

CITY OF EDMONDS

REVISIONING FIVE CORNERS

Special District Plan

Minutes of Public Listening Session

Plaza Room, Edmonds, Library 650 Main Street

January 26, 2011

Stephen Clifton, Edmonds Community Services/Economic Development Director called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Mr. Clifton explained that the City's Comprehensive and Economic Development Plans identify neighborhood centers that have specific plan policies that apply to commercial areas such as Westgate and Five Corners. The Economic Development Commission (EDC), a 17-member body appointed by the City Council in July 2009, has identified completing the planning and implementation process for these key neighborhood centers as one of the six recommended high-priority items for the City. The City Council expressed their support by passing Resolution 1224 and by providing funding to move the projects forward.

Mr. Clifton advised that, in addition to City staff, the Special District Project Team includes faculty and graduate students from the University of Washington's Urban Design and Planning and Green Futures Lab, representatives from the Cascade Land Conservancy, Planning Board and Economic Development Commission. He reported that Phase 1 of the project took place last fall with an inventory of amenities, buildings, uses, etc. and an assessment of the uses. An on-line survey was made available to the public, and will remain open until mid February via the City's website.

Mr. Clifton announced that Phase 2 of the project is underway and will involve reaching out to the public. The Project Team really wants to hear from all stakeholders (residents, business owners, property owners) about the types of uses they want to see, the size and scale of redevelopment, etc. Their goal is to collect as much input as possible. A series of public meetings will be hosted by the Project Team to solicit public input. He said the Project Team considers the citizens to be the fifth member of the Team. By engaging in the process now, citizens will have an opportunity to shape possible concepts related to development regulations. He advised that Phase 3 of the project is scheduled to begin during the second quarter of the year when the Project Team will forward recommendations to the Planning Board for consideration. The Planning Board will discuss the recommendation with the Project Team during public meetings, and a formal public hearing would be conducted prior to the Planning Board forwarding a recommendation to the City Council. The City Council would review the proposal and take final action on the Board's recommendation.

Mr. Clifton introduced Jill Sterrett, University of Washington (UW) Professor and Affiliate Instructor with the Department of Urban Design and Planning; Jeff Aken, Cascade Agenda Cities Project Manager, Cascade Land Conservancy; and Nancy Rottle, UW Associate Professor with the Department of Landscape Architecture and Director of the Green Futures Research and Design Lab. He explained that these individuals were present to speak to the audience about the Project Team's work and solicit feedback from the public. He also recognized the presence of Rob Chave, Planning Division Manager, Frances Chapin, Cultural Services Director, Cindi Cruz, Executive Assistant, and Diane Cunningham, Executive Assistant.

Ms. Sterrett reviewed the agenda for the meeting noting that the Project Team would provide a brief presentation, followed by a polling exercise to collect the audience's responses to specific questions. The last half of the meeting would provide an opportunity for the citizens to visit the various stations set up around the room, provide specific input about how they use the site, and share ideas about what they would like to see in the future. She noted that each of the stations would be manned by University of Washington graduate and PhD students in Planning and Landscape Architecture and the Built Environment

and other students as part of a public engagement and business involvement class. The students were responsible for collecting data of the neighborhood commercial centers via a citizen survey and an inventory of the two areas.

Ms. Sterrett emphasized that the citizen survey is still on-going via the City's website and will remain open through mid February. In addition, materials from meeting will be posted on the City's website, along with additional materials. The next community meeting is planned for February 26th and would be a workshop to consider design options for the two areas.

Ms. Sterrett explained that the students conducted a study to determine how user-friendly the Five Corners Commercial area was using the following criteria:

PROTECTION

- Protection against traffic and accidents (*traffic accidents, fear of traffic, other accidents*)
- Protection against crime and violence (*lived in/used, street life, street watchers, overlapping functions in space and time*)
- Protection against unpleasant sense experiences (*wind/draft, rain/snow, cold/heat, pollution, dust, glair, noise*)

COMFORT

- Possibilities for walking (*room for walking, layout of streets, interesting facades, no obstacles, good surfaces*)
- Possibilities for standing/staying (*attractive edges, defined spots for staying, supports for staying*)
- Possibilities for sitting (zones for sitting, benches for resting)
- Possibilities for seeing (*seeing distances, unhindered views, interesting views, lighting*)
- Possibilities for hearing/talking (*low noise level, bench arrangements, talkscapes*)

