

Approved September 10th

**CITY OF EDMONDS  
PLANNING BOARD MINUTES**

**August 13, 2008**

Chair Guenther called the meeting of the Edmonds Planning Board to order at 7:02 p.m. in the Council Chambers, Public Safety Complex, 250 – 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue North.

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT**

Cary Guenther, Chair  
Michael Bowman, Vice Chair  
John Dewhirst  
Judith Works  
Jim Young  
John Reed  
Philip Lovell

**STAFF PRESENT**

Rob Chave, Planning Division Manager  
Stephen Clifton, Community Services Director/Acting Economic  
Development Director  
Karin Noyes, Recorder

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT**

Don Henderson (Excused)

**READING/APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**BOARD MEMBER WORKS MOVED THAT THE MINUTES OF JULY 23, 2008 BE APPROVED AS CORRECTED. BOARD MEMBER DEWHIRST SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY, WITH BOARD MEMBER REED ABSTAINING.**

**ANNOUNCEMENT OF AGENDA**

The work session on proposed Comprehensive Plan amendments addressing sustainability and climate change was placed after the work session on ground floor issues in the BD1 zone.

**AUDIENCE COMMENTS**

**Rick Kent, Edmonds**, said he was present to correct some misinformation that was provided in the staff report related to the BD1 zone. He said he is one of the owners of the property at 555 Main Street, for which a recent code interpretation was made. He said that while the staff report indicates that the City Council confirmed staff's code interpretation, it is important to keep in mind that the City Council only voted on an interim ordinance to address procedural matters, and not the code interpretation, itself. Mr. Kent pointed out that staff is recommending a minimum 60-foot depth requirement for all ground floor development in the BD1 zone, as well as a 15-foot minimum ceiling height requirement. To give the Board perspective, he noted that the measurement from the back of the City Council Chambers to Chair Guenther was 45 feet, and the width of the room was also 45 feet. In addition, the City Council Chambers has a ceiling height of approximately 15 feet. He summarized that, as recommended by staff, all ground floor commercial development in the BD1 zone would have to be larger than the City Council Chambers.

Mr. Kent referred to the various attachments that staff provided as part of their report and noted that none of the documentation lends support to their recommendations. In fact, he suggested the attachments do just the opposite. For example, Alexandria, Virginia, has a population of 150,000, where Edmonds only has 40,000 residents. Alexandria's plan recommends a depth range of between 45 and 80, and indicates that a 2,000 square foot space is a good average size. The Whistler study identifies an average store size of 1,468 to 1,800. While both of these studies identify an appropriate size of up to 2,000, the staff report recommends a minimum size of 2,000 square feet for Edmonds.

Mr. Kent said the staff report infers it was too difficult to find literature that references a good retail depth. However, he entered "storefront, retail depth, minimum" using the Google search engine and came up with page after page of references to communities that are similar in size to Edmonds. For example, Escondido, California has a minimum depth requirement of 42 to 45 feet. Everett, with a population of approximately 100,000, has a 20-foot minimum depth requirement. Fremont, California, which has a population of approximately 200,000, has retail space that is predominantly 50-feet deep, and Washington D.C., with a population of nearly 5 million, only has a minimum depth requirement of 40 feet. In addition, every single commercial zone in the City of Kirkland has a minimum ground floor depth requirement of 30 feet.

Mr. Kent concluded that he only found one reference to a 60-foot minimum depth requirement, and that was in San Jose, California, which is the tenth largest city in the United States. However, they also include various requirements related to on-site parking. San Jose's ordinance also states that tenants would not accept long, narrow retail spaces, which is what would result from staff's current proposal. If approved as proposed, the City could end up with long, skinny commercial spaces that would not be utilized efficiently because they would be too large. Mr. Kent expressed his belief that a 60-foot minimum depth requirement is arbitrary and no other cities appear to have such a limitation except the City of Edmonds. The proposed limitation could end up hamstringing property owners. If they have such large spaces, they will end up attracting larger retail chains, when the study that was attached to the staff report indicates that small, local retail establishments would have the best economic impact on the community. He summarized his belief that the proposed minimum 60-foot depth requirement does not make sense, particularly for a town the size of Edmonds.

#### **PRESENTATION BY TONY SHAPIRO, AD SHAPIRO ARCHITECTS, ON FIRDALE VILLAGE SITE – ZONING LANGUAGE AND DESIGN GUIDELINES**

At the request of Board Member Dewhirst, Mr. Chave provided some history related to the proposed zoning language and design guidelines for Firdale Village. He recalled that the Comprehensive Plan was amended a few years ago to provide policy guidance for Firdale Village, but no zoning has been developed to date to implement the Comprehensive Plan direction. The property owners have hired AD Shapiro Architects to help them develop a zoning designation that implements the policies contained in the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Shapiro has presented ideas to staff, and staff felt it would be appropriate for him to present them to the Planning Board and obtain their input before they proceed further in the process. It is their ultimate intent to recommend amendments to the Development Code to incorporate new zoning language and design guidelines related to the Firdale Village property. Board Member Dewhirst inquired if staff has provided feedback regarding the draft document, and Mr. Chave responded that staff has provided comments, but they have not signed off on the draft language.

