

CITY OF SHORELINE

SHORELINE PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING

January 3, 2013
7:00 P.M.

Shoreline City Hall
Council Chamber

Commissioners Present

Chair Moss (arrived at 7:03 p.m.)
Vice Chair Esselman
Commissioner Craft
Commissioner Maul
Commissioner Montero
Commissioner Scully
Commissioner Wagner

Staff Present

Paul Cohen, Planning Manager, Planning and Community Development
Steve Szafran, Senior Planner, Planning and Community Development
Jessica Simulcik Smith, Planning Commission Clerk

CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chair Esselman called the regular meeting of the Shoreline Planning Commission to order at 7:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Upon roll call by the Commission Clerk the following Commissioners were present: Vice Chair Esselman and Commissioners Craft, Maul, Montero, Scully and Wagner. Chair Moss arrived at 7:03 p.m.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda was accepted as presented.

DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS

Mr. Cohen did not provide comments during this portion of the meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of December 6, 2012 were approved as presented.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

No one in the audience indicated a desire to provide general public comments.

STUDY SESSION: COMMERCIAL DESIGN STANDARDS AND ZONING CONSOLIDATION

Staff Presentation

Mr. Cohen recalled that at the December 6th meeting, staff presented the legislative proposal for code amendments for commercial design standards and zoning consolidation. At that time, the Commission's discussion focused on the key changes and not the required peripheral changes elsewhere in the code that are associated with the proposed change. The purpose of tonight's discussion is to address the remaining items, as well as the comments provided on December 6th by representatives from the Ronald United Methodist Church, Housing Development Consortium of King County, Compass Housing Alliance, and Hopelink. Commissioner Moss submitted additional comments, as well. He reviewed each of the remaining items as follows:

- **Parking Standards (SMC 20.50.400)**

Mr. Cohen reviewed that, at the December 6th meeting, citizens asked that the Commission consider increasing the potential parking reduction for low-income housing from 25% to 50%, and staff updated the language to be consistent with this request. However, since that time, proponents of the parking reduction submitted an email asking that the parking reduction be further increased to 75%. Because staff has not had an opportunity to thoroughly analyze this new proposal and the proponents did not provide any supporting analysis, they are recommending that the potential parking reduction remain at 50% for low-income (50% of the area mean income) and very low-income housing (less than 30% of the area mean income). Mr. Cohen referred to SMC 20.50.400 (Page 89 of Staff Report), which lists the criteria that must be met in order to get a parking standard reduction of up to 25%. New language was added to allow the Director to approve an additional reduction of up to 50% for low-income housing that meets the criteria outlined in the section.

Mr. Cohen explained that King County is currently conducting a right-sized parking study, which includes detailed surveys of multi-family residential properties to identify how much parking is being used and what the real parking needs are. An additional item (Criteria viii) was added to SMC 20.50.400 to require "concurrence with King County right-sized parking data, census tract data and other parking demand study results." He also noted that Criteria vi calls for high-capacity transit within a quarter mile radius and was changed to take into consideration not only the distance to a transit stop, but how long it would take to bike and/or walk to the stop. The criterion does not yet identify a reasonable distance for the walk or bike shed.

Commissioner Scully said that while Criteria iv, v, and vii would provide public benefits, he does not see a clear connection between adding the amenities and needing less parking. For example, high-occupancy and hybrid or electric vehicles would not necessarily lead to a reduction of spaces, because the cars would still need a place to park. Mr. Cohen acknowledged that these criteria may not affect the actual demand; they are more incentives to encourage people to consider other modes of transportation.

Commissioner Maul noted that the proposed language allows the Director to use a combination of criteria to approve a 25% reduction in parking. He questioned if they need to define how many criteria must be met or if leaving it to the discretion of the Director is sufficient. Mr. Cohen said the criteria in the current code for parking reductions are vague. Staff felt the criteria should be more specific, but leave flexibility for the developer to propose an appropriate combination. He cautioned that it would be very difficult and probably unnecessary to require a developer to meet all of the criteria in order to justify a parking reduction. The Director's decision would be based on the criteria contained in **SMC 20.50.400**.

Commissioner Scully asked if low-income housing, alone, would be sufficient to justify the parking reduction, or if the developer would also be required to meet at least some of the criteria. Mr. Cohen said that in order to qualify for a parking reduction of up to 50%, a developer would have to provide low-income housing and meet some of the criteria. Commissioner Scully suggested that, if that is the intent, the language should be changed to read, "In addition to meeting the criteria above. . ." However, he suggested that providing low-income housing, by itself, should be sufficient to justify a parking reduction. He recalled previous testimony that the people who live in low-income housing have far fewer cars.

