

From: [Debbie Kellogg](#)
To: [City Council](#)
Subject: Comments for July 8 Council Meeting - CRA
Date: Monday, July 08, 2013 8:17:54 AM
Attachments: [CRA PlanCom.pdf](#)
[Aurora Square CRA comments.docx](#)

plancom minutes only included for clarity & not part of public record

Sound Stage Proposal

Evidence of any market study has not been submitted by the city staff to support the proposal for construction of two sound stages. The 2009 cost of construction in New Mexico for two sound stages was \$25 million. What is missing from the staff proposal is that sound stages require a large warehouse for the construction and storage of sets. **Sound stages have an infrastructure requirement of a large supply of electricity. An infrastructure impact study should be performed.**

Finally, the operation of sound stages and film/television/video production require the movement of semi-trucks, vans, and large RVs carrying equipment and staff in support of all operations of the sound stages. In spite of these demands, the staff proposes closing two truck routes and failing to forecast the demand freight traffic sound stage operation would place upon the road network. A traffic study is required.

Other elements missing from the analysis is a competitive analysis of Washington State's tax credit/rebate program relative to Canada (only 90 minutes away in Vancouver, BC) and other states. The Washington State Legislature has elected to let the motion picture competitive tax program expire in 2011: <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?bill=1554&year=2011>

By way of comparison, New Mexico offers a 29% rebate to stimulate film production: <http://articles.latimes.com/2009/dec/10/business/la-fi-ct-newmexico10-2009dec10> Note that project was facilitated with a \$10 million economic development grant from the State of New Mexico and included 27,000 square feet of warehouse space. A follow up project in 2011 was constructed in 2011 on a 65-acre site where the sound stages were 19,274 square feet. It is unclear from the Aurora Square CRA proposal prepared by the staff if they have considered the space requirements for the two stages, much less the ancillary services (such as restaurants, hotels, rental cars, etc.) for operational support.

Shoreline Community College Parking

Presently Shoreline Community College (SCC) parks behind Sears and uses a shuttle to transport students to campus (or they may elect to walk I suppose). The staff propose constructing a parking garage (structure parking) consisting of 300-400 stalls. Kemper Development has informed the Bellevue City Council that their cost for structured parking is \$70,000 per stall, which means that the parking garage proposed by staff will cost between \$21-28 million and I presume this cost will be financed by city bonds in the CRA. A consideration of the city's ability to finance these bonds is not included in the CRA plan.

Another consideration is that the SCC Master Use Plan is currently open for comment. Since the CRA plan explicitly states it will integrate SCC into Aurora Square, the intended use of the parking garage at the WSDOT site is for SCC, and the sound stages will support educational programs at SCC, the SCC Master Use Plan should include these facilities at Aurora Square as SEPA requires all inter-related parts (and programs) in its analysis. Elsewhere in the CRA a

second parking garage to support retail and residential parking is proposed at the Sears site, so it is apparent that the WSDOT site is intended for use by SCC.

The planning commission minutes of March 21, 2013 also show that the staff has proposed other projects for SCC integration not explicit in the Aurora Square CRA. They have proposed building student housing and a used auto repair program by repurposing the Sears building. There is discussion of building a theater for use by the SCC drama program, all of which lead to the question as to why these programs have not been included in the SCC Master Use Plan if they are really under consideration by SCC.

WSDOT

Is it even realistic for the staff to include WSDOT in the CRA plan? WSDOT provides support to a multi-county region for real-time video support, emergency services, and the Washington State Patrol in the Northwest Region. WSDOT provides a higher public purpose than any proposed by the city staff and apparently plan on building a secure, hardened (hardened against natural disaster) structure in the future in the parking lot the city staff has identified as site for a parking to support SCC and the sound stages. WSDOT will receive no benefit from any future LID as well and clearly indicated last year they did not want to participate in the CRA.

Northwest Center for the Deaf

The Center last year stated they did not wish to be included in the Aurora Square CRA and in the plan they will receive no benefit from the plan. In fact, they will in all likelihood be negatively impacted by traffic and overflow parking from the tremendous increase in multi-family housing density. Since no traffic impact study has been completed for the CRA, a SEPA EIS should be completed. Furthermore, inclusion of the Center means that they would be negatively impacted by the imposition of a LID from which they would receive no benefit.

