

**GIG HARBOR CITY COUNCIL
DESIGN REVIEW MANUAL WORKSESSION**

August 30, 2004, 6:00 p.m. – Civic Center Community Rooms

PRESENT:

Councilmembers: Steve Ekberg, Derek Young, Paul Conan, Jim Franich, Bob Dick, John Picinich, and Frank Ruffo. Mayor Wilbert presided over the meeting.

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

Mayor Wilbert opened the work-study session at 6:08. Steve Osguthorpe, Planning & Building Manager, explained the agenda. He said that he would give a brief introduction and history of Design Review in Gig Harbor, and then there would be a brief discussion on the effectiveness of design review before moving into review of the draft document.

Mr. Osguthorpe then presented a history of the adoption of the Design Manual, first adopted in 1996. He further explained that recently, the Design Review Board had been changed from a decision-making body to a recommending-body.

Mr. Osguthorpe described the two main proposals before Council. The first is to update the manual to fix inconsistencies in the manual and the second, to codify the manual to add a new Chapter 17.99 to the zoning code. He gave an overview of some of the more significant amendments to the document to address the inclusion of industrial building exemptions, zone transition standards, height allowance issues, and the issue of buffering standards in the view basin.

Mr. Osguthorpe then moved into the second agenda item, Effectiveness of Design Review. He addressed questions regarding recent projects that have chosen to build according to the administrative code rather than choosing to utilize the Design Review Board. Discussion ensued over the Luengen Building and the fact that the applicant chose to withdraw from the DRB process and instead utilize the administrative process. Carol Morris, City Attorney, explained that the apparent frustration with the Design Review Board process led the developers to transition back to using the administrative process. Mr. Osguthorpe added that many of the issues regarding specificity and vagueness had been addressed in the manual updates.

Councilmembers requested that as staff moved through each section of the draft manual, that the updates be identified with a description of what brought about the changes. Mr. Osguthorpe agreed, and asked that because of the amount of concern with the Design Review process, that Council first go through the updates to the manual, and then go back and review the Design Review process to see if there is a better way to incorporate input at the start of the design process.

Mr. Osguthorpe then proceeded to review updates to the manual by section. He said that he would give a brief overview of changes to each section and then open it up for discussion.

Section 1 – Neighborhood Context

1.1 Activity Centers – Mr. Osguthorpe explained that the primary changes to this section are to:

- Rename and amend boundaries of activity centers
- Eliminate requirement to cluster development around outdoor pace in activities centers
- Eliminate requirement for pedestrian paths in activity centers to connect to out-lying development.
- Eliminate requirement to buffer pedestrian areas from the street.
- Eliminate transit stop language from activity center standards.
- Identify new parkways and eliminate portions of Rosedale Street parkway and extend Peacock Hill Ave parkway.
- Eliminate setback averaging requirement from parkway standards.
- Revise Zone Transition standards:
 - to include more definitive description of “substantial buffering”
 - to require conformance to architectural standards in abutting zones
 - to apply zone transition standards only if proposed use is not allowed in opposing zone
 - to redefine structures in opposing zones used to determine average footprint size and height
 - to define zoning categories that zone transition standards apply to
 - to eliminate vegetative buffering as an option for meeting zone transition standards within the height restriction area
 - to provide an alternative method for addressing zone transition standards before the DRB based on site specific evaluations

The Mayor asked for comments from the audience.

Dale Pinney asked for clarification on whether staff was obligated to take the recommendation from the DRB into consideration and what recourse the application would have if the recommendation was not considered. Mr. Osguthorpe explained that the recommendation from the DRB would go to the Hearing Examiner, where he expects it would be considered, unless there were obvious deficiencies. He further described the application process.

Mr. Pinney recommended a flow-chart to illustrate where design review falls in the site-plan approval process. He further recommended a preliminary public works oversight function at the onset of a project to help to identify problems that may arise before the DRB spends time reviewing a project. Mr. Osguthorpe asked if a pre-application process would address his concerns.

Mr. Pinney's final comment addressed the section 1.1.04.4 in the Activity Center Section. He asked if the common design requirement meant to match exactly or if similar materials could be used.

This issued was discussed at length, and staff was directed to insert the language "substantially similar" to allow more flexibility in areas already developed.