Commissioner Wagner expressed concern that Criteria x, which allows the Director to impose performance standards or conditions of approval on a project, is too vague and would probably not be successfully used by the Director. She asked what guidance the Director would use to identify the appropriate standards or conditions. Mr. Cohen said the intent is to allow flexibility. Staff does their best, based on experience and what they know, to figure out how to make a project work and minimize impacts to the community. However, requiring a financial guarantee or performance agreement allows the City to address unforeseen impacts after the fact. Commissioner Wagner suggested that the City would not likely win the ability to force a developer to make additional changes after the fact unless the language is more concrete.

Commissioner Craft suggested that the intent of a performance guarantee is to prevent a developer from leaving a project half done or developing a project that does not meet the intent of the other criteria. Commissioner Wagner recalled that several years ago, parking problems came up on the North City area because building occupants were parking on the street. Although the developers provided parking spaces for their tenants, they charged for the spaces and tenants chose to park on the streets instead. Mr. Cohen summarized that parking is not an exact science, and Criteria x is intended to provide the director leeway to ensure that changes can be required after development, if necessary.

Chair Moss asked if this concept has been demonstrated in other areas. Mr. Cohen answered that the City requires performance agreements and/or maintenance bonds for general development all the time to make sure projects are completed and that landscaping is maintained. However, the current code does not address performance standards specific to parking. Commissioner Wagner suggested that language should identify a specific time frame for releasing the money, as well as some criteria for identifying an appropriate dollar amount. Mr. Cohen agreed to update the language as recommended.

Commissioner Maul suggested that perhaps it would be appropriate to require a developer to provide an alternate plan for adding more parking at some future point if it is determined that the available parking

is inadequate. Commissioner Moss agreed it would be appropriate to require a contingency plan for parking.

Commissioner Scully referred to Criteria v and questioned why the number of electric parking spaces was connected to the number of required handicapped parking spaces. Mr. Cohen said there is no state standard related to electric vehicles at this time. Staff is recommending that, for the time being, the standard for handicapped parking should be applied to electric vehicles, as well. Commissioner Scully cautioned against this approach because there is no demonstrated connection between the two. He suggested the language be changed to read, "Conduit for future electric vehicle charging spaces in an amount equivalent to meet future state standards or as determined by the Director." Commissioner Wagner said she supports the language as is because it provides a clear standard for the number of spaces that would be required. Mr. Cohen clarified that Criteria v simply requires a developer to provide the conduit for electric vehicle charging spaces, but not the actual charging facilities. This will allow them to more easily add the charging facilities when justified by demand. Chair Moss asked that if the current language is retained, the word "handicapped" should be changed to "disabled."

Commissioner Montero observed that Criteria ix and x are statements that have nothing to do with the reasons for reducing the parking requirement. The Commission agreed that these two items should be statements rather than criteria.

Chair Moss noted that many of the criteria are outside of a developer's control. For example, it may not be possible to provide on-street parking along the street front, depending on the existing easement. There is also nothing a developer can do to provide high-capacity transit service within a quarter mile of the development. She suggested that requiring a developer to meet at least two of the criteria in order to obtain a parking reduction of up to 50% may be too high. It is important that low-income housing is durable and sturdy and will last for a long-period of time. Expenses associated with meeting the criteria may diminish the volume of low-income housing that can be developed. She agreed with Commissioner Scully that low-income housing, in and of itself, should be adequate to justify a reduction in the parking requirement. Mr. Cohen said that is the intent of the proposed language. He acknowledged that many properties might not have the ability to utilize the criteria, which is largely based on the location of the development. The language is intended to imply that if a property's location does not allow a developer to meet any of the criteria, a parking reduction would not be appropriate. Over time, staff hopes the criteria will become relevant to more properties, particularly commercial properties.

Commissioner Craft suggested that in the context of trying to plan for affordable housing, it is important to create an environment of success from a community standpoint. Being in proximity to high-capacity transit service is important. Requiring conduit for electric vehicle charging stations is not inexpensive and would not make or break a development. In addition, most developers have the ability to provide on-street parking spaces along the street front. He summarized that the intent of the proposed language is to create a vision of what future development in the City should look like. Parking reductions not only require important components identified in the criteria, but low-income housing, as well. All of these components are important to the future of Shoreline. Vice Chair Esselman agreed with Commissioner Craft. The proposed language does not require a developer to meet a specific number of criteria in order to obtain a parking reduction, but it does add an extra overlay that encourages low-

income housing to be located where there is access to transit. She said she supports the language currently proposed by staff.

