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**CITY OF BREMERTON**

**PLANNING COMMISSION  
MINUTES OF VIRTUAL MEETING  
March 21, 2022**

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**CALL TO ORDER:**

**Chair Tift** called the regular meeting of the Bremerton Planning Commission to order at 5:31 p.m.

**ROLL CALL**

**Commissioners Present**

Chair Tift  
Vice Chair Rich  
Commissioner Flemister  
Commissioner Mosiman  
Commissioner Pedersen  
Commissioner Wofford

**Staff Present**

Andrea Spencer, Director, Department of Community Development  
Garrett Jackson, Planning Manager, Department of Community Development  
Sarah Lynam, Project Assistant, Department of Community Development

**Others Present**

*Quorum Confirmed*

**CHAIR CALL FOR MODIFICATIONS TO AGENDA**

The agenda was accepted as presented.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**COMMISSIONER WOFFORD MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF JANUARY 24, 2022, AS AMENDED. COMMISSIONER RICH SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**PUBLIC MEETING**

**Call to the Public** (public comments on any item not on the agenda)

**Chair Tift** invited comments from citizens. There were none.

**Public Hearing: Revisions to the Eastside Village Subarea Plan**

**Mr. Jackson** announced that the orders of the day are for the Planning Commission to conduct a public hearing on the proposed revisions, receive public testimony, and provide a recommendation to the City Council. The City Council will make the final decision. He shared a map to illustrate the borders of the Eastside Village Subarea. He reviewed that prior to October 2020, the area was identified as the Employment Center Zone. It was a single zone, with an 80-foot maximum height limit and no density cap. The City conducted a marketing study in 2019 to identify anticipated changes as a result of Harrison Hospital's relocation. In order for the area to be successful, the study recommended that the City provide a clear approach, removal regulatory hurdles, and encourage the existing strong housing market. Based on these recommendations,

the Eastside Village Subarea Plan was adopted in October 2020 and included a Planned Action Ordinance, which streamlines environmental permitting. The adopted subarea plan included the requirement for the City to continue to monitor the execution of the plan to make sure its vision is implemented.

**Mr. Jackson** further reviewed that the Commission held a workshop on January 24, 2022, which was open to the public, to consider the proposed revisions. At the workshop, the Commission requested more detail on how the proposal would meet the vision of the subarea plan. They also requested that staff perform additional public outreach. Since that time, staff sent mailings to property owners and residents within 300 feet of the subarea plan, inviting them to an online open house on February 28<sup>th</sup>. The open house was well attended, with a lot of questions and positive feedback.

**Mr. Jackson** explained that the proposed revisions are important in order for the City to implement the vision of the subarea plan and meet its regional planning goals that are set by the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC), which is a regional planning body that coordinates with Snohomish, King, Pierce and Kitsap Counties. The PSRC's Vision 2050 forecasts that Puget Sound will increase by 1.7 million people and 1.1 million jobs by 2050. Bremerton's portion of that growth is anticipated to be an additional 33,000 people and 20,000 jobs by 2050. The City's land-use centers are intended to absorb most of the City's growth. The idea is to protect residential areas from intense growth and provide a more targeted approach to utility improvements. He provided a list of all of the centers, as well as a map showing their locations.

**Mr. Jackson** briefly reviewed the vision statements contained in the subarea plan. One is that the subarea should be a residentially-focused center with diverse, high-density housing types for all ages and incomes, supported by a commercial core and flexible opportunities for employment-generated uses. Other vision statements promote walkability, inclusiveness, and economic vibrancy. Statements indicate the need for the area to be bikeable and livable for all ages. It encourages both commercial and residential uses and the promotion of open space and parks. He advised that the subarea plan includes 23 goals and 75 policies, including the following:

- Ensure that standards are simple and cost effective to construct housing.
- Ensure that there is vibrant and diverse employment, serving the City and the neighborhood.
- Ensure that City growth is focused in centers by accommodating a range of development opportunities.
- Promote livability, health and mixed uses.

