

## Planning Commission Report

**To:** City Council

**From:** Planning Commission

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**Date:** January 26, 2011

**DGA Number:** L100393 and L100394 (SEPA) Amendments to Neighborhood Commercial portions of Redmond's Comprehensive Plan and Community Development Guide (Zoning Code)

**Planning  
Commission  
Recommendation:** Approval.

**Recommended  
Action:** Adopt Ordinances Nos. \_\_\_\_\_, amending the Redmond Comprehensive Plan and Redmond Community Development Guide (Zoning Code) to update Neighborhood Commercial portions of Redmond's Comprehensive Plan and Community Development Guide (Zoning Code).

The recommended amendments are in Attachment A. Ordinances to be provided.

**Summary:** The recommended Neighborhood Commercial amendments are intended to accomplish the following:

- Establish consistency between Neighborhood Commercial policies and regulations while incorporating timely updates to the Neighborhood Commercial portion of the Land Use Element.

- Provide additional policy-based criteria to guide future decisions on potential rezones.
- Promote compatibility with adjacent land uses by updating standards for elements of neighborhood commercial development such as lighting, signage, and landscaping.
- Support community interest in creation of informal meeting spaces.
- Implement other citywide policies including those found in the Goals, Vision, and Framework; Land Use; Community Character/Historic Preservation; Economic Vitality; and Transportation Elements.

**Reasons the Proposal should be Adopted:**

The proposed amendments should be adopted because they address the following:

- Consistency with goals and policies in the Redmond Comprehensive Plan;
- Compatibility between neighborhood commercial uses and other land uses;
- Preservation of Redmond’s Downtown as the civic and cultural center where citizens obtain a wide-variety of goods and services; and
- Redmond’s long-term land use pattern and community vision to provide goods and services, at small- to medium-scales, within a walkable and bikable distance of homes and places of employment; to create places for people to gather for a variety of purposes; and to help reduce the general frequency of short-distance vehicular trips.

**Recommended Findings of Fact**

**1. Public Hearing and Notice**

**a. Public Hearing Date**

The City of Redmond Planning Commission held a public hearing on the proposed amendments on December 15, 2010 and kept the public hearing open for written comment until January 12, 2011. No one testified at the public hearing however, King County’s Department of Transportation provided comment regarding their transportation

management program and implementation of Neighborhood Commercial land use, included in Attachment B.

John Shively, a transportation planner, described the County's analysis of the Novelty Hill travel shed, located along Avondale Road immediately to the north of Redmond's city limits. This travel shed currently fails the County's concurrency test however Mr. Shively adds that the portion of Avondale Road immediately north of NE 116<sup>th</sup> Street does not fail the test.

#### **b. Notice**

The public hearing notice was published in the Eastside edition of the Seattle Times. Public notices were posted in City Hall and at the Redmond Library. Notice was also provided by including the hearing in Planning Commission agendas and extended agendas mailed to various members of the public and various agencies. Additionally, hearing notification was posted on the city's web site and cable TV.

Hearing notices were mailed to official parties of record, known interested parties, and owners of current Neighborhood Commercial (NC and NC/C) zoned properties.

## **2. Additional Research**

To help provide the Commission with a comprehensive description of the current and near-term commercial climate and to inform development of staff's recommendation, staff presented a series of questions to owners of businesses consistent with the currently permitted neighborhood commercial uses. The same questions were also asked of several Redmond residents whose view of neighborhood commercial uses varied from favorable to significantly unfavorable. A summary of the results is included as Attachment C.

Staff also met with a commercial real estate developer, leasing agent, architect, and two regional planners to assess preliminary, recommended amendments to Redmond's land use and zoning designation. Staff heard suggestions regarding siting, accessibility, population concentrations, and economic vitality. The results of this effort were included in staff's recommendations as provided to the Planning Commission and further described during the Commission's deliberations.

Additionally, during the Planning Commission's review process, staff along with a portion of the Commission met with neighborhood commercial

stakeholders, including several of the business owners and residents who assisted with the research described above. This group responded to a series of questions, ranked preferences, and shared additional thoughts regarding several of the Commission's major discussion topics. This outreach helped inform the Commission's recommendation. A summary of the results of this outreach is included as Attachment D.

## **Recommended Conclusions**

### ***1. Key Issues Discussed by the Planning Commission***

In addition to the comments of King County's Department of Transportation, the Planning Commission raised several issues of its own. Attachment E includes a summary of the Planning Commission's major discussion issues and responses. Below are key issues discussed by the Planning Commission.

