

# AGENDA ITEM

## BUSINESS OF THE PLANNING AGENCY City of Des Moines, WA

SUBJECT: Marina District View Analysis and Design Guidelines

FOR AGENDA OF: November 2, 2009

DEPT. OF ORIGIN: Planning, Building & Public Works

ATTACHMENTS:

DATE SUBMITTED: October 13, 2009

1. Draft Marina District Design Guidelines
2. Proposed Review Schedule
3. Preliminary View Analysis
4. Summary of June 27, 2009 Council Retreat
5. Pacific Ridge Design Guidelines

CLEARANCES:

PB &PW DIRECTOR: GF

### **Purpose and Recommendation**

The purpose of this agenda item is to initiate discussion with Des Moines Planning Agency on the draft Marina District Design Guidelines (Attachment 1) and determine the means by which the Agency will conduct their review (Attachment 2). This work will be informed by a Preliminary View Analysis (Attachment 3) as well as prior Council discussions (Attachment 4). Agency members are asked to provide staff with specific questions prior to the meeting to ensure appropriate information can be presented to better inform the Planning Agency's discussion and recommendations. *Please be mindful not to copy other agency members so as not to constitute a "meeting of the Planning Agency".*

Planning Agency action is to confirm the review schedule (Attachment 2) and designate a representative to provide progress briefings to the City Council. Policy direction is requested regarding the draft Marina District Design Guidelines (MDDG) for the Downtown Neighborhood.

### **Background**

The following overview is intended to provide the Planning Agency the context from which the MDDG were developed. Much of this information focuses on broader planning for the Downtown Neighborhood of which the MDDG are an important element.

**March 6, 2008 Council briefing:** Staff provided an overview of the various activities, currently underway and planned, that affect and shape the planning and development for the Downtown Neighborhood. These relate to infrastructure planning, the Marina Master Plan, development regulations, the University of Washington Storefront Studio project, Downtown design guidelines, and the Main Street program. Staff discussed how these activities could also facilitate development of a strategic plan or master plan for the Downtown Neighborhood.

Council was provided copies of the Downtown Neighborhood Element, information on the Main Street Program's "Four Point Approach" and "Why Downtowns are Important," and a staff-proposed work program. Staff gave an overview of the three core components of a strategic plan or master plan: a *physical plan*, an *economic plan*, and a *regulation/ implementation plan*, and its value in facilitating the Comprehensive Plan's vision for a particular area – to augment revitalization work and to managing future change.

Council expressed a desire to follow a planning process similar to the one carried out for the Pacific Ridge Neighborhood Improvement Plan. Council decided to hold a retreat focusing on Downtown Planning.

**March 29, 2008 Council Retreat:** Council discussed a series of questions related to Downtown Planning and planning goals to review and update the Downtown Neighborhood Element. In summary, Council was supportive of a visioning process followed by a comprehensive analysis of the Downtown neighborhood and development of a Downtown strategic plan. There was consensus on the need for community input with Council leadership and ownership; software-assisted height and view analysis to better understand opportunities and inform decisions; and a willingness to consider design guidelines. Input from staff and the UW Storefront Studio project was also seen as valuable to the planning process. Council also discussed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats affecting Downtown, many of which will guide the visioning and planning process.

**April 26, 2008 Council Retreat:** The retreat began with a Developer Forum where guest speakers provided their perspective about market conditions in Southwest King County and critical factors for economic development in Downtown Des Moines. Staff then provided Council with a brief background on Downtown Des Moines, including existing visions/policies, proposed public/private investments in the area, and a summary of Council comments from their March 29<sup>th</sup> retreat. The goal of the discussion was to get Council clarification and reach consensus on the adequacy of current policies (i.e., Downtown Neighborhood Element), development regulations, existing conditions, and the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats identified by Council.

Staff provided an overview of Downtown concepts/elements including lessons learned from other communities who have developed downtown plans. Council then participated in a visual preference evaluation and discussion to identify principles/elements that represent their vision for Downtown. Council also discussed specific opportunity areas – the geographic area centering on S 223<sup>rd</sup> Street was seen as the "heart of Downtown" and a key area for focusing City investments to create a town center and gateway to the Marina. Parking and traffic circulation were identified as key issues affecting the success of Downtown. In closing, staff indicated that a proposal for moving forward with Council's ideas would be brought back to Council for consideration.