**Mr. Jackson** advised that the City has received feedback from potential investors that certain development regulations in the subarea plan are getting in the way of their ability to implement the vision. Specifically, regulations related to maximum density, height limits, and maximum floor area ratio (FAR) are prohibitive to development. Based on this feedback, staff is recommending the following:

- The maximum building height in the subarea would be increased from 55 to 75 feet to a maximum of 80 feet. Feedback indicates that the current height limits in the subarea plan are prohibitive to covering construction costs. The overall difference in height would be between 5 and 15 feet for about three-quarters of the properties in the subarea. This modest increase could mean a lot from the standpoint of constructability and feasibility of potential projects. The International Fire and Building Codes allows for five levels of wood-frame construction over a concrete and steel podium, and this is the most economical way to build housing. An 80-foot height limit would allow developers to build to the highest degree possible. The Harborside Flats, Spyglass Apartments, and 606 Apartments are examples of five levels of wood-frame construction over a podium. While the previous version of the proposal would have raised the height limit in the Center Low Residential Zone, the current proposal would retain the 35-foot height limit.
- The density cap would be eliminated. The current density cap (between 30 and 60 dwelling units per acre) is insufficient. For example, the Sage Apartments on lower Wheaton Way was permitted under the previous Employment Center but would not be allowed under the current subarea plan. Currently, density in the zone is limited at 40 units per acre and the Sage Apartments is 70 units per acre. The Sage Apartments is a modestly-sized multifamily development (4 stories, 50 feet tall) with 29 units.
- The Design Review Board (DRB) process would be required to ensure a more development-friendly atmosphere and to make planning more predictable. The DRB is composed of Bremerton residents (architects, developers, etc.) It reviews individual projects against the requirements of the subarea plan and may grant departures from the standards if it determines that the intent of the zone would still be met. For example, there is an odd-shaped, 4,300 square-foot

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lot that was partially encumbered by an easement for the ferry tunnel. The property was located adjacent to a park plaza and close to the shipyard and ferry, and the applicant proposed a restaurant at the ground level for pedestrian use, with three residential units on top. However, it was determined that the residential units would not meet the 10-foot mid-level setback requirement. Because this infill project was so small, it would have been difficult for the applicant to accommodate the setback and still provide three units on top. Instead of the setback, the applicant proposed Juliet balconies, light fixtures, wood paneling and awnings to provide depth and modulation to the building. The DRB determined that the proposal met the intent of the subarea plan by providing interest to the façade.

- Currently, there are four zones and three overlay districts. If the FAR standards are uniform, the height limit is increased to 80 feet and the density cap is removed, it doesn't make sense to have so many zones. Some of the overlay districts, such as the Multi-Use Entrepreneurial Zone, existed in order to promote small business. The City Council has since raised the Business and Occupation (B&O) Tax Exemption to \$1 million, making the overlay districts outdated. The proposed change would have two zoning districts and one overlay district, which staff believes will accomplish the vision of the subarea plan. As proposed, the Center Residential High, Mixed-Use and Multi-Use Zones would be consolidated into the Multi-Use Zone, and the Center Residential Low Zone would be retained to preserve the existing low-level development. The new Multi Use Commercial Overlay District would capture the areas that were previously under the Mixed-Use Zone and Multi-Use Commercial Overlays.

**Mr. Jackson** shared maps to illustrate both the existing and proposed zoning, noting that the commercial areas would expand slightly, but the remaining subarea boundaries would remain unchanged.

**Mr. Jackson** summarized that the proposed changes are intended to standardize and simplify the process to make it easier for the public and developers to understand the subarea plan requirements. To accomplish this, staff is recommending the following:

- Reducing the number of zones and overlays as previously described.
- Changing the Multi Use Zoning Standards to District Center Core Zoning Standards.
- Removing the Street Frontage Design Standards from Chapter 5.4.
- Altering Chapter 6 Design Guidelines to transition to a chapter that the DRB can use as a guidance piece.
- Removing subarea plan specific regulations that are already addressed in the Bremerton Municipal Code (BMC). (i.e., drive-through facilities, parking, etc.) Regulations that are unique to the subarea would be retained in the subarea plan.