Commissioner Craft asked if the 50% parking reduction associated with the affordable housing component would be in addition to the 25% parking reduction allowed for developments that meet a combination of the criteria. Mr. Cohen said the maximum parking reduction would be 50%. Chair Moss clarified that in order to obtain a 25% parking reduction, a developer would have to meet at least one of the criteria. She said that, in general, many low-income housing developments will be located near high-capacity transit because the residents tend to be transit-dependent. However, it may not be possible for properties along Aurora Avenue North to provide on-street parking. It would be great for developers to work out shared parking arrangements with adjoining parcels, but the situation could change quickly if the adjoining property is sold and redeveloped at some point in the future. She said she supports the criteria in general, but it may not be appropriate to require low-income developments to meet the same criteria.

Chair Moss asked if the King County right-sized parking data has been validated. Mr. Cohen said they have completed their initial results, and the data will be finalized very soon. Staff has reviewed the data and found it to be good. It offers a different way to solve parking problems.

Mr. Cohen explained that the City is looking for ways to encourage people to live in a more urban situation where they use transit and other modes of transportation. They also want to encourage affordable housing whenever possible. Parking is not an exact science. Therefore, it is important to provide a toolkit of criteria and then rely on the knowledge, experience and sensitivities of the Director to make decisions about what will work best for the community. That is the overall intent of the proposed language in SMC 20.50.400.

Commissioner Scully said that while he recognizes that it makes sense to tie low-income housing to proximity to transit, he does not see a connection between low-income housing and the other criteria. It does not make sense to require conduit for electric vehicle spaces or hybrid parking when testimony makes it clear that the populations living in the low-income housing would not likely utilize these facilities. This can result in empty parking spaces with unused service provisions. He suggested a better approach would be to simply allow a parking reduction of up to 50% for low-income housing, relying on the data that very low-income populations generally do not own cars.

Commissioner Craft summarized that the Commission not only supports the idea of incentivizing low-income housing; they also are interested in creating ways to help the concept along in the City. However, the other components found in the criteria are also important and justified as the community moves forward.

- **Step Back Requirement for Low-Income Housing (SMC.20.50.021)**

Mr. Cohen said members of the public previously expressed concern that the step back requirements are onerous and make it more costly and difficult to build affordable housing. He explained that there is a fine line between protecting neighborhoods and encouraging affordable housing. While they certainly support efforts to encourage affordable housing, staff is not recommending a provision that would allow

the Director to exempt low-income housing from the step back and other transition area standards. He noted that in the example proposed by the Ronald United Methodist Church there is actually room to move the building back 20 feet, which would eliminate the need for step backs. There is also room to build over surface parking to get more building mass on the interior of the property. He recognized that it will cost money to implement the transition standards, but staff believes they are basic and necessary. The proposed code language would allow developers to request design departures via the administrative design review process, but not in the transition areas. He reminded the Commission that the transition areas standards are very important to the community.

- **Proposed Zoning Map**

Mr. Cohen explained that the proposed zoning map has consolidated all the commercial zones without modifications. However, there are some small, anomalies zoning situations that do not appear logical and are unrelated to nearby properties. At the last meeting he recommended against changing the individual anomalies at this time. These changes would be considered site specific, and should not be done without notifying the property owners. He reminded the Commission that the proposed Comprehensive Plan designation would allow property owners to initiate rezones for these properties at some point in the future.

- **Definitions (SMC 20.20)**

Mr. Cohen advised that new definitions were added for signs. The goal is to be more specific about what is meant by the different types of signs. Definitions were also added for “public places” and “vehicle display areas.” Mr. Cohen pointed out that car sales and associated vehicle display areas would be allowed in all the commercial zones located along Aurora Avenue North. Chair Moss suggested that the definitions related to “signs” should make reference to the actual sign code language.

- **Administrative Design Review (SMC 20.30)**

Mr. Cohen said the Commission has previously discussed the administrative design review concept. The current code requires design review for all commercial development to demonstrate that the design standards would be met. Because staff reviews each application for design consistency anyway, making administrative design review a specific requirement for all development in commercial zones seems unnecessary. As proposed, administrative design review would only be required when an applicant is requesting a departure from the design standards. The idea is that the regulations create the basis for good design, but it is also important to allow flexibility for better ideas and to address situations where it can be demonstrated that unusual site constraints make the design standards difficult to apply. He emphasized that the proposed language does not allow departures from the dimensional and transition area standards. These departures are only allowed through a zoning variance.