An additional consideration that the staff has not included is the status the Center under federal law in terms of the Federal Rehabilitation Act and Americans with Disabilities Act, I have seen no analysis of their status as a school that serves a protected class of citizens by the staff.

SEPA is required

The city staff asserts that no SEPA is required because the CRA is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and all associated elements (which include sub-area plans, the surface water management plan, and the transportation master plan). The staff, without citing any specific policies in the Comprehensive Plan or any associated elements. The staff further claims that SEPA is regulatory, when indeed it is NOT. SEPA is intended to measure all associated impacts of proposed development, determine what mitigation needs to be implemented, and solicits public comment. Development code that is derived from the Comprehensive Plan is regulatory in dictating setbacks, design standards, parking requirements, etc. but SEPA as a process is not merely regulatory.

The Aurora Square CRA area is bordered by the Richmond Highlands, Westminster Triangle, and Parkwood Neighborhoods, yet the staff has not met with these neighborhood associations nor the Council of Neighborhoods. Instead, they have elected to meet with these groups months before any CRA plan was available for the public to review:

Echo Lake (at the far north end of Aurora, Aurora Square is at the far south end of Aurora)
Richmond Beach (in the far northwest corner of Shoreline)

Pro Shoreline (which is a political action committee, organized under the Public Disclosure Commission)

City Hall Open House (in April, two months before the plan was available to the public)

A so-called neighborhood meeting in February

I refer to the neighborhood meeting as a "so-called" meeting as we live less than 6 blocks from Aurora Square, yet we have never received any email from the City notifying us of any of the meetings above using the Constant Contact system. However, the staff does seem to find it important enough to let us know they are having Climate Change meetings sponsored by the City when it is more important to us what the city has proposed for Aurora Square.

Street vacation and Truck Routes

When the Red Brick Road was vacated for Aurora Rents in 2009, a traffic study was already completed and discussions had been held with surrounding property owners (i.e., Seattle City Light, Haggens, and other small business owners) who are entitled to the opportunity as adjacent property owners to purchase the street as part of the street vacation procedures. The staff has presented no evidence that they engaged adjacent property owners. Additionally, SEPA was performed as part of the Red Brick Road Street Vacation.

In 2011 the TMP was updated and Westminster was retained as part of the freight mobility truck route map. North 160th St. is a truck route used for SCC & Central Market (which will remain) as well as other retail. The 2014-2019 Capital Improvement Plan <http://cosweb.ci.shoreline.wa.us/uploads/attachments/cck/council/staffreports/2013/staffreport070813-8c.pdf> shows that the staff proposes installing a traffic circle at the intersection at 160th & Dayton. My question is, if the Aurora Square CRA is to develop more linkages (in terms of a theater, parking, student housing, used auto repair, and film programs), would a traffic signal be a better alternative at this intersection? Since the staff has not done a traffic study for all of the improvements they have proposed for the Aurora Square CRA, including the traffic between Aurora Square and SCC, they cannot answer this question.

Since Westminster and N. 160th Street are truck routes, other stakeholders in the street vacation and redesignation of these streets would be:

- King County
- WSDOT (Aurora is a state highway of significance)

- Puget Sound Regional Council Freight Mobility

The above is just a suggested list, it is not exhaustive.

A consideration is that staff has reported that the entrance into Aurora Square from N. 155 St. will have a some kind of fountain structure (as reported to the Planning Commission on March 21, 2013). This will create an obstacle for freight, vans, and other large vehicles intended to serve the sound stages, the Central Market, the retail venue currently occupied by Big Lots, and the proposed used auto repair program for the repurposed Sears building. Businesses need to receive freight, and if Westminster is vacated and N. 160 St. is repurposed, what will be the new routes?

I would imagine that one new route will be N. 155 St. However, the TMP data shows that the intersection at N. 155 St & Aurora is experiencing more accidents than originally forecasted when the Aurora Corridor EIS was completed. Furthermore, when the Aurora Corridor EIS was completed, a bridge for the Interurban Trail over N. 155 St. was not included. The bridge creates a height restriction for freight traveling on this route. An alternative route would be on N. 145th St. to Greenwood to Westminster to N. 155 St., but no traffic studies have been completed and no consideration of the impact to these neighborhoods had been included in any analysis since analysis had not been done. I should note that N. 145 St is also considered a state highway as well; WSDOT should be considered a stakeholder in this process.