**Tony Shapiro, AD Shapiro Architects**, provided additional background information as to why they are proceeding with the proposed amendments to the Development Code. He said his firm has been hired by the property owners to rezone the property, with the ultimate intent to sell it to another developer. The intent of the proposed language is to allow flexibility. He recalled that with prior rezone applications that have come before the Planning Board, the Board has expressed concern about "spot zoning." Because the draft language includes a design guideline component, this concern can be sidestepped by requiring the property owners to develop a master plan and obtain approval of a binding site plan. He said the proposed language utilizes a form-based zoning concept, which combines design guidelines with the zoning code language.

Mr. Shapiro said the property owners' hope is that the site would be developed into an "urban village" setting, and that is the objective they have shared with the neighborhood. To date, they have not received any adverse reaction to their proposal. He explained that one main element of the proposal is the concept of pushing the buildings out to the street edge as much as possible to encourage a pedestrian-friendly atmosphere. Another idea that could be considered is creating parallel parking

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spaces along Firdale Avenue. Many residents have expressed concerns about safety due to the fast speed that cars travel along this street, and parallel parking would help slow traffic down. However, he emphasized that he has not reviewed this option with his clients in terms of the additional space it would require. He added that the proposal would include a 15-foot side setback and a 20-foot rear setback. They have not yet identified proposed maximum height and minimum street setback requirements. He pointed out that there are a fair number of Douglas Fir trees on the north side of the property, as well as a substantial grade change. He provided pictures to illustrate these situations.

Mr. Shapiro noted that neighborhood meetings have been conducted to keep the neighbors involved in the process. About eight to ten people attended each of the meetings, and there was a good interaction between the property owners and the neighbors. Again, he said the neighbors have indicated their support for redeveloping Firdale Village. He explained that issues such as height, open space, physical limitations of the property, pedestrian and vehicular access, and linkage with transit opportunities were discussed at the neighborhood meetings. He said the neighbors particularly pointed out that in order to access the transit services from the subject property, a person must cross Firdale Avenue where there are no crosswalks. They expressed concern about the high speed of the traffic and felt that a neighborhood traffic light should be installed. He noted that traffic has not been significantly addressed in the proposal yet, but it would have to be incorporated at some point because of the neighborhood concerns.

Mr. Shapiro said the property owners envision the property being redeveloped into a mixed-use development, with both commercial and multi-family residential space. They have studied the existing market conditions and talked to a number of developers, and information supports the concept of retail and small professional office uses in this location. He referred to the Comprehensive Plan policies that were adopted in 2006, which indicate it is desirable that at least 25 percent of the development be dedicated to commercial space.

Mr. Shapiro shared aerial photographs to illustrate the location of the Firdale Village property. He particularly noted the significant grade changes that exist. He pointed out the dense trees along the street, which may be inappropriate as street trees. He said that as part of the new development, they may work with the City to replace these trees with a species and size that would be more conducive to a pedestrian development. Mr. Shapiro pointed out that there are currently both storm and sewer lines running across the subject property, and these present challenges when trying to incorporate underground parking as part of the project. He briefly explained where the access points might be located, and noted that the City's Traffic Engineer would be involved in setting the access points.

Mr. Shapiro said the neighborhood village design concept would include elements to encourage walkability by providing a pedestrian friendly street design and outdoor spaces. The concept also calls for a mixture of uses, as well as natural open spaces such as courtyards. The property owners' objective is to provide commercial retail space on the ground floor and most of the parking would be located below ground, which is not always conducive to a retail setting. They have discussed with the staff the need to keep the scale of the new development low and to be responsive to pedestrian needs. He provided several pictures to illustrate the type of development they intend to implement. He specifically pointed out the desirability of having plantings against the street edge to separate the pedestrians from the street and parking. He noted they would also like to incorporate a broader pedestrian area that allows retailers to spill out into the walkway. The plan would also require courtyards or other open spaces that can serve as public meeting places.

Mr. Shapiro advised that the proposed design standards would not to tie the property owner down to a specific and rigid concept, but would provide flexibility for the developer to construct a feasible, attractive, and desirable project. On the other hand, the design standards would provide assurance to neighboring property owners about how the property could redevelop in the future. He provided a brief overview of the proposed zoning criteria, which would limit commercial development to three stories and multi-family residential development to four stories. Density would be determined using the form-based zoning concept. He provided an example of a development in Juanita where the retail and residential uses are separated.

Mr. Shapiro explained that the purpose of the design guidelines is to require quality design that emphasizes the creation of an attractive, inviting, livable environment for tenants, residents and visitors. This can be done by incorporating human scale details at the ground floor, canopies along store fronts, large ground floor windows, human scale lighting, street furniture, artwork, and landscaping. Building modulation and varied roof heights would also result in a more attractive design.

Mr. Shapiro advised that the design guidelines would encourage pedestrian friendly design by ensuring that sidewalks provide continuous connections throughout the site; using street furniture; and emphasizing safe and attractive streets, courtyards and other outdoor spaces. He provided pictures to illustrate potential courtyard designs. He noted that in order to create an inviting and usable space, the courtyard design should include decorative elements, outdoor furniture, landscaping, and possibly a fountain.

Mr. Shapiro said it is important to avoid placing a large number of refuse containers in areas that are exposed to the pedestrians. The proposed language would require screening and separation of these uses. He advised that, as proposed, landscaping would be located at the street edge. The design guidelines do not currently identify a specific requirement for landscaping in parking lots, and the Planning Board may favor a hard number to identify the exact requirements. He asked that they provide direction in that regard. He noted that the City's current parking lot regulations require one tree for every four stalls, while the City of Everett's requirement is one tree for every ten stalls.