**Mr. Jackson** reported that a number of public comments have been received, all of which were forwarded to the Planning Commission. Most (about 80%) were in support of the proposal, but some concerns were raised, as well. He summarized the comments as follows:

- Some were not in support of the proposed increase to the maximum height limit. There is concern that the added height will cast more shadows and impact water views. However, it is likely that a 35-foot building in the Center Residential Low Zone would impact water views just as much.
- Some people voiced concern about allowing greater density, and they believe that the current densities are sufficient and should remain.
- There was a *Kitsap Sun* opinion piece that advised Bremerton residents of the online open house. The article voiced opposition to increased height and density, and suggested that .5 parking spaces per unit would be insufficient. However, it is important to note that standard units within the subarea are required to have one parking space, but there is a provision that allows parking to be reduced to .5 spaces per unit for developments that are restricted to seniors only. As the comment regarding parking was published in the *Kitsap Sun*, it is possible that some of the public comments were based off of inaccurate information.
- There was concern that utilities would be insufficient to service this type of development. Staff spoke recently with the City Engineer who assured that Bremerton is in a good position, utility wise, to accommodate the growth that is expected through 2050. In addition, individual development proposals are analyzed by the Public Works Department to ensure that all utility needs can be met.

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- Eight people who own property within the subarea commented in support of the proposal, noting that the current regulations make planned projects infeasible and devalues property. They commented that increased height and density is needed to justify project costs, and the proposed changes could help revitalize the neighborhood with Harrison Hospital's departure.

**Mr. Jackson** concluded his report by recommending that the Commission conduct an open public hearing and receive public testimony and then provide a recommendation to the City Council.

**Chair Tift** opened the public hearing.

**Michael Cowan, Bremerton**, said he supports the City's focus on revitalizing areas in the City so that services can be provided within walking distance of where people live and people don't have to rely so much on cars. The increased cost of gasoline wouldn't be such a big problem if people weren't so reliant on cars to get where they need to go. There are currently a lot of empty parking lots that could be developed into residential uses. He suggested that a huge golf course in his area would be far better as a park for the whole community. He supports changes that encourage better community connections.

**Mr. Goldberg, Bremerton**, expressed his belief that staff has done an excellent job summarizing the proposed changes. Removing the overlays and simplifying the zoning makes it easier for developers to understand the requirements. This enables them to quickly move their projects forward. The proposed changes are a good step in the right direction for Bremerton, and he believes they will result in revitalization within the subarea, making it a showcase for what can be done elsewhere in Kitsap County.

**Diane Manning, Bremerton**, observed that Mr. Jackson's comment that 80% of the public feedback was in favor of the proposal doesn't mean a lot without knowing how many total people commented. Although the Public Works Department will review projects to ensure adequate utilities, the *Kitsap Sun* recently published an article about the increased costs residents would have to pay for required sewer upgrades. She said she isn't familiar with what the current capacity is and how it is being impacted by all of the new construction. She suggested that the City should have expanded the mailed notification to include property owners beyond 300 feet of the subarea because people within a mile of the subarea would be impacted. She also is concerned about traffic, which is already bad on Warren Avenue and SR-303, and a lot of apartments are being built along that stretch. She hasn't seen any plans for infrastructure improvements.

**Mr. Jackson** responded that utility upgrades will be needed regardless of how many residents live in the City. However, the more residents that are added, the more people there will be to share in these costs. He also noted that the code didn't require staff to send notices to property owners within 300 feet. This was added in an attempt to provide more public notice. Staff conducted an online open house where public comments were accepted and most were positive. Four of the people who commented were opposed to the changes, and 18 to 20 indicated support. The City has completed a corridor study for Wheaton Way, and he agreed to post a link to the study in the chat. In addition, the Warren Avenue Bridge was recently appropriated a substantial amount of money to make it more walkable and bike friendly. Improvements are coming to the corridor that should increase livability and address traffic concerns. Also, each project within the subarea will be required to pay a traffic mitigation fee based on off peak PM trips.