What is worrisome is that the staff has identified N. 145th St. as in need of repair, which is the reason the city sought funding from the Legislature to complete an in depth traffic study in the recently completed session; however, the Legislature ended without funding any transportation projects. So, how does the staff propose adding more traffic to N. 145th St. when they have identified it as a route in need of significant improvement?

Metro Bus Routes

Aurora Square is served by Route 358, widely regarded as one of the worst rides in the system (see the comments:

<http://slog.thestranger.com/slog/archives/2009/11/04/2655981-seattles-crappiest-bus-route>

<http://www.thestranger.com/slog/archives/2009/11/05/regarding-seattles-crappiest-bus-route&view=comments>

<http://www.seattlemet.com/news-and-profiles/publicola/articles/punched-in-the-face-on-the-358>

<http://blog.seattlepi.com/seattle911/2008/12/01/the-most-common-metro-routes-for-driver-attacks/>

KOMO News reported Route 358 had 333 incidents in 2011, the worst in the entire system: <http://www.komonews.com/news/local/Recent-attacks-have-Metro-riders-worried-about-bus-safety-138618294.html> The Seattle Transit Blog singles out Route 358 for being late, smelling terrible, being crowded, and repeating all of the above criticisms:

<http://seattletransitblog.com/2007/06/04/best-worst-bus-routes/> In summary, the main bus route to Aurora Square is second only to Route 7 (to the Rainier Valley) as the worst bus route in Metro.

My question to the staff is: do you honestly expect new residents, who will be located far from the light rail stations, to regularly use Route 358 given the ridership experience? Everyone I know who has rode the 358 (including myself) elect to drive to the Northgate Park and Ride where they can catch Route 66 – if you go to Aurora Park and Ride you are stuck waiting with the passengers who got off the 358 and are at the end of line for King County, loitering around and oftentimes going to Echo Lake to continue their misdeeds, not to mention there is a lack of parking. If the Councilmembers and staff rode the bus more often they would be aware of the Metro experience in riding into Seattle.

Metro, with the failure of the car tab fee increase in the recently concluded State Legislature, will be cutting back service county-wide 17%, and the impact upon routes serving Shoreline (including the infamous Route 358) have not been revealed yet, nor has any discussion of how the Rapid Ride peak routes along Aurora will be impacted.. Since the city has began a discussion of the adoption of

Design Review

The Town Center Sub-Area Plan and Briarcrest have design review standards, which the Aurora Square CRA does not. The lack of design review resulted in a project like Echo Lake, which many in the community objected to in terms of its visual impact. Floor area ratios and design review would increase the visual appeal of Aurora Square and reduce the impact on the neighborhoods.

Increased Density

In discussing the proposal with city staff by email, it appears that the purpose of the street vacation is to allow the present owner of the former Joshua Green property lying to the east of Westminster to acquire the property so that he can flip it to Mill Creek Residential so that they can build 300-400 units of multi-unit housing. At the March 21, 2013 planning commission, staff reported that the Aurora Square CRA plans on the construction of 1,000 units of multi-unit housing. These uses are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan; however, no traffic studies have been performed to determine their impact upon the street network. A member of the planning commission asked about integration of the plan into multi-modal transportation, and the staff had no answer.

The planning commissioners suggested that the application of the eco-district term to the Aurora Square CRA was inappropriate as it was a term of art. I have attached their specific comments as the staff has not included them in any report to council.

The meetings with the community held so far have not mentioned that 1,000 additional units of housing would be added, nor did they mention the closure of the truck routes. The failure to disclose these key planning points would hardly lead one to believe that an adequate public process had been conducted to date.