Mr. Shapiro pointed out that the proposed design guidelines identify appropriate exterior lighting levels, and the numbers proposed are typical of other City requirements. He noted that lighting can be an important component of how a site feels when it is built out. He said the proposal also addresses safety issues by requiring safe and inviting facilities for transit users, utilizing outdoor lighting to enhance safety, and providing pedestrian access to the garage connections, the residential units and the commercial spaces. Once again, he reminded the Board of neighborhood concerns related to the fact that a person must cross Firdale Avenue in order to access the transit service, and there are no crosswalks. He said this issue needs to be addressed by the addition of a traffic light or another method to slow traffic down. Mr. Shapiro said the design guidelines also address the issue of sustainable design but do not provide definitive standards at this point in time.

Mr. Shapiro advised that to illustrate the concepts proposed in the draft language, he prepared three master plan options to give the Board a sense of the project's scale. He emphasized that the options do not represent development proposals and they were not used to delineate the language in the proposal. He said he has considered the aspects the proposed options would require and tried to write code language that would respond to them. He reviewed each of the options, which identify the proposed location of both underground and surface parking, courtyards, retail space and multi-family residential space. All of the options placed the buildings as close to the street edge as possible to create interest at the street level. Again, he explained that the options were not created to illustrate how the project would be built. They were intended to be rough concepts to help anticipate potential problems associated with the proposed language.

Board Member Lovell inquired if the subject properties would be developed as a single project that would replace all of the existing development at Firdale Village. He referred to Mr. Shapiro's comments about "street level" and a "zero front setback" on a number of occasions. He noted that Firdale Avenue offers a quick way to get through the area and is not a street where he anticipates people would park and go to the retail stores. If a courtyard is created as part of the project, the retail spaces would be located back to back, with some facing the street and some facing the courtyard. Mr. Shapiro answered that the entire site would be redeveloped. He advised that the speed limit on Firdale Avenue is 35 miles per hour, which is quite fast. Many neighbors expressed concern that redevelopment could help entice people to get out of their cars and walk to the center. The goal is for the redevelopment to be a type of neighborhood center. Therefore, it is important to respond to the land use formation in a way that helps change people's behaviors. Pushing the buildings out to the street edge would result in more interest an activity at the street level, which would provide more reason for people to slow down. It is not likely the retail stores facing Firdale Avenue would also have access to the courtyard. He said they anticipate smaller boutique type retail stores. The development would not be an attractive location for national chains since they look for more arterial traffic than what exists on Firdale Avenue. He said the concept of providing parallel parking along Firdale Avenue is just a thought at this time. However, parallel parking has been known to cause people to slow down, and he would like to discuss the concept with the City's Traffic Engineer. He briefly shared an example of how the concept was applied to the Newbury Project he designed on Ash Way.

Board Member Dewhirst said he finds the proposal to be an interesting approach, and he likes the idea of combining the zoning and the design guidelines because Firdale Village is a very unique site. It is located in a bowl, and he encouraged Mr. Shapiro to conduct some lighting studies at various times of the year to see what the situation is before they start planning courtyards, etc. Board Member Dewhirst expressed his belief that the "Uses" section is weak. For example, it doesn't talk about medical uses, health clubs, drive ins and drive throughs. He also suggested that better definitions of the uses they have

in mind would be beneficial. He said that while he believes Mr. Shapiro has a good idea of what he is trying to do, it didn't come out well on paper. He said there was a tremendous amount of redundancy in the document that leads a reader from place to place. He suggested the document still needs a lot of editing. He said that while one section talks a lot about sustainability, solar orientation, etc., the concept is not played out throughout the document. Board Member Dewhirst pointed out that the design guidelines are good and give a good feel of what a developer is trying to achieve, but the various terms need to be used consistently throughout the entire document.

Board Member Dewhirst said he also found the signage element to be very weak. He expressed his belief that signage for developments of this type have typically been an afterthought, which is too bad. If the goal is to have commercial development on both the front and back of the building, the retail space at the rear will need to have some way to provide signage on the front of the development. He said he would prefer that pole signs not be used for this purpose. He emphasized that signage would be a tough issue to resolve to get people interested in locating their business on the rear side. He suggested the design guidelines address the concept of wayfinding signs to lead people throughout the development. These signs could be incorporated into the building design. He noted that the design guidelines also do not address the issues of sign size and whether or not they can be internally lit, yet these are typical neighborhood concerns.

Board Member Dewhirst said he believes the Firdale Village site is a good place for additional building height because it is located in a bowl, with a large apartment complex to the side. He agreed that two or three stories of commercial space would be appropriate, but four stories of residential space may be too much, given the current community sentiment regarding height. He said it will be very important for Mr. Shapiro to figure out how to sell the proposal to the public. He said that while he is not sure the land value is sufficient enough to do underground parking, it would be a preferable design since it would allow for a more interesting site plan. In summary, Board Member Dewhirst said the approach outlined in the proposed language is good, but it needs more work. He encouraged Mr. Shapiro to work with staff to figure out how to integrate the language into the zoning ordinance.

Mr. Shapiro agreed that the document does not make a blanket statement that there would be a main street that would access all points of the property since that wouldn't be a beneficial overlay to impose upon a potential developer and designer of the property. Board Member Dewhirst said his comments were related to wayfinding signs to guide people around the site. Mr. Shapiro said he foresees directional signs being located throughout the property. Advertising for commercial spaces on the back of the development would have to be done by a means other than a monument or pole sign. These signs would not be conducive to the flavor of the project they are trying to achieve. Mr. Shapiro emphasized that drive ins and drive throughs would not be permitted on the site because they consume too much space.

