If employees used all of the stalls and they parked there all day, then customers would not have an opportunity to slip in and out throughout the day.

Mr. Bullock advised that the second study that was done by the consultant was conducted on just one day. They recorded license plate numbers and went back each hour to see how long the cars stayed in the spaces. The consultant used this information as a representative sample and then applied it to the occupancy study that was done earlier. The occupancy study identified how many stalls were available and how many were being used, and this study appears to indicate that Edmonds has a fairly good supply of parking in the downtown area. When mapped out, it shows that the occupancy rate along Fifth Avenue and Main Streets is high (80+ percent full), which is what staff would expect to see. The highest use areas should have the higher occupancy, which is what you would look for in a vibrant busy downtown area.

Board Member Crim said he cannot find any reason to disagree with the strategies recommended by the consultant because they seem fairly logical. However, he questioned how the City intends to monitor the employee parking areas. He suggested that this probably needs some further thinking, but increasing the cost of the employee parking permit makes good sense to him.

Mr. Bullock referred to the second set of recommendations proposed by the consultant, which relate to how the City should deal with parking in the core downtown area. The consultant reviewed codes from other jurisdictions and considered the City's needs based on the study in order to put together a proposed ordinance (Appendix A). The proposed ordinance has been provided in the study in underline/strikeout format to compare the City's existing version of the parking chapter to what is now being proposed.

Mr. Bullock said one recommended change would make it easier to use existing buildings in the City. He explained that frequently in the downtown area the older buildings have been built property line to property line, with little or no parking

provided on site. The staff is often unable to issue a business license to someone wanting to lease a space in one of these buildings because there is not sufficient space for parking. The buildings and storefronts end up being vacant and the property owners are unable to rent the space because of the parking requirements. Many have expressed the desire that the City allow some of the older buildings to be used for viable businesses. At this time, many property owners have and are considering redevelopment of these properties because they are no longer useful because of the code requirements. This ends up eliminating some of the existing building stock because it is difficult, in many cases, to make use of the existing buildings. The consultant has recommended that the code be changed to allow all uses that are allowed in the BC zone to take place in any existing building in the downtown area, regardless of how much parking they can provide. Mr. Bullock advised, however, that when the City Council reviewed this recommendation, they discussed that there needs to be a threshold such as all buildings built prior to a certain date.

Mr. Chave said one thing the staff wants to get away from is the problems associated with tracking use and trying to impose parking requirements based on a change of use at some point in time. With new buildings, it is frequently the case that when the developer puts in the required parking, they end up minimizing the space required by declaring that a certain type of business that has a lower parking requirement will be located in the building. The staff later finds that, in many cases, the use that actually goes into the building has a higher parking requirement. Often, developers build to a certain level of parking that does not include customer service and then the space ends up being used by a business that has customers. The parking requirement can no longer be met in these cases.

Board Member Crim noted that because the City has been reducing their staffing level and the staff has had to deal with a lot of issues, the more simple the process, the easier it will be for staff to administer. Mr. Chave said that, in addition, the City gets a bad name when they have to turn down businesses who want to locate in Edmonds because there is inadequate parking space. The study tries to balance the supply of parking with the demand to come up with a system that makes sense and that encourages building occupancy. He suggested that, as the Board goes through the hearing process for the Downtown Parking Study, they should consider ways to encourage full use of the downtown commercial space without creating artificial obstacles or problems.

Mr. Bullock advised that another consultant recommendation is that instead of making developers play the game of speculating who the tenants of the building will be, it makes more sense to develop a flat parking rate for all commercial space in the downtown area regardless of the use. Anything that is allowed in the downtown BC zone would have the same parking requirements.

In regard to mixed-use buildings, Mr. Bullock said the consultant spent time considering the parking requirement for the residential units. The City changed its parking requirements for multi-family development a few years ago. The new requirements were applied to all zones in the City except the BC downtown zone. The City Council agreed that this issue, as it relates to the downtown area, should be addressed after the Downtown Parking Study has been completed. The City Council specifically asked the consultant to address and provide recommendations for the parking requirements for multi-family development. The consultant's recommendation is that one parking space per unit be required as a minimum. This would not prohibit someone from providing more parking if they desire. The consultant based his recommendation on a higher opportunity for transit service in the downtown area. Because of this, he did not feel the same high parking requirement of two spaces per unit would be necessary in the downtown area. In addition, the consultant noted that mixed-use units generally provided parking spaces for their commercial uses, and this space was usually only occupied by customers during the daytime hours. The spaces could be occupied by residential tenants during the evening and weekend hours.