Surface Water Management

The Surface Water Management Plan (which is an element of the Comprehensive Plan) identifies a piped stream that runs along the southern edge of N. 160th St. from east-west. The adopted policy of the surface water management plan is to implement Low Impact Development practices when properties are redeveloped, recent case law requires that piped streams that formerly bore salmonoids to be day lighted, however, because the staff refuses to do any SEPA analysis, this piped stream is not included in the Aurora Square CRA. If the piped stream were day lighted, it indeed could help further the concept of making the Aurora Square an eco-district.

Infrastructure

The staff last year claimed that SPU is unable to provide water service to support development; however, it appears that the staff believes that SPU will be able to deliver enough water to support the construction of at least 1,000 new residential units. As I mentioned in the sound stage section, staff has not addressed the electrical needs of that program, much less any other demands for projects they have proposed and who would fund these improvements. Surface water utility improvements and management have not been addressed, not to mention other utilities. A complete SEPA document (preferably an EIS) would address these concerns.

Burien Experience

Although Burien did utilize the Community Renewal Act to revitalize its Town Square, they did building a parking garage and acquired acreage for developers to construct multi-unit residential housing. Urban Partners condominium project went into foreclosure and the other acreage recently was transferred by the City of Burien to another developer: <http://b-townblog.com/2013/06/18/burien-city-council-approves-2-75-million-sale-of-town-square-parcels/> Burien had completed a sub-area plan, built a parking garage to serve City Hall and the public, acquired land, and they are still working on the project after eight years (8) years, these project involve a great deal of financial risk and exposure to the city.

Complete CRA

Kennewick has done recently completed a community renewal plan as a sub-area, here is the link for their plan:

http://www.go2kennewick.com/go2kennewick/default.aspx?option=com_docman&task=doc_view&qid=3314

They have completed what a community renewal plan should be, what the staff have presented is nothing more than a concept since it lacks details as I have pointed out throughout this document. Throughout the process funding sources have been mentioned but linking them to the purpose and project has been missing. From the Kennebec CRA, here is an example of how they have applied a matrix to the CRA toolkit:

Kennebec Bridge-to-Bridge/River-to-Rail (BB/RR) Revitalization (Subarea) Plan & Implementing Regulations

13 April 2010

Objectives - not necessarily in rank order	Participants																	Implement in year	Cost (000)	Funding sources
	A	L	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P			
Organization																				
1 Assign action plan responsibilities	A	L	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	X		Ptax,
2 Resolve joint ventures w/HDKP/Port/Private	A	L	P	P														X		Ptax
Economics																				
3 Recruit/retain target markets	A	L	L	P														X	X	Ptax, HDKP, Port, TRIDEC, Chambers, COG
4 Expand Main Street program to BB/RR	A	L	L	P														X	X	MainSt, DRP, TMP, PBIA, CDBG, 108,
Promotion																				
5 Expand city/HDKP website outreach	A	L	L	P														X		Ptax, HMTax, TMP, HDKP, TRIDEC, Chamber
6 Install gateways/wayfinding signage	A	L	L	P														X		Ptax, HMTax, REET, TMP, HDKP, CRF
Design Standards																				
7 Update/refine zoning designations	A	L	L	P														X		CTED-GMP, Ptax
8 Adopt design standards for BB/RR mixed use	A	L	L	P														X		CTED-GMP, Ptax
Design/Development - Infrastructure																				
9 Fill/soft armor river shoreline for fish habitat	A	L	P	A	A	L												X	X	Centennial, ALEA, RCO, Ptax, Umatilla, CRA
10 Install swale/levee enhancements	A	L	P	A	P	A												X	X	SDUFee, Ptax, DOE, RCO, TIF/LCF, Prvt, CRA
11 Acquire/develop parks	A	L	P	L	A	P	A											X	X	Ptax, REET, HMTax, ALEA, RCO, Parkfee, Prvt, CDBG, 108, CRA
12 Reconfigure road network	A	L	L	P														X	X	FAUS, UATA, Ptax, MVFTax, Trafficfee, Late-comer, CRA
13 Construct streetscape enhancements	A	L	L	P														X	X	REET, Ptax, MVFTax, LID, TBD, PBIA, Late-comer, CRA
14 Construct sidewalks, curbs, gutters	A	L	L	P														X	X	Ptax, MVFTax, TIB, CDBG, LID, STUFees, 108, CRA
15 Reconfigure transit routes	A	L	L	P														X	X	Ben Franklin
Design/Development - Catalytic Projects																				
16 Acquire/construct public market/train	A	L	L															X	X	HMTax, REET, Ptax, CDBG, 63-20, HDKP
17 Acquire/issue RFP incubator development	A	L	L	P														X	X	Ptax, CDBG, HAEIF, Prvt, COG, EDA, SBA
18 Issue design/develop RFP competitions	A	L	L															X		Ptax, CDBG, HOME, TIF/LRF, Prvt, LITHC
19 Review/resolve Port's Duffy's Pond Plan	A	L	L	A	A	A												X		Ptax