Commissioner Wagner asked about the cost and process for applying for a zoning variance. Mr. Szafran said the fee for a zoning variance is about \$4,000. It is an administrative permit that is ultimately approved by the Director. Mr. Cohen added that an applicant must meet a specific set of criteria in order to obtain a variance.

- **Land Uses (SMC 20.40)**

Mr. Cohen referred to the chart of different zone designations (Table 20.40.020), which proposes to remove the Special Overlay (SO) District. He explained that the City does not currently have, nor does it plan to have, any SO Districts.

Mr. Cohen referred to land-use tables and explained that new headings were provided at the top of the charts, consistent with the proposed new zoning. He noted that rather than analyzing each land use, the Town Center (TC) 4 zone was matched as close as possible to the land uses allowed in the R-18 and R-48 zones. Land uses for the Neighborhood Business (NB), Community Business (CB) and Arterial Business (AB) zones remain the same. The uses allowed in the TC-1, TC-2 and TC-3 zones were matched as closely as possible to those allowed in the AB zone.

Mr. Cohen recalled that “shipping containers” became a significant land use issue several years ago. It was decided that shipping containers are not a use and should have the same screening requirements as trash enclosures. Therefore, “shipping containers” was removed from Table 20.40.130.

Chair Moss asked why neither “research and development” nor “warehousing and wholesale trades” would be allowed in the CB zones (Table 20.40.130). She suggested that perhaps these uses should be allowed as special uses if applicants can prove the uses would not be noxious or terribly disruptive. She also suggested the Commission discuss whether or not the City should encourage and/or allow “adult use facilities,” in the CB zones (SMC 20.40.140). In addition, she questioned the difference between “library adaptive reuse” and “libraries.” Mr. Cohen said the intent was to consolidate the zones as consistent as possible. He suggested that a more in-depth review of the various land uses allowed in each zone is a whole different topic. Commissioner Scully pointed out that if they are really only concerned about a few of the uses, perhaps it would be appropriate to address them as part of the current discussion. The majority of the Commission agreed.

- **Transition Area Landscape and Tree Preservation Requirements (SMC 20.50.021)**

Mr. Cohen recalled that a concern was raised previously about whether or not the additional language regarding protecting and retaining significant trees that are healthy and not severely damaged by construction was sufficient. He said staff believes the proposed language is sufficient since the tree code provides standards for tree protection during construction. The intent of the language is to preserve significant trees in the buffer area as much as possible. However, staff does not believe a developer should be required to preserve trees that are severely damaged by development that occurs at or near the 20% line. Although an arborist report will identify how the trees can be protected and staff will identify the current requirements to protect trees, some trees could still be damaged. The goal is to require developers to make their best effort to preserve at least 20% of the trees without carving out a significant portion of the building.

Commissioner Scully expressed concern that if the proposed language is not exactly consistent with the language in the tree code, an attorney could argue that this separate section overrides the tree code requirements. He suggested that because the first sentence requires a developer to follow the tree code, the second sentence is unnecessary. The remainder of the Commission concurred. Mr. Cohen pointed

out that, at this time, there is no tree preservation requirement within commercial zones. The new provision is an improvement.

Commissioner Maul asked if SMC 20.50.021(c) would apply to all commercial zones or just to transition areas. Mr. Cohn answered that the provision would apply to all commercial properties that are abutting or across the street from R-4, R-6 and R-8 zones.

- **Landscaping (SMC 20.50.455)**

Mr. Cohen pointed out that this language was originally contained in the Town Center Subarea Plan. It was moved to the landscape section and will be applicable to all commercial development.

- **Street Frontage Landscaping (SMC 20.50.470)**

Mr. Cohen referred to the proposed new language in SMC 20.50.470(E) for vehicle display areas. It establishes a basic requirement, but allows a property owner to use the administrative design review process for departures.

- **Internal Landscaping for Parking Area (SMC 20.50.500)**

Mr. Cohen said the language in this section defines the internal landscaping requirement for parking areas. The current standard (SMC 20.50.500(C)) requires one tree for every five stalls for commercial, office or industrial development and one tree for every ten stalls for residential and institutional development. Staff believes that one tree for every five stalls is too much, and they are recommending one tree for every ten stalls for parking areas in all zones.

Chair Moss expressed concern that the requirement (SMC 20.50.500(A)) of 20 to 25 square feet of planting area for every parking stall may be too high. Commissioner Maul agreed this requirement is higher than most. Chair Moss also expressed concern that Figure 20.50.500(B) does not clarify the requirement for internal landscaping for parking areas.