ENJOYMENT

- Scale (*dimension of buildings and space in observance of the important human dimensions, related to sense, movement, size and behavior*)
- Possibilities for enjoying positive aspects of climate (*sun/shade, warmth/coolness, breeze/ventilation*)
- Aesthetic qualities/positive sense experiences (*good design and good detailing, views/vistas, trees, plants, water*)

Ms. Sterrett summarized that, based on the 12 criteria, the students found that neither Five Corners nor Westgate reached the user-friendliness level of Downtown Edmonds. She emphasized that it is not the Project Team's intent to make the Five Corners Commercial Center just like Downtown Edmonds, but Downtown Edmonds could be used as good examples of what makes a commercial center convenient, comfortable and user-friendly. She provided a map to illustrate that the Westgate and Five Corners Commercial Centers are not only of neighborhood importance, but they are located on major corridors heading into the City from Highway 99 and Interstate 5. They both have interesting topography with the ravine near Five Corners and the hillside south of Westgate. Both sites are highly visible to people entering the City.

Mr. Aken said it has been a pleasure to work with City staff and the University of Washington students and faculty on the Five Corners Special District Plan. He explained that Cascade Land Conservancy's efforts focus on conserving great lands and creating great communities. Their goal is to engage citizens in discussions about how communities grow and develop, how to protect the quality of life, and how to preserve lands. He reminded the audience that the purpose of the meeting is to listen to what the citizens want to see in the Five Corners Commercial Center in terms of design and changes. He explained that when planning for future redevelopment of the Five Corners Commercial Center, they should consider opportunities to enhance public space and the neighborhood identity, connect to surrounding neighborhoods and amenities, make it easier to walk, bike and use transit, provide opportunities for sensible parking, and allow for a mixture of uses, including the potential for housing. It is also important to consider opportunities for making neighborhood centers more complete, compact and connected. He provided the following questions to consider in each of the categories:

COMPLETE

- How can the public realm be enhanced?
- What mixture of uses would best serve the community's needs and help them do what they need to do?
- How can neighborhood identity be created and/or enhanced?

COMPACT

- What is the best way to use the land to make redevelopment efficient and walkable?

- How can redevelopment be more environmentally friendly?
- Are there opportunities to support transit?
- How can they create a more active street life?

CONNECTED

- How can the residential neighborhoods be better connected to the local shops?
- How can parks and open space be better connected?
- How can transportation options be increased so people feel safe walking, biking, taking the bus or driving to the site?

Mr. Aken emphasized the importance of designing a neighborhood center that meets the needs of everyone. He reported that approximately 20% of the population in Edmonds is under 18 years of age, and 20% is 64 years or older. About 35% of the citizens of Edmonds do not drive for various reasons. It is important to consider how the Five Corners Commercial Center can be designed to work for everyone. He provided the following examples of what cities in the area are doing to improve their commercial centers and make them more user-friendly:

