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These Minutes Subject to
December 1st Approval

**PLANNING BOARD MINUTES
November 10, 2004**

Chair Young 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

James Young, Chair
Janice Freeman, Vice Chair

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

Don Henderson
Cary Guenther

STAFF PRESENT

Rob Chave, Planning Division Manager
Jennifer Gerend, Economic Development
Director
Karin Noyes, Recorder

Jim Crim
Virginia Cassutt
John Dewhirst
Judith Works

Board Members Guenther and Henderson were excused from the meeting.

READING/APPROVAL OF MINUTES

BOARD MEMBER CRIM MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF OCTOBER 27, 2004 AS CORRECTED. BOARD MEMBER WORKS SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF AGENDA

There were no changes made to the proposed agenda.

AUDIENCE COMMENTS

Don Krieman, 24006 – 95th Place West, said he is impressed with the work the Board has done to date on the Comprehensive Plan Update. However, he expressed his concern about the proposed changes to the Downtown Waterfront Plan related to setback requirements in the downtown retail core, particularly the idea of requiring one foot of setback for each additional foot of height. He felt this could result in a jagged street front. He noted that at the mall the fronts of all of the retail shops are straight. While he does not want Edmonds to become a mall, he likes the straight storefronts that currently exist on Main Street. He suggested that there be a three-foot setback requirement for all construction so that the street fronts are all setback the same distance and the City can provide a ten-foot wide sidewalk. He said he is not sure the current plan of requiring one foot of setback for every foot of additional height would result in a benefit to the City of Edmonds.

CONTINUED DISCUSSION AND DELIBERATIONS ON AMENDMENTS TO THE DOWNTOWN WATERFRONT PLAN (FILE NUMBER CDC-04-25)

Mr. Chave referred the Board to the information staff provided from the American Planning Association Cascadia Conference that was recently held on the subject of "building a downtown." He also referred the Board to the information that was provided by staff regarding the topography of the downtown area. To prepare these documents, staff used the digitized aerial contour maps that were already available to the City and tried to provide some analysis and a three-dimensional picture of what the topography in the downtown "bowl" area is like. He noted that the higher areas furthest from the waterfront have elevations of up to 300 feet, and the topography slopes downward towards the water until it reaches sea level near the shore. The slope of the entire area is between five and six percent, but the grade varies at different places. He pointed out on the map where the City offices and the Fountain Area are located, as well as the ridge that forms above Fifth Avenue as a result of the significant elevation gain. This hillside is visible to the east as a person drives down Fifth Avenue. Mr. Chave further explained that staff was able to provide specific topographical information for Dayton Street, Walnut Street and Main Street by doing a cross section of each to show the elevation change. He pointed out that on Dayton Street between Seventh and Fifth Avenues, the elevation gain is about 70 to 75 feet. The elevation gain is about 25 feet between Third and Fifth Avenues and drops another 25 to 35 feet to Sunset Avenue. This is a fairly steady decrease in elevation all the way to the water, and the same situation exists on Main Street and Walnut Street.

Chair Young advised that he invited Ms. Gerend, the City's Economic Development Director, to attend the meeting and provide her viewpoint about how the proposed changes would impact the economic viability of Downtown Edmonds. In addition, he said he e-mailed a copy of the power point presentation that was made at the recent APA Conference regarding "building a downtown." Mr. Chave reminded the Board that a one-page summary of the power point presentation was provided in the Board's packets. Chair Young said some interesting points were made in the presentation regarding downtown revitalization, assuming this is what the City wants to do. He said he would be interested in hearing from the Board about what they feel the objectives of the Downtown Waterfront Plan update should be (i.e. revitalization, maintaining vitality, preservation, etc.).

Board Member Crim said that from what he has heard from Board discussions and public hearings, if Edmonds is going to have a good retail area in the downtown, they somehow have to get around the situation of developers squashing the first floor retail space in order to provide two floors of residential space above. He said he is very much in favor of a 12-foot minimum ceiling height requirement for the first floor commercial space in the downtown area. Secondly, he said he lives fairly low in the bowl area and has done some observations on how much difference three additional feet of height would make to his view. He concluded that it wouldn't make a bit of difference. Therefore, an increase in height to 33 feet would be very acceptable in his opinion. He referred to the memorandum Mr. Chave provided to the Board regarding this issue, which provides three options for the Board to consider. He said he would be in favor of Option 3, which would address both the first floor ceiling height and the relationship of the overall building height. However, he does have a question about the area this change should apply to. He felt it should apply to the retail core area along Fifth Avenue and most of Main Street.

Board Member Dewhirst said he agreed with Board Member Crim to some extent, especially that a first floor ceiling height requirement should be put in place. He reported that he spent time wandering around the downtown area looking at view corridors, etc. As he walked around he tried to keep in mind the testimony that was provided to the Board two weeks ago. While he felt the Board was close to making a recommendation to the City Council regarding the Downtown Waterfront Plan, they must spend more time on the design aspects. He noted that the information Mr. Chave has already provided is a good start, but he felt there should be more work done to address all of the design related issues.

