

August 25, 2011
Ellensburg City Planning Commission – Regular Meeting Minutes
City Council Chambers

[MAKERS' response to comments/questions in track changes.](#)

Members Present: Chair Bruce Simpson, Bob Hood, Bill Beattie, Beverly Heckart, Fred Padjen, Gretchen Thatcher
Members Absent: Vice Chair Sarah Bedsaul
Others Present: Planning Supervisor Lance Bailey, Planner Brandi Eyerly

Chair Bruce Simpson opened the meeting at 5:45p.m.

Minutes:

August 8, 2011

Bob Hood moved to approve the August 8th minutes. Bill Beattie seconded. Motion carried.

Public Meeting:

Review of Draft Land Development Code Update – Articles 4 and 5

Brandi Eyerly introduced herself to the Planning Commission, indicating that she staffs the Landmarks and Designs Commission and the Board of Adjustment.

Brandi Eyerly was asked how much of the current design guidelines the Landmarks and Design Commission applies are contained in Articles 4 and 5, in other words how much would the City be changing to adopt the new Articles? Brandi replied that her reading of Articles 4 and 5 indicates that the design standards and guidelines being proposed are fairly standard types of requirements she has seen in other communities, and are consistent with the City's current requirements.

It was suggested that the process for reviewing Articles 4 and 5 would be to simply start at the beginning and work sequentially through the materials. It was pointed out that summaries have been put together for both Articles 4 and 5, and the summaries hit the major high points of each Article.

Supervisor Bailey explained to the Commission that the current task for their review is to provide specific comments on elements of the proposed Articles. These comments will be provided to City Council, who will be holding a series of special work session meetings to review the draft Articles. The first Council special meeting is scheduled for September 12th. The Planning Commission will ultimately hold a public hearing in late October or early November to formulate specific recommendations that will go to City Council.

Article 4

15.40 Street Design

- 1) There were questions regarding where the specific road standards would actually be placed in the City's code. It was explained that some of the standards currently contained in the Public Works section of the code would be pulled into the development code, while some other standards (such as the specific dimensions for the street cross sections) would be contained in the Public Works Development Standards. Yes, the detailed standards will be spelled out in the PWDS – which are also in the process of being updated, so these two documents are consistent. The second paragraph of 15.40.010 at the beginning of the chapter spells out that the material here in the LDC is just a summary (and the detailed standards are in the PWDS).
- 2) It was suggested that the language in the Arterial (15.40.020) and Collector (15.40.030) Street design sections referring to the street cross sections be clearer in regards to the fact that the specific dimensions are contained in the Public Works Development Standards. If it's helpful, we can add a small note in each of the cross section images that the detailed dimensions are set forth in the PWDS.
- 3) The NMT recommendations have not been adopted, but rather they have been rolled into the draft Articles 4 and 5. Yes.
- 4) It would help those reading the code to have examples of each street type listed in the "Intent" section for the street types. This could be helpful – particularly if they are included only as examples (again – leave details for the PWDS). One challenge with this is that many of the roads may not meet the standards – and therefore sending conflicting messages. This is particularly true of the local street types.
- 5) Street widths - Allowing three options for the Local Access streets could result in adjacent developments with different street designs. It was suggested to consider deciding on one specific standard for all Local Access streets. This was a good discussion point in the process – but it was ultimately felt that providing flexibility for designers was a good thing. But the consistency issue is notable. Perhaps we should add some language that prohibits midblock changes to the street design for an individual street. Otherwise – if a development has several streets, having some variation in design on some streets based on their context might be a good thing.
- 6) Section 15.40.020 C. There is no provision for Minor Arterial Streets in the Public Works Development Standards. Yet the illustration printed here implies that a minor arterial street is smaller than the 48 feet of paving required for a Principal Arterial. The NMT suggested a width of 36 feet of paving for commercial, industrial and multi-family zones. The NMT's suggested pavement width for single-family residential zones are way too high. This section needs more work. Again – the PWDS will be updated per the LDC – which came out of NMT recommendations plus direction from CC/PC at our earlier work-sessions.

15.41 Subdivision Design and Block Structure

- 1) Section 15.41.020(B)(1) If departures are going to be allowed and specifically referred to in a variety of sections, then more examples of reasons for departures need to be provided here. Perhaps one more example might be useful – but I wouldn't advocate going much further as it's difficult to anticipate every situation.