- 108 CDBG Section 108 Loan Funds
- 63:20 Lease-to-Own using 63:20 nonprofit financing
- ALEA ROC Aquatic Lands Enhancement Act
- CDBG Community Development Block Grant
- CDBG Community Development Block Grants
- COG Small Business Assistance
- CRA Community Renewal Act
- CRF Community Revitalization Finance
- DOE Department of Ecology Centennial Fund
- DRP Washington State DoFC Downtown Renewal Program
- EDA Economic Development Administration
- GMP Washington State DoFC Growth Management Planning grant
- HDKP Historic Downtown Kennebec Partnership funds
- HMTax Tourism Hotel/Motel Tax
- HOME CDBG Program
- Late-cc Late-comer Improvements charge

- LID Local Improvement District
- LIHTC Low Income Housing Tax Credits
- MVFTAX Motor Vehicle Fuel Tax
- ParkFee GMA Park Impact Fee
- PBIA Parking & Business Improvement Area
- Port Port of Kennebec funds
- Prvt Private developer contribution or other funds
- Ptax General Fund Property Tax
- RCO Wa State Recreation and Conservation Office (ROC) grants
- REET Real Estate Excise Tax
- SBA Small Business Administration
- SDUFee Stormwater Management Utility fee
- TBD Transportation Benefit District
- TIB Transportation Improvement Board grants
- TIF/LRF Tax Increment Finance/Local Community Finance
- Trafficfee GMA Traffic Impact Fee

SEPA Applies to the CRA

Washington State law and regulations are very clear regarding SEPA. SEPA is to begin at the earliest stage for a series of interrelated projects. All interrelated projects, including transportation concurrency, are to be included in the analysis.

- Renton completed an EIS for their CRA plan
- No design review
- No traffic studies
- Increase in density
- Public process – pre-application-like meetings
- Complete CRA plan unavailable at city council retreat
- Major stakeholders left out of the public process
- Surface water management
- Modifications to the TMP as adopted by the city
- Modifications to the original Aurora EIS

The above list is not exhaustive, which is why SEPA needs to be conducted.

Final Considerations

The city hired Foster Pepper to assist them in CRA process. Foster Pepper has written a document that outlines the basics of the CRA that has not been shared with the council outlining some of the basics and legal/financial consideration that have not been discussed at a council meeting to date, it can be accessed here:

<http://www.mrsc.org/artdocmisc/m58spitzer.pdf>

Since the council has elected to utilize eminent domain, how does the city propose to exercise control over the Sears property should it become available? Do they intend to purchase it outright? How does the city propose to finance the improvements to the Sears property? How does the city propose to finance the structured parking at the WSDOT site? I have asked staff what is the public purpose for these improvements? In the document I have linked to above, written by Hugh Spitzer of Foster Pepper, I wish to highlight:

State Law Parameters. State law permits general obligation or revenue bonds to carry out community renewal. RCW 35.81.100-.115. However, it is important not to run afoul of the State’s “lending of credit” constitutional provision. That provision bars gifts or loans of public funds to private institutions or individuals. In order to avoid a constitutional violation, a city selling community renewal land to a private person or entity must receive adequate consideration for the sale. Bonds issued to finance a community renewal project must clearly be issued to finance a project of general public benefit; any private benefit must, from a legal standpoint, be incidental in nature.

The constitutional provision may be more specific, however, and the city attorney and/or the State Attorney General should submit an opinion on the city lending its credit to SCC.