- The Town Center development in Mill Creek offers a good example of a **public gathering place**. It includes an open-air plaza where people can meet with neighbors. The Plaza can provide a sense of place, and slow the pace so people are more comfortable.
- A development in Burien provides an example of how open space can be utilized as a **public gathering place**. The development provides both residential and commercial space, and the open space can be used to host outdoor events such as a farmer's market.
- The Town Center development in Mill Creek also provides a good example of **scale**. It includes 1 and 1½-story buildings that are used for primarily office and commercial. Some parking is provided on the street in front of the businesses, and a separate parking lot is also provided behind the businesses. There is a variety of architecture to break up the appearance from the street. In addition, street trees and other landscaping, as well as awnings, were added to create a more user friendly environment.
- The Fairhaven development in Bellingham also provides a good example of **scale**. The development consists of 2½ story buildings, with classical brick architecture.
- A development in Old Bellevue provides yet another good example of **scale**. The buildings are up to 4 stories tall, with the 4th stories set back more to break up the scale from the street level. There is a mixture of heights to break up the scale. Retail uses are located on the ground floor, with awnings to provide weather protection. Different colored sidewalks separate the pedestrian areas from the street and parking, and the curb bulbs make it more comfortable for pedestrians to cross the street. Parking is provided both in front and behind the buildings.
- A development in Portland provides housing units on top of a grocery store. This is a good example of how commercial and housing uses can be combined into a **mixed-use development**.
- A development in Kirkland provides a good example of how projects can be designed to be **pedestrian friendly**. In this example, awnings are used to provide weather protection, and street trees were added to create a more comfortable and inviting environment. If a development is user-friendly, the exact height of the buildings can become less important to pedestrians.
- A Mercer Island development provides a good example of the types of design features that can be included as part of the **streetscape**. In this area, a median was placed in the middle of the street. The median includes landscaping, but also a pedestrian refuge for people to safely stand while attempting to cross the street. Awnings on the fronts of buildings provide a more comfortable pedestrian experience. Street lights and bike racks also add to the design.
- An example in Burien illustrates more options for **streetscape** improvements. A few parking spaces were eliminated in order to accommodate a wider sidewalk in some areas to provide a place for landscaping and for people to sit.
- A photograph from Old Bellevue illustrates how sidewalk cafes and other business-type uses can spill out into the right-of-way to make the **street more active** and provide a more comfortable environment for pedestrians.
- The Fairhaven development in Bellingham uses a mixture of brick to create interesting architecture. The unique signage also adds to the neighborhood's appeal and creates a more **pedestrian-friendly environment**.

- A development in Mercer Island uses different colors of sidewalk materials to create a **pedestrian-friendly environment**. Sidewalk amenities also include bike racks and landscaping. All of the streetscape amenities create a pedestrian feel so the height of the buildings is less noticeable.
- An example of a Portland development illustrates good ideas for **parking** and includes both surface and street parking. It incorporates pedestrian features into the parking areas so that people feel safe walking through the parking lots to the businesses. It also incorporates landscaping to minimize stormwater runoff and impervious surfaces.
- A development in Portland also provides a good example of using **stormwater and green infrastructure** to make a project more environmentally friendly. There are ways to treat stormwater on site using pedestrian-friendly green areas for people to enjoy.
- An example from Vine Street in Seattle also illustrates how **stormwater** can be treated in a more environmentally-friendly way. This example integrates public art with a cistern to create a more engaging sidewalk.
- Examples from Portland also illustrate good **connections between bicycles, pedestrians and transit**. It is important to make it easy for people to use all modes of transportation, including private vehicles. Amenities include bike racks, bike lanes, complete streets, signage, and transit infrastructure that is easy and comfortable to use.
- An example from Edmonds illustrates how **public art** can be used to create a sense of place. Gathering places are often the place that people know and identify with, and art can be used to make these areas stand out at a pedestrian and human scale.

Mr. Aken emphasized that the citizens are the 5th stake holder in the Five Corners Special District Planning Process. It is important for them to provide their ideas throughout the process so that the neighborhood's views are clearly reflected in the end product.

Brad Shipley, University of Washington, led the audience through a polling process. The following are the questions posed and the responses received:

What is your age group?

- A. 17 or under (0)
- B. 18 to 24 (1)
- C. 25-34 (2)
- D. 35-44 (7)
- E. 45-54 (6)
- F. 55-64 (8)
- G. 65-74 (9)
- H. 75-84 (4)
- I. 85+ (0)
- J. Prefer not to answer (0)

How many years have you lived in Edmonds?

- A. 0-5 (10)
- B. 6-10 (11)
- C. 11-15 (8)
- D. 16-20 (4)
- E. 21-25 (3)
- F. 25 plus (14)
- G. I live in Esperance, Shoreline or Woodway (1)
- H. I Live in Lynnwood or Mountlake Terrace (0)
- I. I do not live in the area (0)

How many children live in your home?

- A. 0 (42)
- B. 1 (2)

- C. 2 (3)
- D. 3 (0)
- E. 4 plus (0)
- F. Prefer not to answer (0)

What type of dwelling do you live in?

- A. Single-family (33)
- B. Duplex (4)
- C. Multi-family (14)

Assuming perfect conditions, what is your preferred method of getting to Five Corners?

- A. Walking (32)
- B. Biking (0)
- C. Bus (0)
- D. Auto (15)
- E. Other (0)

Approximately how long would it take for you to walk from your home to Five Corners?

