

# AGENDA ITEM

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

SUBJECT: Marina District View Analysis and Design Guidelines

FOR AGENDA OF: November 16, 2009

DEPT. OF ORIGIN: Planning, Building & Public Works

ATTACHMENTS:

DATE SUBMITTED: November 10, 2009

1. 11/02/09 Meeting Summary
2. Revised Review Schedule
3. Summary of Council Comments on Downtown Planning
4. Downtown Capacity
5. Zoning Map
6. Topography Map

CLEARANCES:

PB &PW DIRECTOR: \_\_\_\_\_

### Purpose and Recommendation

The purpose of this agenda item is to discuss the neighborhood context and design objectives of the Draft Marina District Design Guidelines (MDDGs) and the preliminary view analysis for the Downtown Neighborhood. Councilmember Dave Kaplan has been invited to attend the meeting to provide some perspective on the Council's work to date on the Downtown planning.

No Planning Agency action is required at this meeting. Policy direction is requested regarding the design objectives and view analysis.

### Background

The following information is intended to track the Planning Agency's progress on the review of the draft Marina District Design Guidelines for the Downtown Neighborhood.

**November 2, 2009:** The Planning Agency initiated discussion on the draft Marina District Design Guidelines (MDDGs) and confirmed the schedule and process by which the Agency will conduct their review. A summary of the meeting is provided as Attachment 1. Leslie Newman was appointed as the Agency representative to provide progress briefings to City Council, with Aaron Bekkerus designated as Alternate 1 and Shan Hoel as Alternate 2.

## **Discussion**

**Neighborhood Context and Design Objectives:** The overriding objective of the Marina District Design Guidelines (MDDG) is to ensure that new development fits in well with its surroundings. The design guidelines share this objective, with an emphasis on siting and design conditions and priorities supported by the community, to guide the design of new development in a manner that strengthens the Downtown mixed-use commercial core and connections to the Marina, Beach Park and the waterfront. Attachment 3 provides some background on the development capacity for the Downtown.

Des Moines City Council has been working on the downtown planning since March 2009 and has met 11 times to discuss issues related to the Downtown Neighborhood. At the 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 – Council responses to these questions provide some perspective on the Downtown Neighborhood (Attachment 4). 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.

Des Moines City Council stated its desire to maintain the unique qualities have historically characterized the Marina District. However, it is also recognized that new development provides the opportunity for a broader mix of businesses and services, residential units and employment. In January 2009, City Council adopted a draft vision for the Marina District’s future as well as a mission statement that identified public actions to make that vision a reality. One of the recommended actions is the adoption of a set of design guidelines to be used in reviewing all new development and major renovations in the Downtown Neighborhood. The vision and mission statement clearly express the importance of design in creating and maintaining a sense of place and enhancing the economic vitality of the Marina District:

### ***Vision for the Marina District***

*The Marina District – the Downtown, Marina and Beach Park – is the historic and cultural center for Des Moines. A revitalized Downtown with a small-town charm reflecting the City’s rich history invites new businesses, development, shoppers and residents. A quality mix of services in the District encourages residents to shop locally and creates a destination for visitors. Improved pedestrian access to and from the Marina and Beach Park, and pedestrian amenities along South 223rd Street and South 227th Street enhance the image of Des Moines as a special Puget Sound waterfront community. Design guidelines encourage private participation and public art to reflect and celebrate the City’s unique location and maritime heritage.*

### ***Mission Statement for the Marina District***

*To strengthen the vitality of the Downtown Marina District as a place for people to live, shop, work and play by:*

- Strengthening community sustainability, pedestrian accessibility, livability and downtown business vitality.

- Optimizing Des Moines’ prime waterfront location and City views through the enhancement of cultural opportunities and experiences.
- Establishing design guidelines aimed at preserving Des Moines’ small-town character while promoting diversity and creativity of new development.
- Creating an integrated transportation system that includes a comprehensive parking strategy, pedestrian and bicycle network, and streetscape improvements.
- Planning for the S. 223rd Street between Marine View Drive and Cliff Avenue focusing initially on public works street improvements and the Cliff Avenue connection to the Marina floor.
- Planning for the S. 227th Street corridor focusing initially on public works street improvements and Marina entrance enhancements.
- Coordinating with King County Metro the placement and funding of bus shelters on Marine View Drive.
- Developing detailed facilities, marina street furnishings, and amenities plans that include funding and priorities in the Municipal Facilities, Marina and Arterial Streets Capital Improvement Plans (CIP).
- Coordinating with the Des Moines Arts Commission and the Des Moines Historical Society to develop a Public Arts Plan that includes sculptures, murals, interpretive Marina railing displays, and history trails.
- Executing a valid community survey to determine what citizens of Des Moines envision for the Downtown.”

