

**GIG HARBOR CITY COUNCIL
BUILDING SIZE ANALYSIS WORKSESSION
July 6, 2004 6:00 p.m. – Civic Center Community Rooms**

PRESENT:

Councilmembers: Derek Young, Paul Conan, Jim Franich, Bob Dick, and John Picinich. Mayor Wilbert was absent, and Councilmember Franich presided over the meeting.

Councilmembers Ekberg and Ruffo were absent.

Staff: Mark Hoppen, John Vodopich, Steve Osguthorpe and Molly Towslee.

Mayor Pro Tem Franich opened the worksession at 6:03 and welcomed everyone. John Vodopich, Community Development Director, explained that this session was to address building size limitations in the height restriction area of the View Basin, with the exception of the DB and waterfront; two zones which were discussed in earlier worksessions. He gave an overview of the recommendations for each zone.

Councilmembers explained that they would address each zone marked in yellow on the handout, discuss any concerns, and accept any public comments before moving on to discuss the next zone.

Carol Davis asked for clarification on whether the recommendation for a 3500 s.f. / structure meant that more than one structure could be built on a parcel or lot. She said that the lots in the downtown area are small, asking if a series of 3500 s.f. structures could be built side-by-side, resulting in a large structure.

Councilmember Young explained that the reason behind the change to per structure rather than per lot was for city-wide zoning rather than for the smaller lots downtown. He said that a limit of 3500 per lot would encourage sub-division of larger lots, which may not be the best solution.

Steve Osguthorpe, Planning / Building Manger, read the setback requirements for the R-1 and R-2 zones.

Architect David Bowe used the white board to illustrate what could occur with separate buildings.

Mr. Osguthorpe said that this concern with separation of structures could be handled through a definition of structure that requires a physical separation between buildings as opposed to using the building code definition. Mr. Bowe voiced concern of how you could determine an appropriate spacing.

Councilmember Young explained that it would be similar to identifying setback requirements. He said that this is not such a concern in the R-1 or R-2 zones, but in the RB-1 and RB-2 zones where small office or small commercial buildings are allowed. He

said that they wanted to encourage an overall site-plan with smaller buildings rather than having the parcel subdivided.

Ms. Davis commented that the 3500 s.f. per structure may not be valid in all zoning districts and may have unintended consequences.

Councilmembers discussed the concern and agreed that further consideration is warranted.

Mayor Pro Tem asked how everyone felt about the 3500 s.f. limitation. Councilmember Conan said that it is okay in the downtown area, but he was unsure of that figure for lots further away from the waterfront.

Lita Dawn Stanton voiced concern that Council was about to give their stamp of approval for a 3500 s.f. limitation without enough information. Mayor Pro Tem Franich explained that no decisions were being made, and that Council was in no hurry to approve any limitations until the completion of the charette process. There was discussion about what limitations would be appropriate further up Soundview, and whether the issue is building size or view corridors.

Scott Wagner commented that it appears that the 3500 s.f. limitation was pulled from a hat. He recommended using the tax records to average the size of structures throughout the different areas. Councilmember Young said that he has information that the average Gig Harbor home is 2900 s.f.

Bruce Gair explained that the Planning Commission forwarded the recommendation for the 3500 s.f. limitation from information they obtained using the GPS picture of downtown. He said that the vast majority of the buildings were in the 3500 s.f. range. He said that the Planning Commission only made a recommendation to limit commercial buildings so as not to "step on any toes" by recommending that residential also be limited.

Scott Wagner said that the Arial photo the Planning Commission used only shows the footprint. He asked if it matters if the structure has a basement, or if the building stays within the setbacks. He said that it should be a footprint limitation, not a total structure limit. Councilmember Young explained that by limiting the footprint you are giving an advantage to sloped lots. He said along Olympic Drive, there are several office buildings that have daylight basement structures.