Mr. Chave said that when looking at the parking ratio, it is also necessary to have a discussion about the mix of uses or the pattern of uses in the downtown. Right now, there is an RM and a BC (mixed-use and commercial) zone in the downtown area. No other option is available. The parking committee has discussed the option of having a different type of commercial zoning towards the performing arts center location. In addition, the south end of the downtown is different than the core downtown area because it is not as pedestrian oriented.

Mr. Chave referred to Ms. Wiggin's comment that a parking requirement of one space for every 500 square feet is too strict and would not allow the construction of a building that is used 100% for commercial space. He agreed that it would be

APPROVED

difficult to meet this requirement when constructing a 100% commercial building. However, it is important for the Board to consider whether or not they want to allow 100% office buildings in the downtown retail core. Perhaps they should have a different kind of commercial zone that is close to the downtown that would allow for this type of use. Then the parking requirements for that type of development could be different. Again, Mr. Chave suggested that, rather than just talking about the parking issue, the Board should also talk about the mix of uses that they want to have in the downtown area. Focusing their discussion on the existing pattern does not necessarily provide the best solutions.

Board Member Crim said he believes that the construction of the performing arts center will have a significant impact on parking. Mr. Chave agreed and said timing will be very important as to how well the parking study will fit in with discussions related to the other issues that will impact the downtown. The Board needs to carefully schedule these discussions on their 2004 agenda.

Mr. Bullock referred the Board to the packet of information they received prior to the meeting, which included letters submitted to the City Council before they accepted the parking study as being completed. In addition, the City Council Meeting minutes from the Council's discussion were provided. He urged the Board to read the Council's discussion about the study to get an idea of the issues they are most concerned about. He noted that the top two pages of the packet provide a memorandum and additional information from the consultant as requested by the City Council at their July 22nd hearing.

Mr. Bullock said staff has not had a lot of time to strategize the form the study should take when it is presented to the City Council for final approval. He recommended that issues related to on-street parking management (i.e. 3-hour parking limits, fines and employee parking permits) should be dealt with in the City's municipal code rather than in the Development Code. These should be forwarded as one package to the City Council. The second package could include the recommended amendments to the Development Code related to parking requirements. The Board must review these amendments before they can be forwarded to the City Council for action, but the Council could have acted on the changes to the municipal code without Board review. The Council chose, instead, to send all of the recommendations to the Board for review as one coordinated package.

Board Member Crim inquired if it would be best for the Board to forward their recommendations related to parking management and the municipal code changes to the City Council first. Mr. Chave suggested that perhaps it would be best for both packages to be forwarded to the City Council for consideration at the same time. Board Member Crim agreed that they must be considered by the City Council together, but perhaps the Board could work on one package at a time. Mr. Bullock said the Council has advised that even if the Board decides to break up the two issues, the City Council would still consider both at the same time.

Board Member Crim expressed his concern that in many cases, citizens provide written comments to the Board just prior or during a public hearing, and it is difficult for the Board members to read through this information before making a decision. This places the Board at a disadvantage. The public should be encouraged to get their written comments in to the staff in time for the Board to digest and read the documents before the meeting. Mr. Bullock said staff does encourage the public to get their comments in early, but that does not always happen.

Mr. Chave said the Board must decide whether or not they want to work on the document further before presenting it to the public for comment. Another option would be to hold a public hearing early on to find out what the public thinks before spending a significant amount of time on their review.

Board Member Hopkins suggested that it would be useful to hold a hearing early in the process. He said the finding of no parking problem in the study that was done over the summer baffles him when they have received numerous comments indicating that people feel there is a problem. If they don't have a parking problem, they need to be careful not to create one.