- 2) Section 15.41.020(B) (2) Who is the "reviewing authority" referred to here? If this phrase is simply a substitute for "Director of Community Development," then say so. This term is defined in Article 1 and is usually used in situations where the decision maker may be different based on the type of application.
- 3) Section 15.41.030(C). There is too much encouragement here and not enough requirements. The suggestion is to eliminate the "are/is encouraged" and substitute "shall." There was not consensus on this, specifically in regards to how you define "natural amenities". When you have requirements with "shall", then those requirements need to be clearly defined. The examples listed in the section ("views, mature trees, creeks, rock outcrops and other similar features") are not specific enough. It was even suggested that this section might be deleted entirely. Another suggestion is to reference the density bonuses in Article 3, and tie the integration of natural amenities into the incentives provided in that Article. These issue are next to impossible to craft into black and white standards. At the same time, there is value in including them here as something to encourage. The connectivity and other standards are generally supportive of the features here – and the material is consistent with the policies of the Comprehensive Plan. Ultimately it's a Council policy decision – but again - we've included the language here, as we felt there is value to getting the issue down on paper as something to encourage.
- 4) Section 15.41.030(D) There is no consensus on whether to allow gated communities or not. In Ellensburg is there really a need for gated communities? On the other side, what is gained by prohibiting gated communities? It was suggested that it might say that new subdivisions in Ellensburg "shall integrate the new developments into the community." It was pointed out that gated communities are likely to negatively impact attempts to create more connectivity in the community. This is another policy issue that included a generous amount of discussion amongst NMT members. Other connectivity and fence standards by design make it very challenging to do gated communities.
- 5) Section 15.41.030(D) (1) Prohibit rather than "discourage" reverse frontage lots. If that were done there would be no need for 15.41.030(D)(1)(a). There was no consensus on prohibiting reverse frontage lots, mostly because there are places where there might be no other alternative. With the new landscape buffer requirements in the proposed street standards, it will mitigate the situations where there might be fences along the street. Good points. Again – the connectivity and fence standards place some limitations on the extent of this design. Allowing some of them can provide some flexibility to designers. The key here is to put some clear limits to avoid the continuous blank wall along the arterial.
- 6) Section 15.41.050(A) The Planning Commission would like to come back and revisit this issue. The Planning Commission has concerns about the impacts of allowing zero lot lines with infill development. These would only occur internal to individual developments – and they are a good option that can create more usable yard space – particularly where there are alleys. A combined 15' side yard is much more usable than two 7.5' side yards. I've seen them in both old neighborhood and brand new subdivisions (see image in code) and they work out just fine. Easements for maintenance are easily addressed between the plat and CC&R's.

Article 5 – Project Design

General Comments on Article 5:

- The Planning Commission likes how the final draft has taken out the numerous references to “approved by Director”. But in many cases it seems to have been replaced with “reviewing authority”, which isn’t clearly defined. See comments on this above.
 - The Planning Commission agrees with the inclusion of the Landmarks and Design Commission as the recommending body for departures Good.
- 1) Section 15.50.020 The Planning Commission likes the thresholds for the Level I, II and III improvements. Good.
 - 2) Section 15.50.030 It is not clear from the language describing the departure process exactly how this process works and who makes the final decision. We refer to the Type II process, with the exception that landmarks will review them at a public meeting – Director ultimately makes decision (as referenced in 15.21). But maybe we need to add a sentence here that Director makes final decision, per Type II process per 15.21.
 - 3) Section 15.51.030 In the table presented along with this section, the phrase "No additional ground floor use restrictions" is not clear. The Planning Commission supports restricting ground floor uses along Storefront Streets to non-residential uses. Mike pointed the conflicting language out to me – we’ll need to clarify this here and in the permitted use charts. Actually – we should probably say that residential uses are prohibited in the first 30’ of building frontage – except for lobbies/common entrances serving residential uses.
 - 4) Figure 15.51.040(C) Umptanum Road should not be classified as a Secondary Street 2. The exemption for the location of parking along street frontages (15.51.070) is not appropriate for Umptanum Road. Ultimately a policy decision.
 - 5) Section 15.51.050(C). This section is an encouragement to those building on storefront streets, both current and future, to provide 60 feet of frontage for parking, when what we really want on these streets is to eliminate parking in front of the buildings. There was no consensus on this issue, the counter argument being that we need to allow flexibility for the provision of parking in downtown. Yes, some flexibility is important here – particularly on vacant or under developed parcels where new development is proposed and there’s a strong need / desire to have some off-street parking.
 - 6) Section 15.51.050(D). This should not say that vehicular access is prohibited because Figure 15.51.050(B) clearly shows an approved design option with vehicular access from the street. The language does reference the exception. Or we could just say “discourage” since we have the strict 60’ limitation.
 - 7) Section 15.52.030(E)(1)(g) Space should not only be oriented toward sun in winter and shade in summer but also according to the prevailing wind pattern. It’s important that open space in Ellensburg take the wind into account. Good point – worth mentioning.
 - 8) Section 15.53.020(B)(2) There is no consensus on prohibiting franchise architecture, and exactly how to define it. It was suggested that by limiting the type of lighting and signage, that many negative impacts can be addressed. There are numerous examples of buildings in Ellensburg that were originally built as some type of franchise, and have be re-adapted to other uses over the years. If you are going to tell an applicant what they can’t do, you also need to be able to tell them what they can do. Some on the Commission suggest deleting the entire section on franchise architecture. With the other standards that are being proposed – transparency, building

orientation, articulation, design elements....etc – if these are being met isn't that enough? Policy issue and a topic of good discussion. We've used similar language in many other codes. The key is where the franchise uses building forms that are difficult to adopt to other uses. I-hop with their steep A-frame roofs, McD's or Pizza hut and mansard roofs. Right Aid used these funky diamond windows for a while – once they close – the buildings are always associated with the former chain unless extensive and expensive remodels can successfully adopt them to new uses.

- 9) Section 15.53.040. B. Today's invisible building might turn out within 10 years' time to be very visible. Good point – if you can suggest alternative language or approaches?

Review to be continued at next Planning Commission meeting.

The next Planning Commission meeting is scheduled for September 8, 2011

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00pm.

Respectfully submitted
Lance Bailey, Planning Supervisor