Secondly, Board Member Dewhirst said he does not have a problem with the height increase that is being proposed, but the Board must work on the building massing and the open space aspect. He said that as he walked around the downtown area he noticed a pattern of small open spaces, particularly along Fifth Avenue and some on Main Street, where some buildings come to the edge of the sidewalk and others are set back. He felt this creates an interesting and intriguing place of space versus massing. He felt the Board should take a hard look at some of the setback requirements, particularly along Fifth Avenue and Main Street, but also the side streets in the area. He emphasized that the view corridors from the public spaces are critical and must be maintained. He said he sat on Seventh Avenue looking across the playfield and track and found a peek-a-boo view of both the Sound and the Mountains. These are very important view corridors to maintain.

Board Member Dewhirst advised that he reviewed all of the information that was provided to the Board regarding this issue in the past. He was reminded that one of the missions the City Council gave the Board was to integrate art into the

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downtown. When he reviewed the discussion from the Board's retreat, he found a lot of good ideas for integrating art into the design of public and private spaces. However, this goal was lost somewhere in the process. He suggested that integration of art should be interjected into the urban design information that is incorporated into the Downtown Waterfront Plan.

Board Member Dewhirst suggested that the Board should first come to an agreement on the various planning area designations and some boundaries and uses for each. Then they could start looking at design review issues related to each area.

Board Member Cassutt reminded the Board that past studies have indicated that the downtown area is very viable at this time. There are a lot of people walking around and there are not a lot of parking spaces available. She also reminded the Board of their recent decision to make the downtown retail core area smaller, and she agrees with this decision. However, she expressed her concern about the proposal to limit the types of uses that would be allowed in the downtown commercial areas to retail only. She said she agrees with Mr. Fleck that the City should not restrict who can lease space in downtown Edmonds. Other than that, the businesses are doing well. There are always going to be businesses that are unsuccessful in Edmonds, but this is not something the Board should worry about because it is not a result of a weak retail core. This is a result of either poor business people or they didn't have a product that people in Edmonds wanted to buy.

Board Member Cassutt said she does not believe it is necessary for the City to have a 12-foot minimum ceiling height requirement. She said her building and many others do not have this height, and it hasn't bothered anyone to move into the buildings. Many business people in downtown feel the same way. This is not a necessity. She suggested that the 12-foot ceiling height is partially being driven by the developers who want to construct three-story buildings. She said she is not in favor of allowing three-story buildings in the downtown. She is also not in favor of encouraging condominiums above all of the shops in the downtown. She questioned if the City really needs to allow two stories of condominiums over each building that goes into the downtown. She concluded that she does not believe this is necessary.

Chair Young asked Ms. Gerend to provide feedback, from an economic development perspective, as to the options the Board should consider and what the City's best "bang for their buck" would be if the changes were implemented as proposed. In terms of the future of the downtown and the "best bang for the buck," Ms. Gerend explained that the demand for retail space in Edmonds is really healthy now, but the key is that the space must be good retail space. She referred to the space where Cottage Gate is located on Fifth Avenue and said that this business owner is closing her shop for personal reasons. A "for rent" sign was never posted in the window and there were two competing offers on the storefront space just last weekend, and the space was rented to a chocolate shop. She said this is a good example of the type of demand there is for good retail space in the downtown. The demand is really high for this space. However, it is important to realize that these spaces were not built under today's zoning code. People like the spaces that have higher first floor ceilings for a variety of reasons. Even for those who do not necessarily need the additional height, they prefer it because it provides a sense of loftiness and it is more inviting to people coming in off the street. Any beauty salon or restaurant use would require the additional ceiling height for their ventilation needs.

Ms. Gerend concluded that the City's best "bang for their buck" could include new restaurants. She said a lot of restaurants have expressed an interest in coming to downtown Edmonds. She said she recently visited the Thai Restaurant and found it was packed. People were waiting to go to the theater. She suggested that one way to increase sales tax revenue would be to move towards shops staying open past 5:00 p.m., but this would require a bunch of uses that bring people to the area in the evening hours. If the downtown were bustling in the evening hours, shops would find it profitable to stay open later, as well. This would serve residents and visitors and provide additional sales tax revenue.

In terms of condominiums being located in the downtown area, Ms. Gerend reminded the Board that adding residential units allows the City to add people to the downtown mix, and these people provide additional customers for the retail shops. She recalled that the Heartland Study indicated that condominium units are driving the redevelopment that is occurring in the downtown area. The model of having condominium units above the retail space is strong financially for developers.