Others agreed that it would not be a negative thing to have this advantage if it didn't affect the neighbors. Councilmember Young said that if building size is the issue, then this shouldn't be allowed. The back side of a building should have as much consideration as the front.

Mark Hoppen pointed out that the value is the view, and the question is the best way to address it.

Dick Allen pointed out that the design of a building has a great deal to do with what is acceptable. He used the BDR building and the ones built below as an example.

Lee Desta agreed that trees make a huge difference, and added how important it is to limit the height and the types of trees being planted when protecting the “mega-mansions.”

Mr. Gair added that he remembered that the 3500 s.f. limitation came from the existing limits in the Millville zone.

Councilmembers discussed whether or not it was necessary to make a motion and decided that these two remaining worksessions were only to gain input. They recommended allowing the charette process to occur before any further decisions or directions were made.

Mr. Hunter said that the value in these meetings was the ability to bring out the concerns that came to light from the first draft of the ordinance. He reiterated that the previous votes were to allow larger buildings on the Westside and to take zoning changes off the table for consideration. John Vodopich explained that the zoning changes may come back as a result of the charrettes.

The discussion moved on to the R-2 zone.

Councilmember Young commented that in light of the discussion, the R-2 recommendation needs adjustment. He asked for clarification of how the size is currently regulated in R-2 and R-3. Steve Osguthorpe explained that in R-3 it is units per acre, and in the R-2 only a duplex is allowed. Councilmembers discussed size limitation in the R-2 zone.

Ms. Desta asked Council to refer to the large duplexes that were just constructed off Pioneer as examples of how large a structure could occur.

The discussion then moved on to the R-3 zone.

Councilmember Young said that he felt that there should be some limit in the R-3 zone, but he would like to encourage some non-residential uses in that zone due to the intense nature of the development. Steve Osguthorpe explained that there are currently no limits on size but the density is limited to eight units per acre.

Mr. Wagner said that there shouldn't be any limitation but density in this zone. Councilmember Picinich said that because there is only one R-3 parcel in the view corridor, he thought it should be kept at no limit.

The discussion then moved to RB-1.

Jack Bujacich asked why the Ancich parcels on Grandview were zoned RB-1 where they abut the residential parcels. He said that condos would be appropriate and would provide a good buffer for the commercial across the street and the residential down the hill.

Mark Hoppen explained that this may be an appropriate place for a zone mapping change.

Mr. Gair said that he had submitted a letter from five families that live on Butler that explained their concerns with the trees on the harbor side of Grandview, the concern that tall office buildings may be built on these parcels and the impact on traffic. Mr. Gair asked that Council review this letter.

Mr. Allen agreed that Grandview is a good buffer between residential and commercial.

Mr. Bowe said that he came to comment on the RB-1, and asked permission to illustrate some of the issues of this zone on the whiteboard. He explained that he has had an opportunity to study an RB-1 site in the view basin, and drew three zones, with the RB-1 between an R-1 and a C-1 zone. He explained that because this is a transition zone, and because of the required buffers and setback requirements, that the only way to make the property work is to sub-divide or to build higher-density residential.

Councilmember Young said that this illustrates what they were trying to prevent; the separation of projects. Mr. Bowe said that this creates lots of little buildings with their own parking lots in the view basin, which should be a higher density area.

Mark Hoppen explained that a property owner would attempt the maximum density in a transition zone. He said that this is the triangle on the map and what is adjacent is R-2, not R-1. He asked what kind of transition people would like to see in this area. He continued to explain, using the Spadoni Brothers property as an example. He said that because of the transition standards that limit the size of the building, this property would not support 5,000 s.f. structures. He said that you could get five buildings, but they would be the same size as the houses next door. He stressed that a number of standards are at work in the transition zone, not just the square footage. He said that the downtown triangle property would lend itself to a strange averaging problem due to the surrounding buildings.

This led to a discussion on whether height restrictions would be sufficient to accomplish the desired results. Mr. Bowe said that Gig Harbor has a unique way of measuring height. This was further discussed.