- **Signs (SMC 20.50.530)**

Mr. Cohen said the language in these sections melds the Town Center sign standards into the existing sign code. It also clarifies several administrative requirements and would apply to all commercial zones in the City. The Residential, Campus, Planned Area (PA) 3 and TC-4 zones have separate design standards. He particularly referred to SMC 20.50.540(H) regarding A-frame signs, which identifies the number of signs allowed, where they can be located, the maximum size, etc. It requires that A-frame signs be removed when the business closes each day. Vice Chair Esselman suggested that an additional provision be added to SMC 20.50.540(H) to ensure A-frame signs do not interfere with sight distancing. Mr. Cohen said he believes there is a general standard that addresses sight distance for all signs, but he agreed to research further and report back.

Commissioner Montero noted that, as per the proposed language for SMC 20.50.540(F), cabinet signs with translucent faces would not be allowed. Mr. Cohen said that is the current standard in the Town Center Subarea. Cabinet signs are allowed to have illuminated lettering and logos, but the entire face

cannot be illuminated. Commissioner Montero observed that at least 50% of the existing cabinet signs in the City would be considered out of compliance with this requirement. Mr. Cohen agreed. He said that when new cabinet signs are proposed, the face would have to be opaque except the lettering. The sign area would be calculated based on the illuminated portion of the sign (lettering, graphics, etc.)

Commissioner Scully asked why it is important to prohibit the background on a cabinet sign from being illuminated. Mr. Cohen said it is important for the signs to clearly identify businesses, but staff feels it is not critical to illuminate the entire sign face and it creates too much light. The goal is to tone down the commercial areas a bit. He observed that while only the letters can be illuminated, the code is more generous with the size of the letters currently allowed along Aurora Avenue North.

Commissioner Maul suggested that the title for SMC 20.50.540 should be changed to “Sign Design” as it outlines design features for signs. He noted that the “C” should be removed from SMC 20.50.550(E). He also asked why signs would not be allowed to cover windows (SMC 20.50.570(A)(1)). He noted that Aurora Rents recently put up a sign in their window that he actually likes. Mr. Cohen said the intent is to have windows that are visible. However, SMC 20.50.570(A)(1) is inconsistent with another section of the sign code that allows property owners to cover up to 25% of their window with signage. He suggested the words “shall not cover windows” should be deleted, and the Commission concurred.

Commissioner Maul suggested that SMC 20.50.590(B)(3) is unnecessary since outdoor advertising signs (billboards) would no longer be permitted. Commissioner Montero pointed out that SMC 20.50.590 deals specifically with billboard signs. The language gives the City flexibility to get rid of existing billboards that are not maintained. Chair Moss asked why staff is proposing to eliminate the language in SMC 20.50.590(B)(2) that requires the grounds surrounding a billboard to be kept free of debris, litter and unsightly vegetation. Mr. Cohen said this issue is better addressed by other codes dealing with debris, abandoned vehicles, weed-strewn yards, etc. Chair Moss suggested that because billboard signs would be non-conforming, perhaps they should be handled differently. Mr. Cohen agreed to review this section again and report back to the Commission.

- **Engineering Development Standards (SMC 20.70.320)**

Mr. Cohen specifically referred to SMC 20.70.320(C)(1) and (C)(2) and said the engineering development standards were amended to identify a threshold standard to require right-of-way frontage improvements. The amendment parallels the proposed development code threshold for site improvements, except that the assessed property value is based solely on structures instead of land and structures. Commissioner Moss said the concept in SMC 20.70.320 makes sense, but the language is unclear and may be open to interpretation. Chair Moss asked how SMC 20.70.320(C)(4) would be applied in the case of an accessory dwelling unit (ADU). Mr. Cohen said the provision would not be applicable to ADUs since ADU’s are not included in the definition of a “dwelling.”

Public Comment

Phyllis Johnson, Chair of the Building Committee at Ronald United Methodist Church, said she was present to speak on behalf of the committee, as well as Paula McCutcheon, pastor of Ronald United Methodist Church. She reviewed that over the course of nearly two years, members of the Ronald

United Methodist faith community have been on a journey, birthing a partnership with the Compass Housing Alliance, Hopelink and SMR Architects to bring an affordable housing project to life that will include warm, safe homes for the poor and space for a foodbank and social services. She said they consider the City of Shoreline another partner in the process. The City has been both instructive and supportive in all the steps they have taken thus far. They appreciate the attentiveness they have received from the Commission, particularly with regards to the very necessary parking reduction that is now included in the updated language.