Mr. Chave said it is important for the Board to review the summary page staff provided in their packet from the APA Conference regarding "building a downtown." Many of the things identified on the list are already provided in downtown

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Edmonds, but the list also provides a perspective of what some of the City's goals should be. It makes some good summary points that represent the general thoughts amongst planning and redevelopment people, such as maximizing pedestrian access, promoting development density, defining areas where development would be constrained, developing a strong commercial core, managing parking effectively over time and providing more opportunities for a mixture of uses. These are all things the City has been working on for the past several years.

Mr. Chave continued to review the list that was provided in the Board's packets. He noted that the bottom point is one that retailers made during the public hearing that housing supports retail businesses and this has been the underlying assumption of the City's mixed-use concept that predates back to 1980. Up to this point, the City's goal has been to encourage a mixture of uses. If the Board wants to change this direction, they must provide a clear, valid reason for doing so.

Board Member Freeman questioned what the ceiling heights are in the structures that have recently become available for lease. Ms. Gerend said she does not know the exact ceiling heights, but they are at least 12-feet high. Mr. Chave said it is important to keep in mind that the Heartland Study emphasized that not all of the downtown area would redevelop. Most of the redevelopment would occur in the marginal area where the commercial activity was not strong. These areas tend to be more prime targets for redevelopment. If redevelopment were to occur, it is likely that it would be two stories of residential units above commercial space, since the residential units provide the driving financial factor. It is not likely that redevelopment would occur in the strong retail core area because the income is such that it would not be feasible for someone to purchase a property and redevelop it. However, even if these properties were to redevelop, the City would not want to create a situation where a developer was forced to sink the first floor of the structure in order to get three stories.

Board Member Crim pointed out that the Heartland Study also indicated that the good retail properties that are well maintained would continue to be profitable, and it is not likely they would be redeveloped. Those properties that are marginally developed would likely be the prime candidates for redevelopment. If these properties are going to be redeveloped, it is important that the redevelopment be done in such a manner that provides retail compatible space.

Board Member Crim said the question regarding the types of uses that would be allowed in the downtown retail core is valid. But he would like to separate this subject from the physical characteristics of the redevelopment, itself. Mr. Chave explained that on one hand, retailers have a very limited choice as far as space. They cannot be successful if located on a second story, since they need to be located where all of the activity is. Office uses have a lot more freedom to locate on upper floors and other areas where retail businesses would not be successful. On the other hand, an argument could be made that the market demand should drive the uses. The City could focus on design guidelines and parameters to make sure the first floor space is retail friendly and hope that through all of the design considerations the market would sort out the issue of use. However, he cautioned that the latter approach could be risky because the rental rates in Edmonds are not in line with this type of model. At this time, retail rental rates are not necessarily higher than office rates.

If the City were to limit the use in the downtown area to retail only, Board Member Works questioned how the City would enforce the requirement. Mr. Chave replied that the business license requirement would control who could locate in a space. The City staff would look at a proposed use and match it up with what the zoning code allows. The Board should make it clear in the zoning code amendment exactly what uses would be allowed in the downtown area. He said it is clear to staff that a retail business must offer retail items for sale, but there are businesses that is part retail and part service. Perhaps the Board should consider allowing other types of businesses in the area such as beauty salons and others that have walk in customers. He noted that all existing businesses would be grandfathered in.

Board Member Works referred to Mr. Krieman's comment about setbacks creating a zigzag effect, and whether or not this would be desirable. Mr. Chave said most mall spaces are pretty uniform and he wouldn't want to compare the downtown area to a mall space. Even with a pseudo downtown like University Village there is quite a bit of variety and space. He summarized that there is typically a lot of variety in the street fronts in successful downtowns. Even if the City did not require a one-foot setback for every foot of additional height, the setbacks in the downtown would likely vary. Ms. Gerend added that the City would only encounter a problem with setbacks if they were very dramatic. For example, leaving the side of a building exposed. However, the setback requirements that are currently being considered are not dramatic.

Board Member Freeman suggested that if the City wants to increase the width of the road, they should encourage the setback of new buildings since it would take years for all of the buildings to conform. Mr. Chave said they could require a three-foot setback for all new construction, but either way, most people would probably want the extra three feet of building height anyway. He noted that the Heartland Study mentioned that even if additional height is not necessary for the retail space, it is desirable for residential space, as well. The three feet of setback would provide space for landscaping, tables, benches, etc. to make the streetscape more interesting.

Board Member Works said she is more comfortable with Option 3 as proposed by staff. She said she has lived in areas where people live above shopping space that provides higher ceiling space, and it is a really pleasant living situation. She said she does not like the vacant spaces that have sunken first floors since it is unattractive and isn't what the City wants to convey as a pedestrian friendly environment.

Board Member Freeman agreed with Board Member Works. If the City does not do something different, they could end up with more buildings like the ones that are currently vacant. This type of development could end up destroying the vitality of the downtown.

