

APPROVED JULY 8th

**CITY OF EDMONDS
PLANNING BOARD MINUTES**

June 24, 2009

Chair Bowman called the meeting of the Edmonds Planning Board to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers, Public Safety Complex, 250 – 5th Avenue North.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Michael Bowman, Chair
Philip Lovell, Vice Chair
John Reed
Jim Young
Judith Works
Kevin Clarke
Valerie Stewart

STAFF PRESENT

Rob Chave, Planning Division Manager
Stephen Clifton, Community Services/Economic Development
Director
Karin Noyes, Recorder

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

Philip Lovell, Vice Chair (excused)
Cary Guenther (excused)

READING/APPROVAL OF MINUTES

BOARD MEMBER YOUNG MOVED THAT THE MINUTES OF JUNE 10, 2009 BE APPROVED AS PRESENTED. BOARD MEMBER WORKS SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF AGENDA

No changes were made to the agenda.

AUDIENCE COMMENTS

Steve Bernheim, Edmonds City Council, said the purpose of his presentation is to put into the record some other development concepts for the downtown/waterfront area that are different than the alternatives previously presented to the Board. He distributed a handout titled “Waterfront Concerns, Visions and Interests,” which suggests uses such as parks, a convention/community center, rooftop open space and reclaimed wetlands in conjunction with commercial and residential development, a heritage center/museum, a centrally located community center with senior housing and commercial/retail space, a gateway shopping center along with a community center and mixed use opportunities, and a hotel and community center with housing opportunities. He said he hopes the Board would consider the options as they discuss future development opportunities for the downtown waterfront properties.

Council Member Bernheim stressed the importance of the Board moving forward with the full cooperation and consideration of all of the options so that everyone’s opinions are taken into account. This type of approach would allow the Board to move forward with something that could be approved and supported by the majority of the City Council and citizens. He

referred to the design concepts that were prepared by high school students to illustrate potential development options for the properties. He expressed his belief that these are the best plans he has seen, including those presented by the consultant. He urged the Board to consider them with an open mind.

Council Member Bernheim provided images to illustrate how different concepts could be incorporated into the design of the downtown/waterfront area and advised that nearly all of the illustrations would be code compliant. He specifically noted the following:

- Pedestrian walkways do not have to be expensive, but they can provide significant access for everyone to enjoy the downtown waterfront area.
- A 40 to 50-foot height limit is not necessary in order to develop profitable touristic type centers, and five-story buildings are too tall for the area.
- The Board should focus on achievable engineering results and a pedestrian bridge over the railroad tracks would not be a complicated or expensive project.
- Six to eight-story buildings would be a disaster for the City of Edmonds. The waterfront area is not the place for large scale development.
- While he supports transit-oriented development and it would make some sense to concentrate residential uses near the train station, the Board must keep in mind that this train station is located in the heart of the most valuable and beautiful area of the City.
- Although developers have tried to scare the citizens by saying that a mini-mall style development would wreck the downtown waterfront area, he suggested that is a false statement. He suggested that a mini-mall type of development would be acceptable as long as it has a good design.
- Overpasses would provide unimpeded pedestrian access from the downtown businesses to the waterfront and could actually help draw people to Edmonds.

Council Member Bernheim summarized that the purpose of his illustrations was to steer the Board away from the 40 to 50-foot tall, mixed-use development that has been proposed by the property owners. The zoning code should not allow flexibility for additional height unless the City has a clear understanding of the contribution the project would have on the community. The ideas he presented are much better for the low-impact, old fashioned City that Edmonds is famous for. He reminded the Board that people come to Edmonds to walk around the old fashioned downtown, and he does not want to see it wrecked by modern buildings that are too large in scale. He urged the Board, City Council, property owners and community to work together in cooperation and openness to come up with a solution that can address everyone's needs and concerns. Unless a cooperative atmosphere is established, all sides would continue to fight against each other.