**June 5, 2008:** Staff presented a proposed approach to move forward on the planning work for Downtown that included the following elements:

- A draft vision statement for the Downtown Neighborhood.
- A land use planning and urban design component that recommends a unified development concept, preferred land uses by sub-area, urban design features and actions, development regulations, and other implementation measures.
- A transportation component that analyzes circulation issues and recommends improvements and parking strategies necessary to ensure continued efficient access.
- Engineering advice and planning level recommendations regarding utilities, road and parking construction.
- An economics component that identifies market opportunities and constraints and recommends implementation strategies by sub-area, including funding programs.
- An environmental management component that recommends measures needed to protect the natural environment and to encourage low impact development.
- An active public involvement process that engages the community and enhances the likelihood for success.

At the conclusion of the discussion Council deferred finalizing the work program until after the conclusion of the Storefront Studio project – the intent being to incorporate recommendations and ideas from the studio work into the downtown planning work

**July 17, 2008:** Staff transmitted to City Council the “Marina District Enhancement Plan” prepared by the University of Washington Department of Architecture’s Storefront Studio Project. Project Director Jim Nicholls and architecture students presented an overview of the Storefront Studio which operated from April to June 2008, based out of a temporary office located in Downtown Des Moines.

The primary goal for the Storefront Studio was to integrate and connect the historic downtown with the marina/waterfront areas of the City of Des Moines, to promote economic development, and enhance the pedestrian experience. This area, termed as the “Marina District” is located between Marine View Drive S and the Des Moines Marina/Beach Park, and Kent-Des Moines Road/S. 227<sup>th</sup> Street and S. 216<sup>th</sup> Street. The following products were created by the Storefront Studio:

- A Community asset map for the Des Moines Marina District, showing physical, historic, and cultural assets, existing surface parking including current and proposed projects.
- Illustrated design proposals, developed for these assets and for properties within the District, including both site elements and building exteriors that may be affected by additions or new construction. The proposals addressed building scale, form, exterior features and materials, public art, landscaping, and other relevant attributes that define the character of the District.
- Banners, way-finding and community kiosk designs were developed to act as a seed project for the Marina District.

The Storefront Studio project goals support many of the policies and strategies established in the Downtown Element of the Des Moines Comprehensive Plan. Outcomes from the project complement future downtown, waterfront and cultural planning work.

Following the July 17<sup>th</sup> Council meeting, staff provided Council with a list of 44 recommendations and ideas from the *Marina District Enhancement Plan* that could be implemented by the City. Council was asked to individually indicate with a “yes” or “no” on whether or not the ideas should be pursued and the priority level for each "yes" answer (high, medium or low).

Based on individual Councilmember's feedback, staff identified the following relative priorities for Council discussion and confirmation:

1. North & South Gateway improvements.
2. Design guidelines for Downtown modeled on those of Pacific Ridge 9 (Attachment 5).
3. Marine View Drive sidewalk and bus shelter improvements.
4. Sub-area plan including street and pedestrian improvements on the S. 223<sup>rd</sup> corridor.
5. Marina Entrance improvements.
6. Pedestrian & streetscape improvements on 227<sup>th</sup> west of MVD.
7. Marina/Beach Park improvements including waterfront benches, boardwalk extensions and new shelters.
8. Sea Serpent art sculptures along the breakwater and S. 223<sup>rd</sup>.
9. A Public Arts Plan with priority on murals, interpretive Marina railing display, history trail and marina street furnishings.
10. Preliminary planning for a new hill-climb building/parking structure with elevator on the Marina floor at S. 223<sup>rd</sup>.
11. Preliminary planning for the Des Moines Elementary School site with Highline School District.

**September 11, 2008:** Council discussed and identified the following priorities for inclusion in the downtown planning work program. Numbers correspond to recommendations noted above.