Mr. Chave said that increasing the building height by three feet would not result in a dramatic change to the downtown. The Heartland Study indicated that in areas where there are attractive, high demand spaces there is no incentive to make changes. If changes occur in these areas in the future, the City would want it to be done right. The most change would occur in the areas where redevelopment has been taking place for the past several years, the periphery of the core downtown area.

Chair Young inquired if it would endanger the character or preservation of the downtown if the Board were to consider a 12-foot minimum ceiling height requirement and a 33-foot height limit. He questioned what Ms. Gerend would visualize the impact to be. He recalled that some financial information was presented to the Board a few weeks ago that was not very impressive to him. It indicated that the City would gain less than \$500,000 in additional tax revenue if the changes were implemented. He pointed out that there are other reasons for updating a Comprehensive Plan other than increasing the tax revenue for the City.

Ms. Gerend said the financial analysis that was recently provided was straightforward and conservative. However, the consultant could not anticipate a full-fledged economic impact analysis and identify an exact multiplier. The idea is that there would be a domino effect if the City were able to create more attractive retail space. This would likely result in an increase in business at existing shops, as well. In addition, the financial analysis did not indicate the additional buying power that would result from people moving into the residential units that are developed in Edmonds.

Chair Young recalled that the APA presentation talked about the symbiotic relationship between housing and downtown businesses. Generally, speaking, that is a good thing. But it is a better thing for commercial areas, in his experience, to have a driving force other than financial. For example, in Bell Town, they were dealing with a blighted area. The presentation at the APA Conference was oriented towards communities like Lynnwood and Redmond where it is difficult to identify a downtown area. But Edmonds doesn't fall into either of these situations. Therefore, he questioned if the Board should first identify the area where changes are appropriate. Perhaps they should also consider the philosophy of "if it isn't broke, don't fix it."

Ms. Gerend said it is difficult to identify the impacts of the proposed changes because everyone likes the way downtown Edmonds is now. But it is important to keep in mind the type of redevelopment that is occurring at this time. New development is creating dead retail space in the downtown area because the projects depend upon the two stories of residential units on the upper levels to make the projects viable. She questioned if the Board feels this type of development is good for the streetscape and a bustling, vital downtown.

Ms. Gerend pointed out that the financial analyst was also unable to estimate the amount of leakage that could be recaptured by the City of Edmonds if they were to provide more restaurant services or more quality retail shops in the downtown area. In terms of the impact of new residential units versus office space, Ms. Gerend pointed out that as long as Edmonds has a lot of vacant office space, developers would not likely be willing to build more. She said that at this time, it is too easy for businesses to lease office space in the retail storefronts because it is sometimes less expensive and more convenient. If the

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City does not designate the retail core for retail uses only, any of the storefronts could be converted to office space instead of retail shops, and this would have a negative impact on the neighboring retailers. She suggested that office users belong in office spaces and retailers belong in the storefront spaces. Even if this were only a requirement for the area around the fountain area, it would have a very positive impact to the downtown.

Chair Young agreed, but questioned how the Board could package the proposed change in terms of goals and policies. He agreed with Board Member Dewhirst's point about design guidelines and Board Member Crim's comment that the difference being contemplated for additional height would be almost non-measurable from an engineering and volume standpoint. However, it is important for the Board to have a clear understanding of what all of the impacts would be. Perhaps the objective is not necessarily to increase sales tax revenue. The change could also be partially related with the City's desire to improve their image and empty storefronts would not accomplish this goal.

Board Member Crim pointed out that if the proposed changes were approved, there would not be an immediate change to the area. He noted that they are just now seeing the results of requirements that were put in place five or ten years ago. Mr. Chave said the original height limit of 25 feet plus five additional feet was enacted in 1981, but changes to the roof and building modulation occurred in the mid 1990's. He agreed that if the City were to change the Comprehensive Plan and zoning map now, it would be ten years before the City would see the impact of the changes. If the City decides they don't like the type of development that is occurring, they could make changes in the future to address the concerns.

Mr. Chave explained that if the City were to enact a minimum first floor ceiling height requirement but leave the overall height of the building alone, the mandate would be two-story buildings. This would reduce the capacity of the downtown in terms of potential housing that is available in the future. This means the City would have to go back in the Comprehensive Plan and determine where this capacity could be put outside of the downtown node in order to comply with the Growth Management Act requirements. He explained that for the past ten years the Comprehensive Plan has identified the downtown as an activity center that could accommodate additional growth. However, if the growth capacity for the downtown area were reduced, the City would have to put this capacity somewhere else. He emphasized that this would be a big change in direction for the City.

Board Member Freeman said it is important to realize that the aging population of Edmonds has a desire to stay in the City. The downtown area is a desirable place for them to locate because it is within walking distance of the waterfront, businesses, restaurants, etc. In addition, there is adequate public transportation available to serve these people. If the City were to reduce the number of residential units in the downtown, they would not be able to meet the demands of the community. She did not feel this would be a viable option for the Board to pursue.