Roger Hertrich, Edmonds, said he was impressed with the composite images provided by Council Member Bernheim to illustrate how the various concepts could be applied to the downtown/waterfront area. He said he supports Council Member Bernheim's comments, including those related to a cooperative approach. He expressed his belief that "economic development" does not mean raising building heights in the downtown/waterfront area. He suggested the Board has an opportunity to do some good work related to economic development in Edmonds, and their discussion should not just center on the issue of building heights.

Mr. Hertrich reminded the Board that one of his earlier ideas for economic development was to focus on Highway 99, which would never develop well until the zoning parallel to Highway 99 is changed. He suggested the Board come forward with a recommendation to change the zoning in this area. Once rezoned, the uses and densities on the properties would change over time. He noted that Highway 99 is probably the only retail location in Edmonds that produces a significant amount of tax revenue. He expressed his belief that when considering redevelopment options for the downtown/waterfront area, the Board should not focus so much on tax revenue. Instead, this area should be redeveloped for the purpose of drawing people to the area and enhancing the area. He credited the high school students who prepared design models for the City to consider.

Mr. Hertrich summarized that this is the Board's opportunity to really be at the root of ideas for making Edmonds grow economically and also saving what they already have. He pointed out that people purchase property in Edmonds because of the waterfront and the unique downtown that provides a feeling of living in a small town. Future redevelopment should not be allowed to replace this ambiance with large buildings. He expressed his believe that any future plan would only be

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successful if the Board could come up with a process that does not alienate either side. On the other hand, if their focus is too narrow and they push the wrong ideas forward, their recommendation would not be supported by the public.

John Heighway, Edmonds, said he understands that the Board is obligated to follow the codes and regulations that currently exist, but they have an excellent opportunity to get all of the parties together in a cooperative fashion to come up with a plan that will work best for everyone. Many people have expressed a desire to maintain open space, and that is something any future design should address. In addition, recent election results have demonstrated that many citizens want to keep the building heights low in the downtown/waterfront area.

Mr. Heighway pointed out that whatever development is allowed in the downtown/waterfront area would have an impact on the neighborhood centers that are located on the periphery of the City. He expressed his belief that it would not be appropriate to concentrate residential development in the downtown/waterfront area. He would like to see this space developed as more of a community gathering place. He said he finds the suggestions put forth by Council Member Bernheim exciting, and the Board has the ability to make recommendations for alternatives that would result in something the City could be proud of. He suggested that rather than taking a more liberal approach, the Board should stick with the existing code requirements and apply the current rules to come up with something that is truly unique. He cautioned the Board against focusing too much on economic interests, and he noted there is already a tremendous amount of available retail space in the downtown area and many businesses are failing. There are also many condominium projects in the area that are failing due to the economy. The City needs something that will last.

Betty Larman, Edmonds, concurred with the previous three speakers. She expressed concern that she only found out about the Board meeting today, and she questioned how long and where it was published. She noted that if it had been advertised in *THE EDMONDS BEACON* last week, there would have been many more citizens in attendance. She encouraged the Board to think outside the box as they discuss the downtown/waterfront area. She said that huge condominium towers are not what the City needs, and many citizens would agree with her.

Chair Bowman clarified that Board would not be talking about possible designs for the downtown/waterfront area. Instead, their discussion would focus on economic sustainability. Both Jennifer Gerend and Stephen Clifton were invited to provide background information about what has happened in the past and review some of the challenges the Board would be faced with as they continue their sustainability discussions. He emphasized that Council Member Bernheim did not indicate until late this afternoon that he would make a presentation related to redevelopment of the downtown/waterfront area. The issue was not scheduled as part of the Board's agenda, and none of the Board Members were aware that the issue would be raised at this meeting.

Adrienne Fraley-Monillas, Edmonds, said she sees the Planning Board as playing a significant role in the City's economic future. She expressed great concern about the viability of business, tourism and economic development. The economic future of Edmonds is bleak, and she encouraged the Board to remember that they need to bring more tourism back to the City. She said she lives near Highway 99 and is concerned about the economic viability of all areas of Edmonds, including Highway 99. She encouraged the Board Members to drive down Highway 99 and note the differences between the Shoreline and Edmonds portions of the highway. She pointed out that while the types of businesses are similar, Shoreline's portion of the highway offers safer pedestrian access opportunities. She suggested that pedestrian access is a very important issue to consider. She encouraged the Board to consider opportunities for creating more economic development options and drawing people to businesses in all areas of the City.