2. Develop design guidelines for Downtown that are based on the street and building design principles established in the Pacific Ridge Design Guidelines.
3. Coordinate with King County Metro, the location and funding of bus shelters on Marine View Drive. Identify funding for street furniture and trash receptacles and prioritize in the CIP.
4. Conduct more detailed planning for the S. 223<sup>rd</sup> Street corridor focusing initially on public works street improvements and including the Cliff Avenue connection to the Marina floor. Identify capital improvements, funding and priority in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) in a way that is coordinated with the completion of planned Beach Park and Marina improvements.
7. Incorporate the Marina and Beach Park improvements (i.e., waterfront benches, boardwalk extensions and new shelters) into the Marina District Master Plan and Beach Park Plans and CIPs.
9. Support the Arts Commission in the development of a Public Arts Plan for murals, interpretive displays and other public art.
11. Initiate discussion with Highline School District on the future of the Des Moines Elementary School site.

**September 27, 2008, City Council Retreat:** Council held a retreat to discuss the issues concerning Downtown Des Moines such as parking, zoning, and site development constraints. In summary, the meeting opened with comments from property owners and downtown businesses. Key issues and recommendations identified by individuals included:

***Issues:***

- Business signage and the permitting process
- Property maintenance (varies throughout Downtown)
- Need more pedestrian crossings to aide shoppers in accessing businesses in the downtown area

- Parking supply – discussion of whether or not there is a parking problem in downtown
- On-site parking requirements – restrictions imposed by the City make it very difficult for small businesses to build
- Economic development
- Lack of participation and City representation on SW King County Chamber of Commerce
- Meeting is a good way for the business owners to air their concerns to the Council

***Recommendations:***

- Make the process for sign permits consistent throughout the City to help business owners understand what is acceptable
- Develop a business attraction plan to attract the businesses that residents need
- Develop new standards and enforcement procedures related to building/property maintenance
- Council should develop a shared vision for the City by having a rejuvenated Chamber of Commerce and community betterment as opposed to economic development
- Des Moines Elementary School site seen as the most appealing and visionary project. The objective should be to celebrate the City’s past and also focus attention on visions for the future. Cooperative team work with the City could be an aide to progress instead of an obstacle.

At the conclusion of the community comments, the Mayor made a proposal to the Council to eliminate all parking requirements for businesses that are non-residential. This was clarified to mean any uses downtown would not be required to provide parking except for residential uses. Council then discussed the pros and cons of such action. Issues and comments discussed included:

- Problem that older buildings were built without the requirement to provide parking
- How to address parking requirements for vacant lots – not requiring parking is irresponsible
- Vision of downtown is what should drive parking requirements and the parking code should reflect those needs
- Whether a parking mitigation fee be charged in lieu of providing some parking and that money be used to develop more downtown parking
- Options to reduce the requirements or loosen up the requirements for shared parking agreements
- Issue of equity for those businesses that are already here and are providing the required parking

Each Councilmember was then asked to give his or her personal vision of how they see the Downtown. This information was used by staff to revise the proposed vision statement for Council review.

**October-November 2008, Parking Changes to Zoning Code:** Council heard concerns from multiple Downtown business owners regarding what the owners perceived as overly strict parking requirements given the abundance of parking available in the public rights-of-way. Additionally, the property owners indicated that the current offsite parking agreement requirements create a significant burden on properties that would provide the offsite parking since the current code requires that the agreement be in the form of a deed or easement that is valid in perpetuity.

The City’s parking code prohibits business owners from utilizing the on-street parking space to provide the zoning code-required number of parking stalls for customers. This prohibition frustrates many property owners because the on-street parking stalls are typically the closest to the front door since the buildings are required to be located on the front property line near the street or the stalls have been

historically used to provide parking for the business on the lot. Property owners also do not understand why the City has adopted, what they believe are, extremely high parking requirements when there is parking for the public in the rights-of-way.

In an effort to address the concerns of the property owners and facilitate redevelopment in the Downtown, Draft Ordinance 08-223 was developed for the purpose of establishing a parking exemption for commercial uses in the Downtown Commercial Zone. A public hearing to consider the ordinance was held on October 16, 2008 and continued to November 20, 2008 when it was passed by Council, to be effective for a period of one (1) year.

**October 2, 2008:** At the October 2<sup>nd</sup> Council meeting, staff facilitated further discussion of the remaining priority items that were not able to be fully discussed on September 11<sup>th</sup> based on the UW Storefront Studio *Marina District Enhancement Plan*.