NEW BUSINESS

Community Renewal Area (CRA) Plan for Aurora Square

Mr. Eernisse said the purpose of this discussion is to present the draft Aurora Square Community Renewal (CRA) Plan. He reviewed that the CRA was established in September. Since that time, staff has been working to prepare a plan, as required by State law, to show how renewal will happen. He advised that the initial draft plan has already been presented to the City Council, and he hopes to provide them with an updated plan for review and approval in May or June. He said the purpose of tonight's discussion is to review the draft plan and obtain feedback from the Commission.

Mr. Eernisse emphasized that while the plan is not intended to be a specific master plan for Aurora Square, it is a master planning effort that allows the City to identify projects in which the City can participate through public/private partnerships. The projects proposed in the plan are intended to make the current businesses function better, add new businesses, and make Aurora Square a better place for the entire community. He explained that the plan is broken up into two documents. The brochure would be an 11" x 17" document, and the inserts would outline the eight public/private partnership (PPP) projects. When the brochure is given to property owners or outside investors, staff would insert information on the individual projects that are applicable.

Chair Moss asked who the primary audience of the brochure would be. Mr. Eernisse said the brochure would be useful to developers, property owners and investors. He said he envisions the process will include some type of developer agreement between the property owner/investor and the City to identify how the City can participate in redevelopment and what it would get in return.

Mr. Eernisse referred to the proposed plan and suggested that the title be changed from "The Master Plan" to "Master Planning." He also expressed his belief that through the multiple phases of implementation, land efficiency can be increased by much more than 100%. He reviewed each of the individual projects contained in the document as follows:

- **Create an Eco-District.** The draft plan does not identify exactly where the eco-district would happen; but there are numerous opportunities at Aurora Square, which was built in the 1960's before there were better stormwater options. **The eco-district could also include more cutting-edge technology such as power generation and waste-water management.** The goal is to look at the carbon footprint of the entire center and identify how each building could contribute in some way.

Commissioner Scully recalled that the Planning Commission recently learned that "eco-district" has become a term of art to mean a community organization with binding regulations. He asked if that is what staff has in mind in this case. Mr. Eernisse said he has not specifically defined the term "eco-district." However, the intent is to take the obvious economies of scale and try to do things with a regional mindset rather than a building-by-building mindset. It would be fantastic if all ten property owners would agree to participate, but there are other options. For example, a few property owners could lead the way by establishing a facility that is large enough to handle future development and then be repaid at some point in the future. Commissioner Scully suggested the plan use a different term than "eco-district."

- **Transform Westminster Way North.** Westminster Way North is a 100-foot right-of-way located between North 155th and North 160th Streets. It basically functions as a one-way off ramp from Aurora Avenue and has become a dividing highway between the old Denny's property and the rest of Aurora Square. Changing Westminster Way North into a low speed and walkable road, with parking and buildings at the street front, would transform how the entire center functions. For example, the City could deed 35 feet of the right-of-way on the Denny's side to the property owner in exchange for them building the road out in a different way, including improvements to Aurora Avenue at the corner of North 155th Street. **The Aurora Avenue improvements were done assuming that Westminster Way North would need to function as a truck route,** but improvements to this corner are still necessary.
- **Build a New Center Point.** The goal is to highlight and provide better access to the logical center point of Aurora Square (somewhere in front of Sears) by creating two strong connections between the separate areas of the site. This would allow the site to function as a cohesive whole.
- **Re-Imagine the Sears Property.** Most of the initial master planning effort was focused on the Sears property.
- **Build a New Home.** There has been discussion about **incorporating up to 1,000 residential units** into Aurora Square to take advantage of the nearby amenities, which is a reasonable goal given the size of the property and its close proximity to Shoreline Community College (SCC). **The impact for residential housing would not be limited to Aurora Square.** Successfully redeveloping Aurora Square would enhance the desirability of living anywhere along Aurora Avenue North. While they are not looking to duplicate University Village, it is a great example of how a shopping center can affect the surrounding areas and particularly the desirability for housing.
- **Trade Surface Parking for Jobs.** The CRA designation gives the City significant power to encourage job growth. **It allows the City to actually provide direct funding for projects that bring more jobs to Shoreline. For example, providing adequate structured parking for the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) would free up land that could be redeveloped for industry and office uses. A film production industry cluster with a sound stage in this location would be one option. The SCC already has a film production program and both the WSDOT and SCC properties are owned by the State.** In addition, Washington State already allocates over \$3 million each year to support an incentive program for the film industry, and Governor Insley has indicated support for the program. The City does not have a lot of land for traditional light and heavy industrial uses, and locating a few sound stages on this site would bring in significant revenue and provide jobs. The goal is to bring in development that will help the entire region's economy.
- **Incorporate the College.** The goal of this project is to engage the SCC's 10,000 students. For example, programs can be provided at Aurora Square to draw at least some of the student body. Not only would this bring students to the retail areas, but it would provide SCC a presence on Aurora Avenue North where all the car traffic is. The SCC has numerous performing arts programs, and **incorporating performance and/or classroom space at Aurora Square** would bring additional life to the center.