Board Member Dewhirst pointed out that old buildings have a tendency to burn down more than the newer buildings. If this were to occur, the property owner might not want to replace the building in kind. While the proposed changes would not take place quickly; once approved, there is a chance that a building in the downtown could be replaced with something they don't want to have.

BOARD MEMBER CRIM MOVED THAT THE BOARD USE OPTION 3, AS OUTLINED BY THE STAFF, AS THE STANDARD CONCEPT FOR THEIR FINAL PUBLIC HEARING. THIS OPTION WOULD ADDRESS BOTH THE FIRST FLOOR CEILING HEIGHT PROBLEM AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO OVERAL BUILDING HEIGHTS AT THE SAME TIME.

Board Member Dewhirst suggested that the motion should be more detailed. For example, the Board should work more on the map and the descriptions of the various zoning designations. Board Member Crim explained that the intent of his motion was to get the Board to agree on the preferred option, and then move forward with more detailed discussion about specific issues.

BOARD MEMBER WORKS SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION CARRIED 5-1, WITH BOARD MEMBER CASSUTT VOTING IN OPPOSITION.

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Board Member Crim said he could support the current definition for the Historic Retail Core. Board Member Dewhirst disagreed and suggested that the Historic Retail Core should be reduced to those properties that are immediately surrounding the fountain. He suggested that for this area, the height limit should be no more than 25 feet, and no additional height should be allowed even if step backs or modulation is provided. In addition, only retail uses should be allowed on the ground floor in the Historic Retail Core. The second floor could be used for either commercial or residential. The other properties that are located on Fifth Avenue and Main Street could be identified as part of the Downtown Mixed Commercial Area.

Board Member Works questioned about the current height of the buildings that are on properties located around the fountain. Mr. Chave answered that most are 25 feet in height or less, except in the southeast corner where the building is probably closer to 30 feet in height. He noted that if the height in the Historic Retail Core were limited to 25 feet, this building would be grandfathered.

Board Member Dewhirst pointed out that when looking down Main Street, even though there are tall trees down the alley that block some of the view, there is a peek-a-boo view that adds to the special Edmonds character. He said he believes this view and the view of the mountains are critical and must be maintained. That is why he is recommending that the height limit in the Historic Retail Core remain at 25 feet. He also suggested that no setbacks be allowed in the Historic Retail Core because he likes the existing character of the area. Board Member Dewhirst suggested that a height limit of up to 33 feet could be allowed in the Downtown Mixed Commercial Area, along with a minimum ceiling height requirement of 12 feet.

Board Member Cassutt recommended, and the remainder of the Board agreed, that the term "Historic Retail Core" should be changed to "Fountain Square Area." They also agreed that this area should be reduced in size by placing all of the properties that are located south of the alley into the Downtown Mixed Commercial Area. They agreed that the height limit for the Fountain Square Area should be set at a maximum of 25 feet. The uses on the first floor would be retail only, and the second floor could be office, commercial or residential as per the market demand. A 12-foot minimum ceiling height would apply to the ground floor. Lastly, they agreed that the entrance to all buildings in this area must be at street level. All of the properties that would no longer be part of the Fountain Square Area would be identified as part of the Downtown Mixed Commercial Area.

Board Member Crim suggested that if the Board wants to limit the ground floor uses in the Fountain Square Area to retail only, they should provide a better definition for "retail compatible spaces." Perhaps they could list the allowed uses. Mr. Chave agreed, and said that this definition could become part of the zoning ordinance.

Board Member Dewhirst suggested that the definition for the Downtown Mixed Commercial Area should be changed to encourage, but not require, offices to locate on the second story of structures. He pointed out that there are numerous businesses that rely on the internet for a lot of their work, yet they have some commercial retail and larger office space needs. An example of this type of business would be a real estate office, which the Board agreed would be compatible with retail uses. Another example would be a bank. Board Member Dewhirst said it is also important for the post office to remain in the downtown area, since it provides a huge draw for the downtown businesses.

Ms. Gerend said the intent of the proposal to limit the ground floor space in the Fountain Square Area to retail only is not to create a mall in the downtown area, but the reality is that this type of convenience is what people want. With a mall situation, the manager has control over the retail leases and can choose those that draw the right mix of people. As the new town centers become more like old downtowns, at some point they could begin to compete with the mall situations. In addition, she said it is important to remember that tourists do not consume office uses when they come to the downtown. She suggested that it is important to consider both the needs of the local residents and the needs of the tourists. When tourists walk down Fifth Avenue and come to an obvious office use, they tend to turn around and go back, thinking the retail uses are over. Board Member Dewhirst suggested that urban design guidelines could address this issue. When the ferry terminal is relocated as proposed, it could serve to draw more people to the business establishments. The City could also use art to accomplish this same thing.