Ms. Johnson said she was also present to offer support to the Alliance and SMR Architect's request for flexibility in the design standards for affordable housing. This flexibility would allow them to construct a facility that would not only be keeping in with the mixed-use neighborhood, but a facility that would also be physically reliable well into the future. She emphasized that the Alliance is successful at what it does because it thinks strategically and long-term. Their desire is to build a high-quality facility where short and long-term maintenance needs are minimized. This is particularly important when the funds for affordable housing are so hard to come by. She also pointed out that having the design flexibility to build a sustainable facility would also free further dollars for the Alliance to do even more for those who are so desperate for services. She asked the Commission to carefully and thoughtfully consider this very reasonable request and to look favorably on its inclusion in the design standards.

Poppi Handy, SMR Architects, Seattle, said she was present on behalf of the Compass Housing Alliance, Ronald United Methodist Church and Hopelink to follow up on the testimony she provided to the Commission on December 6th. She specifically referred to their request to allow Director discretion to modify the design standards. She submitted a packet of information that included zoning codes from the Cities of Issaquah (Attachment A) and Kirkland (Attachment B), showing incentives for design departures or director discretion for dimensional requirements. Attachments C and D illustrate what two code-compliant massing studies would look like. Attachment E is SMR Architect's proposed massing study, with Director's discretion for dimensional standards.

Ms. Handy explained that, as currently designed, their project would include two plazas: one on the interior of the site and another facing Aurora Avenue North. Both of the plazas would be open to the public and provide through-block connections. If they must strictly comply with the code (Attachments C and D), these public amenities would be compromised and they would likely have to design the building per Attachment D. Providing step backs to be consistent with the transition overlay would require a lot of roofing and modulation in the building, which raises concerns about the long-term maintenance and durability of the structure. A design similar to the illustration in Attachment D would also require a 45-foot front yard. She expressed her opinion that a large front yard instead of storefronts and other amenities near the pedestrian zone would be contrary to the intent of the code. She summarized that the preferred massing option (Attachment E) would set the building back 25 feet and represents an intermediate option between Attachments C and D.

Beth Boram, Compass Housing Alliance, Seattle, said she supports the testimony provided by Ms. Handy from a developer's perspective. She said the Alliance is not interested in constructing a building with multiple step backs because the construction and long-term maintenance costs would be too great. Rather than constructing a building in Seattle with step backs at 35 feet, they chose to pull the entire property line back 10 feet from the sidewalk. She reported that funding for affordable housing is

particularly challenging in Shoreline. The Alliance is hoping the Commission will recommend Director discretion for good design, which she believes SMR Architects has done with their preferred massing option that pulls the building back 25 feet from the property line. The plan provides an internal courtyard to create a village sense with the Ronald United Methodist Church. This connection would be lost if the building is pushed all the way to the back property line. The proposed building would include an external corridor, making the units more efficient. She summarized the Alliance's belief that they have a great design, and they hope the Commission will support allowing Director discretion to modify the design standards related to step backs. She said she appreciates the Commission's support for incentivizing affordable housing.

Kelly Rider, Policy Director, Housing Development Consortium (HDC) of King County, recalled that at the last meeting they asked that the commercial design standards allow the Planning Director the discretion to provide exemptions for housing developments that include a significant number of affordable homes for lower-income households. This policy would protect neighborhood compatibility, while also creating flexibility in the code to ensure that affordable housing developers are able to provide the most homes at the deepest level of affordability possible. She noted that this is in line with Policies H-7 and H-8 of the City's recently adopted Comprehensive Plan. She also noted that nearby cities (Kirkland and Issaquah) use similar policies.

While staff has stated that affordable housing does not need exemptions from the transition area standards because buildings could simply be set back a few feet in order to avoid additional costs and maintenance issues related to the required step backs, Ms. Rider argued that this practical outcome of the proposed design regulations would result in fewer affordable homes being available in Shoreline. She suggested that the current design regulations would create a disincentive to the development of affordable housing and would be in conflict with Policy H-7, which states "the City's desire to create meaningful incentives to facilitate development of affordable housing in both residential and commercial zones, including consideration of exemptions from certain development standards in instances where strict application would make incentives infeasible."

Ms. Rider explained that they are not asking for affordable housing developers to be exempted from all design standards. They also understand that incorporating into a community and providing effective transitions as described in Comprehensive Plan Goal H-3 and Policy H-28 is important for community aesthetics and character. However, they believe there are some circumstances, as illustrated by the example shared by Ms. Handy, where design regulations carry an extra and unnecessary burden for affordable housing developers as compared with market rate developers. Therefore, they are asking that the Commission give the Director the discretion to determine when this threshold has been reached and be able to work with affordable housing developers to agree on a design that protects community character and creates effective transitions while also making affordable housing development as cost effective as possible for the benefit of all taxpayers and the whole community, including low-income and homeless individuals.