SUSTAINABILITY DISCUSSION: BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Jennifer Gerend said she was present to speak generally about economic development. She emphasized her visit was completely voluntary and she was not present to comment on any specific proposal. She thanked the Board for inviting her to speak and said she has many good memories of working with them. She advised that since her departure from the City of Edmonds, she has held a research fellowship in Berlin, Germany where she worked with German city planners and economic development professionals to understand their tools and strategies for encouraging revitalization and economic growth. She

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was able to hone in on their creative and trendy temporary uses. She advised that through supportive municipal regulations, empty lots were transformed into urban beach bars in the summer, a closed municipal swimming complex became an urban campground, flea markets took root in empty parking lots, and make-shift art and theater venues sprouted up around the city. A swimming pool was added to a barge in the Spree River. She observed that when people speak of Berlin today, it is often such quirky and innovative land use surprises that they mention first. She said she would love to see Edmonds take more risks too and create a bit of a “buzz.” In her second year in Germany she was also a retail planner for the City of Trier, where she worked on concepts to preserve and enhance downtown and neighborhood shopping areas. At the current time, she is working on a PhD dissertation about retail development planning tools in the U.S. and Germany. In addition, she does some consulting and is a full-time member of the faculty at The Evergreen State College.

Ms. Gerend said that as Economic Development Director she was able to submit Comprehensive Plan change recommendations, such as with the neighborhood plans for Five Corners and Firdale Village. She recalled that she conducted a series of community planning meetings that were used to update the Comprehensive Plan for the two areas. Many of the neighborhood centers had extremely outdated land use regulations, many of which did not permit mixed-use development and had very limited height restrictions. She noted that Edmonds has a relatively small amount of commercially-zoned land, but it is critical. Mixed use or commercial areas present opportunities to add jobs, services, sales tax and property tax through increased valuation on more densely redeveloped properties. She recalled that residents in the Five Corners and Firdale Village areas were generally very receptive to changes and were excited to see some attention being paid to planning their neighborhoods. However, given the current staff’s limited resources, the City probably does not have many options to pursue neighborhood plans as aggressively as one might like. For example, there may be opportunities to create larger development sites such as around Five Corners, or to consider major traffic alterations such as a roundabout. If the City had the staff resources, they could continue the neighborhood planning process to update the Comprehensive Plan language and zoning for all of the neighborhood centers, including Westgate and Perrinville. They could also consider the development of sub area plans so there would be more areas “ready to go” when the real estate market upswings.

Ms. Gerend observed that Highway 99 was a great place for more generous development regulations, and she was happy to learn about the changes that were recently made. In addition, the Interurban Trail could make some redevelopment opportunities more interesting. However, she suggested there is still room to further incentivize development through shared parking arrangements and this would be a sustainability measure.

Ms. Gerend reported that plenty of cities have successfully used property tax abatements on dense mixed-use developments. While this may sound counterintuitive in these economic times, it could help spur development in the long run and increase revenues for the future. She shared an analogy of “Bid Red,” which is a large tree situated across from Roosevelt High School in an area marked for high density, transit-oriented redevelopment because it is next to a future light rail station. A small constituency worked hard to save the tree, which sparked a big debate about whether to save the tree or redevelop the site for the largest number of housing units possible. In the big picture, it is appropriate for people to live next to mass transit, since this would theoretically save trees elsewhere.

