

MEMO TO: Mayor Marchione and City Council

FROM: Rob Odle, Director, Planning & Community Development, 425-556-2417
 Colleen Kelly, Assistant Director, Community Planning, 425-556-2423
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DATE: April 18, 2013

SUBJECT: **STUDY SESSION: COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AND ZONING CODE AMENDMENTS REGARDING SUSTAINABILITY, ARCHITECTURAL EXCELLENCE, AND ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW (L120157; L120156; L120155; SEPA 2013 00274)**

PURPOSE

The purpose of the April 23, 2013, study session is to discuss and resolve discussion issues identified by Council members regarding proposed amendments to the Redmond Comprehensive Plan and Redmond Zoning Code concerning sustainability, architectural excellence, and environmental review.

BACKGROUND

These proposed Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code amendments are now under review by City Council. In its report dated March 20, 2013, the Planning Commission provided recommendations for the three-part proposal as follows:

Proposal	Planning Commission Recommendation
Add new ninth goal to Comprehensive Plan	Deny
Revise policy language in Comprehensive Plan to encourage innovative and green buildings	Deny
Zoning Code Amendment to raise State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) exemption thresholds	No action at this time

Council members identified discussion issues regarding these proposed amendments during a staff report at its April 16, 2013, meeting, available online at

www.redmond.gov/Government/CityCouncil/meetinginformation

Mayor and Council

RE: STUDY SESSION: COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AND ZONING CODE AMENDMENTS REGARDING
SUSTAINABILITY, ARCHITECTURAL EXCELLENCE AND ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

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ENCLOSURES

Attachment A An issues matrix is attached for your assistance in preparing for the study session. Staff has provided initial responses to Council's comments based on information available at this time.

Exhibit 1: *Existing Comprehensive Plan Policies and Zoning Code Regulations related to sustainability and green development*

SCHEDULE

Based on direction received at the April 16, 2013, study session, staff will prepare documents for the Council's final action on this matter. Staff anticipates final action on May 21, 2013.

Please contact Pete Sullivan at ppsullivan@redmond.gov if any questions are not captured correctly, or if further clarification is needed.

Comprehensive Plan And Zoning Code Amendments Regarding Sustainability, Architectural Excellence And Environmental Review

Issue / Councilmember	Discussion Notes	Status
<p>1. What is the timeline for staff following up with a City-initiated proposed Zoning Code Amendment to address State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) exemption thresholds?</p> <p><i>Allen</i></p>	<p><u>Staff Comment/Recommendation:</u> Staff anticipates Planning Commission will begin reviewing this item in late May 2013. City Council review is anticipated in summer 2013.</p> <p><u>Public Comment:</u></p> <p><u>Council Comments:</u></p>	<p>Opened 4/17/13</p>
<p>2. How is this proposal inconsistent with Comprehensive Plan policies and existing principles for sustainability?</p> <p><i>Allen</i></p>	<p><u>Staff Comment/Recommendation:</u> This response addresses the first two parts of the applicant’s proposal.</p> <p>The <u>first</u> part of the applicant’s proposal – adding a new, ninth goal to the Comprehensive Plan – has three inconsistent aspects, as described in the Planning Commission’s Report:</p> <p><i>1) Sustainability is already explicitly defined in the Comprehensive Plan.</i> The Comprehensive Plan is already guided by explicit sustainability principles expressing the community’s intent for all aspects of sustainability. The applicant asserts that the Comprehensive Plan does not demonstrate Redmond’s commitment to sustainability, and that the Plan’s <i>Goals</i> should be the place to reflect this. The Planning Commission noted that the City’s commitment to sustainability is already evident in the plan. For example, the opening of the Plan’s <i>Introduction and Sustainability Principles</i> section describes how sustainability became an organizing principle for the document as a whole, and that sustainability is intentionally woven throughout narrative and policies. It also describes the community engagement process – highlighted by the <i>Livable Redmond</i> event in November 2010 – that resulted in the Plan’s six Sustainability Principles. As noted in the Plan, the principles are intended to act as a lens to guide future City decisions.</p> <p><i>2) Proposal could undesirably limit the scope of sustainability.</i> The applicant’s proposed new goal draws a connection between the built environment and sustainability. While addressing the environmental dimensions of sustainability is important, the</p>	<p>Opened 4/17/13</p>