- A. Live there (19)
- B. 5-10 Minutes (18)
- C. 10-15 Minutes (5)
- D. 20 Minutes (2)
- E. 30 Minutes (5)
- F. 45 Minutes (3)
- G. 60 Minutes (2)
- H. Don't know (0)

In your opinion, what is the greatest barrier to walking?

- A. Nothing, I enjoy walking (14)
- B. Time/living too far away (6)
- C. Inconvenience (1)
- D. Protection from weather (5)
- E. Unpleasant walking environment (4)
- F. Fear for safety (3)
- G. Carrying purchased items home (5)
- H. Running other errands (4)
- I. Steep hills (3)
- J. Lack of lighting (3)

In your opinion, what is the greatest barrier to biking?

- A. Nothing, I enjoy biking (6)
- B. Time/living too far away (3)
- C. Inconvenience (2)
- D. Protection from weather (2)
- E. Lack of biking lanes (4)
- F. Fear for safety (2)
- G. Carrying purchased items home (3)
- H. Don't own a bike (24)
- I. Steep hills (5)
- J. Lack of lighting (0)

If we were to make changes to Five Corners, which of these streetscape treatments do you think are most appropriate?

- A. Street trees (3)
- B. Landscaping and activities (37)
- C. Bioswales/stormwater treatment (6)
- D. Art elements (2)

A member of the audience observed that stormwater treatment improvements would come with any redevelopment at Five Corners. Ms. Sterrett agreed and noted that the pictures provided were intended to be examples of how stormwater could be treated by using infiltration on site as opposed to the older style of discharging the stormwater into the City's piped system.

How would you like to connect to the businesses from the sidewalk?

- A. Asphalt business fronts (4)
- B. Business fronting on the street (6)
- C. Businesses fronting on street with business activity on the street (39)

A member of the audience observed that the responses might depend on the types of businesses that are redeveloped at Five Corners. Ms. Sterrett agreed but noted that having businesses fronting on the street with business activity on the street would be quite a change from the current situation of parking in front of each business.

If changes are made to Five Corners, what type of gathering space do you think most appropriate?

- A. Benches (6)
- B. Water activities for children (26)
- C. Plaza (15)
- D. Artistic setting (3)
- E. Water feature (0)

A member of the audience questioned where a gathering place could be constructed at Five Corners. She noted that the commercial center is small. Mr. Shipley explained that the ideas were provided as options to consider if and when Five Corners is redeveloped. He agreed that there may not be room for a gathering place given the current configuration of development.

A member of the audience expressed that he had a very negative opinion of the Project Team's entire approach, and he would like an opportunity to express his opinion at some point during the meeting. Ms. Sterrett invited the gentleman to speak with her after the formal presentation. However, the gentleman indicated he wanted to speak when everyone in attendance could hear his comments. Ms. Sterrett clarified that this particular meeting was not structured as a public hearing. Instead, it is an opportunity for the Project Team to provide ideas and for the citizens to provide feedback on what they like and don't like.

Another member of the audience inquired who the City anticipates would purchase the Five Corners properties in order to make the grand plans a reality. She reminded the Project Team that developers and property owners are interested in getting the most profit possible from a redevelopment project. Ms. Sterrett observed that sometimes developers are altruistic enough that they want to make friends with the surrounding neighborhoods. She explained that the Urban Land Institute has found that if developers create gathering places as part of their projects, more people are attracted to the area and the commercial uses become more successful. One option is to offer developers additional building height in exchange for specific public amenities.

A member of the audience asked if anyone from the Project Team has talked to the current property owners at Five Corners regarding redevelopment options. Ms. Sterrett answered they have had discussions and would continue to work with the current property owners. However, she said she was unprepared to provide specific information related to these discussions at this meeting.

Which building scale do you feel is most appropriate for Five Corners?

- A. 1-2 stories (37)
- B. 3-4 stories (10)

C. 5 stories (5)

A member of the audience asked if there would ever be a public forum where people can ask questions of the Project Team. Ms. Sterrett answered that the purpose of this forum is for the citizens to provide input at the various stations set up around the room.

A member of the audience asked why Five Corners was chosen for a special district plan. Mr. Clifton answered that the Economic Development Commission forwarded a recommendation to the City Council that the Five Corners and Westgate Commercial Centers be reviewed to look at how development in the neighborhoods could be improved. The intent is to lay the groundwork for future redevelopment with less prescriptive zoning to allow for more creative design than the existing strip mall development. The goal is to encourage more of the uses that people want to see in their neighborhoods.