Jim Pasin stressed that the Public Works Department must be required to follow the Design Guidelines during city projects.

This was discussed, and Mr. Osguthorpe explained that the staff recommendation is to take section 4 out of the Design Manual and insert it into the Public Works Standards, but to direct staff to explore a way for more public input for public projects. In addition to compliance, this would allow the City Engineer to make a determination in terms of safety.

1.2 Parkways

Mr. Osguthorpe discussed changes to Parkways:

- Added Borgen Boulevard
- Added Purdy Drive
- Added North/South Connector at Gig Harbor North
- Eliminated a portion of Rosedale Street
- Extended Peacock Hill Avenue to Borgen Blvd.
- Eliminate the setback averaging requirement

There was discussion on the inclusion of Purdy Drive and whether that stretch was capable of being developed as a parkway. There was further discussion on the use of chain link fencing along parkways as an aesthetic issue verses the blocking of views. Mr. Osguthorpe explained that chain link is addressed in several sections. No recommendations for change were made and the discussion moved on to the next section.

1.3 Enhancement Corridor

Mr. Osguthorpe said that there were no substantive changes in this section. He explained that graphics in the document will be move to more appropriate spots in the final document as well as corrected language regarding the defined Burnham Drive Enhancement Corridor.

There was a great deal of discussion regarding the screening requirements along SR-16 and the existing properties that have no vegetative screening and use chain link fencing. Mr. Osguthorpe explained that these sites were all developed prior to the existence of the design guidelines.

Wade Perrow asked for clarification in Section 1.3.03 (2d) that requires full screening along property lines perpendicular to the Enhancement Corridor whenever the adjoining property has been cleared enough to allow a structure to be visible. He said that he was hoping that the manual updates would simplify the explanation.

There was a great deal of discussion about the screening requirements along the Enhancement Corridor and how to address issues such as the clearing of adjacent property and the various changes in topography.

Councilmember Dick made a suggestion to amend the requirements so that a property owner would have the right to have less than full screening conditioned upon not exposing an adjacent property. There was discussion on whether the requirement to keep adjacent property screened would constitute a taking of property.

Mayor Wilbert commented on the protection afforded by the green-belt requirements that were imposed by Pierce County on neighborhoods that are now annexed into the city. She asked that these same requirements be imposed on new development. Mr. Pasin mentioned how these greenbelts can be taken away by such projects as the proposed roundabout on Point Fosdick. Councilmember Dick said that the alternative is to never modernize to accommodate increased traffic.

Kit Kuhn said that it was important to protect the gateway to the peninsula by screening development from Highway 16. There was further discussion on visibility for such uses as car dealerships.

Mr. Perrow suggested that the city identify an area that could be zoned for these types of uses. He reiterated that the screening requirements within 300 feet of Highway 16 are not feasible in many areas due to the topographical challenges.


Randy Boss pointed out that the whole screening discussion is only for the area 30 feet from the corridor. Steve Osguthorpe clarified that the requirement for 30 feet screening is along the right of way line to retain the significant vegetation. In addition, it does require any properties that are within 300 feet of the Enhancement Corridor to provide full or partial screening, and although it doesn't state that it has to be 30 feet depth screening once you are beyond the right of way line, it does require some sort of screening, which could be a line of trees. If the structure isn't visible, then the screening requirement would not be triggered.

The concern that you could be relying upon your neighbor for screening was brought up again. After further discussion, Steve Osguthorpe said that he doesn't have a good solution for the topographical challenges, and asked if it would be more appropriate to just require the properties abutting Highway 16 to screen. It was agreed that there are many variables, and Mr. Osguthorpe offered to bring back revised language to try and meet the intent.

Jill Guernsey suggested that rather than having an arbitrary 300 feet edge from the right of way, why not take and draw the visual corridor in relation to the topography so that in some places it is significantly less than 300 feet, and in other places, it would be significantly bigger.

The Mayor thanked everyone for coming. The next worksession is scheduled for Monday, September 20, 2004 at 6:00 p.m. Councilmember Ekberg requested that members of the audience review the draft Design Manual and to submit comments ahead of time in writing to allow staff and Council to review and address the issues. There were no further comments and the worksession ended at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:


Molly Towslee, City Clerk