**December 1, 2008 Planning Agency:** Staff briefed the Planning Agency on City Council's policy priorities related to the University of Washington Department of Architecture Storefront Studio Report – "Des Moines Marina District Enhancement Plan" and the working vision and mission statement that staff developed for Council consideration. Staff also discussed current work on a sketch-up model of the downtown for the purpose of completing a view analysis.

During the public comment period, Andy Langsford, a Downtown property owner, discussed the economic challenges the 35-foot height limit presents in redeveloping his five properties in the Downtown. Mr. Langsford indicated that increasing the height limits would help to kick-start the Downtown and increase tax revenues for the City.

Agency Member Bekkerus asked what height limit might be recommended, and Mr. Langsford suggested 65 feet. Mr. Langsford clarified that the building heights need to be addressed for the Downtown as a whole rather than his properties alone. Agency Chair Proulx asked if there were issues other than building heights that need to be considered. Mr. Langsford indicated that a vision and plan of action for the Downtown was needed.

Planning Agency members discussed their continued interest in being involved in the Downtown planning work. Other issues discussed included the need for economic development in the Downtown; the need for critical mass of businesses and residents (i.e., more residents lead to more need for goods and services); and limitations that height restrictions present and associated effects on property value.

**January 22, 2009:** Council confirmed the following direction related to the remaining priority items related to the UW Storefront Studio *Marina District Enhancement Plan*:

1. Develop gateway signage and wayfinding kiosk concepts that incorporate the sailboat theme from Pacific Highway S. Focus first phase on Marine View Drive at S 216<sup>th</sup> and Kent-Des Moines Road. Apply for CTED grant funds for wayfinding signage on state highways (February 2009).
5. Develop Marina Entrance design options for Council and community consideration. Optionally, consider having a community/artist design competition. Ensure structure heights do not conflict with large boats accessing the Marina.

6. Conduct more detailed planning for the S. 227<sup>th</sup> Street corridor focusing initially on public works street improvements. Evaluate right-of-way cross sections to determine how design elements (including artwork) and parking can be accommodated. Consider options for removing center turn lanes and adding angle parking. Address signage, lighting and pedestrian amenities as elements of the Design Guidelines. Evaluate trail and bicycle linkages to and through the Marina and Beach Park.
8. Survey Arts Commission for opinions and ideas for art sculptures along the breakwater and S. 223<sup>rd</sup> Street. Research and present the format and cost estimates for completing a statistical survey for Downtown.
10. Work with City departments to complete a highest and best use analysis for a new hill-climb building/parking structure on the Marina floor with elevator access to S. 223<sup>rd</sup>. Coordinate with passenger-only ferry studies (if Council proceeds in this direction).

Council also approved a vision and mission statement for the Marina District that captures the work program elements associated with Council goals and priorities, and provides the context and framework for the planning process, plan content and more specific projects that Council wants to emphasize.

**June 4, 2009.** Staff briefed Council on an updated work program that focused on Council priorities for the downtown planning work. Based on Council direction on January 22, 2009, Staff updated the work program that focuses on the Council priorities for the downtown planning work. The updated work program includes a number of opportunities for community input such as participation in stakeholder group meetings or community forums, public open houses/workshops and a survey to determine what citizens of Des Moines envision for the Downtown. In addition, Council briefings, Council Finance and Economic Development Committee meetings and Planning Agency meetings are proposed for sequencing project reviews. Staff proposed utilizing the Planning Agency members to help facilitate the public and stakeholder group meetings. Proposed staff briefings are intended to focus on the following items:

- Downtown design guidelines and view analysis.
- Community/stakeholder group input regarding: a community survey, view analysis, urban design, streetscape and wayfinding.
- Review of draft goals, policies and strategies; possible draft zoning amendments; final vision and design guidelines; and
- Final goals, policies, strategies and zoning amendments; public hearing and ordinance adoption.

Although no consensus was reached on the work program or the public outreach component; several Council members expressed an interest in involving the Planning Agency and hosting some open houses to obtain community input on the downtown planning work.

Staff provided Council with the preliminary view analysis and draft design guidelines for the Downtown/Marina District. The software-assisted height and view analysis (preliminary) was completed for the purpose of illustrating, at a very broad scale, how changing building heights in certain areas of the downtown could affect views and to better understand opportunities and inform decisions regarding the Downtown and a willingness to consider design guidelines.