A member of the audience asked what the City plans to do with all the cars and traffic. Mr. Clifton answered that parking would be included as part of the Project Team's conversation and any code language that is adopted by the City Council. Mr. Clifton said that during the ten years he has worked for the City, he has had discussions with neighbors and landowners throughout the community who are interested in improving aesthetics and attracting businesses that neighbors can walk or bike to. They want their commercial centers to be more neighborhood oriented.

A member of the audience inquired if a traffic circle is still being considered as an option for the Five Corners intersection. Mr. Clifton answered affirmatively and reported that the City received a \$400,000 to \$500,000 Federal grant to engineer and study the traffic circle. The Engineering Department is pursuing this project in an effort to improve traffic flow through the intersection.

What would most draw you to Five Corners?

- A. Retail shopping (6)
- B. Higher quality restaurants (10)
- C. People spaces such as plazas and outdoor dining (10)
- D. Better lighting (0)
- E. Activities for children (0)
- F. Improved architecture and aesthetics (11)
- G. Improved walkability (1)
- H. Fewer vacancies (3)
- I. None of the above (4)
- J. Do nothing (5)

Ms. Rottle announced that the second half of the meeting would be structured similar to an open house to obtain more detailed feedback from the participants. The expert student team has worked hard to set up a series of stations that are all about listening. The goal of this exercise is to find out what the residents of Edmonds know about Five Corners and what they would like to see there. Edmonds residents are the experts about their City, and the Project Team wants to learn from them. She invited the participants to visit all of the stations. She encouraged them to share their thoughts both orally and in writing. She described the five stations as follows:

- **Getting Around.** Two maps have been provided at this station so that participants can draw the routes they take to get to and from Five Corners and what they would like to see.
- **Greening the Site and Environment.** At this station participants would be asked to share their ideas for how to make the design and planning more environmentally friendly. This station provides an opportunity for people to look at the larger neighborhood and identify the problems, opportunities and solutions. The goal is to be better connected to habitat and parks and to provide better stormwater treatment options. Participants will be asked to share their ideas for stormwater control, more sustainable energy, etc. A wide range of environmental options have been identified, but participants should feel free to add more.
- **Shopping/Services, Socializing and Housing.** At this station each participant will have an opportunity to identify their three to five highest priorities for shopping/services, socializing and housing options in Five Corners.

- **What is Your Neighborhood?** At this station participants will be invited to share the history of their neighborhood and how the commercial center can contribute to a sense of community. Participants will also be invited to identify things they like and dislike about their neighborhood.
- **Wish Center.** At this station participants will have an opportunity write down their one wish for Five Corners.

Ms. Rottle explained that after the meeting, the Project Team would summarize the public input and attempt to find patterns. The information would be posted on the City's website and used to guide the February 26th workshop, where participants would have an opportunity to work in small teams to identify specific things they would like to see at Five Corners. She emphasized that the information provided by the participants is very important to the Project Team. They want to find out what the neighbors know and what they would like to see at Five Corners.

A member of the audience explained that she has participated in meetings similar to this one where the public was invited to share their likes and dislikes, but then plans were drawn and things were decided without any consideration to the input provided by the neighbors. She expressed her belief that property owners are out to make the most money possible. None of the things the citizens of Edmonds want are viable for developers. They are interested in the tallest buildings possible that use up all the parking spaces. If there are not enough parking spaces, businesses will not be successful. They can create a beautiful plan that meets the desires of the surrounding neighborhoods; but if the property owners cannot make enough money, they will be a waste of time. The property owners are interested in obtaining more height, and most of the people in Edmonds do not want that to be allowed even if it does not impact views.

Ms. Rottle explained that the more public input, the greater chance the property owners will listen and the City will create the kinds of regulations that will result in the type of development the surrounding property owners want.

THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED TO A WORKSHOP SETTING AT 7:50 P.M. WHERE PARTICIPANTS VISITED THE VARIOUS STATIONS SET UP AROUND THE ROOM.

THE MEETING CONCLUDED AT APPROXIMATELY 8:30 P.M.