

Summary of Public Comments from the April 30, and May 4, 2011 Open Houses on the Marina District Zoning Changes

Following is a summary of the 34 comment forms submitted at the April 30, and May 4, 2011 Open Houses related to the Marina District Zoning Changes as proposed in Draft Ordinance No. 11-011. Key points made are either quoted verbatim or paraphrased for clarification.



COMMENT FORM - Marina District Zoning Changes

Marina District Zoning – Open House Public Comments (33 comment forms received)

Let us know what you think about...

1. Establishing a 20-foot setback from street corners to enhance visibility and allow for the creation of dynamic pedestrian space?

Supportive = 88% Not supportive = 5% No Comment/Neutral = 7%

Key points/questions (as quoted or paraphrased for clarification):

- *“Anything that makes the downtown core more accessible and appealing for potential customers, and pedestrians is good for the local economy and viability of Des Moines.”*
- *“Good idea but if you do not encourage people to walk the setback will not be useful.”*
- *“Very important. Provides area for small businesses and pedestrian traffic in Marina Area.”*
- *“Do like this idea to draw more people to walk, dine and work.”*
- *“Bringing more people and foot traffic into town is a worthy goal.”*
- *“More important to have anchor businesses that get people out of their cars and walking. Would it be better to have high foot traffic business in middle of block or at corner for visibility?”*
- *“Good idea - If it leaves enough room for an appropriate building.”*
- *“To make this work, we need to be sure it is VERY pedestrian friendly.”*
- *“Agree this is a good idea. Especially on 7th Avenue.”*
- *“Yes. Great idea.”*
- *“I like this idea along with marked crosswalks on Marine View Drive.”*
- *“This is a possibility.”*
- *“This would be okay to allow leisure walking.”*
- *“Yes, especially the visibility.”*
- *“Agree that sightlines for motorists is important.”*
- *“Yes, where appropriate such as on 227th, 223rd and 7th, and Marine View Drive S. Not sure if it is needed on all street corners. There could be other designs with overhangs that could create a similar result.”*
- *“Yes, eliminates tunnel effect.”*
- *“Good concept from a couple of perspectives – 1. Design features and 2. Driver visibility at intersections.”*
- *“No. Owner will put tree into block visibility.”*
- *“Yes – encourages people to get out of their cars.”*
- *“Good idea for safety.”*

2. Providing an opportunity to create angled parking along Marine View Drive?

Supportive = 72% Not supportive = 16% No Comment/Neutral = 12%

Key points/questions (as quoted or paraphrased for clarification):

- *“Angle parking is good. However, based on presentation..., it would be the property owner’s responsibility. Either do it or not.”*
- *“Creating easy ingress to retail business is in fact supporting them by creating easier accessibility to and for customers.”*
- *“Bad idea. Do more to remove cars from Marine View Drive and establish parking areas. Use the area for wider walking areas.”*
- *The existing angled parking causes traffic problems. Other ideas should be explored. If angled parking is considered, maybe speed limits should be enforced along Marine View Drive.*
- *“Yes, very important.”*
- *Like idea of this opportunity for businesses to have easy parking and access on this through fare.*
- *“This will help businesses along Marine View Drive.”*
- *“Is angled parking statistically safer? Which style allows more cars? Does it encourage more pedestrian traffic? Which looks more ‘BUSY?’”*
- *“Bad idea. Marine View Drive is so busy and the angled parking that is already there is dangerous.’*
- *“Don’t like the idea of angled parking. Backing into traffic along Marine View Drive is potentially unsafe.”*
- *“Yes, if it is optional.”*
- *“Like this idea as long as it doesn’t create more traffic on 8th Avenue.”*
- *“If it would slow down or divert some commuter traffic – do it.”*
- *“As long as there is room to be able to back up and not hit by cars on Marine View Drive.”*
- *“Like the angled parking but it could be expensive for each property owner. All Marine View Drive (should have) angle parking to be consistent.”*
- *“Very positive, but cost to property owner may be too much.”*
- *“Would like to see angled parking as feasible vs. strip mall type of parking lots. Would also like consideration of parking configuration on side streets.”*
- *“Not a good idea if cars will need to back out into traffic.”*
- *“Like the idea, there will also be more demand for parking if a thriving destination is established.”*
- *“Street is not wide enough to do that.”*
- *“Would this be a traffic calming device as well, as cars back up into traffic? Would land that is currently in private ownership have to be condemned to accommodate this? Wouldn’t this have a negative impact on bicycle traffic – which we definitely should be encouraging and planning for?”*
- *“Works well on south end, west side.”*