Councilmember Young said that the intent of the per structure limitation was to discourage haphazard subdivision and to encourage master site planning. He asked if the per lot limit is the direction that was preferred.

Mr. Bowe responded that there are principles and there are rules that supposedly enforce principles. He said that the principles should override the rules, so that when

you have a unique site, following the principles of the design means that you cannot follow a rules-based permitting process. This allows public input on the design so that the buildings all don't look the same. Any character will be lost because you can't design each site as if it was a flat parcel, adding that the developer wants to maximize the site.

Councilmember Franich asked if maximizing the site should be the driving force. Mr. Bowe said that the result would be residential and the downtown would disappear. Councilmember Franich disagreed. He said that if the triangle doesn't develop as commercial, the downtown will not die. Mr. Bowe said that the 3,500 or 5,000 limitation would discourage any commercial development and the downtown will become more residential. He added that the character of this area should be guided by guidelines, not square footage. He used other jurisdictions as an example of how each project is reviewed independently.

Councilmember Young pointed out that without limits, you would end up with a 65,000 s.f. building in place that you do not want, which has happened in the past with buildings that the public is unhappy.

Mr. Bowe said that this is an unfair analogy, because the Design Review Board was not allowed to review the entire project, only specific points. He said that you can't govern or legislate this with rules.

Lita Dawn Stanton said that she agreed with this analogy. She said that the city wants to rely on design review, but won't give them the power to be flexible. And yet, you want to use numbers to take care of what we don't trust with design review.

Councilmember Young said that up to this point, the fear has been a 65,000 s.f. building at the Finholm site, and if you don't have a limit, how would you prevent this. Ms. Stanton replied that she would be in favor of a larger building size limit if she believed that design review would have the power to dictate design without it being a subjective opinion challenge. She said that other jurisdictions are doing it, adding that what you want is to reflect neighborhoods, which requires three legs to design. These are staff, a board appointed because of their expertise, and the community. As it is now, there is no fluid interaction with the community.

Councilmember Young asked what would happen if a developer doesn't choose to go through a design review process. Mr. Bowe recommended that they not have a choice.

Mr. Gair said that the Planning Commission had completed the public hearings on the first look at the Design Review Manual, and he does not believe that they can develop a manual that can address the concerns and the legalities that will work for everyone. He said that they could deliver a manual for Costco and that neighborhood, or one for the Downtown Business zone, but without a look at the all different communities contained in this one town, no one book can do it all.

Steve Luengen. Mr. Luengen said that he found it very hard to get a large building on his site due to the averaging of the surrounding structures. He said that they had to average over three different zones, and his building had to be broken into two to obtain the smaller scale. He sympathized with what was said about the rules driving the structures, as he found that rules drove everything in his development and he was not pleased with the inability to work with the city to come up with a design that would work for the area.

Councilmember Young used Mr. Luengen's original drawings of a much larger building as an example of how the averaging rules and the requirement for a view corridor could work for a more acceptable project. Mr. Luengen agreed that in the end, he cannot say it was a bad thing, because he can see the merits and trying to make the building fit better in the area. He said that he had the same issues with the Design Review Board, when they were looking at such minute details of the plan that it was a disappointment. He wanted comment and feedback on the whole project, which they were unable to give. He added that if the DRB limited his building to a smaller size, he would have reverted to residential, which isn't what that area should be. That area should invite the public to sit down and enjoy the harbor.

Councilmember Franich said that he thought that the building is too big for that area and the two buildings are an example of how the Design Review Manual and Municipal Code can be manipulated to end up with a bigger building. He said that the area would have been better served with residential.

Mark Hoppen said that this another example of a mapping issue. The parcel was split between a commercial and residential zone.