Council expressed concerns regarding how the public would interpret the block models shown on the view analysis. It was noted that the model was intended to show, at a broad scale, the extent of which views could be affected but was not intended to illustrate design under current zoning. Council requested that the view analysis should be modified to consider views from adjacent buildings and to illustrate what could be built under current zoning and include appropriate floor area ratios (FAR), modulation, appurtenances and design detail. It was suggested that a fly-through model (e.g., down 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue) be developed to illustrate what buildings could look like. It should be noted that due to the elimination of the Planning Intern position, no additional work has been completed on the view analysis.

Discussion of the draft design guidelines noted that a number of the images used are more representative of an “urban” versus “small town” character. It was suggested that the images be changed to reflect the “small town” character or alternately consider changing the downtown vision statement if a more urban environment is desired. Council also requested additional information such as examples of FAR and how that restricts the building area/lot coverage and current architectural/building requirements for internal space such as ceiling heights, modulation, appurtenances.

**June 27, 2009 Council Retreat.** Discussion at the Council retreat focused on downtown planning, zoning, infrastructure, and design guidelines. This meeting was taped and can be accessed from the City’s website for viewing. A summary of key points from the discussion is provided as Attachment 4.

**October 1, 2009 Council Study Session.** Council remanded the review of the MDDG to the Planning Agency. Council requested that the Agency/staff provide regular updates to Council on their progress, with the first briefing in early 2010.

## **Discussion**

In early 2009, staff completed draft design guidelines (Attachment 1) and a software-assisted height and view analysis (Attachment 3) for the Marina District. Each of these documents includes an introductory section that explains the methodology used for the analysis. Council discussed the view analysis and design guidelines at their June 4<sup>th</sup> study session (summarized above) and June 27<sup>th</sup> retreat (Attachment 4); this information is intended to inform the Planning Agency discussions on these topics.

The November 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting will focus on the intent of design review and design guidelines, and the proposed schedule for the Planning Agency’s review of the draft MDDGs (Attachment 2). Special meetings are proposed to maintain momentum and keep the subject matter fresh. As shown, the subject matter has been broken out into topic areas. It is recognized that discussions may carry over into subsequent meetings or that the Agency may opt to have longer meetings in lieu of more meetings.

Following is an overview addresses the purpose of design review and design guidelines; the organization and application of the MDDG; and staff questions and comment for the Planning Agency’s consideration.

### ***What is Design Review and how does it relate to Design Guidelines?***

Design Review provides a forum for citizens and developers to work toward achieving a better urban environment through application of fundamental design principles. Design Review is intended to affect how new development can contribute positively to a particular area such as the downtown. Des Moines has an Administrative Design Review process that is implemented by the Development Review team. Design Review has three principal objectives:

1. To encourage better design and site planning to enhance the character of the an area and ensure that new development is sensitive to its surroundings;
2. To provide flexibility in the application of development standards; and
3. To improve communication and participation among developers and the City early in the design and siting of new development.

Design guidelines offer a flexible tool – an alternative to prescriptive zoning requirements – that allow new development to respond better to the distinctive/desired character of its surroundings. They help to reinforce the desired character for an area and protect the qualities that the community values most in the face of change. The overriding objective of design guidelines is to ensure that new development and/or redevelopment fits in well with its surroundings.

The MDDG share this objective with an aim to guide the design of development in a manner that strengthens the Des Moines’ downtown mixed use commercial core. The MDDGs augment development standards established in the Des Moines Municipal Code (DMMC) and together would serve as the basis for project review within the Downtown Neighborhood. They are also intended to assist project developers and their architects by providing graphic examples of the intent of the MDDGs and design regulations. **The Planning Official will use these guidelines to interpret the design regulations through the Administrative Design Review process.**

**Document Organization:** The MDDG document is organized into four sections with Section I Introduction focusing on the intent of the MDDG; Section II Marina District Neighborhood Context and Priority Design Objectives focusing on the vision and mission for the Marina District; Section III Design Guidelines which are grouped by topic similar to the Pacific Ridge Design Guidelines (PRDG); and Section IV Definitions (pending). Development of the MDDG was based on the following methodology:

- The PRDG (Attachment 5) were used to the extent feasible; they are cumbersome to follow, text is lengthy, and design principles are intended for a larger scale neighborhood.
- Staff reorganized and simplified sections, added more photos/illustrations, and modeled standards after smaller community/neighborhood examples – Burien, Kirkland and Seattle Neighborhood Design Guidelines (i.e., West Seattle, Lake City).
- Yellow highlight indicates where information is pending and red text with green highlight denotes questions and/or comments for consideration.
- Document uses a hierarchy of numbering with bullets. Optionally, the organization could continue with alpha/numeric format versus extensive use of bullets.