- **Add Nightlife to the Mix.** Annual residential surveys reveal a strong desire for more entertainment and dining options in the City, and an entertainment district at Aurora Square could be very successful.

Mr. Eernisse emphasized that the eight projects are not meant to be exhaustive but are intended to spur thought and make it clear that the City's goal is to help property owners redevelop and improve the center. He said he does not know the exact approach the City will use to accomplish the projects, but it will likely include several different options.

Vice Chair Esselman asked if Sears has indicated a desire to vacate their site. Mr. Eernisse answered that Sears has not given any indication that they plan to vacate the site. On a national level, Sears appears to be grouping their stores that are not mall-based in a separate category, but he does not know what their exact plans are. He said the CRA activity prepares the City to respond if Sears submits a redevelopment proposal or sells the property to a developer at some point in the future.

Vice Chair Esselman requested more information about proposed plans for connections throughout the site. Mr. Eernisse emphasized there are several different options for creating the connections. The intent of the master planning process is to identify the things the site needs and what the City is willing to invest in. The City's goal is to act as a catalyst, particularly in the area of infrastructure. He reviewed an updated map of the current proposal and provided pictures to illustrate potential options for redevelopment. He particularly noted the following:

- WSDOT has proposed a new building and parking area. The plan identifies a parking structure that would free up significant land for other uses. The parking garage could be filled from the top down to accommodate weekday parking needs, and from the bottom up to accommodate weekend parking needs.
- A vehicle ramp would be provided near Marshalls.
- The plan proposes an adaptive reuse of the Sears Building, using the existing shell and developing student housing on the upper stories.
- The Sears underground parking area could continue as a parking use or it could be used as auto bays for the SCC automotive program.
- Restaurants and retail uses would be located on top of the underground parking.
- Development on Westminster Way North could be five stories, located right up to the sidewalk. Retail space could be located on the ground floor, with office uses on the upper floors. Reconfiguring Westminster Way North would provide better connection throughout the site.
- One or two sound stages could be developed in the space behind the WSDOT building. A black box theater could be located on the site. While the theater would likely be run by the SCC, it could also be used as a second location for smaller professional theater companies. There is significant overhead associated with producing a show, and theater companies may be interested in having an alternative location that serves a different market but is still close by.
- The central entrance to Aurora Square could include a roundabout, a fountain and an outdoor covered stage. Because Westminster Way North would be reconfigured to serve the property better, this area could be closed to vehicular traffic for an afternoon to accommodate a festival and/or concert.

Once again, Mr. Eernisse emphasized that the proposal is not intended to be a master plan; it is a master planning effort. With the exception of the Sears site, the plan would not displace any retailers and there would be alternative space for retailers to relocate. There would even be space in another location for Sears to locate on a smaller scale. He said one of the key elements of the plan is to provide smaller blocks throughout the site to make it easier for people to get around.

Vice Chair Esselman asked if the land necessary to connect Westminster Way North through the site to North 160th Street is currently right-of-way or private property. Mr. Eernisse answered that this land is privately owned. He emphasized that areas along this roadway could become the spine of all the required infrastructure upgrades such as stormwater (rain gardens), water, sewer and fiber optics.

