

June 18, 2020

Shoreline Planning Commission
Re: Study Item 6a – Ground-Floor Commercial Development Code

Dear Commissioners,

I am writing because I am very concerned about the rapid loss of our canopy to commercial development. It is changing the character of our city and sacrificing all the environment services and humanizing benefits they provide. Shoreline is quickly becoming a “tougher” space along with all the problems that includes.

I would ask the Commission to request more information before making a recommendation on this item. Here are some thoughts I hope you give serious consideration.

4. **ED7:** Enhance existing neighborhood shopping and community nodes to support increased commercial activity, neighborhood identity, and walkability.

In reading the staff report, this is the one and only place that speaks of walkability. Walkability is of great importance if ground floor businesses are to be successful and yet it is not addressed in the research done. For example, were there places for shoppers to stop and rest when on foot? Were there trees and planters to “soften” the hardscape of building frontages? How were bus stops handled? These are all things that require consideration if businesses are to be successful. It is well established knowledge that greener spaces invite and “hold” shoppers in an area for longer periods of time and that they will spend more while there. Business success is less about the square footage of the frontage and more about the comfort of the consumer. Along with the requirement for ground-floor business, what has been investigated to attend to the consumer?

The three most desirable businesses are all spaces where customers will want to feel comfortable both indoors and outdoors and the likelihood of success would be greatly enhanced by the requirement for increased requirements for living, green amenities.

The three highest rated uses by residents were:

1. Restaurants and cafes (citywide score of 89);
2. Brewpubs and microbreweries (citywide score of 72); and
3. Shops, salons and services (citywide score of 70).

Who wants to eat looking out the window at an uninterrupted line of cars rushing past? Wouldn't you rather have a view of people walking along under trees and sitting near big planters? These are the things that improve business success, by adding consumer comforts like improving and adding interest and character to a neighborhood. They also make living in the apartments above much more desirable. The walkability and comfort of potential customers is what it's all about. When you have your hands full of shopping bags and you need to wait for the bus, wouldn't you want to have enough space to sit without displacing others or pressing up against them?

The decision criteria for a Development Code amendment in SMC 20.30.350 (B) states the City Council may approve or approve with modifications a proposal for a change to the text of the land use code when all the following are satisfied:

1. The amendment is in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan; and
2. The amendment will not adversely affect the public health, safety or general welfare; and
3. The amendment is not contrary to the best interest of the citizens and property owners of the City of Shoreline.

I'm not convinced that simply addressing the hardscape of building itself without also investigating and giving due consideration to potential users of both the ground floor commercial spaces and those who would live in the dwelling units that this meets the intentions of the Comprehensive Plan, the needs of public health in such a densely built-out environment, or the best interest of either the people or the property owners.

Again, I ask that you consider more than the square footage of the buildings and spend time discussing what supports both potential shoppers and successful businesses. When people can live, walk and sit in an area they are going to feel safer and hold it in higher regard. This increases use, increases spending and reduces crime.

Sincerely,

Boni Biery