Regarding the issue of height, Mr. Shapiro pointed out that the existing Comprehensive Plan stipulates that four stories would be permissible. The concern is that these units may end up looking down into the yards of the adjacent single-family properties. The language stipulates that four-story development must be set back from the property line by 15 to 20 feet in order to address this problem. He noted that the existing trees on the north side of the property would adequately screen the new development from adjacent properties. In addition, a fair number of trees ring the entire property, and they will recommend that most of them be retained.

Mr. Shapiro agreed with Board Member Dewhirst that below-grade parking is very expensive, but it can be made more affordable based on volume. If they can avoid the need to shore a slope, the cost of below-grade parking can be significantly reduced. He also pointed out that the existing low grade at the center of the property would allow them to minimize the need to export soil from the site. He cautioned that he has not completed a detailed assessment of the concept, but he anticipates they can achieve approximately 440 parking spaces on the site, and access to the parking garage would come from two different points.

Board Member Works said she likes the proposed concept, but she agreed that it needs editorial work to resolve inconsistencies. She referred to the list of uses that would be permitted on the property and suggested they might want to include outdoor markets as allowed uses. She noted that summer markets are becoming very popular; and given the location of the subject property, this may be a commercially viable use.

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Board Member Guenther said he likes the concept of applying form-based zoning and design guidelines together. He said he has been trying to visualize the “urban village” concept based on the drawings provided by Mr. Shapiro. He recalled Mr. Shapiro’s statement that they could provide more than 400 parking spaces on site. He questioned if that is the number of spaces needed to construct the desired amount of floor area. Mr. Shapiro answered that the parking spaces would serve approximately 120 residential units and between 60,000 and 80,000 square feet of commercial retail space. In discussions with developers from Seattle, it has been suggested that they ask the City to lower the parking requirement slightly for the residential portion of the project. He invited the Board to provide further direction regarding this option. He pointed out that transit service is immediately available to the site, and the Aurora Village Park and Ride is located just over the hill. Both of these aspects make the subject property conducive to a parking reduction. He concluded that 440 parking spaces would cost a significant amount of money, and it would be desirable to minimize these costs, if possible.

Board Member Lovell said he likes the form-based zoning approach that has been proposed. He asked if the property is currently owned by one person and if it would be developed as a single project. Mr. Shapiro said the property is currently owned by one ownership team, and their intent is to sell it entirely or join forces with another developer to redevelop the site as one project.

THE BOARD TOOK A BREAK AT 8:10 P.M. THEY RECONVENED THE MEETING AT 8:20 P.M.

### **WORK SESSION ON GROUND FLOOR ISSUES IN THE BD1 ZONE**

Mr. Chave announced that a recent code interpretation was requested involving the configuration of the ground floor in the BD1 zone. The City Council confirmed staff’s interpretation, and adopted an interim zoning ordinance to clarify the code language. At that time, they indicated it would be desirable for the Planning Board to review the ground floor requirements in the BD1 zone and make a recommendation to the City Council as to any appropriate changes that would improve the function of the code.

Mr. Chave explained that the existing code language requires that the entire ground floor be dedicated to commercial uses. This does not acknowledge or allow for situations where the depth of a lot potentially results in retail commercial space that is too deep from the street front to be useable. He advised that this problem came to light when the City recently received an application for a project at 555 Main Street. Without some allowance for varying use of the ground floor, inefficient use of space could result. In addition, although parking is not required for commercial space in the BD1 zone, providing parking is a general benefit to the downtown if it does not detract from available quality retail space.

Mr. Chave referred to the comment made earlier in the meeting by Mr. Kent regarding the resources staff used to prepare their proposal. He explained that staff was looking for different information than what Mr. Kent found on the internet. Staff was not so much concerned about what other jurisdictions were doing. Instead, they were trying to focus on information that would better inform them of the kinds of things they should look at when setting standards in the zoning code.

**Stephen Clifton, Acting Economic Development Director**, cautioned that his comments were not intended to apply to a specific site. Instead, his focus is on ensuring that whatever new commercial/retail spaces are created or developed are highly marketable, leasable, and effectively add to the overall inventory needed to ensure that the downtown retail core remains financially healthy. He summarized that the issue before the Board is not whether to amend the code to fit a particular development or use, but to determine the kind of commercial spaces the City wants to create within the BD1 zone. He expressed his belief that it is imperative that any new commercial/retail space that is created in the downtown area provides for maximum flexibility and allows a variety of uses. He emphasized that once a commercial/retail shell is created, the outer perimeter or building wall is unlikely to change and the wall will remain fixed. Once established, the entire commercial space can either be rented to one business or divided into smaller spaces depending on tenant needs. He said the question before the Board is what kind of spaces does the City need and want to create within the downtown retail core. He said that in answering this question, it is important to keep in mind that as the depth of a commercial space lessens, the number and types of retail uses that can occupy a space diminishes.