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	<p>Comprehensive Plan defines sustainability more broadly, as being a balance of the environment, the economy, and social equity. The concern is that the new goal as proposed could limit the view of sustainability and conflict with other portions of Plan.</p> <p><i>3) Proposal speaks to implementation, while other goals speak to intent.</i> The proposed new goal is phrased more like a policy than a goal, because it speaks to <u>how</u> the City should achieve its goals. In contrast, the other eight goals are higher-level, describing <u>what</u> the City should look like.</p> <p>The <u>second</u> part of the applicant’s proposal, regarding Comprehensive Plan policies for building design, also has three inconsistent aspects, as described in the Planning Commission’s Report:</p> <p><i>1) Proposal is not clear</i> The proposal is not readily clear in its objectives, and uses certain terms like “dynamic” that are not well understood.</p> <p><i>2) Proposal duplicates existing green building policies and code requirements</i> Explicit support and incentives for green building and low impact development techniques already exist in Comprehensive Plan policies and Zoning Code regulations as noted in <u>Exhibit 1</u>. If the applicant is seeking additional flexibility in development standards for green buildings, such a request would be more appropriately made via a Zoning Code amendment, because it would directly address any hurdles to green development that a developer may be experiencing.</p> <p><i>3) Proposal establishes an unreasonable level of green development expectations</i> The Commission aims to balance the aspirations of innovative developers with those in the development community who practice more traditional techniques, and otherwise meet code requirements.</p> <p><u>Public Comment:</u></p> <p><u>Council Comments:</u></p>	

Comprehensive Plan And Zoning Code Amendments Regarding Sustainability, Architectural Excellence And Environmental Review

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<p>3. Some aspects of the applicant’s proposal appear to be based on assumed, future code changes. What are the implications of the applicant’s proposal if those assumed changes do occur?</p> <p><i>Myers</i></p>	<p><u>Staff Comment/Recommendation:</u></p> <p>There are two known linkages between the applicant’s proposal and future policy or Zoning Code amendments.</p> <p>First, the applicant is aware that a new, higher SEPA exemption threshold became available to the City in January 2013 in response to the Round 1 rule-making process by the state Department of Ecology. The applicant thereby encourages the City to respond by raising SEPA thresholds via Zoning Code amendment. As noted in item #1 above, staff will follow up in a timely manner with a separate, City-initiated proposed Zoning Code amendment process that will allow for thorough discussion of the implications of changing the exemption thresholds. The applicant did not propose a specific exemption threshold for the City to consider, therefore taking no action at this time with regard to SEPA exemptions does not negatively impact future Planning Commission or City Council discussion.</p> <p>Second, the applicant indicated that revising policies related to building design could positively inform a future update to <i>Redmond’s Design Standards</i>. An update to the design standards was recommended by the Code Rewrite Commission as part of recently-completed review and update of Redmond’s Zoning Code. However, the applicant’s proposed policies related to building design have other drawbacks, as noted in item #2 above. Moreover, staff believes that the Comprehensive Plan’s sustainability principles already provide a foundation for addressing the the tone of Redmond’s Design Standards. How that tone is specifically incorporated into the Zoning Code could be holistically addressed when the design standards update is formally initiated.</p> <p><u>Public Comment:</u></p> <p><u>Council Comments:</u></p>	<p>Opened 4/17/13</p>

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<p>4. How is a sustainability with respect to the built environment currently expressed in the Comprehensive Plan?</p> <p><i>Flynn</i></p>	<p><u>Staff Comment/Recommendation:</u></p> <p>The connection between the built environment and sustainability are reflected in the Plan’s goals, policies, and sustainability principles as follows:</p> <p><u>Comprehensive Plan Goals</u></p> <p>The following goals address the built environment and sustainability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To emphasize choices and equitable access in housing, transportation, stores and services. • To support vibrant concentrations of retail, office, service, residential and recreational activity in Downtown and Overlake. • To cultivate a well-connected community, working together and with others in the region to implement a common vision for Redmond’s sustainable future. <p><u>Sustainability Principles</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having housing choices that are accessible to residents with various incomes, ages and abilities; • Valuing environmental quality and supporting choices that minimize impacts to the environment; <p><u>Policies</u></p> <p>Please see <u>Exhibit 1</u>, which lists existing Comprehensive Plan policies and Zoning Code regulations related to the built environment and sustainability.</p> <p><u>Public Comment</u></p> <p><u>Council Comments:</u></p>	<p>Opened 4/17/13</p>

