



## RENTON PLANNING COMMISSION

### Meeting Minutes

March 15, 2006  
6:00 PM

City Municipal Building  
Council Chambers

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Planning Commissioners Present: Robert Bonner, Jimmy Cho, Ray Giometti, Jerrilynn Hadley, Nancy Osborn, Joshua Shearer, Greg Taylor

Planning Commissioners Absent: None

City Staff Present: Rebecca Lind, Planning Manager; Elizabeth Higgins, Senior Planner; Judith Subia, Recording Secretary

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1. CALL TO ORDER: Commissioner Giometti opened the meeting at 6:00 PM
2. ROLL CALL: Commissioner Osborn called roll; Commissioner Cho arrived at 6:01 PM
3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: The Minutes of December 7, 2005, January 4, January 18, and February 15, 2006, were approved as written.  
  
The Minutes of March 1, 2006 were not approved. Commissioner Bonner requested that his comments be added to the Minutes.
4. CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED: Hearing Examiner Minutes of a February 14, 2006 meeting, regarding approval for construction of two office/retail buildings with associated surface/structure parking and landscaping on a 4.8-acre site
5. AUDIENCE COMMENTS: Inez Petersen, 3306 Lake Washington Blvd N #3, Renton, WA 98056: Ms. Petersen attended the City Council's offsite where they discussed the Highlands. The Council agreed on the Community Renewal Act, which Ms. Petersen feels is condemnation for reluctant sellers. She feels that the owners will not be able to afford to live in the Highlands after the redevelopment. Ms. Petersen does not agree with the redevelopment plans and asked the Commission to think of the residents that live there.
6. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS: None
7. POLICY/CODE STUDY SESSION:

**Highlands Subarea Plan Discussion: Community Design Policy and Code Amendments  
STAFF PRESENTATION**

Elizabeth showed a presentation about design guidelines in the Highlands subarea. She went over the current project design guidelines and how Staff anticipates combining the new guidelines that are specific to the Highlands subarea with guidelines that are already adopted. The "Urban Center Design Overlay District Guidelines" were adopted in 1999 for the Downtown Core and South Renton areas. In 2003, design guidelines were adopted for the South Lake Washington redevelopment area. These were a modification of the earlier guidelines and were incorporated into the Development Agreement with

Boeing. Revisions in 2004 resulted in the "Urban Design Regulations," on which the currently proposed regulations and guidelines are based.

The proposed amendments are specific to the Highlands subarea and are intended to be incorporated into the code, meshing with the previously adopted regulations for Downtown Renton (District A), the South Renton Neighborhood (District B), and Lakeshore Landing Redevelopment Area (District C). Design District D is the commercial core of the Highlands subarea. District E in the Highlands subarea consists primarily of residential areas.

Each design element has intent statements. Proposed projects must meet the intent. Each design element has minimum standards, which are mandatory, and guidelines, which are recommendations for how the intent may be met. Standards and guidelines are applied as appropriate to each Design District. For example, Design District D has minimum standards that anticipate the commercial area transitioning into a mixed-use area with retail/office/commercial uses on the ground floor and residential above. Design District E has standards and guidelines that promote pedestrian-friendly, safe, secure residential neighborhoods.

The primary elements of the design guidelines are 1) site design and building location, 2) parking and vehicular circulation, 3) pedestrian environment, 4) landscaping and common space, 5) building architectural design, 6) signage, and 7) lighting.

In the site design and building location element, buildings are located in relation to streets and other building so that the Vision of a high-density, urban environment can be realized. Businesses are visible from the street, and pedestrian activity is encouraged.

The next element, parking and vehicular circulation, provides safe, convenient access to the subarea. It incorporates various modes of transportation, ensures sufficient parking, allows an active pedestrian environment, and maintains contiguous street frontages.

The pedestrian environment element enhances the urban character by creating pedestrian networks, provide strong links from streets to entries, and makes the pedestrian environment safer, more convenient, comfortable, and pleasant to walk through.

The landscape and common space element uses landscaping to provide visual relief in areas of expansive paving or structures, to add to the aesthetic enjoyment of the area, to have common areas that are accessible to the public, and to lessen the impacts of the urban environment.

The building architectural design element encourages building design that is unique and urban in character, comfortable on a human scale, and uses appropriate building materials suitable to the local climate. Also, this element discourages the use of standard franchise structures.

The signage element provides a means of identifying and advertising businesses and provides directional assistance. It encourages quality signage that contributes to the character of the Highlands subarea.