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Mr. Clifton referred to Mr. Kent's earlier comments related to the size of the Council Chambers. In order to provide some overall context for the discussion, Mr. Clifton pointed out that the dimension between the interior entry doors in the hallway of the City Council Chambers is 60 feet. He said he also visited several downtown Edmonds businesses (Namas Candy Store, Garden Gear, Savvy Traveler, Edmonds Flower Shop, Rosa Mundi, and Cole Art Gallery) within the retail core and measured the depth of each one. He said he also spoke to several business owners about their needs. He noted that the depths of businesses ranged from 55 to 90+ feet, measured from the sidewalk abutting the entrance of each building. He agreed that some commercial spaces in the downtown core are less than 55-feet deep, but the question is what kind of space they want to create. Does the City want to create spaces that are as marketable as possible or spaces that create a more limited business shell? Mr. Clifton said that in addition to conducting site measurements and meeting with business owners, he called a few of his colleagues in other cities. He also called Mark Hinshaw with LMN Architects. Mr. Hinshaw stated that although cities can establish any dimension, a minimum depth of 60 feet would provide a space most retailers would find useful. Considering that the BD2 and BD3 zones require a minimum depth of 60 feet, Mr. Clifton questioned why the City would require anything less in the BD1 zone, which currently requires only commercial uses on the ground floor.

Mr. Clifton said he also received a valuable piece of information from Bill Trim, who serves as the City of Mill Creek's Community Development Director. Mr. Trimm stated that the recent buildings along the main street of Mill Creek Town Center range between 55 and 70-feet deep for complete tenant spaces. The tenant spaces are all required to have their main entry on the main street and secondary entries from the rear and side parking lot. Mr. Trimm said that since the shells were being developed prior to many of the spaces being leased, Mill Creek tried to make sure that the demising walls would correspond to the exterior pilasters that separate the windows. He further mentioned that if the City is going to set a standard for tenant space depth, a range of between 60 and 70 feet seems appropriate for new buildings. Mr. Clifton reported that he also spoke with his predecessor, Jennifer Gerrand, who stated that the issue is about looking at the desirability of a space. Good ceiling heights, entrances at sidewalk level, transparent façades, and good square footage are all highly important elements of a building. She suggested that square footage would dictate the types of businesses that can be located in a structure. She pointed out that many restaurants need larger spaces in order to locate a kitchen, bathrooms, storage, customer seating, etc.

In closing his remarks, Mr. Clifton shared the following comments he received from business owners he spoke to:

- I can't imagine creating depths less than 60 to 70 feet. In addition to the main presentation and sales area of retail businesses, an owner also needs office and storage spaces, restrooms, etc. Restaurants also need kitchens, seating, office and storage areas.
- For businesses wishing to expand and stay in the downtown area, it is extremely difficult to find spaces that allow a business to grow.
- Tall ceiling heights are quite important. The lower the ceiling height, the lower the desirability of retail and commercial spaces. Tall ceiling heights provide more options for all businesses.
- Storage seems to be a big issue. Once you designate a certain portion of your business to storage, the amount left over must be useable, thus the need for larger spaces.

Board Member Lovell inquired what the interim ordinance that was passed by the City Council accomplished. Mr. Chave answered that it basically clarifies the intent of the City Council's discussions during the Downtown Waterfront Planning process. The intent was that the entire ground floor in the BD1 zone should be devoted to commercial uses, and a 15-foot ceiling height should be required.

Mr. Chave advised that staff believes that several clarifications and corrections would be appropriate to include in a public hearing draft of proposed BD zone changes. The staff and Board reviewed each of the six proposed changes as follows:

- ***Clarify that the 15-foot ground floor height requirement in the BD1 zone only applies to the first 60-feet of commercial space measured from the street front. Behind 60 feet, the ground floor would be considered to be the floor that is closest in elevation to the ground floor, but the floor does not have a minimum height requirement.***

Mr. Chave advised that staff actually agrees with Mr. Kent that having a minimum depth requirement makes sense. The question the Board must consider is what the requirement should be. He said that in reviewing information related to

retail space sizes and dimensions, staff found several patterns. First, it was very difficult to find a clear discussion of desirable retail store depths independent of any other factor. Instead, the literature identifies ranges of desirable store sizes, and approximately 2,000 square feet seems to be a good average for downtown retail space. The literature indicated that store front spacing of every 20 to 30 feet was desirable. As expected, Mr. Chave pointed out that different types of retail stores and restaurants require differently-sized spaces, and a consistent pattern of store fronts and usable space is critical.

Mr. Chave said the literature also made it clear that it is important to retain flexibility in retail space so that businesses can come and go without being constrained by a limited supply of desirable quality space. He noted that this has been a problem in Edmonds in the past, with businesses that wish to locate downtown being discouraged by lack of adequate retail space. He recalled that, in previous years, residential space drove the financial viability of development in the downtown, and developers did not really focus on creating usable retail space. This resulted in situations where the retail space has remained vacant because it is not conducive to most retail types of uses. He suggested that setting a retail store depth requirement that is too shallow could endanger the desired flexibility of space that is necessary to retain and allow expansion of retail businesses in the future. He cautioned that it is important to keep in mind that the necessary depth of a retail space does not only include the display space that is seen by customers, but storage and office spaces, etc.

Board Member Bowman said that, at this time, he is negotiating for a second store at Renton Landing, and one undesirable aspect of the space is the high ceilings. He expressed his belief that retailers do not typically desire higher ceilings because it is difficult to light the space adequately. While the building he is leasing has incredible vaulted ceilings, they are not necessarily conducive or desirable for many retail uses. He said he has had difficulty renting out some of his current space because it is long and deep. They will likely have to redo the space to make it more marketable. He said he has people drop by his store on a weekly basis, looking for retail space in Edmonds. Most of these people are interested in space that is approximately 1,250 square feet in size.