Wade Perrow. Mr. Perrow echoed the comments that the community needs to be involved. He added that he lives in the urban City of Gig Harbor, and he likes to be able to walk down and go to the shops and feel like he is a part of the community. He asked how you can specifically define that any size limit is in the best interest, or is an ideal size. He said that there are safety standards written for roadways that pertain to the particular statistical information, but there is no such information on building size. He said that Councilmembers need to keep in mind that you cannot legislate good taste. What one person sees as good may not be what another sees as good. He used Spinnaker Ridge as an example of good development and cloistering of services. He said that these building size limitations are just a knee-jerk response.

Councilmember Franich said that the Planning Commission gave quite a lot of thought to and took a look at the existing neighborhoods to come up with the numbers that have been recommended.

The discussion moved on to the B-1 zone. There is only one in the entire city, located behind the Uddenberg Shopping Center and is supposed to be used for neighborhood business. Councilmember Young suggested that the Finholm area may be a good place for this zoning designation, which can be reworked to allow something like a

grocery center, but without the larger retail structures that are allowed in the B-2 zone. The Councilmembers discussed a small retail concept for the B-1 designation, and to replace the B-2 in the Finholm district with this new B-1 zone. Mayor Pro Tem Franich agreed that the Finholm and the Beach Basket areas need more consideration to make a decision that is best for the neighbors and the community. He added that a 65,000 s.f. limit is not appropriate there.

Steve Luengen said that again, you are trying to legislate design. He said that no one would build a 6500 s.f. building there, as there is no parking. Chuck Hunter warned that if you allow the 6500 s.f. limit there, someone would figure out how to do it.

Mark Hoppen said that it cannot be done because of the transition zone standards that would apply. Mr. Hunter pointed out that with buffers and meeting the DRB standards, you may be able to work through a lot of that, adding that a 6500 s.f. building is too large for this area. Mark Hoppen then commented that it doesn't make sense to zone the downtown and the north end differently.

Mayor Pro Tem Franich stressed that in the charette process, this area would be given a hard look. He said that the B-2 limits on the Westside would not work here. Mr. Hoppen said that it doesn't make sense to have larger buildings on the north end than in the downtown. This led to more discussion on what would be appropriate for a neighborhood zone with an emphasis on the scale of the existing buildings.

Councilmember Picinich said that he agreed with a B-1 designation for the Finholm area, pointing out that this isn't a large area. Councilmember Conan commented that he too agreed that the B-1 zone needs to be rewritten to fit. Councilmember Franich said that mass and scale was as important as uses. He again said that Mr. Luengen's building does not fit the existing scale of the neighborhood.

Mr. Luengen commented that the rules forced him to build out front. He originally wanted the placement of the structure further back on the property. Steve Osguthorpe explained that the main part of the property was zoned R-1.

Dick Allen said that an interesting fact is that as large as the Hennington Building is, it is not as noticeable because of the blending and landscaping.

Mr. Luengen commented that office space in the Finholm district is one of the things that is keeping it alive. He said that he is trying to place retail in his building, and there just isn't the interest.

Mr. Hoppen asked if the conjoined nature of the buildings on the uphill side of this area was of value. If this is desirable, maybe B-1 isn't the correct zone. He suggested a DB zoning designation, as this is the zone that is supposed to be across from WC.

Councilmember Young responded that it all depends upon what is appropriate for each neighborhood.

Ms. Stanton mentioned that the Luengen building is made up of 3,000 s.f. structures, and that according to the Design Manual, you could build this same thing all along the Finholm District. She asked whether it is the height or footprint that needs to be looked at.

Mr. Luengen commented that he chuckled when he heard that people said that the Harbor Inn is about right at its 3000 s.f. footprint, because his buildings are the same.

Chuck Hunter said that the trick on the height was the two zones and staff allowed the height to be calculated from the high side of the assessor's, R-1 zone. If it would have been measured from where the building actually sits, it would have been much lower, with the parking garage in the ground. Mr. Hoppen restated that the problem is with mapping, and a single parcel should never be split with two zones.