Ms. Rider thanked staff for incorporating their request for a parking reduction into the design standards, but she recommended one small change to align the income standard of 50% area median income with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defined label of very low income rather than low income, which HUD defines as 80% area median income. She said that while she is not

opposed to the language, as written, she reminded the Commission of the importance of supporting affordable housing in different types of neighborhoods. They should not only be located in transit-friendly neighborhoods, but also in family-friendly neighborhoods with nearby schools. For this reason, the application of the 25% criteria in addition to the 50% criteria may not always hold. They would rather them be separate than together. At the same time, they are willing to accept the current language, if necessary. The Commission should keep in mind that predictability and interpretation for affordable housing developers is also incredibly important.

Ms. Rider summarized that all families in Shoreline should be able to afford their housing and still have enough money to pay for gas, groceries and childcare. With the Commission's support, they can bring Shoreline one step closer to the vision. She asked them to recommend providing the Planning Director the discretion to provide design standard exemptions for affordable housing developments when deemed appropriate.

Paula McCutcheon, Pastor, Ronald United Methodist Church, said the church is very excited to be working on this joint project, not only with the Compass Housing Alliance, but Hopelink, as well. The step back requirement would impose a difficulty for the church. The church wants to have a village feel and enough parking for the clients of Hopelink since they will be sharing parking. They want the support of the Director's discretion and they are very thankful for the Commission's support.

Commission Discussion

Chair Moss reminded the Commission that this item is scheduled for a public hearing on January 17th. In preparation for the hearing, the Commission reviewed the proposal page-by-page and provided their additional comments and concerns to staff.

- **Section 20.40.** Chair Moss recalled previous comments about the types of land uses allowed in the various zones, particularly the Community Business (CB) and Neighborhood Business (NB) zones. She asked Commissioners to forward their additional thoughts and comments regarding this subject to staff via email.
- **Table 20.50.020(1).** Chair Moss asked if the City has the ability to impose a minimum density requirement on large single-family residential properties. Mr. Cohen said there is a minimum density requirement for residential zones, and no changes have been proposed. He explained that a minimum density requirement is typically intended to ensure that properties are not underdeveloped. Commissioner Scully said he understands the rationale, but he questioned the City's ability to deny a building permit because the proposal does not meet the minimum density requirement. Mr. Cohen agreed that the minimum density requirement is a bit archaic. The Commission agreed that because the current proposal focuses primarily on commercial elements, issues related to residential uses should be placed on the parking lot agenda rather than dealt with as part of the current proposal.
- **Table 20.50.020(2).** Chair Moss questioned why the base height is only 65 feet in the AB zone, but 70 feet in the TC-1, TC-2 and TC-3 zones. Mr. Cohen said the Town Center Subarea Plan adopted a 70-foot base height, and the base height in the Mixed Use (MUZ) and Industrial (I) zones is 65 feet. The intent is to be as consistent as possible with the current zoning.

- **SMC 20.50.240(D)(2)(c).** Chair Moss asked if the requirement for balconies for residential units on all floors above the ground floor would only apply to street corner developments. Mr. Cohen said balconies would be allowed anywhere on the building, but they would be required on the corner portions of buildings to enhance the building design and add to the appeal of the corner from the street.
- **SMC 20.50.240(C)(1)(b).** Commissioner Maul asked if buildings that are located five feet from the property line would be exempt from this requirement. Mr. Cohen said “fronting” means facing the street. If there is no structure between the building and sidewalk, the building would be considered “fronting.” Commissioner Maul asked how the 12-foot height would be measured. Mr. Cohen answered that the 12 feet is the maximum ceiling height for commercial development. Rather than requiring commercial development on the ground floor, the idea is to build to commercial standards but allow residential uses. If and when the market supports commercial uses, the space could be easily adapted. Commissioner Maul pointed out that while it is possible to construct a 12-foot ceiling, there would be a wall every 12 feet on the inside of a wood-frame structure. This makes the space less adaptable to commercial uses. If the City’s goal is to require development that supports commercial uses on the ground floor, they should go one step further and force developers to use concrete structure versus wood frame structures on the ground floor. He noted, however, that this would significantly increase the cost of construction. He summarized that he likes the intent of this provision, but he is not sure the proposed language would accomplish the intent. Mr. Cohen agreed a developer may have to construct a concrete base in order to meet this requirement, but it is possible. Commissioner Scully pointed out that this provision is intended to relax the current requirement that all ground floor space must be commercial. While this would not be the cheapest alternative, the provision still provides more flexibility than the current code requirement of commercial only.
- **SMC 20.50.240(E)(1)(e).** At the request of Commissioner Maul, Mr. Cohen explained that if sidewalks are only 8-feet wide, trees must be placed in grated tree pits so pedestrians can walk around them. If the walkway is greater than 8-feet wide, the trees can be placed in planting beds. The Commission agreed that replacing the “struck out” words would clarify the language.
- **SMC 20.50.240(F)(2).** Chair Moss pointed out that the reference number in this provision should actually be “3” and not “4.” Mr. Cohen agreed this is a typographical error.
- **SMC 20.50.240(F)(5).** Commissioner Maul pointed out that this provision conflicts with SMC 20.50.240(F)(1), which requires public places to be a minimum of 400 square feet.
- **SMC 20.50.240(G)(1)(b).** Chair Moss requested clarification of the 20-foot dimensional requirement for open space. To make the intent clearer, Commissioner Wagner suggested the provision should be changed to read, “no dimension is less than 20 feet.” Mr. Cohen agreed to modify the language to clarify the intent.