Mr. Eernisse said one common response he has received regarding the plan is that it is not aspirational enough. For example, there is still a lot of surface parking. He explained that he considers the current proposal Phase 1. If Phase 1 gets built out in the next 15 years, other properties would start to change, as well. He stressed the importance of doing incremental, small changes that serve the greater good.

Commissioner Wagner agreed that the plan still shows too much surface parking. She pointed out that there is currently no safe access from the Interurban Trail to the Central Market without having to ride through a parking lot. She suggested that more emphasis should be placed on pedestrian and bicycle access throughout the site. For example, perhaps parking should be eliminated from the area between the proposed outdoor theater and the storefronts. She also said she does not like the idea of providing parking spaces around the “coffee mecca.” She suggested staff consider options for providing a complete connection at some point in the future. In addition, she suggested that infrastructure and new structures should be built to a standard that supports additional multi-family residential uses on upper stories if/when the use becomes economically viable at some point in the future.

Mr. Eernisse said he provided direction to the architect that the plan should protect the existing surface parking in front of the Central Market at this point. He said he does not see this need changing in the near future. Commissioner Wagner said she is okay with surface parking, but there must also be protected bicycle and pedestrian access. Mr. Eernisse agreed. He pointed out that it is difficult to accommodate good crosswalks within a roundabout intersection. However, because there is sufficient right-of-way, a bicycle/pedestrian access might be possible. While a roundabout is an option worth investigating, they may end up with something more traditional in the end.

Mr. Eernisse said he invited graduate and undergraduate students from an architecture studio to review the proposed plan. Although eliminating Westminster Way North was an option they were asked to consider, they all felt the roadway was critical to providing connectivity. All of the students agreed that a connecting road through the site was also important.

Commissioner Maul expressed concern that the plan does not place enough emphasis on the connection between Westminster Way North and North 160th Street, which is critical to the plan’s success. He suggested that this connection should be enhanced.

Commissioner Montero asked regarding SCC’s response to the plan’s proposed expansion of their campus and the additional facilities. Mr. Eernisse answered that some representatives from SCC have

expressed concern that their campus is cloistered up in the woods. They believe a presence on Aurora Avenue North would be positive. Although they do not need significantly more classroom space, there are specialized vocational training programs that require unique facilities. For example, they cannot do used car mechanic training on campus because of agreements with new car dealers who built their existing facilities, but the programs can take place off site. They are also excited about the idea of providing student housing at Aurora Square.

Commissioner Montero pointed out that the proposed new sound stages would be located on the south end of the WSDOT building, which will be partially used by SCC. He suggested that providing space for SCC at the northwest corner would give them an opportunity for signage and provide a stronger connection towards the campus. Mr. Eernisse agreed that either location would work great. He suggested that student housing would be terrific in the northwest corner, but WSDOT has not indicated support for student housing as part of their new development. He expressed concern that while this type of use would result in more property tax revenue, it would not create jobs and long-term sales tax revenue. He expressed his opinion that any proposal for a land trade with WSDOT should be more robust. He noted there are plenty of places in Shoreline that will accommodate residential development above commercial ground floor uses. But they won't be developed unless there are commercial centers where people can shop, work and enjoy life.

Commissioner Wagner asked what the Commission's role in the master planning process would be going forward. Mr. Eernisse invited the Planning Commissioner to provide feedback to staff and the City Council, but he said they would not be required to conduct a public hearing and forward a recommendation to the City Council. He explained that the plan is intended to provide direction and would only become solidified as property owners/developers come forward with redevelopment proposals. The Planning Commission may play a greater role in future processes.

Commissioner Wagner suggested it would be appropriate to solicit more community input and develop more formalized framework goals. The next step could be to prioritize the goals and identify the elements of the plan that are not negotiable. Mr. Eernisse noted that this process would involve a more prescriptive zoning change or overlay for the property. Commissioner Wagner recommended that if the plan is going to be nebulous, there must be some guidelines to help staff implement the concepts.

Chair Moss asked staff to share some of the concerns and issues that came up at the public meetings. Mr. Eernisse said that, generally, people are ecstatic about any positive change for the center. Neighbors surrounding the center have also indicated a desire for improved pedestrian and bicycle amenities.

Mr. Eernisse thanked the Commissioners for their input and invited them to contact him with additional comments and ideas.