3. Raising the base building height along 7th Avenue S to 45 feet?

Supportive = 56% Not supportive = 40% No Comment/Neutral = 4%

Key points/questions (as quoted or paraphrased for clarification):

- *“Let’s make Des Moines an attractive, appealing and enticing community that it can be. A community that capitalizes on being a destination locale, rather than a pass through, and only supported by the limited 30,000 residents.”*
- *“Efforts should try to enhance views to Sound which is a big plus for Des Moines.”*
- *“No. Serves little purpose. High structures belong on Hwy 99 area.”*
- *“It will bring more people from the community and outside the community to come walk, eat and shop. In the long run, it will bring in more money and increase the value in property and people wanting to invest here.”*
- *“How would that fit in with the slope of the shoreline? It seems best to take into consideration the contours of the surrounding environment.”*
- *“Maybe – again depends on size and overall “bulk” of building. I would hate for 7th and Marine View Drive to be” jammed” with large buildings that overpower the City’s overall ‘open’ look and feel.”*
- *“Let’s make it more appealing to developers.”*
- *“No. Not sure ‘mini-high rises ‘ would fit in very well. Just spent a week in downtown Charleston, SC. Hardly any buildings more than 3 stories high. Very appealing. Consistent styles made it tasteful and quaint.”*
- *“Good idea as long as some kind of agreement can be made with the residents. As long as the zoning or zoning plans for the future are thought out and planned to eventually convert all of the single residential properties to commercial zoning along 7th Avenue South from 223rd south.”*
- *“Live on 8th Avenue S. The 45’ buildings will greatly decrease property value and take away the view. Would like 35’ to remain. Would love overhead wires on 8th Ave S buried.”*
- *“If you allow 45’ how much more will others ask for later. Also it may take away view and cause property value to decrease which will take property tax down. In addition, it will take away from the related comfortable feeling that Des Moines has.”*
- *“We must revise building heights. The vacant property in the downtown area is a big hole in our tax base that owners of developed property have to fill.”*
- *“Yes. This is not going to please everyone, but believe it could help bring development into our city. I commend the folks in Des Moines who have worked on this project. They have done a great job crafting a plan. This is a daunting task.”*
- *“No. One of the advantages of living in Des Moines is to get out of the City with tall buildings...would have stayed in Seattle.”*
- *Yes, if they are mixed use.”*
- *“No, don’t think we need to do that. We can revitalize downtown without raising the heights. Better sidewalks, better parking, attractive facades, incentives for business; Build higher buildings on Pac Hwy. Keep the traditional main street feel of the downtown but make it attractive.”*

- *“Yes. Would provide many new development opportunities in an underdeveloped neighborhood. Would like to see development such as Redmond Town Center in the Marina District with retail, cultural opportunities, restaurants, etc.”*
- *“Okay if 10’ of the 45’ is sub terrain.”*
- *“Only if the buildings have setbacks on the upper stories to preserve view corridors.”*
- *“Agree to a maximum of 45’, but would not support exceptions that would allow buildings to be taller.”*
- *“No higher than 45 ft”*
- *No problem – 45’ is not that high in today’s building projects – even higher in some areas if possible.”*
- *“No. It will block many home views. Leave alone. Clean up downtown.”*
- *“No. Do not exacerbate the problem we already have – of our main business district being visually cut off from our primary asset – Puget Sound!”*

4. Establishing building height bonus areas and an associated public benefit system that would allow several buildings at 45-, 65- and 75-feet, if sufficient public benefits are included in the project?