Ms. Gerend suggested the “Big Red” of Edmonds is building height. She observed that the City has an opportunity to have a real urban mass transit village by the sea, which would be one of the few places in the region where people could walk to a rail connection that could bring them to work. They could also walk to grocery stores, restaurants, and the other amazing downtown businesses. She reminded the Board of recently proposed State Legislation that would have required such density around rail stations. While the legislation did not pass, she said she anticipates it will be back soon enough. She emphasized that if the City were to create an urban mass transit village, it would have to be done in conjunction with historic preservation efforts. The goal would be to preserve the local treasures and build density up around it. She referred to the 4th Avenue Cultural Plan, which would connect the Edmonds Center for the Performing Arts and the downtown. She emphasized that the City has many tools to work with (zoning, design guidelines, historic preservation, transfer of development rights, changes to the streetscape, wayfinding, etc.) and the City staff is doing a great job of promoting the arts and economic development in this area.

Ms. Gerend suggested another great opportunity for the City lies in the downtown business owners. She encouraged the City to implement a business improvement area downtown so they have a sustainable budget with which to do their downtown events, promotions and beautification. She suggested Edmonds could even create a downtown pedestrian shopping zone.

She offered to provide pictures from Charlottesville and Burlington, Virginia to illustrate their successful downtown pedestrian shopping zones.

Ms. Gerend summarized her belief that the City already knows what really needs to happen, but there have been some inconsistencies related to implementation. This has made developers hesitant to undertake projects in the City because there are other places nearby with subarea plans in place that are nearly “shovel ready” for developers. She said she would like to see a wider interest from exciting architects and developers, since this would ultimately result in more attractive projects. She emphasized the need for straightforward consistency and vision on the part of the City in order to make people feel comfortable investing their time and money to propose redevelopment projects.

Ms. Gerend recalled that near the end of her time with the City, two City Council Members served as Council liaisons to her department, and this seemed like a good way for staff and the City Council to discuss policies in more depth and share information that was private, such as information about specific businesses or property owners. She expressed her hope that the economic downturn would be an opportunity for Edmonds to move away from old stand offs and consider the sustainability of the City. This is a great time to plan and be ready for the next economic upturn.

Board Member Works said she has heard over the years that small businesses have little interest in locating in Edmonds even though there is vacant space. She asked if there are specific reasons for this trend. Ms. Gerend replied that for a long time while she was at the City, the requirements of the zoning code encouraged developers to construct two stories of residential space above a ground floor commercial space that was too low in height to be desirable for retail uses. However, the newly adopted design guidelines should prevent this from occurring in the future. She noted there is a lot of competition right now, and Edmonds is impacted by its close location to Alderwood Mall and other places that have added modern and useful spaces and created a lot of synergy amongst the retailers. She suggested that perhaps it is time for Edmonds to be bolder in their marketing plan and downtown activities.

Chair Bowman asked Ms. Gerend to send the Board a list of other locations, besides Burlington and Charlottesville, who have successfully redeveloped their commercial areas. He observed that the Board is faced with the challenge of bringing the City forward without compromising the character that currently exists. He suggested it would be helpful to use other cities as models for how to proceed. Ms. Gerend agreed to forward a list of model cities for the Board’s consideration. Board Member Works suggested it would also be helpful for the Board to review examples of cities that were not successful, such as Eugene, Oregon.

Board Member Clarke thanked Ms. Gerend for the time she spent at the City. He said he was impressed when she contacted him asking how the City could generate interest in office space in the City. He observed that her leadership was not always appreciated and was often overlooked, and he was excited to have her come back before the Board so they could let her know how much they appreciated the leadership she provided. He said he appreciates the background she provided as a result of her experiences in Germany. He suggested that the real issue amongst the citizens is the idea of putting more dense commercial and residential development in the area surrounding the multimodal transportation center. He noted that this is the way it is done in Europe so that people do not have to use their cars to get round. He asked Ms. Gerend to share her ideas about how the City could implement the concept of increasing the housing stock with ground floor retail space in the area surrounding the Edmonds Station without going so far as to allow four to six-story buildings.

Ms. Gerend responded that the City could create land use changes and zoning for the area that allows two-story retail office development, but she did not believe developers would be seriously interested in this type of development in downtown Edmonds. She noted that the housing component of mixed-use development adds financial feasibility that makes the projects pencil out. She said that visibility is also an important issue to address. The citizens need to see useful examples of developments they like and they need to be assured that amenities would be included as part of the project. She summarized that people need to have places to live and places for recreation. She referred to Bell Town, which is an extreme example of high-density housing and they are still trying to make up some of the amenities they overlooked. Edmonds already has many of these amenities, but they need to consider the whole package and work closely with the community on a vision. However, projects must be financially feasible in order for developers to proceed.