The lighting element ensures safety and security. It provides adequate lighting levels in pedestrian areas and public places and increases the visual attractiveness of the area at all times.

Commissioner Cho said that the words encourage and discourage were used in the presentation and asked if the City would offer certain credits for architectural design. Elizabeth said that everything is subject to interpretation by an Administrator. The intent is that design elements are met. Rebecca added that there are minimum standards and guidelines for each element. When the Development Services Division reviews a plan, the minimum standards, which include the word shall, are required. The guidelines are similar to policy language, include the word should, and provides alternative ideas for ways to meet the intent.

Rebecca asked the Commission to review the code and share with Staff any comments they have.

Commissioner Shearer showed a few items in the minimum standards that use the word should rather than shall. Rebecca said that these will need to be addressed in the code language.

Commissioner Bonner asked about the pedestrian friendly environment and the need to minimize sidewalks. He questioned a picture in the presentation that showed a café with seating on the sidewalks, and asked where the pedestrians would walk. Elizabeth said that there are wider sidewalks in the Commercial Corridors that allow for outside seating. Commissioner Bonner suggested a courtyard space for buildings 300 feet in length, creating an indent in the building or have varying widths of sidewalks for different uses. Rebecca added that the code for widths of sidewalks would be required, and is in a different section of the City code.

Staff distributed to the Commission proposed community design policies that are in the Subarea Plan. Rebecca explained that Staff is presenting this to the Commission because the first phase of zoning changes need to be made before the Council's deadline for the moratorium. These guidelines are the first piece of the zoning, and Staff is developing them in the context of the policies that will be adopted in the Subarea Plan itself.

Elizabeth said that there is a workable street pattern in place in the subarea. Staff hopes to re-enforce the existing alley system and increase the pedestrian nature of the alleys.

Commissioner Giometti asked if this could be applied to other parts of the City where there is an existing alley system. Elizabeth said that design guidelines only apply to certain areas of the City, but it is possible to apply throughout the City, subarea by subarea.

Commissioner Osborn asked about the code making reference to an adopted road network plan and asked when the Commission would see a proposed road network plan for the subarea. Commissioner Giometti also asked if the road network plan is in regards to the current roads or roads as they are being envisioned. Rebecca explained that both of these are the case. Studies have been done that looks at the width of the existing road rights-of-way. She also explained how it may work when the road network plan is done, saying that the City will offer property owners the opportunity to vacate 10 feet of property in the existing right-of-way and swap it for 10 feet of right-of-way to create an alley at the back of their lots causing the lots to shift forward and the existing roads are narrower without the property owner losing any square footage of developable land. The road network plan will be part of the Transportation policies that will be presented to the Council. Rebecca also said that the whole system will not be set up before the Phase I zoning.

Commissioner Osborn asked if there would be a difference in maintaining a street and alley pattern. Elizabeth explained that the existing patterns will remain. Rebecca added that this is an old area and it has old easements running in various places.

Commissioner Bonner asked how mass transit fits into this plan. Elizabeth said that there are about 5 different routes that go through this area. Commissioner Bonner feels that the corner of 12<sup>th</sup> Street and Kirkland Avenue could be a great gateway piece for architecture and suggested incorporating transit to that building, similar to Downtown.

Commissioner Bonner also asked about light rail. Rebecca said that light rail was not likely to happen and explained that it is not known whether there will be additional routes for this area. Metro creates the routes and the City does not make those decisions.

Commissioner Osborn commented on the building entries minimum standards for both districts, using the word shall instead of should. Elizabeth said that there is an error in the code language that was provided for the Commission. Rebecca added that Staff will create a matrix and that the Commission will see the actual code in legislative format for review.

Commissioner Osborn questioned the code used in minimum standards for All Districts, stating that not all items may pertain to residential. Rebecca said that Staff will critique the code language and remove what does not pertain to all districts. She also added that it may be necessary for a third district.

Commissioner Osborn asked for clarification about commercial signs not being allowed in gateways for District D. Rebecca said that this only pertains to gateways for the commercial components in District D, not District E. Commissioner Bonner commented that this may create an interesting collaboration between the City and retail establishment. Rebecca said that the mixed-use zone will be large and will go to the back of the property lines of anything commercial. The only signage that would likely occur are neighborhood entry signage.