Supportive = 37% Not supportive = 37% No Comment/Neutral = 26%

Key points/questions (as quoted or paraphrased for clarification):

- *“Let’s make Des Moines an attractive, appealing and enticing community that it can be. A community that capitalizes on being a destination locale, rather than a pass through, and only supported by the limited 30,000 residents.”*
- *“Only if people are encouraged to enhance views to Sound. Buildings should add shrubs or planting areas to make it look more natural.”*
- *“Like the idea and am glad the City would get some funding for projects. Feel strongly that every building should have retail and outdoor spaces.”*
- *“No, not in downtown Marina District. Yes, near Highway 99. Property value is based upon view capability.”*
- *“Yes, it will rejuvenate the area, businesses, increase property values and community resources for roads, green spaces, etc...”*
- *“Like the idea of the public benefit initiatives. This allows an increase in property values, brings people into the community, and makes the City a more exciting place to stop and visit.”*
- *“If sufficient public benefits are included. 75 feet especially seems too high in downtown area. One would stick out like a huge ‘sore thumb.’ 65 feet is much too much except on a particular lot in the right area.”*
- *“Brilliant! Love the idea of making downtown more attractive to developers and adding residential to establish a stronger core.”*
- *“75’ too high. 65’ OK.”*
- *“No. Takes away view which will lower property value and taxes paid to city. If property is lowered will cause people who wouldn’t be able to afford normally to purchase in area and may not keep are up. Do a study of economic impact on property value. Sometimes builders make promises but will they follow through?”*

- *“Provided they do not block water views.”*
- *“Yes, as long as the building doesn’t overwhelm the neighboring buildings. In other words, if a developer has put together a block of properties where building heights can modulate to fit with the area, it would be more acceptable.”*
- *“45’ is enough.”*
- *“Only if it preserves view corridors – straight up box or rectangular buildings would not be appropriate.”*
- *“No – a maximum of 45’; 3 stories is sufficient.”*
- *“No. Clean up downtown.”*
- *“Not convinced that increased heights would be a benefit for the City. Would like to see development of all of the currently empty lots and vacant storefronts. Are there no developers who are interested in imaginative, smaller-scale projects?”*

5. Establishing the use of a “floor area ratio” (i.e., the ratio of the building size to the lot size) as a more flexible standard for regulating building massing and size than the current code provides?

Supportive = 51% Not supportive = 14% No Comment/Neutral = 35%

Key points/questions (as quoted or paraphrased for clarification):

- *“Let’s make Des Moines an attractive, appealing and enticing community that it can be. A community that capitalizes on being a destination locale, rather than a pass through, and only supported by the limited 30,000 residents.”*
- *“Geometry should be more important. Boxes should be limited and open sky and views to Sound made a priority.”*
- *Yes – 80:20*
- *“Not appropriate for Marina area. More appropriate for Highway 99 area.”*
- *“It will add appeal to the sites and rather than block buildings and again draw community and non-community members to visit Des Moines. It’s working in Ballard, Fremont and West Seattle.”*
- *“Excellent idea – creates great appeal to the skyline.”*
- *“Seems this would produce more dense development which is a good long-term goal.”*
- *“Very important and should be true for all new buildings being considered in the City.”*
- *“Agree per previous comment - Love the idea of making downtown more attractive to developers and adding residential to establish a stronger core.”*
- *“No – stay with prescriptive.”*
- *“It should always be a flat standard no flexibility.”*
- *“Yes, to allow for view corridors and/or light. Residents are concerned that their properties will have tall buildings looming over them blocking daylight not just views.”*
- *“Yes – the buildings should have a direct correlation to the lot size.”*
- *“Yes, as long as the maximum height is 45 feet/3 stories.”*

How did we do?