- **SMC 20.50.250(A).** Vice Chair Esselman suggested that the purpose statement should also emphasize attributes important to the pedestrian experience or place making. Mr. Cohen agreed to add new language.
- **SMC 20.50.250(B)(1).** Commissioner Maul expressed concern about reducing the articulation standards for buildings located on state routes. Mr. Cohen pointed out that the different standard for state routes was intentional given the increased speed and larger scale of these rights-of-way. He noted that the two state routes in Shoreline include Aurora Avenue North and Ballinger Way. The Commission discussed that one of the City's goals is to encourage walkability, and the state routes are surrounding by single-family neighborhoods. Mr. Cohen noted that this language was included in the Town Center Subarea Plan for boulevard streets (Aurora Avenue North). Chair Moss recalled that in the Town Center Subarea, the long-narrow park creates a buffer along the highway. However, this may not be the case as other properties along Aurora Avenue North are redeveloped. Mr. Cohen pointed out that development along state routes would still be required to meet other requirements to prevent developments with large, blank walls. The Commission agreed to discuss this issue further at their next meeting. They asked staff to provide pictures to illustrate the difference between the two articulation standards (80 feet versus 100 feet).
- **SMC 20.50.250(B)(8)(c).** Commissioner Maul questioned the need to place so many limitations on the use of stucco, which is a wonderful material. Mr. Cohen said this provision is intended to encourage building articulation via material changes and trim. Commissioner Maul said he understands the purpose of placing limitations on the use of metal siding, which can be easily damaged (See SMC 20.50.250(B)(8)(a), but that is not the case for stucco.
- **Table 20.50.390A.** Chair Moss questioned why a mobile home park is required to have 2 parking spaces per unit when a two-bedroom house only requires 1.75 spaces per unit. Mr. Cohen advised that mobile home parks are allowed and must meet the standards for residential development. Each mobile home would be considered a single-family home and two parking spaces would be required. He reminded the Commission that no amendments to the residential design standards have been proposed.

Mr. Cohen explained that because the Commission has asked him to provide alternative language for a number of topics in the proposal, he will not be able to send out the public hearing packet on January 4th as he had originally planned to do. He indicated he could have the updated draft available by January 11th. The Commission agreed that this timeline would be acceptable, and they asked staff to prepare a clean version of the proposal, which incorporates the newest changes and identifies the issues that still need further discussion. Mr. Cohen agreed to provide a legislative version of the proposal, as well. Chair Moss requested larger versions of the maps.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Cohen did not provide a Director's Report.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES AND COMMISSIONERS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chair Moss advised that the Station Area Planning Subcommittee would report to the Commission on February 7th.

AGENDA FOR NEXT MEETING

Mr. Szafran announced that a public hearing for the commercial design standards and zoning consolidation proposal has been scheduled for January 17th. Staff would also introduce the one item on the 2013 Comprehensive Plan amendment docket.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Donna Moss
Chair, Planning Commission

Jessica Simulcik Smith
Clerk, Planning Commission

TIME STAMP
January 3, 2012

CALL TO ORDER:

ROLL CALL:

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS:

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: 1:05

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT: 1:29

STUDY SESSION: COMMERCIAL DESIGN STANDARDS AND ZONING CONSOLIDATION

Staff Presentation: 2:00

Public Comment: 1:29:20

Commission Discussion: 1:46:32

DIRECTOR'S REPORT: 2:40:37

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES AND COMMISSIONERS/ANNOUNCEMENTS: 2:40:43

AGENDA FOR NEXT MEETING: 2:41:16

ADJOURNMENT