Board Member Cassutt questioned how many more restaurants the City could support. She also questioned who would buy all of the \$1 million condominiums that are being built. Ms. Gerend said she is confident that a few more good restaurants in the downtown would be supported. A lot of people have mentioned that they would like some type of upscale bar or café in

the downtown, and the Public Facility District's Project could also increase the demand for evening activities. In addition, she explained that because of the changes that were recently made to the parking requirements, it is likely that more small residential units would be built in the future. The overall price of these units could be reduced, as well.

Board Member Cassutt recalled that several nice restaurants on the waterfront have failed in recent years. She said she does not believe there would be sufficient demand for more restaurants in Edmonds. Ms. Gerend said many restaurant businesses have indicated that they are interested in locating in downtown Edmonds. She said she relies on these businesses to do their homework to find out how viable this type of venture would be. She also pointed out that the waterfront area is a different market than the downtown area, particularly since there is a theatre now and there will soon be a performing arts facility.

Board Member Dewhirst said he found the design guidelines that were provided in the document by staff to be a good start, but they need to be refined further. He emphasized that this is important since the Board does not know when the City Council will get around to approving the design guideline document that was forwarded to them months ago.

Board Member Dewhirst suggested that the boundaries of the Downtown Mixed Commercial Area are appropriate as drawn, with the inclusion of the additional properties that were previously part of the Historic Retail Core. However, he asked that the Board consider the option of requiring greater setbacks for any new buildings that are constructed. If the City allows three feet of additional height, this would be a good opportunity to require greater setbacks, as well. He said he likes the idea of having some required setbacks for heights up to 25 feet, but anything above that could require two feet of setback for every one foot of height increase. However, he said he is not sure how this would work out with the dimensional proportions. He said he believes the massing of the new buildings that have been constructed in the downtown is inappropriate. These buildings tend to crowd the sidewalk, and he has noticed that some of the older buildings do not have any setbacks, either. They are stark with no opportunity to buffer. He said some minor setbacks with landscaping could soften the massing of these buildings. He suggested that an undulation of the setback would be very visually appealing. If the City is going to allow greater heights, they need to require structures that are more in keeping with the proportion and scale than the three or four new buildings that have gone up recently. He recalled that at the public hearing, citizens expressed concern about the scale of the new buildings and how they seem to crowd the sidewalk. Setback requirements could be used in the Downtown Mixed Commercial Area to improve this situation. He also suggested that greater setbacks would be appropriate for the Arts Center Corridor. He suggested that perhaps the City could require a standard setback for buildings up to 25 feet in height, and any building over 25 feet in height would be required to provide additional setback.

Chair Young referred to the goals that were identified by each of the separate Board Committees that studied sections of the Downtown Waterfront Plan. These goals were intended to identify how each of the area should be developed and how they should function in the future. The committees did a good job of stating their vision for the different parts of downtown. Therefore, he questioned the need to provide design guidelines in the Downtown Waterfront Plan, as well.

Board Member Crim recalled that one of the Board's goals for the Downtown Waterfront Plan was to enhance the pedestrian scale and provide additional setbacks to accomplish this goal. Board Member Dewhirst said his assumption is that the language provided by staff to describe each of the different districts would be the language that is adopted into the Comprehensive Plan. This language would identify the expectations for each of the districts as far as use, height, etc. The Board could also further define some of the areas in the design guidelines that can become the basis for the zoning districts that will follow in 2005.

Mr. Chave said the draft design guidelines document is lengthy, and he does not anticipate including the entire document in the Downtown Waterfront Plan. However, the design objectives could easily be included. He explained that the objectives were taken from the design guidelines and then tweaked to fit the descriptions of the various districts. Board Member Dewhirst felt that including the objectives would be sufficient to give the Architectural Design Board and Hearing Examiner some guidance in the interim period before the design guidelines are adopted by the City Council.

Chair Young suggested that a goal statement be provided for each of the districts. Board Member Crim disagreed and explained that if general statements were included in the plan, they would be subject to interpretation and the intent could be misconstrued. Including specific information would leave less to future interpretation.

Chair Young suggested that if the City is going to create new requirements for some of the areas in the downtown, they must provide a clear reason for the change. Board Member Dewhirst pointed out that in the Downtown Waterfront Plan there would be general statements about why the areas were defined as they were. The section the Board is currently reviewing would provide more specific details about each of the districts. He suggested that the Board should wait until they have a rough draft of the entire document before they decide to add any more statements related to the goals of the plan. Perhaps Chair Young's concerns have already been addressed in other sections of the plan.

Mr. Chave recalled that the Board previously discussed the option of requiring a minimum setback regardless of the height of the building and then an additional setback requirement for each foot of height over 30. Board Member Dewhirst expressed his opinion that a minimum setback requirement would be appropriate for all of the areas in the downtown that are located outside of the Fountain Square Area. He requested that staff provide additional feedback as to what the minimum setback requirement should be. He reminded the Board that the purpose of the additional setback requirement would be to provide space for vegetation, public art or other activity.