Board Member Bowman said he recently visited Mill Creek; and it is a true lifestyle center, which Edmonds is not. Edmonds has only a few retail chains, and most of the businesses consist of mom and pop stores that do not require a large amount of space because they can't afford it. He expressed his belief that the code should allow flexibility for developers. He referred to the proposed project at 555 Main Street and expressed his belief that the designs represent examples of good retail space. He said he would prefer to have more store front and shallower space inside. He expressed his support for allowing developers the opportunity to provide off-street parking as part of future projects. He noted that it is very difficult to find parking space in the downtown during the daytime hours. He concluded by stating his belief that a 60-foot mandatory depth requirement would be too much. Chair Guenther cautioned that the design plans for the project at 555 Main Street were submitted just for the Board's information. Mr. Chave pointed out that this project is what triggered the discussion about proposed changes.

Rick Kent said he is the developer of the project at 555 Main Street. He pointed out that, as proposed, the commercial space would be 45-feet deep, with 13 off-street parking spaces located behind. They would be screened from the street and covered. He said he believes the designs are amazing and would solve the problem of having to do full underground parking, which is very costly. He said their intent is for the 45-foot deep commercial spaces to be retail uses, and it is desirable to have adequate parking available to serve these uses. He recognized that a restaurant use would need more space than what would be provided in the new development, but they shouldn't be required to provide enough space to accommodate a restaurant.

Board Member Bowman asked what the parking requirement in the BD1 zone is. Mr. Chave answered that no parking is required for commercial space in the BD1 zone. However, the residential space that is part of the project would be required to meet the City's parking standard. He noted that while commercial space in the BD1 zone does not require parking, it has been established that more parking is needed in the downtown area. Therefore, it would be desirable for new development to provide additional parking space.

Board Member Reed pointed out that all the commercial lots in the BD1 zone are relatively the same depth. He asked if parking is provided behind the buildings that do not extend all the way to the rear property line. Mr. Chave answered that there is open space and a small amount of parking area behind many of these buildings.

Mr. Chave reviewed that, at this time, the Development Code considers the entire depth of a building in the BD1 zone to be considered ground floor, which requires commercial space only. Board Member Young suggested a developer be allowed to construct commercial space to whatever depth they determine is feasible for their project. He also suggested that the 15-foot ceiling height requirement may be overkill. Mr. Chave clarified that the ceiling height requirement is 15 feet, measured from floor to floor, and this allows for a 12-foot ceiling height. Mr. Clifton reminded the Board that the Development Code is intended to dictate desirable development and serves as a parameter for development. At this time, the Development Code requires the entire first floor to be dedicated to commercial uses in the BD 1 zone, and the proposal is to relax this requirement to a depth that is appropriate.

Board Member Young said he is not convinced, based on the evidence, that 60 feet of depth is the depth that should be required. Again, he suggested that a developer be allowed to build retail space to whatever depth they find appropriate to make the project feasible. Mr. Clifton cautioned the Board against making a decision based on the single application that was submitted for 555 Main Street. They must keep in mind all of the potential projects in the BD1 zone that would be impacted by the changes. Mr. Chave strongly advised in favor of establishing a minimum depth requirement. He invited the Board to discuss the issue further and identify an appropriate number to include in the amendment language for public hearing purposes.

Board Member Lovell pointed out that the new requirements would only apply to new development in the BD1 zone. Mr. Clifton agreed and explained that existing configurations would be allowed to continue. Board Member Lovell summarized that staff is recommending that in order to maximum the potential use of new buildings in the BD1 zone, the minimum depth of a building should be 60 feet. However, that is not to say that a future business would be required to use all of the space. The space could be divided into whatever square footage a tenant wants. Board Member Lovell inquired if the minimum ceiling height could be varied as part of tenant improvements. Mr. Chave said this would be allowed, but it would have to be done in such a way that someone in the future could go back to the 12-foot ceiling height.

Board Member Young noted that the City's previous code language required a certain amount of commercial development in the BD1 zone. He suggested that rather than set a minimum depth requirement, they should identify the percentage of space that must be devoted to commercial uses. Mr. Chave said the percentage method would do nothing to regulate how the spaces are arranged and oriented to the street. Board Member Young suggested that the commercial space could be required to orient towards the street.

Board Member Works said she is bothered by the idea of using an arbitrary number to establish a minimum depth requirement. If the merchants are saying they do not need this provision, maybe depth should not be mandated. Mr. Clifton recalled that none of the business owners he spoke with expressed a concern about having too much space. Instead, they wanted to make sure that retail space is sufficient enough in size to accommodate office and storage space and still have enough area to market their goods. Reducing the depth of the buildings in the BD1 zone would result in fewer types of uses that can occupy the spaces. Again, he said he measured a number of the downtown business and found the average depth to be between 55 and 90 feet. He concluded that, historically, a context has been established for downtown Edmonds. While there are smaller spaces, most are within this range.

Board Member Dewhirst said he is bothered that the Board is being asked to come up with a specific number for depth without having enough information to make an informed decision. Board Member Bowman questioned why they must adopt a single number as the minimum depth requirement. He suggested a better approach would be to offer flexibility to developers by reducing the minimum depth requirement to 30 feet. He noted that developers typically have tenants lined up before they start a construction project. Mr. Chave explained that the number 60 was used in other BD zones, and the current BD1 zone requires commercial space on the entire ground floor.

