



Memorandum

To: Planning Commission
From: Steve Bennett, Planning Director
Date: October 9, 2020
Re: October 13, 2020 Meeting Agenda Item: September 16, 2020
Attachments: Memorandum from Council Chair and Vice-Chair
1. Memorandum from Deputy Mayor/Council Chair Kassover and Council Vice-Chair French

After the Commission made its recommendation on Town Center code updates pertaining to parking structure in April of this year, there was discussion of moving on to the consideration of updates that would address all types of development in the Town Center. However, due to the pandemic, the Commission shifted to virtual meetings in the spring and summer and agreed to put consideration of specific code sections and language on hold because of barriers to public involvement.

The City Council has recently adopted another six-month moratorium ordinance regarding accepting permit applications for development at the Town Center with a specific end-date of March 10, 2021. In their memorandum (attached), Deputy Mayor Kassover and Vice-Chair French express their reluctance to extend the moratorium beyond March 10th because it might put the city in legal jeopardy. They also state that "... during this stage of the pandemic, our city can and must resume normal business, albeit remotely. This includes holding of public hearings and the deliberation and adoption by Council of code changes and ordinances as is now common in counties, cities and towns across Washington State."

With that in mind, they have requested that, by November 10th, the Commission make recommendations on two key issues: maximum residential density and requirements/incentives for open space. They go on to state that recommendations on these issues will "...inform our [the Council's] final decisions on the entirety of the code."

The Commission has discussed how allowing limited bonus density or height could be used to leverage public benefits from private redevelopment including functional and attractive open space, dedicated indoor commons space, or a dedicated farmers market space. Based on previous discussions, it is clear that some Commissioners hold differing views regarding increasing the residential density in order to facilitate the implementation of the Town Center Vision. The remainder of this memo is devoted to outlining a couple potential options for developing a recommendation within the limited timeframe. These options have been prepared in response to ideals shared by Chair Larson and Vice Chair Katz.

Option 1

One way to begin the discussion of this issue would be to entertain a motion to recommend that no further changes be made to the Town Center code other than restoring the density and other limitations on use (18.42.040) that are in the current regulations. That would limit density on the 17-acre site to about 120 units which would have to be developed as part of a mixed-use project. With some minor modifications, the Commission could also establish that all redevelopment must comply with the site plan review criteria in 18.42.130 and the Town Center Framework Design Guidelines. The linkage of those provisions and guidelines could provide basic guidance for development character and a requirement for some connected indoor/outdoor public space. A final review and vote on this option might be achievable without the need for a special meeting.

Option 2

Another option would be for Commissioners to take a vote on a number of residential units that approximates their current thinking on appropriate density. An initial motion could propose that the limit be the highest number of units evaluated in the Final EIS for the Town Center Plan (700 units). If that motion fails for lack of a majority, declining density limits could be entertained until a majority votes in favor.

Depending on the outcome of the density vote, the Commission could consider providing a high-level framework of open space criteria to the Council. For example, in the Final EIS, the 700-unit density cap was paired with open space provisions aimed at achieving a total of 2 acres of public open space. The Commission has also discussed the importance of the following:

- Defining “public” and “private” open space and that both forms are important. That is, public space open for use by everyone (e.g., outdoor commons), and private open space for use by future Town Center residents (e.g., interior courtyard/children’s play area, balconies, roof deck).
- Ensuring quality of open space so that it is safe, inviting, and consolidated in large enough areas to support a variety of active and passive uses (versus dispersed as narrow green strips).

Thus, the Commission could work to develop 1) public and private open space definitions, 2) a total public open space acreage recommendation, 3) a private open space square footage per unit recommendation, and 4) a short set of functional guidelines for creating quality open space. Initial thoughts would be discussed, if time allows, at the first October meeting. Draft language would be reviewed at a special second October meeting, with the final review and vote at the November 10 meeting.