**Application:** The current focus of the MDDG is on the Marina District; however, they could be written to eventually apply to the Business Park and Midway/Redondo LRT station areas as well. This is a feasible option as it is the zoning that dictates the development parameters such as building heights, setbacks, and modulation. If broader applicability is desired, introductory sections could be written that express vision for each area (the City of Kirkland’s Design Guidelines are structured in this manner).

**Comments and Questions for Consideration:**

As indicated below and throughout the MDDG document, there are a number of questions for consideration. Some of these questions were discussed at the June 27<sup>th</sup> Council Retreat with direction indicated in the meeting summary (Attachment 4) as referenced:

- Branding the area as the “Marina District” could enhance the image of the Downtown Neighborhood and strengthen ties to our maritime heritage. Community branding can increase the visibility of an area at both the local and regional level. Typically this branding is supported by a marketing plan. *Envision Midway* is a recent example of community branding. Notable examples include *Fisherman’s Warf* and the *Marina District* in San Francisco and *Marina del Rey* in Los Angeles.
- Do we still want to promote a “Contemporary Northwest Nautical” theme? Nothing in architectural literature search comes up for this. References in the DMMC relate to boat themes, sails, etc.
- Consider modifying directives of the MDDG to say “should” versus “shall” as guidelines are intended to provide design guidance rather than being prescriptive – rely on the Code for actual development regulations (i.e., height, bulk, scale, parking, etc.) (See Attachment 4).
- Stated gateway and heart locations are based on input from Council retreats on downtown planning and intent of Downtown Element of Comp Plan.
- Should S 223rd, S 227th and 7th Avenue S be designated as “key pedestrian streets?” Note that traffic volumes and speeds on Marine View Drive (MVD) make it more difficult to establish a pedestrian street with lots of foot traffic, and outdoor dining. Seventh Avenue presents an opportunity to create this environment and include bicycle lanes that connect with S 216th, Marina and Beach Park while not conflicting with traffic volumes on MVD. (See Attachment 4)
- Should stairs from 6th Ave to the Marina or future improvements at S 223rd and Cliff Ave be proposed for pedestrian enhancements as part of Downtown Element update? (See Attachment 4)
- How do we want the alleys to function in the Downtown? Do we want to promote use by pedestrians as well as service deliveries? Many communities have done this very successfully.
- Do we want to specify loading and garbage areas from alleys in the downtown?
- A major element of the site design, pedestrian environment and architectural concept is the dimension of sidewalk. From our street standards we have learned that the sidewalk width for commercial is 6 feet plus a possible planting strip. Would it be reasonable to extend the sidewalk width to 12 feet, which would include planting strip and trees? This mimics Pacific Ridge design guidelines.
- Do we want to specify uniform tree species for street ROW (e.g., Downtown Bremerton)?
- Do we want to consider townhouses in the Marina District residential areas? Many townhome designs are 3-stories.
- Consider increasing building heights in certain areas based on view analysis (e.g., area around QFC and along 7th Ave S) – (Note: subject for future Council discussion)
- Consider allowing pitched roofs in multifamily zones to allow for variation in building architecture and character and as a mechanism for obscuring rooftop appurtenances.
- Landscaping requirements for the DC and RM900 zones may need to be modified to better reflect the intent of the design guidelines.
- Sign standards should also be modified to reflect the design principles in MDDG.

### **Financial Impact**

Design guidelines can establish a climate for investment for businesses, residents and property owners because the associated review process provides assurance that alterations and new construction by others will reinforce the design goals and vision for the neighborhood. Revitalization of the Marina District will stimulate economic development in the business core. This in turn will help to create jobs, new housing, a stronger tax base and tax revenues for the City of Des Moines.