There were no other public comments, and **Chair Tift** closed the public portion of the hearing.

**Commissioner Flemister** commended staff for their efforts to provide additional public outreach. She said she supports the proposed changes and is satisfied that that the process has been forthcoming and fair.

**Commissioner Wofford** asked if there are any plans to provide small neighborhood parks to serve the additional residents who will live in the subarea. **Mr. Jackson** responded that, although the existing subarea plan map shows parks and areas of potential future open space, these areas shouldn't have been included in the zoning map because parks are not zones. These areas were part of a story map feature that carried over to the zoning code as a suggestion for what might occur in the future, but it isn't a requirement that the properties be parks. Some of them are public areas that will very likely be developed as parks in the future, but not all of them. However, there are indoor and outdoor open space requirements for every project within the subarea. As residential projects come on line, they will be required to have open space areas for individual units,

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as well as exterior open space areas that could potentially be shared with the larger public. There is also a provision that allows developers to pay an in-lieu-of fee, as negotiated with the Parks Department on a site-by-site basis.

**Commissioner Wofford** commented that most of the outside areas that are included as part of development are primarily for adults. He asked if it would be possible to include a requirement and/or suggestion that at least some of the outdoor area must be designed for children. **Mr. Jackson** pointed out that the Parks, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Plan is available on the City's webpage. It is based on an analysis of existing parks in relation to residential areas and identifies areas that are underserved and where parks are likely to be located in the future. In addition to guidance from the PROS Plan, the DRB process includes an additional public process. If any potential project requests a departure, an invitation will be extended to the public to provide feedback and suggestions. He emphasized that the subarea plan requirements are different than the shoreline requirements. All the shoreline properties along Lower Wheaton Way would be required to provide additional public access that is independent of the subarea plan requirements.

**Commissioner Mosiman** said he likes that the proposal would simplify the subarea plan. He also likes that it would increase the density allowed. However, he is concerned that the 80-foot height limit would apply all the way to Wheaton Way and Campbell Way, and there would be no shoreline height restriction. Although it isn't likely, every new building, including those along the waterfront, could be constructed up to 80 feet in height if the proposed changes are approved. In past discussions regarding the Shoreline Master Program (SMP), the Commission emphasized a need to make sure the citizens of Bremerton have both physical and visual access to the water. This access is one of the selling points of the City, and the views along Wheaton Way and Campbell Way are pretty good. Allowing buildings up to 80 feet would create a visual block akin to what exists in downtown Bremerton, and he felt the City would regret this decision. He asked if it would be possible to place a height restriction on the properties south of Wheaton Way and Campbell Way to alleviate this concern.

**Mr. Jackson** responded that the SMP limits development along the shoreline to 35 feet in height, without an approved Shoreline Conditional Use Permit from the Department of Ecology (DOE). Any individual project along the shoreline that wants to go above 35 feet would have to obtain a permit, which would involve an additional public process. He pointed out that some of the single-family homes on Lower Shore Drive are packed so closely together that there isn't much a view, either. With current development, there are no guaranteed views, as someone could add a fence or plant shrubs that block view. However, new development is required to provide public access in perpetuity. New development must also consider view corridors. **Director Spencer** added that the SMP and Shoreline Conditional Use Permit process doesn't allow a developer to step away from the view corridor and public access requirements. **Mr. Jackson** agreed that the Revised Code of Washington (RCW) requires that views must be maintained. However, the Commission could also decide to add additional height restrictions for these properties as part of the subarea plan.