Mr. Chave pointed out that most properties in the downtown are already quite small, so a setback requirement could be significant. He explained that if Board Member Dewhirst's intent is to create a pedestrian friendly environment, a lot of this has to do with the design of a building and not just the setback requirements. He pointed that pedestrians generally do not see anything but the ground level when they are walking down a street. Street trees, awnings, and other things can help soften the mass of a building. Board Member Dewhirst agreed but added that a setback requirement could have an impact on the size of the building. Mr. Chave cautioned that if a building were pushed too far from the sidewalk, the awning would not provide a benefit to the pedestrians on the sidewalk. A setback requirement of three or four feet would work better with the streetscape, but any more than this would not be successful.

Mr. Chave explained that most of the differentiation in historical buildings is vertical as a result of the stronger materials being used on the first floor of the building. In addition, the height of the first floor of the building is typically taller than the upper floor. The inherent visual character of this historic style is appealing to many people and tends to root the building. It also gives the feeling that the building is solid yet the sense of scale is reduced as the building goes up. He said awnings and other types of façade treatment could help to reinforce the first floor scale. He concluded that setbacks are important to the massing of a building, but only to a degree.

Board Member Dewhirst agreed with Chave. He said that all of this information can be found in various City documents now, but they have still ended up with structures that the community feels are inappropriate. The City needs to change how the guidelines are applied or they could end up with the same type of development. Mr. Chave agreed that detailed design guidelines are important, and the Downtown Waterfront Plan should provide sufficient guidance for development until the more detailed design guidelines are adopted by the City Council.

Board Member Crim suggested that rather than only requiring additional setback if a building is taller than 30 feet, perhaps there should be a minimum setback requirement of three feet regardless of the height of the building. He felt this would partially address Board Member Dewhirst's concern. Board Member Dewhirst referred to the depth of landscaping that is found around the Floral Arts Center, and said he believes this type of setback around large buildings is desirable.

Mr. Chave suggested that another option the Board could consider is instead of requiring additional setback for each additional foot of height, the City could require art for the extra height. The Board agreed that Mr. Chave should contact the City's Arts Coordinator for ideas on how this type of concept could be applied.

Mr. Chave reminded the Board of their previous discussion that in addition to having a required street setback in the Arts Center Corridor, there should also be side setback requirements so the buildings are separated from each other. The Board agreed.

Mr. Dewhirst referred to the proposed description for the Shoreline Commercial Area. He said he did not feel the City should allow any additional height and perhaps even 30 feet is too high for this area. He expressed his concern about the side setback requirements and the need to protect view corridors. He said that if side setbacks were required and the height of buildings was limited to 30 feet, the only building that would be impacted would be the new Senior Citizens Center.

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However, this type of policy would follow the spirit of the Shoreline Management Plan. He pointed out that the view corridors are good now, but he would hate to have a new building fill in a view corridor. Mr. Chave suggested that height is really not the issue in the Shoreline Commercial Area. It is more an issue of side setbacks. He said that perhaps the Board should consider the option of allowing additional height for several feet of side setback. The Board agreed that this would be an appropriate approach.

The Board discussed their meeting schedule for the remainder of the year. They agreed to cancel the meeting that was scheduled for November 17th. Instead, a meeting was scheduled for December 1st, at which the Board could review the entire draft Downtown Waterfront Plan. A hearing was scheduled for December 15th on the entire Comprehensive Plan Update. The regular meeting of December 8th was cancelled.

THE BOARD TOOK A BREAK AT 9:07 P.M. THEY RECONVENED AT 9:17 P.M.

Mr. Chave summarized that the Board would like staff to reconfigure the design guidelines to provide more general statements in the opening sections of the Downtown Waterfront Plan, with a more direct set of guidelines for each of the separate districts. Board Member Dewhirst agreed that specific guidelines should be provided for each of the districts. He particularly expressed his concern about the objectives related to vehicle access and parking. The way they are currently written does not appear to be applicable to the downtown areas. In many areas of the downtown, the access issues need to be oriented towards the alleys, since this is the way the access currently exists. He asked that staff rewrite these guidelines with the specific needs of the downtown in mind. Adding additional driveways and curbs cuts on pedestrian streets should be allowed only as a last resort. The Board agreed that the objective should be written to indicate that alleys should be used for access whenever possible. Mr. Chave said he could rewrite the objective to clearly state the priorities for access and make it clear that the alley would be the preferred access. A developer must identify a reason why an alley cannot be used before another type of access would be allowed. He said this would merely continue the City's current practice for determining appropriate access.

Board Member Dewhirst suggested that a separate objective should be developed related to maintaining views from east/west streets and parks. This goal should be highlighted as very important. Mr. Chave said an objective to address the issue of view has already been included in the proposed language for the Downtown Waterfront Plan, but perhaps it could be included in the Soundscape description, as well.

