

**FINDINGS OF FACT, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION
BELLINGHAM PLANNING COMMISSION**

August 6, 2009

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATION

The Bellingham Planning Commission has held a public hearing and deliberated on the proposed Urban Village Design Guidelines and Standards. The Planning Commission has determined that the proposal complies with the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan by guiding new development to contribute to the creation of quality pedestrian-oriented urban villages.

I. Findings of Fact

I. Proposal Summary

This proposal creates new guidelines and standards to facilitate and promote high quality pedestrian friendly development of urban villages in the City of Bellingham. The proposal includes the following actions to accomplish this goal:

- A. Adoption of revisions to **BMC 20.25.020 Applicability** to establish development thresholds for urban village design review by the Design Review Board and to clarify that multi-family design review does not apply to projects that are using urban village guidelines and standards;
- B. Adoption of revisions to **BMC 20.25.040 Decision Criteria** to establish decision criteria for urban village design, and
- C. Adoption of **20.25.070 Urban Village Design** to establish:
 - a. design departure requirements; and
 - b. design guidelines and standards;

II. Procedural History

The proposal to develop a set of standards and guidelines for urban villages along with many of the specific standards included in the proposal was presented to stakeholders during the Samish Way Urban Village public process and more recently to the stakeholders during the Fountain District public process. Creation of design standards and a review process was raised as a critical element by stakeholders, particularly nearby residents.

The proposed guidelines and standards were also presented to the City's Design Review Board and their recommended revisions are incorporated into the proposal.

Planning Commission held a public hearing on June 18, 2009 with a continuation on July 23.

III. Public Comment

See Public Comment Tracker.

IV. SEPA Determination

A Determination of Non-Significance was issued by the City of Bellingham on May 20, 2009.

V. Consistency with Comprehensive Plan Goals and Policies and BMC Review Criteria

The Comprehensive Plan states that the City should accommodate anticipated population growth primarily through the creation of a series of urban villages. Generally, an urban village is an area that:

- Contains a mix of commercial, residential, and service uses;
- Provides amenities and necessities within walking distance;
- Is designed for pedestrians, bikes, and transit, as well as the automobile;
- Facilitates strong community connections and interaction by serving as a neighborhood focal point and providing active public spaces; and
- Promotes sustainability and quality design.

The Comprehensive Plan's Community Design goals and policies related to urban villages are as follows:

- Promote improvement in the quality of public, residential, commercial and industrial development and maintain a high quality environment by ensuring new construction and site development meets high standards (CDG-1);
- Allow for growth and diversity through standards that are adaptable to a variety of situations (CDG-3);
- Successfully integrate mixed use development within four types of urban villages, identified in the Land Use chapter, providing residents with shopping and employment within walking distance (CDG-4);
- Neighborhood and pocket urban villages are accessed by pedestrian scale streets that may include narrow pavement widths, on-street parking, landscaping strips, setback sidewalks, buildings close to the street, and parking in the side and/or rear yards (CDG-20);
- Buildings in transition areas between residential and non-residential should consider the context of both areas (CDP-1); and
- Areas with linear, sprawling commercial land uses along arterial streets that require driving from one business to another should be redeveloped over time into compact areas or nodes, in which many businesses can be easily accessed by pedestrians and transit (CDP-14).

II. Conclusions

Based on the staff report, the Planning Commission concludes:

1. The proposal is consistent with the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan.
2. The proposal guides development towards the creation of safe, convenient and attractive pedestrian mixed-use villages and fosters less dependence on the automobile.
3. The proposal promotes high quality construction and site development in Bellingham's urban villages.

III. Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions, the Bellingham Planning Commission recommends that the City Council approve the proposal as submitted by Planning & Community Development Department which incorporates the following amendments:

1. Revise Figure 25.7 Surface parking.
2. Revise Figure 25.10 to delete reference to "Street" and insert "Private Lane".
3. Strengthen the intent statement for g. Variations on Building Design by making the following revision: "i. Intent: ~~Create a range of different forms and designs so repetition and monotony are avoided.~~ To avoid repetition and monotony, create a range of different forms similar to the variety of buildings and styles found in traditional downtowns which evolved over time."
4. Provide further clarity by revising Figure 25.10 show varying module widths, top and base and remove reference to projections into public right of way.
5. Remove redundancy (with blank wall standards) and confusion by deleting a guidelines in 2. Building Design, a. Massing and Articulation, "~~iii Guideline, Avoid long, uninterrupted expanses of walls, vertically and horizontally to minimize confusion and because a separate design standard addresses blank walls.~~" (renumber accordingly)
6. Delete the following standard in order to accommodate this type of standard within the individual urban village development regulations (i.e. this standard is being proposed for inclusion in the Samish Way Urban Village development regulations) 2. Building Design, a. Massing and Articulation vii. Standards (3): ~~A building shall be set back a minimum of 15 feet from a property line abutting a Residential Single Zone or a Residential Transition Area. The maximum height within 30' of a property line abutting a Residential Single Zone or a Residential Transition Area shall be 2 stories and 30 feet. This standard does not apply if separated by an alley or street right of way. (See Figure 25.14).~~ Delete Figure 25.14 and renumber accordingly.
7. Move roof form standards to 2. Building Design, a. Massing and Articulation by adding "Buildings over 75 feet in height shall incorporate at least one additional set back at or above the 5th floor, and incorporate features that create a visually distinct roof form. The following are examples of such features:
 - Terraced set backs
 - Pitched or curved roof elements
 - Projecting cornice elements
 - Trellises along the parapet
 - Geometric forms
 - Change of material or color on the top floor"

AND, Delete standard "~~h. — Roof Forms for Tall Buildings Intent: Create a visually interesting skyline. Standards: Buildings over 75 feet in height shall: a. Incorporate at least one additional set back at or above the 5th floor, and b. Incorporate features that create a visually distinct roof form. The following are examples of such features:~~

- ~~Terraced set backs~~
- ~~Pitched or curved roof elements~~

- ~~Projecting cornice elements~~
 - ~~Trellises along the parapet~~
 - ~~Geometric forms~~
 - ~~Change of material or color on the top floor~~
- (Renumber accordingly.)

8. Move ceiling height standards to 2. Building Design, a. Massing and Articulation by adding "(5) Commercial ground floor space shall have a minimum floor to floor height of 12'." AND, Page 16, line 49, Page 17, lines 1-6 Delete "~~i. Commercial Space Ceiling Height, i. intent: Maintain traditional floor to floor heights and provide quality commercial space. ii. Standards: Commercial ground floor space shall have a minimum floor to floor height of 12'. "~~"
9. Insert new Figure 25.15 for Transparency.
10. Revise f.Weather Protection, "iii. Standard: Where commercial uses are located on the ground floor, buildings shall provide pedestrian weather protection covering at least a 4' width of sidewalk along at least 75% of the street level frontage. Minimum adjustments needed to accommodate street trees or other overhead objects may be allowed. Materials shall be limited to metal, glass, plexiglass or equivalent "hard" durable materials. ~~Wood may be allowed on historic buildings. Fabric and vinyl fabric may only be used on retractable awnings."~~

ADOPTED this _____ day of _____, 2009.

Planning Commission Chair

ATTEST:

Recording Secretary

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

City Attorney