Mr. Chave said parking problems can be localized situations such as someone not being able to park where they want to on a regular basis. The most common problems are related to parking management. More frequently, there are situations where the problem is location. The parking spaces are relatively full in certain locations, yet a few blocks away the spaces are mostly empty. The consultant's report states that, overall, there is plenty of parking in the downtown area.

Board Member Freeman agreed that perhaps the parking problems are more related to perception and expectations. A person should not expect to be able to find a parking space in front of the store or restaurant they want to visit. But usually, it is not necessary to walk very far.

Mr. Bullock inquired if the Board would like the staff to put together draft language to implement the consultant's recommendations. The draft language could be used to stimulate debate amongst the public and an initial public hearing. Board Member Crim said that, unless there is specific information for the public to comment on, a public hearing would be useless. He agreed that staff should prepare some draft language to present to the public for possible consideration. But the Board should review this draft language prior to releasing it to the public. He suggested that perhaps a bulleted list could be used to list the specific action items that are being considered. The Board could review this list at their next meeting and it could become the basis for the first public hearing. Mr. Chave agreed that the list could be used to stimulate public interest for the initial public hearing. In addition, the full study could be posted on the City's web site.

Board Member Crim said that the underline/strikeout format that was provided by the consultant for the development code amendments would be a good place to start. This could be used for the first public hearing. A series of bulleted items could also be provided to identify the specific actions recommended by the consultant.

PRESENTATION ON HISTORICAL BUILDING HEIGHTS AND REGULATIONS

Mr. Bullock presented the same slide presentation that he provided to the City Council previously illustrating how regulations and codes came into effect in Edmonds and how they relate to building heights in the downtown area. He divided his slide presentation into time periods. He provided slides of each time period and made the following observations:

- **Before the Development Code was adopted in 1956:** In the 1800's properties were developed property line to property line. Some were three stories high. These developments ranged in height of approximately 30 feet or about three stories tall. The buildings have interesting cornices or roof treatments. The architects took special pains to make sure there was something interesting where the building met the sky. A lot of the architectural details relate to the style and treatments.
- **From 1956 to 1981:** In 1956 the City adopted its first zoning code as it relates to the downtown area. This first code allowed buildings up to 45 feet in height or 4 stories tall. In 1961, the code was amended to three stories or 35-foot tall, which remained in effect until 1981. Many of the buildings built during this time were 3-4 stories tall, and they were usually built right to the maximum height allowed with a flat roof and very little detail. Board Member Crim inquired why some of the buildings were built to four stories after 1961 when the code was changed. Mr. Bullock said he would have to research the answer to this question.
- **From 1981 to 1997:** In 1981 there was concern raised about the size and bulk of the buildings that were being constructed—especially in the BC zone (property line to property line to the maximum 35-foot height limit). The City ended up changing the height limit and removing all reference to the number of stories allowed. The new height limit was set at 25 feet, with an additional five feet if a pitched roof of 4/12 or greater was provided as part of the design. What they ended up with is two different approaches. Some developers constructed their buildings to the maximum 30 feet with a 4/12 pitched roof wrapped around the building to take advantage of the 30-foot height limit. Another approach was to construct the building to the 25-foot height limit and then provide a signature architectural element with a 4/12 pitched roof up to the 30-foot height limit. Because of the concern that it seemed like they were getting a predominance of hip roof buildings, the development code was altered in 1997.
- **From 1997 to Present:** In 1997 the City revised their development code provisions related to height in the BC zone. If an applicant could obtain approval from the ADB that his design was an approved modulated design, he/she was allowed to build to the 30-foot height limit even without a 4/12 pitched roof. The language has continued to evolve since that time period. He showed several slides of development projects that were approved by the ADB as a modulated design even though the design included a flat roof.

APPROVED

Mr. Bullock said that some people have expressed concern about where the City is now, and others have expressed that they are happy with the current Development Code. He said it is important that everyone (City Council, Planning Board, Architectural Design Board, etc.) understand how the City got to their present situation and how they approve projects now.

Board Member Crim inquired if the design guidelines the Planning Board forwarded to the City Council could be reproduced and provided to each of the new Board members. He recalled that the Board talked previously about modulated roofs as opposed to modulated buildings. Board Member Guenther said his recollection was that the Board talked about modulation for the façade of a building, but they also talked about rooflines and parapets and sloped roofs, etc. Mr. Chave reminded the Board that they recommended several different modulation options that a developer could use in order to obtain approval from the ADB.