Mayor Pro Tem Franich stressed that is where you measure the height. Bruce Gair offered that the original building was supposed to be 63 feet high, and there has been a lot of mitigation since the original design.

Wade Perrow suggested that Council needs to identify a vision for that corridor, using Poulsbo, La Conner, and Port Townsend as examples of smaller cities on the water. He asked if you would rather see an asphalt parking lot, or if it would be nicer to see a building along there. He recommended developing a zone for that area that would compliment what happens on the water side. He said that several 3,000 s.f. buildings would not look as good as a longer monolithic building that has different store-front looks.

Mayor Pro Tem Franich said that for him, it all comes down to height. He said that the BDR Building and the Luengen Building are prime examples of structures that are too high. Mr. Perrow said that this is the reason that you have to complete a visioning process.

Councilmember Conan said that the one building, broken up into smaller pieces, sounds like a DB zone. Mr. Hoppen said that square footage limitations guarantees that it would be intimate looking. A consolidated approach in this area, with a limited height, might look good here, but it would require addressing the concerns voiced by Chuck Hunter that someone could "beat the rules" and build something out of scale.

Councilmember Dick asked if there are many properties with split zoning. It was determined that the Luengen property was the last site with this anomaly.

Discussion moved to the C-1 District. The only parcel identified as having C-1 zoning is located across from the Beach Basket on the corner of Harborview Drive.

Someone in the audience said that the city should just buy this property and turn it into a park. Councilmember Picinich agreed, or said that the city would offer to give the property owners a "write-off" if they donated the property to the city.

Joel Wingard said that he knew there was talk about restoring the tidelands where Donkey Creek goes into the bay. He said that one of PNA's issues is more access to the water. Councilmember Picinich said that this is also a goal of the Council, and to do what is best for the community by buying as much property in that basin including the Scofield Property and the Eddon Boat property. This is where the citizens need to get involved to buy these properties to preserve them for the public. Then Council wouldn't have to worry about zoning. He stressed that it is time for the city to get busy and buy the property, just as they should have bought the Ancich property when they had the chance. This would preserve the basin and provide access to the area. He said that it will take the citizens to give the support to move forward.

Jack Bujacich said that Council can create the bond issue and let the voters make the choice.

Mayor Pro Tem Franich asked that due to time constraints, that the discussion stay on the C-1 zone.

Ms. Stanton suggested pooling the Finholm District, along Harborview, and the DB District into one B-1 zone.

Bruce Gair explained that at one point the Planning Commission thought about a C-1 and a C-2 zone to avoid this argument; but an agreement could not be reached on how to define C-2.

Councilmember Dick said that if there is a vision for a low-intensity use here, why trigger immediate development by upzoning it to a higher density use. He encouraged the use of the visioning process for the property. He said that the prospect of public acquisition is great, but it takes a great deal of money, and to wait until someone has started on a project that will triple its value is silly, as you will never be able to buy it under those circumstances. He said that if you think the look and feel of this part of the neighborhood should be lower than it is, you shouldn't contemplate making it bigger.

Councilmember Conan commented that the property is currently zoned C-1 and you couldn't make it any bigger, unless you made it DB with no limits. Councilmember Dick said that this was his concern; the discussion that it be consistent and it become DB all along there. If you change the definition of DB, he could understand that logic.


Mark Hoppen clarified that it would be DB with limits. Mayor Pro Tem Franich explained that this property was zoned C-1 because the light company was located there. Mr. Hoppen explained that every place that there has been historical, industrial, or heavy commercial use has been zoned as a matter of history, not as a matter of the future. That is the problem.

Councilmember Picinich said that he would rather see B-1 than DB for that whole area from the marina on around. Councilmember Conan agreed with this comment.

There were no further comments, and Mayor Pro Tem Franich thanked the audience for participating. He announced that the next worksession is July 19th at 6:00 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:



Molly Towslee, City Clerk