6. Was this open house informative?

Comments:

- *“Very informative and in a very comfortable, easily accessible format with the City representatives.”*
- *“It was good.”*
- *“Very informative.”*
- *“Very much so, thank you.”*
- *“Yes, very good – the people at the stations were very informative and helpful.”*
- *“Very informative. I’m glad I came.”*
- *“Yes. Appreciate having folks available to explain and clarify. Thanks.”*
- *“Yes, everyone was very helpful. Things were explained in detail and questions were answered.”*
- *“Somewhat – it provided more information than I currently had.”*

7. Did your opinions change after learning about the proposed zoning changes?

Comments:

- Yes (3)
- *“No. I was in favor of expanding zoning and still am.”*
- *“Maybe a bit. I see some need to change direction toward a pedestrian friendly and non-auto location. Create places to leave your car and spend the day. Shuttle from Marina parking maybe?”*
- *“I think these changes will revitalize Des Moines.”*
- *“No, they sounded good from the start. Still do.”*
- *“Just got me thinking.”*
- *“Maybe?”*
- *“No, I still love the idea.”*
- *Yes. Looking forward to Des Moines being a destination spot for boaters/visitors. Gig Harbor, Ballard, Poulsbo, LaConner, Edmonds, Tacoma – they have so much to offer – we have potential.”*
- *“No, it did not change opinion on building heights. Great ideas about bringing a lodge into area.”*
- *“Yes and no – some architectural ideas I liked but still have a problem with building heights.”*
- *“Some change, could get a better perspective of the proposed changes.”*
- *“Yes, on the parking and setback.”*

8. Do you have other thoughts or ideas?

Comments:

- *“Thank you for this opportunity.”*
- *“A lot has gone into looks; however, I think more could have been done to encourage pedestrian and bicycle activities. Block off side streets and remove parking from Marine View Drive. Possibly have City purchase eyesore lots and convert to parking area surrounded by trees to hide cars.”*

- “All new buildings should provide retail as well as residential. Projects should include sidewalk cafes and retail that everyone can use.”
- “I will attend the next meeting – after reviewing all the options today.”
- “Keep Marina area on Maritime Theme per city history. Restore the waterfront fun tourist motif. Keep hotels, condos, apartments in Highway 99 area.”
- “Cantilevered corners for sheltered outside dining open (sheltered) spaces. Center tower for theme restaurant. As many unobstructed views as possible – interior courtyard. “
- Will always be interested in how our City is progressing. It’s a beautiful area and can be and should be considered so when any new buildings are built.”
- “Include 6th Avenue S even if it is residential only.”
- “It’s good to see people wanting to develop and improve our city. Enough nail salons, sports bars, dog spas! The city looks patch worked and run down – we’re excited about changes.”
- “Wish City Hall would do something about the slum landlords along Marine View Drive. You want to bring in business and help business succeed, but the buildings are not welcoming for walkers or drivers.”
- “Do a study of economic impact on property value. Take into consideration safety of neighborhood when allowing businesses to come and build in Des Moines. What type of clientele/visitor will more here?”
- “Hope you keep the small town feel and do not become URBAN.”
- “No roundabouts – think this would make a mess of traffic.”
- “Do not like the roundabout planned at the flag pole, QFC corner and Red Robin corner.”
- “Policy Question – do not think commercial property should be on east.”
- “Keep up the good work.”
- “1. Utilize the downtown area’s natural terrain for sub-terrain parking garages; put more covered sidewalks (continuous) in downtown; 3. Don block property owners existing views!”
- “A great beginning to address the vision of what Des Moines should look like in 20, 30 and 50 years from now.”
- “We really liked the ‘old-fashioned,’ ‘Cape Cod’ look.”
- “Think the idea is to sell condos with views at the expense of other homeowners.”
- “Clean up the town.”
- “Additional height is not the solution. Creating more pedestrian friendly streets is.”
- “Concern for people and businesses east of the taller buildings. This will negatively affect their views and property values.”