Board Member Crim said it disturbs him that the Board went through a lot of time and effort to put together the design guidelines document, yet the City Council has yet to schedule the document on their agenda for discussion. He suggested that the staff and Board encourage the City Council to schedule this document on an upcoming agenda.

Board Member Freeman said she is interested in learning what the buildings look like from above since the City is built on a hillside. It is important to understand what the people living uphill will see. Mr. Bullock agreed that staff could provide this information. He pointed out that the view would probably be the same for a 25-foot building as it would be for a 30-foot building. Board Member Freeman expressed her opinion that uphill views are more an issue of design than height. Board Member Guenther agreed, and said it is also important to know what equipment would be located on the rooftop and how the equipment would be screened.

Board Member Crim suggested that each of the Board Members review their work on the design guidelines to see if they still agree with the recommendation that was made.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Mr. Chave announced that on the second Tuesday in December, the City Council Committee has invited two Planning Board and two Architectural Design Board members to participate in a discussion on downtown zoning and development patterns. At the last meeting, the committee discussed that rather than one-size-fits-all, they should look at the land use designations that are available for the downtown area and see if some changes are warranted. He suggested that perhaps the chair and vice chair should be designated as the Board's representatives. In addition, he suggested the Board may want to reserve some time on their agenda between now and the committee meeting to focus on the issue so that the chair and vice chair can have some sense of what the Board members are thinking before going to the committee meeting. Perhaps this discussion could take place at the November 19th meeting. The Board should also indicate if they would like the staff to gather specific information for this discussion.

Mr. Chave said the Council brought up the idea of looking at different types of commercial zoning for the downtown area. There could be a central business district for the retail core and then a different type of commercial zone that could encourage office and residential uses just outside of the core. He said other jurisdictions have looked at different ways of creating a transition between the downtown retail core and the surrounding commercial zones. One would be to create a zoning that allows residential uses, but the first floor could be converted to commercial. This could be done by developing the first floor with an elevated ceiling height. That way, if the demand changes, the property owners would be able to turn some of the residential space into commercial uses. Another idea would be to allow buildings that are configured a little differently than the BC zone allows as you move out of the downtown core.

Board Member Crim said that looking at the existing uses and zoning in the downtown would be helpful. Mr. Chave suggested that perhaps the staff could locate where some of the redevelopment has been occurring on a map. Board Member Crim agreed, and suggested that the boundaries identified in the Comprehensive Plan Map should be indicated, as well. He suggested that perhaps the new boundary should be moved a block or so past the performing arts center site.

The Board agreed that Board Members Crim and Young would represent the Board at the City Council Committee Meeting.

APPROVED

APPROVED

REVIEW OF EXTENDED AGENDA

The Board reviewed the extended agenda for the November 12th and 19th meetings. On November 12th, the agenda includes a discussion regarding the regulation of hedges and a public hearing on the proposed parcel-specific Comprehensive Plan Map Amendments and accompanying rezone applications. The November 19th agenda includes a tentative discussion on options for the downtown development patterns, as well as revisiting the design guidelines.

Board Member Crim requested that Board Member Young report regarding the activities of the Highway 99 Task Force. Board Member Young reported that a task force meeting is scheduled for later, and he would provide his report at the November 19th meeting.

Board Member Crim suggested that on November 19th the Board should also discuss how the Highway 99 Task Force discussion relates to different zoning patterns in the downtown area. If they are going to consider new zones, perhaps these new zones could fit more than one area.

Mr. Chave reported that Snohomish County placed a moratorium on essential public facilities for six months while they study and develop regulations.

PLANNING BOARD CHAIR COMMENTS

Board Member Crim provided no comments during this portion of the meeting.

PLANNING BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Board Member Guenther pointed out that his term will expire in December. Mr. Chave said that if Board Member Guenther wants to continue to participate on the Board, he should notify the Mayor’s Office requesting that he be reappointed. He noted that Board Member Freeman’s term expires in December, as well.

THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED AT 8:40 P.M.