The MDDG directly address these objectives. It is especially important that development projects in the Marina District, particularly those on corner lots and key pedestrian streets, implement objectives of the Comprehensive Plan, Marina Master Plan and Comprehensive Transportation Plan by addressing the following:

- Employ façade modulation and articulation to provide appropriate human and architectural scale, view corridors, and visual interest.
- Locating the buildings adjacent to the public sidewalk or orienting the building to a plaza or publicly accessible open space that is located adjacent to the sidewalk.
- A continuous area of commercial and mixed use development is particularly important along Marine View Drive South between S 216<sup>th</sup> and S 227th Streets.
- Providing sidewalks along the street rights-of-way that are at least 12 feet wide. The sidewalk environment can include storefronts near the sidewalk, minimal interruption by vehicular driveways, awnings for weather protection, public open space, street trees, attractive landscaping, and integrated signs and lighting.
- Providing pedestrian-oriented facades and entrances along public rights-of-way and designated pedestrian pathways. “Pedestrian-oriented facades” generally feature window areas or window displays, artwork or other amenities along the majority of the ground floor, and substantial weather protection.
- Minimizing paved surfaces devoted to vehicle circulation and parking. Below- grade or in-structure parking is strongly recommended.
- Minimizing the impact of driveways on pedestrian travel.
- Ensuring that public open spaces and pedestrian travel routes have sidewalks or other walkways, are safe and well lit, and respond to *Crime Prevention through Environmental Design* (CPTED) principles.

**Methodology for Des Moines View Analysis – View corridors:** The Marina District sits in a topographic bowl and many properties within and near the Downtown have views of Puget Sound and the Olympic Mountains. Views from the east are most prominent given the topography of the area generally slopes down from east to west. For the most part, areas to the north and south offer territorial views over the Downtown, Puget Sound and the mountains. Attachments 5 and 6 are show the zoning and topography for the Downtown.

Based on the Comprehensive Plans Goals for the Downtown Des Moines, in this first stage of preliminary study, only the views of Puget Sound and Olympic Mountains were taken into the consideration for the study of the development impact on view corridors.

1. The map of Des Moines Downtown and abutting parcels located on the hillsides was created using the GIS program “ArcMap.” The topographic, right of way and building data from the GIS database was imported to the Sketch Up modeling software. This program was used to create a three dimensional model of the terrain with the buildings for selected areas.
2. A photographic survey of possible view corridors was performed. The pictures were taken from the street right of way looking toward Downtown. The eastern part of study area had the greatest opportunity for protection of the Puget Sound and Olympic Mountain views. The northern slope of the study area is characterized by the unobstructed territorial views of Mount Rainier, Downtown, Marina and Saltwater State Park. Similarly, the views from the southern slopes of study area overlook Puget Sound, the Olympic Mountains, Downtown and the ridge beyond.

View locations were chosen to reflect the point at which the topography captured the greatest view (i.e., point along a corridor at which you could see the greatest expanse of water and/or mountains). Photos were taken near each view point to document the current view frame. In some cases, views are partially obscured by foliage and tree growth. The criteria for the corridors involved a weighing of three factors:

**View Type:** Is the view pedestrian or vehicular? Is it sustained or a glimpse?

**View Frame:** What is actually in the view?

**Viewpoint:** What is the viewpoint and does it have particular significance by itself?

3. Using the Sketch Up modeling ability, different height scenarios of Downtown were developed (Attachment A). The first scenario illustrates the maximum allowed buildup of 35 feet. This massing exercise identified opportunities for increasing building heights along 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue S. Additional scenarios looked at the hypothetical building massing of 45 and 65 feet and heights impact on the view corridors.
4. The cross sections through the model were created. They illustrate topographic changes in heights along all of the major east-west streets leading to and through Downtown. This allowed a better understanding of opportunities for increasing building heights in some areas while minimizing view impacts.
5. Selected photographs were used to establish series of view points through the Sketch Up model and create similar illustration with hypothetical massing.

6. The model illustration and photos were layered using Photo Shop software to achieve computer simulated images. During this process the hypothetical view corridors and view sheds were created to be used in evaluating possible massing scenarios for Downtown development.

The images provided as Attachment A, illustrate views toward Downtown from the S 222<sup>nd</sup> Street, S 223<sup>rd</sup> Street and S 226<sup>th</sup> Place view corridors with build-up scenarios under existing zoning and hypothetical scenarios illustrating build up at 45 feet along the east and west sides of 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue S. A SketchUp model illustrates build up at the QFC site at 45, 55 and 65 feet. East-west topographic profiles were also developed to show the changes in topography along view corridors. For each of the images, the red color denotes properties zoned D-C Downtown Commercial while the dark yellow denotes the RM 900 and 900A-Residential Multifamily zoning. The buildings on the topographic profiles illustrate build-up under existing zoning.

### **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.