Board Member Young said he supports the proposed change that would allow other uses on the ground floor, but he is not sure he understands why they need to set a minimum depth requirement. Again, Mr. Chave reminded the Board of situations that occurred previously when residential projects drove development in the downtown, and developers constructed residual office or commercial space to meet the code requirements. This resulted in commercial space that is

not marketable. He expressed his belief that it is important to set a minimum standard to ensure that future development provides meaningful space for commercial uses.

Board Member Dewhirst left the meeting at 9:10 p.m.

Mr. Chave suggested the Board advertise the proposed amendment for a public hearing using 45 feet as the minimum depth requirement. The hearing information could inform the public that 60 feet has also been considered.

Mr. Clifton reminded the Board that the Comprehensive Plan talks about the downtown retail core being compatible with the historic character of the area. He said he visited the businesses in the BD1 zone to get a context for what has historically been built. He said he talks to a number of people each month who want to locate in downtown Edmonds, but they are unable to find space that has an adequate ceiling height. Their concerns were not necessarily related to depth. He referred to a study commissioned by the City of Seattle to figure out why the retail spaces were not being leased. The study indicated that in order to be marketable, a space must have a 15-foot ceiling height, which is similar to what Edmonds currently requires.

The Board agreed to proceed with a public hearing on this proposed amendment, using a 45-foot depth requirement.

Board Member Reed said he read through the attachment containing excerpts from the City Council's discussion regarding the BD1 zone. He noted that there was only one small comment related to depth. Most of the comments were about the overall height of the structures and/or the need to have a 15-foot minimum ceiling height requirement. He questioned when the City Council discussed the depth requirement. Mr. Chave said the City Council's entire discussion related to the BD1 zone assumed that the entire ground floor would be commercial, with a 15-foot ceiling height. No one argued the depth issue because the main issue of concern was related to height.

- ***Clarify ECDC 16.43.030.B.6.f so that only those commercial spaces within 60 feet of the street front in the BD1 zone must have direct access to the street. The current requirement would make no sense if additional commercial spaces are located to the rear of the building, behind the street front commercial space.***

Mr. Chave explained that if a minimum commercial depth is established and other uses are allowed to occur beyond that depth, it makes sense to require the store front to have direct access to the street. The Board agreed to move forward with a public hearing on this proposed amendment.

- ***Clarify ECDC 16.43.030.B.6.c so that it is clear that the 30-foot minimum depth was intended to apply only to properties in the BD2 and BD3 zones. We would not recommend reducing store front depths to less than 60 feet even for "shallow" lots in the BD1 zone.***

Mr. Chave said this particular amendment is aimed at the BD2 and BD3 zones where developers want to put parking behind the main commercial uses. He advised that the Development Code currently allows a developer to reduce the commercial frontage space to a depth of 30 feet if a lot is 60-feet deep in order to provide parking space in the rear. He pointed out that in the BD1 zone, commercial frontage is very important, and staff recommends the code not allow a developer to reduce this space just to put in parking that is not even required.

Board Member Lovell summarized that the existing code requires that the entire ground floor of a project in the BD1 zone be dedicated to commercial space. However, the BD2 and BD3 zones only require commercial space to a depth of 60 feet, measured from the front of a building. Mr. Chave agreed that in the BD2 and BD3 zones, residential uses could be constructed behind the 60-foot deep commercial area. The area could also be used for parking space.

The Board agreed to move forward with a public hearing on this proposed amendment.

- ***Clarify the uses allowed on the ground floor located behind the first 60 feet. Parking should be allowed behind the first 60 feet. In addition, the BD2 and BD3 zones should continue to allow residential uses behind the first 60 feet.***

**APPROVED**

If it is desirable to preserve the character of storefronts in the BD1 zone, Mr. Chave said it is important to allow developers to construct parking and other uses behind the commercial space. He explained that this proposed amendment would make it clear that parking would be allowed behind the first 45-feet (if that is the number set for minimum depth). The provision would not change the current BD2 and BD3 requirements, since residential and parking uses are already allowed behind the required commercial depth. The Board agreed to move forward with a public hearing on this proposed amendment.

- ***Clarify that for corner lots, the 60-foot requirements do not apply to street fronts of buildings when they are located on side streets at the edge of the BD1 zone district (i.e. when the lot is on a corner that is transitioning into another zone across the street). However, all street fronts along Main and 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue will always have the 60-foot requirements applied, corner or not.***

Mr. Chave referred to the proposed project at 555 Main Street as an example of the current problem. He explained that the lot is technically a corner lot, which faces on both Main Street and 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The lot is on the edge of the BD1 zoning district, and BD2 property is located directly to the east. He invited the Board to consider whether corner lots on the edge of the BD1 zone should be treated differently. He suggested it makes sense that if a property is located on the periphery of the BD1 zone, the orientation should be on the main street rather than on the side streets. The Board agreed to move forward with a public hearing on this proposed amendment.