Commissioner Osborn asked about the location of parking and the minimum standard stating that no surface parking shall be allowed between a building and front property line. She also said that the policy language has specific language about parallel parking being allowed. Rebecca said that this code means that no parking is allowed in the required front setback and that parallel parking occurs in the street right-of-way.

Commissioner Hadley feels that there should be minimum guidelines for structured parking such as lighting. She also mentioned that there should be height standards. Rebecca said that the definition of structured parking in the current code, does not reference height. Commissioner Hadley would like to avoid surface parking, where a builder puts a roof over it and consider it structured parking. She feels that structured parking should have more than one entrance and the footprint of structured parking be limited. She also would like to consider structured parking being under ground, as well as above ground.

Commissioner Bonner asked about solar access under building location and orientation. Rebecca said that there is no requirement for solar access and if the Commission wanted it to be implemented in the intent statement, guidelines would need to be created. Commissioner Bonner feels that there should be a defined architecture type district.

The meeting recessed at 7:28 PM and reconvened at 7:35 PM.

Commissioner Osborn asked about parking within the building being enclosed. Elizabeth said that if there is structured parking along a street, Staff doesn't want a plain wall, but a combination of walls, grilles or trellis work with landscape.

Commissioner Osborn asked about garage parking being secured with decorative doors in District E. Elizabeth said that this means that there be no plain garage doors, and does not consider single family residential.

Commissioner Giometti said that having a guideline to have electronic doors is too project oriented. Rebecca said that if this is not in the code, it cannot be required.

Commissioner Osborn talked about fencing, referencing the guidelines for pedestrian circulation, and said that safety should be one of things that are taken into consideration in the language so that there is no fencing or landscaping high enough for someone to hide behind. Elizabeth said that the City requires that landscape plans be submitted by a licensed landscape architect. Safety is an issue that is looked at while these plans are made.

Referencing the guidelines under pedestrian amenities, Commissioner Osborn suggested having water sources for fountains be recycled or re-circulated. Elizabeth said that most fountains are re-circulated and will add a statement about water conservation in the Intent.

Commissioner Osborn questioned where all pervious areas shall be landscaped in the minimum standards section of Landscaping. Elizabeth mentioned that in the Downtown code, 30% need to be plant material.

Commissioner Bonner asked about view corridors. Rebecca said that there are views in some portions of the study area. There is no consideration for view corridors in this work so far.

Commissioner Osborn asked about parks and its elimination from the Recreation Areas and Common Open Space section. Rebecca said that parks is not a function of design guidelines. There will be separate Parks policies.

Commissioner Osborn asked about the minimum standards under the Recreation Areas and Common Open Space section where it states that movable public seating should be provided. She questioned if this should be a guideline rather than a minimum standard. Rebecca said that Staff will look into this and revise the code language.

Commissioner Osborn asked for clarification about a minimum standard in the Ground-Level Details section saying that display windows shall be designed for frequent change of merchandise, rather than permanent displays. Elizabeth said that Staff is trying to avoid making windows that aren't windows, and want windows that someone can see through.

**AUDIENCE COMMENT**

Cristin Mandaville, 6035 SE 2<sup>nd</sup> Ct, Renton, WA 98059: Ms. Mandaville spoke in regards to the minimum standard for both districts under the Site Design and Street Pattern about maintaining a street and alley pattern consistent with the adopted Road Network Plan. She thought that this standard should be eliminated because you cannot refer to the proposed plan unless it's already official.

Joel Dean, 1100 Harrington Ave #105, Renton, WA 98056: Mr. Dean lives in a 30-unit condominium building in District D. He would like to the opportunity to be informed of decisions that need to be made and bring the Association up to date in regards to relocation and condemnation.

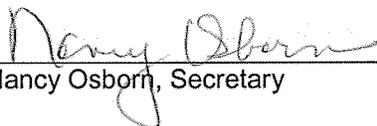
Rebecca said that he would be added to the Interested Parties of Record and will be informed of any upcoming meetings.

- 8. DELIBERATION/RECOMMENDATION: None
- 9. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS: The next Planning Commission meeting will be on April 5, 2006 and a special meeting for a Public Hearing will be on April 12, 2006.

Commissioner Giometti will not be able to attend the April 19, 2006 meeting. Commissioner Shearer may not be able to attend the April 12 and April 19 meetings.

- 10. ADJOURNMENT: The Meeting was adjourned at 8:21 PM

  
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Jimmy Cho, Vice-Chair

  
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Nancy Osborn, Secretary