Board Member Dewhirst suggested that a bulleted item be added related to night lighting, since this is important for stores and public areas in the downtown. In addition, the massing objective also needs a lot of work. Board Member Dewhirst further suggested that the Board work more on the issue of art in the downtown. Perhaps the appropriate way to address this issue is to include the Urban Design Guidelines objective related to art and create an entirely separate chapter. He again stated his concern that art has become lost from the discussion while the Board dealt with height, etc. Mr. Chave suggested that art could be addressed in the general description, as well as the description for the Arts Corridor Area. Board Member Dewhirst recalled that the City Council expressed an interest in incorporating art into every aspect of the downtown. He suggested that the Downtown Waterfront Plan should provide examples and guidance for how art could be implemented into public and private spaces, especially if this is something the Board wants to encourage to shape the character of the downtown. Mr. Chave explained that now that the Board has gotten through the details of the plan, staff could put together another full draft that would include much of the art opportunities.

CONTINUED REVIEW OF 2004 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN CHANGES (FILE NUMBER CDC-04-23)

Mr. Chave advised that at the December 1st meeting, staff would provide an expanded draft of the whole Comprehensive Plan. No changes were made to the sections the Board has already reviewed with the exception of updating the statistical information. He advised that staff has been reviewing the current Comprehensive Plan, and they do not anticipate any significant changes. Mr. Chave noted that even though only 3.2 percent of the City is zoned for multi-family residential uses, the actual percentage of zones that allow multi-family residential uses is 6.2. In addition, he noted that the City has a significant amount of public open space and public rights-of-way. The Board suggested that the Comprehensive Plan should make it clear that a portion of the land that is identified as unzoned includes right-of-way space. Mr. Chave further noted

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that the City's population grew a lot, but the increase in housing units grew commensurate with this rate. The total land area of Edmonds is just over nine square miles, but the net area not including critical areas is smaller. The net density is almost twice what the growth population density is, but when looking at housing units, the net number of housing units per acre increased from 4.9 to 5.4. The Growth Management Act standard is four units per acre in urban areas, so not only is the City exceeding this, but their density has increased over time. This indicates that the City's infill strategies and concentrating growth in the urban areas has been successful.

Board Member Young summarized that because the City appears to be heading in the right direction, he would like to think this gives the Board more latitude to make decisions that are right for the community. Mr. Chave agreed that the statistics indicate that the direction the City is heading has resulted in a positive situation.

REVIEW OF EXTENDED AGENDA

There were no additional comments provided related to the extended agenda.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Mr. Chave reported that Stephen Clifton, Community Services Director, recently announced that the Environmental Impact Statement on the Edmonds Crossing Project has been issued. Essentially, the project has gone through the environmental review and the preferred solution is official. This sets up the opportunity for the City to move forward with detailed designs and potential property acquisition in the future.

Mr. Chave announced that the City Council is set to adopt its budget at the December 16th meeting. Board Member Dewhirst inquired if the City Council has responded to the Board's recommendation that money be set aside for a traffic study for the Highway 99 Corridor. Mr. Chave announced that the City Council voted to include money for a detailed traffic analysis for the Highway 99 Corridor in 2005.

Board Member Freeman inquired if the City Council has agreed to extend the timeframe for completion of the Comprehensive Plan Update. Mr. Chave said he would brief the City Council of the situation within the next few weeks. He said he contacted the State Representative of CTED, and he indicated that the only jeopardy the City would face if they were to postpone adoption of their updated Comprehensive Plan is they could become ineligible for transportation grants. But he does not anticipate this to be an issue if the City were to postpone their approval for just a few months.

Board Member Cassutt inquired about the City's interest in annexing the remaining portions of the Esperance Area. Mr. Chave answered that the City is set to take this project on next year. In the short term, it would cost some money for the City to improve some of the infrastructure in this area. But in the long term, the area should fit in with the services the City provides and that the residents of this area are already taking advantage of at no cost.

PLANNING BOARD CHAIR COMMENTS

Chair Young reported that the Board has received numerous compliments from the public indicating that they are feeling like their concerns are being heard regarding the Comprehensive Plan issues.

PLANNING BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Board Member Cassutt reported that she and Board Member Dewhirst attended a planning forum that was held by Snohomish County. Mr. Dewhirst added that representatives from Lynnwood, Woodway, Snohomish County and Edmonds were in attendance. The County had a series of questions for all of the planning commissioners to address, such as how to define mixed-use, how should infill happen, and how jurisdictions could pay for their transportation situations. It was almost

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unanimous amongst those in attendance that the County should give the cities the power to review and issue permits for the County areas that surround their jurisdiction. He concluded that it was interesting to be in a room with other planning commissioner from other jurisdictions to find out what was important to them. The County expressed concern about the concurrency issue while the cities were worried about getting enough money to pave the streets.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:50 p.m.

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