- ***Clarify that conversion of existing building space to a commercial use would not trigger the ground floor height requirements. This is covered under the non-conforming regulations, but it would help to clarify the issue in the BD zones so there can be no question raised.***

Mr. Chave advised that this issue came up in the context of the BD5 (4<sup>th</sup> Avenue) zone. He explained that the non-conformance chapter in the Development Code allows commercial uses in existing structures without requiring an applicant to meet the 15-foot minimum ceiling height. However, rather than having to rely on a code interpretation, it makes sense to make it clear that if an applicant is putting a commercial use into an existing space, it would not trigger the ground floor requirement of additional ceiling height. The Board agreed to move forward with a public hearing on this proposed amendment.

Chair Guenther said it would also be helpful to know, prior to the public hearing, the median depth of all of the existing commercial spaces in downtown Edmonds. Mr. Chave advised that this information would be very difficult for staff to obtain. Board Member Works suggested staff ask the Downtown Merchant's Association to provide this type of information. Mr. Chave advised that Mr. Clifton would meet with the Chamber of Commerce, as well.

## **WORK SESSION ON PROPOSED COMPREHESIVE PLAN AMENDMENTS ADDRESSING SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE**

Mr. Chave recalled that the City Council recently passed resolutions supporting the work of the Mayor's Climate Protection Committee. The State is moving forward to address climate change issues, as well. He suggested it is quite possible that within the next year or two, the State may even mandate that jurisdictions adopt comprehensive plan elements related to climate change.

Mr. Chave reported that staff has been working with the Mayor's Climate Protection Committee on the development of a new Comprehensive Plan element called "Community Sustainability" to address issues surrounding climate change. This element would likely contain subsections regarding climate change, environmental quality, and community health. Emphasis would be placed on showing the inter-dependence of these various policy areas while trying to clarify how they are mutually supportive and provide a unified vision for the City.

Mr. Chave referred to the draft overview of goal and policy statements related to the new Community Sustainability Element. He suggested that this list could be used as a checklist to ensure that all the elements go forward consistently from a sustainability standpoint. This would be a good way to make sure all the goals and policies are aligned, which is a

requirement. He invited the Board Members to provide feedback about whether or not the approach described by staff makes sense. He reported that the City Council is quite interested in this project, and they have asked staff to arrange a joint meeting between the City Council, the Climate Protection Committee and the Planning Board to discuss the issue further.

Board Member Works inquired if the Climate Protection Committee had any discussion about the inherent conflicts associated with the outlined goals and policies. She inquired if a hierarchy would be established to identify the goals and policies that are most favorable. Mr. Chave suggested that these types of issues would be addressed as the goals and policies are incorporated into the Development Code. Board Member Young suggested that a joint work session could help iron out Board Member Works' concern related to conflicting goals and policies by identifying the most important elements. He agreed with Board Member Works that it will be important to decide which elements are most important and should be incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan and Development Code. Mr. Chave clarified that the purpose of the outline is to inform the Board of all the topics that are currently being considered. The next step would be to identify those the City wants to pursue.

Chair Guenther explained that the City would use the new Community Sustainability Element to help them make land use decisions in the future. He noted that when talking about sustainability, the first thing that typically comes to mind is environmental issues. However, sustainability also includes economic and housing issues. He suggested that if the element is going to be a guideline for future land use in the City, it is important to identify priorities. For example, the City Council's recent decision to down zone multi-family property to single-family is not really consistent with other sustainability strategies. Again, Mr. Chave said that once the goals and policies have been identified, the next step would be develop policy statements that can serve as guideposts to direct future Development Code amendments.

Mr. Chave announced that additional amendments to the Development Code would have to be made in order to implement the goals and policies in the Comprehensive Plan related to sustainability. He explained that the current rewrite will make the Development Code more organized and clear, which would provide a better framework for the Board to work on amendments to implement the sustainable elements.

Chair Guenther pointed out that when leaders of the Iroquois Nation make decision, they have a policy of planning for "the 7<sup>th</sup> generation," and that is what sustainability is all about. They must make decisions that will not only affect the current generation, but will have a positive impact for the next several generations.

Mr. Chave summarized that the City is already doing a surprising number of things related to sustainability, they just haven't had a name for their efforts. This is not a new topic, but a new term for things the City has already done. However, a lot more can still be done. He invited the Board Members to forward their comments and suggestions to staff in preparation for the joint meeting. He suggested Chair Guenther work with Mayor Haakenson to schedule this meeting as soon as possible.

Board Member Works referred to an article recently published in *THE SEATTLE TIMES* regarding how the Pollution Control Board's decisions could alter future development practices. Mr. Chave said the article noted that this State agency is now mandating that low-impact development methods be integrated into building and site design. However, the article did not say the techniques had to be used uniformly, only that they had to be used to the extent possible. He said the City may need to update their regulations in the future to make sure they consider the possibility of incorporating these techniques into development proposals. However, at this time, the policy does not affect local codes.

### **REVIEW OF EXTENDED AGENDA**

Chair Guenther noted that the August 27<sup>th</sup> meeting has been cancelled.

### **PLANNING BOARD CHAIR COMMENTS**

Chair Guenther did not provide any comments during this portion of the meeting.

**APPROVED**

### **PLANNING BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS**

Board Member Reed announced that the City Council would conduct a workshop on August 18<sup>th</sup> from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. to discuss several topics, one of which is looking at the priority list developed by staff in concert with the discussion about acquiring the railroad track property. He encouraged the Board Members to attend if possible. He said the City Council would meet again in regular session on the evening of August 18<sup>th</sup> because the primary election is scheduled for August 19<sup>th</sup>.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

The Board meeting was adjourned at 9:48 p.m.

**APPROVED**