#### **a. Placement and Frequency of Neighborhood Commercial**

Commissioners discussed several aspects of the placement and frequency of neighborhood commercial sites. They concurred with the goal of ensuring walkable and bikable access from home and work to these locations. However, a number of the Commissioners expressed significant concern that staff's recommended siting criteria were too limiting and would not allow for neighborhood commercial development within a walkable distance of homes throughout Redmond. In particular, Commissioners questioned the criteria concerning proximity to parks and permitted frequency of the commercial establishments. One Commissioner did not concur with the criterion for proximity between a park and neighborhood commercial establishment and the goal of supporting placemaking and a complementary relationship between these uses. In general, these Commissioners sought opportunities for innovative approaches to neighborhood commercial development.

Other Commissioners believed that it was appropriate to proceed more cautiously and to monitor interest and experiences with neighborhood commercial development. In the end, the Commission agreed to support staff's proposed criteria and to also support an additional policy that provides direction for periodic monitoring of interest in or concerns with neighborhood commercial uses during periods of economic growth.

## **b. Relationship to Redmond's Downtown**

One Commissioner expressed great concern with staff's recommended criterion to maintain a minimum distance of one-half mile for new neighborhood commercial (NC-1) development from the Downtown urban center and to a lesser extent, the Overlake urban center. This Commissioner believed that the minimum distance prohibited the walkable and bikable nature of the intended neighborhood commercial land use and zoning designation. He described several locations in other municipalities such as Bend, Oregon and Portland, Oregon that demonstrated how smaller businesses would not detract from a Downtown urban center. Describing the existing frequency and density of coffee cafes in Redmond's Downtown, he did not see a correlation between the minimum distance and protecting this type of use from increased competition in residential neighborhoods. He added that Redmond's terrain further restricted walkable and bikable access to goods and services and therefore provided the basis for removing the required minimum distance.

Staff recommended maintaining the minimum distance as initially proposed to continue supporting Redmond's Downtown as Redmond's major retail and service center and to also prevent "commercial creep" between the Downtown and adjacent neighborhoods. Ultimately, the Commission supported this approach provided that the City continues to periodically monitor key elements of neighborhood commercial uses such as access and economic vitality to determine if further updates are needed.

## **c. Scale and Tenancy**

A majority of the Commissioners expressed their interest in the City continuing exploration of a single-tenant, micro-scale neighborhood commercial use. In combination with periodic monitoring of market and general public interest, the Commission requested that staff engage the community in evaluating the need, interest in and guidelines for permitting a smaller-scale commercial than recommended as NC-1. In particular, the Commission sought exploration of policy and associated regulations that would enable the establishment of single-use, single-tenant neighborhood commercial sites in locations throughout Redmond. The Commissioners believed that requests for additional neighborhood commercial zoning should be prompted by property owner interest and market analysis and should not be limited by policy based siting criteria that would focus new neighborhood commercial zoning in certain locations.

While the majority of the Commission voted for approval of staff's recommendation that includes policy based siting criteria and includes

proactive monitoring of neighborhood commercial interests and concerns, the majority of the Commissioners strongly emphasized support for near-term discussions with Redmond's citizenry including businesses and residents as well as commercial and mixed-use real estate developers for evaluating micro-commercial uses.

The Commission minority did not support this recommendation, reasoning that it is appropriate for the City to allow single-tenant, micro-scale neighborhood commercial uses throughout Redmond. In addition, Commissioner Miller submitted a minority report describing his additional interest in this type of commercial development, its placement throughout the City, and design and operating criteria such as restrictive on-site parking, as shown in Attachment F.

**2. *Recommended Conclusions of the Technical Committee.***

The recommended conclusions in the Technical Committee Report (Attachment G) should be adopted as conclusions.

**3. *Planning Commission Recommendation.***

The motion to recommend the amendments to Neighborhood Commercial portions of Redmond's Comprehensive Plan and Community Development Guide (Zoning Code) in Attachment A was approved by a four-to-two vote with one Commissioner not in attendance. The Planning Commission's Report was reviewed by Planning Commissioners and approved at their January 26, 2011 meeting.

## List of Attachments

- Attachment A: Planning Commission’s Recommended Amendments to Neighborhood Commercial portions of Redmond’s Comprehensive Plan and Community Development Guide (Zoning Code)**
- Attachment B: Public Comments and Public Hearing Minutes**
- Attachment C: Stakeholder Survey Results (outreach to inform staff recommendation)**
- Attachment D: Stakeholder Questionnaire Results (outreach during Planning Commission review)**
- Attachment E: Planning Commission’s Issues Matrix**
- Attachment F: Commissioner Miller’s Minority Report**
- Attachment G: Technical Committee Report**

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Robert G. Odle, Planning Director

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Date

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Thomas T. Hinman, Planning Commission Chairperson

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Date

Approved for Council Agenda

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John Marchione, Mayor

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Date

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