

CITY OF EDMONDS

REVISIONING WESTGATE

Special District Plan

Minutes of Public Listening Session

Brackett Room, City Hall, 3rd Floor, 121 – Fifth Avenue North, Edmonds

January 25, 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 planning policies that apply to commercial areas such as Westgate and Five Corners. The Economic Development Commission (EDC) 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 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 and representatives from the Cascade Land Conservancy, Planning Board and Economic Development Commission. He reported that Phase 1 of the project was conducted last fall and included a survey of citizens (about 360 citizens responded) and an inventory (uses, amenities, buildings, etc.) of the two commercial centers by the University of Washington students.

Mr. Clifton announced that Phase 2 of the project is underway and will involve several opportunities for public participation. The Special District Project Team will host a series of meetings to solicit input from citizens. They are eager to hear from the public 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, particularly from the citizens living near the commercial areas. He said the Project Team considers the citizens to be the fifth member of the Team because their input will shape the outcome of future development regulations. He explained that Phase 3 of the project is scheduled to begin during the second quarter of the year when the Project Team forwards a recommendation to the Planning Board for consideration. The Planning Board would conduct a series of public meetings with the Project Team and hold a formal public hearing prior to forwarding a recommendation to the City Council. The City Council would review the proposal and take final action on the 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 review 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, and Cindi Cruz, 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 their 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 there would be additional opportunities for the public to be involved in the process over the next few months. Another public workshop related to design ideas is currently scheduled for February 26th. In March, the Project Team would work with the Planning Board and Economic Development Commission to refine some draft alternatives for redevelopment of the Westgate Commercial Center. These meetings would also be open to the public, and the public would specifically be invited to provide comment again at a meeting in April. Workshops with the Planning Board and Economic Development Commission and a public hearing before the Planning Board would take place in May and June. She specifically invited the members of the audience to participate in the on-line citizen survey, which is open until mid February. She noted that materials from tonight's workshop would be posted on the City's website.

Ms. Sterrett explained that the students conducted a user friendliness survey of the Westgate Commercial Center, 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, glare, 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 Westgate Commercial Center scored very low in terms of user friendliness. 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 Westgate 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 the connection between the Westgate Commercial Center and Downtown Edmonds. She noted that the entire Westgate area is in a key location as people approach downtown Edmonds coming down SR-104.

Mr. Aken said it has been a pleasure to work with City staff and the University of Washington students and faculty on the Westgate 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 Westgate Commercial Center in terms of design and changes. He explained that when planning for future redevelopment of the Westgate 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 to make the Westgate Commercial Center 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** to host outdoor events such as a farmer's market. He noted that distinctive lighting features were used to provide a sense of place.
- 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.
- A development in Queen Anne provides another example of appropriate **scale**. It includes development up to three stories high, with residential units constructed above the commercial space. This is an example of how it is possible to mix housing and commercial uses together. The parking is primarily provided by an underground parking garage, but there is some surface parking, as well.
- 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 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. Taller buildings are located on one side of the street, with lower buildings on the other. This allows for a mixture of rents and opportunities for various business sizes.
- 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 reach 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.
- 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 Westgate 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 (1)
- B. 18 to 24 (0)
- C. 25-34 (0)
- D. 35-44 (3)**
- E. 45-54 (5)
- F. 55-64 (6)
- G. 65-74 (4)
- H. 75-84 (4)
- I. 85+ (0)
- J. Prefer not to answer (0)**

How many years have you lived in Edmonds?

- A. 0-5 (1)
- B. 6-10 (5)
- C. 11-15 (1)
- D. 16-20 (1)
- E. 21-25 (1)
- F. 25+ (10)
- G. I live in Esperance, Shoreline or Woodway (3)
- 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 (13)
- B. 1 (3)
- C. 2 (4)
- D. 3 (0)
- E. 4+ (0)
- F. Prefer not to answer (0)

What type of dwelling do you live in?

- A. Single-family (20)
- B. Duplex (0)
- C. Multi-family (2)

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

- A. Walking (5)
- B. Biking (6)
- C. Bus (0)
- D. Auto (7)
- E. Other (1)

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

- A. Live there (2)
- B. 5-10 minutes (2)
- C. 10-15 minutes (3)
- D. 20 minutes (2)
- E. 30 minutes (9)
- F. 45 minutes (2)
- G. 60 minutes (0)
- H. Don't know (0)

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

- A. Nothing, I enjoy walking (1)
- B. Time/living too far away (7)
- C. Inconvenience (1)
- D. Protection from weather (0)
- E. Unpleasant walking environment (2)
- F. Fear for safety (3)
- G. Carrying purchased items home (4)
- H. Running other errands (0)
- I. Steep hills (1)
- J. Lack of lighting (0)

Mr. Shipley noted that this response confirms the data collected as part of the on-line survey. A member of the audience asked if they had considered that people may ride their bike because it is faster and not because they don't enjoy walking.

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

- A. Street trees (4)
- B. Landscaping and activities (15)
- C. Bioswales/stormwater treatment (1)
- D. Art elements (0)

Imagine you are walking down the sidewalk approaching the site, what type of interface from the sidewalk would you like to have with the businesses?

- A. Asphalt business fronts (2)
- B. Business fronting on the street (2)
- C. Businesses fronting on street with business activity on the street (17)

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

- A. Benches (2)
- B. Water activities for children (3)
- C. Plaza (7)
- D. Artistic setting (6)
- E. Water feature (2)

Which building scale do you feel is most appropriate for Westgate?

- A. 1-2 stories (5)

- B. 3-4 stories (11)
- C. 5 stories (3)

What would most draw you to Westgate?

- A. Retail shopping (2)
- B. Higher quality restaurants (5)
- C. People spaces such as plazas and outdoor dining (3)
- D. Better lighting (0)
- E. Activities for children (2)
- F. Improved architecture and aesthetics (2)
- G. Improved walkability (2)
- H. Fewer vacancies (3)
- I. None of the above (1)
- J. Do nothing (0)

Mr. Clifton observed that with this last question, it might be helpful to allow respondents to identify the top three things they would like to see at Westgate as opposed to just one response. This would allow them to rate the responses and a few items would likely rise to the top of the list. Mr. Shipley noted that the on-line survey allows people to identify their top three preferences. In addition, participants at the Shopping/Service, Socializing and Housing Station would have an opportunity to provide more specific information about what they would like to see at Westgate.

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 Westgate 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 Westgate 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 Westgate.
- **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 Westgate.

Ms. Rottle explained that the information would be collated and used by the Project Team to prepare better maps for the next public meeting where they would report back on what they heard from the citizens to date. The February 26th workshop would be even more interactive with good maps and building blocks. Participants would be asked to help construct different alternatives for what Westgate might look like. Based on the information they receive at the next public meeting, the Project Team would prepare larger-scale design options.

A member of the audience asked how those who do not live in the Westgate area should respond to the questions posed at each of the stations. Ms. Rottle encouraged those who do not live in the Westgate area to share their thoughts and ideas, too. She summarized that a person does not need to live near Westgate; they just need to care what happens.

THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED TO A WORKSHOP SETTING AT 7:30 P.M. WHERE PARTICIPANTS VISITED THE VARIOUS STATIONS SET UP AROUND THE ROOM. THE MEETING CONCLUDED AT APPROXIMATELY 8:30 P.M.