

**From:** [Julie Underwood](#)  
**To:** [Will Hall](#)  
**Cc:** [Carolyn Wurdeman](#); [Debbie Tarry](#); [Dan Eernisse](#); [Rachael Markle](#)  
**Subject:** RE: CRA comments and questions  
**Date:** Friday, June 07, 2013 4:43:49 PM

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Hi Will-I know we had a chance to talk about this during our one-on-one yesterday. And I thought it would be good to share some of this with Council. You had some good questions/comments. Also, I wanted to formally respond since this item is up for discussion on Monday.

As you know, economic development is a marathon. The Plan will need to be thought of over a long period of time, in phases. But as you've correctly pointed out, Shoreline's land values and commercial rents are a long way from the point when all structured parking makes sense, which is why the City would have to provide incentives to get a garage built. We believe that encouraging dense, robust development like Bellevue Square is a worthy goal, but not a strategy for zoning -- especially not now. If the City made structured parking a zoning requirement, for example, we believe it would decrease the likelihood of development occurring. It's worth pointing out that Dan's conceptual drawings are only the first wave of development. The Marshall's/Pier 1 site would potentially be next (and more dense still), followed by the Chinese restaurant area, and finally the rest of WSDOT and Central Market. Perhaps financing parking structures could be a long-term solution; if the City made structured parking less costly, then it allows for more being built.

While the lack of assemblage is a historic problem that has hindered good site development, at this moment in time we believe portions of the site are potentially able to develop. For example, four large developments can occur on site right now (Denny's triangle, Sears -- which really is two or three large developments, the Marshall's lot, and WSDOT) without assemblage. That is why the CRA Plan is so critical. Using the CRA Plan, the City needs to encourage these large developments to happen in such a way that they benefit the entire center.

We do believe the site needs a street and/or access from Aurora somewhere between 165th and 155th. Vacating all of Westminster makes sense if we were able to obtain another access point from Aurora. This option is certainly possible through development agreements, which are proposed in the CRA Plan.

It seems like imposing minimum FARs in the CRA alone would go against the principle of having less zoning districts. However, the CRA is specific. So does a minimum FAR make sense? We believe that it may backfire by increasing the cost of development, and again -- like requiring structured parking -- hinder rather than encourage investment. Another note is that by encouraging multifamily on site (something that hasn't happened before), we'll definitely increase the FAR. We believe we should focus on multistory multi-family and structured parking, and that will increase the FAR even if only through more tightly packed single-story retail buildings.

I believe that we're on the same page regarding transformational redevelopment. We believe that the sustainability vision implies repurposing. Also, we're only talking about repurposing the Sears building -- it lends itself to repurposing as it already has a natural parking garage (i.e. the entire first floor) and is multi-story above. I'll admit, when Dan first discussed repurposing the buildings, I was underwhelmed--this was not what I had envisioned. But I've been at the City long enough to know how long we've tried to get anything to happen in this area. I also know that many of our residents see this area as a potential U Village and would be excited to see something like this happen (ours would include MF which U Village doesn't have). We know we're not going to have a big mall, but we could have in the short term an area for our residents to shop, eat, find entertainment, and live.

Given all that we've tried in the past, I believe one of two things (or both!) needs to happen to wake this sleeping giant:

1. We need a catalyst--something that nudges more investors to actually invest in redevelopment. It's clear that this area is attractive to investors -- over the last few years, properties in this area have had

no problem selling. So we know it is already seen as a good return on investment. We need that first redevelopment to happen that lights the fire for more.

2. If you want bold, if you want to design and control the site, and if you want something to happen in the near time, then we'd need to buy the site. Dan and I have talked about this at length, but it is a strategy with risks. I'd prefer to see if we can get the private sector to come along first before I'd recommend this. However, this might be an option for you to think about.

Dan has gotten us the closest that I've seen with the private/investor community. As you've mentioned, in order to be more sustainable, we are going to need more development. If we don't do more to encourage it, I'm afraid we'll have more of the same--vacant underdeveloped properties not contributing to our quality of life.

Thanks,  
Julie

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-----Original Message-----

From: Will Hall  
Sent: Tuesday, June 04, 2013 9:32 AM  
To: Julie Underwood; Debbie Tarry; Dan Eernisse; Rachael Markle  
Cc: Carolyn Wurdeman  
Subject: CRA comments and questions

Here are some thoughts after reading the CRA staff report.

I would prefer to make existing zoning districts work citywide, even if that means amending some existing codes, rather than creating a new overlay district. We just spent a bunch of effort consolidating commercial zones. I don't want to go back to numerous different land use codes.

I like the parking garage idea. Is there a way to think long term about transitioning all or nearly all surface parking into structured parking either in standalone garages or under buildings? I know it may take a while, but Bellevue Square has been an example.

Is there anything we can do to promote land assembly? One of the key barriers we identified is that the lot configuration is a barrier to transformational redevelopment. I'd still like to solve that challenge so that logical units of the site could redevelop.

Why not vacate all of Westminster north of 155th and adopt a new master circulation plan that could be implemented in phases and through dedications as sectors develop?

Can we impose a minimum FAR? Did we do that, or at least talk about it, with Town Center? I would like to avoid wasting space with single-story buildings (although I know that there are other opinions, especially for suburban retail, but I'm aiming for urban, not suburban).

I appreciate the tax rate comparison with Bitter Lake, responding in part to a question I raised in a previous email. Have you confirmed that the rate is equally low in other similar north King County areas?

In general, I want to position this site through this plan for bold and transformational redevelopment. I understand that repurposing existing buildings might revitalize portions of the site and might be the best we can hope for in the near term, but I would prefer to set out a bold long term vision and then work backwards from there.

Will Hall, Councilmember  
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