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<p>5. Do other jurisdictions identify sustainability within their comprehensive plan goals? How does Redmond’s approach toward addressing sustainability in its plan compare with others in the region, and to what extent does our approach satisfy regional requirements?</p> <p><i>Allen</i></p>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>City</th> <th>Title of Comprehensive Plan*</th> <th colspan="4">Where does sustainability appear in the document?</th> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2"></td> <th>Goals</th> <th>Vision statement</th> <th>Special section or heading</th> <th>Stand-alone element</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> = Item is included in comprehensive plan <input type="checkbox"/> = Item not included in comprehensive plan </td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Seattle</td> <td><i>Toward a Sustainable Seattle (2005)</i></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Redmond</td> <td><i>Redmond 2030 (2011)</i></td> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Bellevue</td> <td><i>Bellevue Comprehensive Plan (2004)</i></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Kirkland</td> <td><i>Kirkland Comprehensive Plan (1995)</i></td> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Woodinville</td> <td><i>Woodinville Comprehensive Plan (2009)</i></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Bainbridge Island</td> <td><i>Bainbridge Island Comprehensive Plan (2004)</i></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Bellingham</td> <td><i>Bellingham Comprehensive Plan (2006)</i></td> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Spokane</td> <td><i>Spokane Comprehensive Plan (2012)</i></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="6"> <p><i>* Dates shown under the title of each plan refer to original year of publication or last major major periodic update.</i></p> </td> <td rowspan="10"> <p>Opened 4/17/13</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="6"> <p>The table above provides a snapshot of how various Washington cities address sustainability in their Comprehensive Plans. 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	<p>cities are now in the process of updating their comprehensive plans as Redmond did in 2011, and one could expect that over time, sustainability will be more explicitly emphasized by other cities as they carry out their periodic comprehensive plan updates.</p> <p>With respect to how sustainability is expressed in a comprehensive plan, cities have some discretion in choosing how to incorporate it. As part of the 2010-11 periodic update to the Comprehensive Plan, Redmond chose to weave sustainability across all chapters and policies, and decribed that process in the Plan’s <i>Introduction</i>.</p> <p>Prior to the agency’s final certification of <i>Redmond 2030</i>, PSRC staff reviewed a working version of the plan and provided written comments and suggestions. The following is an excerpt from their Janurary 2011 review:</p> <p>SECTION I: NOTEWORTHY WORK IN DRAFT ELEMENTS</p> <p><i>The draft elements submitted to PSRC show great progress towards implementing VISION 2040. Particularly noteworthy work identified during our initial review of the draft elements received includes the:</i></p> <p>Goals and Vision Element</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Incorporation of the theme of sustainability and a continued focus on environmental stewardship which acknowledges —a systems perspective and recognizes that people, nature and the economy are all affected by both individual and collective actions.</i> • <i>A call for a complete approach to the natural environment, including protecting, enhancing and restoring habitat and natural ecosystems.</i> • <i>New policies addressing climate change, including consideration of potential built, natural, and social impacts.</i> 	

Existing Comprehensive Plan Policies and Zoning Code Regulations related to sustainability and green development.

Land Use Element – Comprehensive Plan

- LU-4 Encourage sustainable development of both public and private lands in Redmond through the use of techniques, such as green building and green infrastructure.
- LU-5 Provide an appropriate level of flexibility through development regulations to promote efficient use of buildable land. Balance this flexibility with other community goals and the need for predictability in decision making. Achieve this through measures such as clustering that preserve open space and administrative variances for minor variations.

Natural Environment Element – Comprehensive Plan

- NE-12 Encourage environmentally friendly construction practices, such as Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED), King County Built Green, and low impact development.
- NE-13 Encourage projects which utilize alternative technologies, engineering, and plans which emphasize low-impact development strategies through incentives and flexibility in meeting regulatory requirements.
- NE-24 Encourage use of creative and appropriate site design and housing types to balance environmental protection and achievable density. Encourage clustering and density transfers for both commercial and residential development to help retain significant natural features and critical areas as open space.

Utilities Element – Comprehensive Plan

UT-73 Promote, support, and increase the use of clean alternative energy by:

- Advocating for the development of renewable energy sources;
- Facilitating development and use of innovative technologies, such as alternative fuels and on-site renewable energy; and
- Providing incentives for development that incorporates renewable energy.

Redmond Zoning Code

- Green Building and Green Infrastructure Incentive Program (RZC 21.67)
- Overlake Incentive Program (RZC 21.12.170)