**Commissioner Pedersen** said he worked downtown for a number of years and remembers some popular park benches on private property that were likely required as part of development. He asked staff to share other examples of view corridors associated with development. **Mr. Jackson** said there are none in the subarea because the shoreline is undeveloped, but there are many examples in the downtown. He particularly noted the pathway provided in front of the 400 Apartments, Harborside and Marina Square. Once Marina Square is fully constructed, it will also include public plazas and an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible path that will lead from Washington Street down to the shoreline. These are both good examples of what could potentially happen in the subarea.

**Commissioner Wofford** recalled that, at one time, there was a requirement that 25% of the front footage had to be a view corridor. He asked if that requirement is still in effect. **Mr. Jackson** said there are percentage requirements specific to downtown, and the Department of Ecology (DOE) would likely require projects outside of the downtown to provide a view analysis and demonstrate how they will provide a view corridor. In addition to staff review, the DOE will review specific development proposals that involve height increases. **Commissioner Pedersen** asked if taller, thinner buildings would be encouraged rather than wide ones that fill the entire parcel. **Mr. Jackson** answered that decisions would be made on a site-by-site basis. Staff informs applicants of the public access and view corridor requirements and makes them aware that the DOE has the final say on whether to approve, deny or conditionally approve a project. Staff encourages all applicants to coordinate with the DOE at an early stage when requesting a Shoreline Conditional Use Permit.

**Commissioner Rich** commended staff for clearly identifying all of the benefits associated with the proposed changes and said she is prepared to support them as presented. She referred to the pie chart provided by staff that captured the spirit of the

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public comments both in favor and opposed to the proposal. Although it wasn't listed on the chart, affordable housing was raised as a concern. She said it is important to acknowledge this concern as the proposal goes to the City Council and they consider future issues such as changes to the Multifamily Tax Exemption (MFTE) and other policy options that will make affordable housing development easier and more possible in centers. **Mr. Jackson** agreed to include affordable housing as a prompt with the City Council.

**Chair Tift** also commended staff for their efforts to prepare and revise the proposal based on Commission and public comments. Having been on the Commission for a long time, he has learned the importance of being adaptable. He recalled working on the initial Employment District Plan, with the hospital being the centerpiece. In the face of a major employer leaving the subarea, the City adopted the Eastside Village Subarea Plan, which recognized the need for entirely different development. He believes the subarea plan is very plausible and feasible, and development is already in process. He said he supports the proposed changes, as well.

**COMMISSIONER RICH MOVED TO RECOMMEND THAT THE CITY COUNCIL ADOPT THE PROPOSED REVISIONS TO THE EASTSIDE VILLAGE SUBAREA PLAN AS DETAILED IN ATTACHMENT A BASED ON THE STAFF REPORT AND THE FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS PRESENTED IN ATTACHMENT C. COMMISSIONER WOFFORD SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

## **BUSINESS MEETING**

### **Chair Report**

**Chair Tift** noted there is still a vacancy on the Commission and encouraged the Commissioners to reach out to potential candidates. He also advised that they may be able to return to a hybrid meeting style at some point in the near future.

### **Director Report**

**Director Spencer** announced that, with the lifting of the mask mandate on March 14<sup>th</sup>, City offices opened back up. Office hours for the Department of Community Development are 9am to noon each weekday. They still have a significant amount of volume and some people are still working a hybrid schedule. They can only staff a counter for three hours a day at this time.

**Director Spencer** said they are waiting for the City Council to implement a hybrid meeting format before the Commission follows. She reminded them that their meetings are broadcasted live on Bremerton Kitsap Access Television (BKAT), so the cameras will be on again when they return to in-person meetings. She emphasized that the hybrid format is meant for public participation. Ideally, all of the Commissioners would be in the room barring extenuating circumstances. The citizen experience will be better if there are fewer Zoom participants because they will be able to see more of the screen. Commissioners can be spaced out in the room to ensure safety.

### **Old Business**

There was no old business.

### **New Business**


There was no new business.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:42 p.m.

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Respectively Submitted by:



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Andrea L. Spencer, AICP  
Executive Secretary



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Rick Tift, Chair  
Planning Commission

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