Board Member Clarke referred to the town of Carmel, California, and questioned if this same type of concept could be applied to the old Safeway Site. Instead of having people live there, they could invite people from the outside to visit the City and enjoy the seaside experience that they are not able to get in locations where higher densities are allowed. He suggested the Board consider the option of maintaining the low density and creating a unique shopping experience that brings people to the area. Ms. Gerend said she was not prepared to discuss this option with the Board.

SUSTAINABILITY DISCUSSION: UPDATE AND OVERVIEW OF TRANSPORTATION AND LAND USE OPPORTUNITIES IN THE DOWNTOWN/WATERFRONT INTERFACE

Mr. Clifton referred to the packet of information that he submitted as part of his Staff Report. The items included the following documents:

- Past Economic Development Activities since 1984/1985
- Economic Development 2008 (excerpts taken from 2008 quarterly reports to identify projects staff worked on in 2008)
- Economic Development Strategies: Programs, Projects and Opportunities (presented to the City Council in February 2009)
- February 18, 2009 Staff Update (presented to the City Council on February 28th)

Mr. Clifton reported that he met with the City Council on February 28th to provide more information about Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT) Ferry Division's Revised Long-Range Plan for 2009 through 2030 and how it would impact the Edmonds Crossing Project. The document made it very clear that Washington State Ferries (WSF) is starting to crystallize what the long-range funding issues would be for the overall system. The Revised Draft Long-Range Plan identifies two possible future service and investment scenarios: One option would maintain the current level of service through 2030 and the other option would dramatically cut the service levels and routes.

Mr. Clifton advised that the revised plan only identifies \$26 million for Edmonds Ferry Terminal improvements, needs and maintenance, which means the Edmonds Crossing Project would not likely commence construction in 2012 as originally planned. He said that after verifying the numbers with WSF, it became very clear to him that Edmonds should focus their attention on the Edmonds Station, which is located between Dayton and Main Streets. He recalled that, previously, the City was heading in the direction of classifying the station as an interim facility, which meant it would function as a fully operational commuter rail station but without the level of amenities that were present in the plan that was originally approved by the City Council in 2002.

Mr. Clifton reported that in February he made a presentation to the City Council and recommended the City request Sound Transit (ST) to construct the station as per the 2002 plan, which included shelters, railing, light fixtures, as well as Community Transit (CT) bus stops between James and Main Street. The City Council approved the recommendation, and he notified Sound Transit of their decision. He further reported that he attended the Sound Transit Finance Committee Meeting recently where an addendum to the KPPF Contract was approved so that the plans could be revised to implement the 2002 plan. Commencement of construction for the station should take place during the first quarter of 2010.

Mr. Clifton advised that representatives from ST, CT, Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) and the utility districts have been meeting with the Public Works and Planning Department staff to coordinate utility installation. It is important that all entities coordinate with each other in this regard. He reviewed that BNSF has proposed to construct a second rail line along the waterfront, and their most recent anticipated commencement of construction is to begin the first quarter of 2010, with work beginning south of Dayton Street. Initial efforts will relate to grading and it is not known when they will actually construct the second line. This is a change from the original schedule proposed by BNSF.

Mr. Clifton announced that Bob Gregg has purchased the Skippers property, and he and WSF are working on a private/public partnership to redevelop the property between James Street and the parking lot. He reported that the Legislature appropriated \$2 million for WSF to study the possibility of a private/public partnership for the area because they

know that the owner of the Skippers property is looking to redevelop in the near future. He said he asked WSF to contact the City when they initiate their efforts towards a partnership. He emphasized that the City should be a key player in any of the discussions.

Board Member Reed asked what kind of public process would be associated with the public/private partnership. Mr. Clifton answered that this would be up to WSF. Discussions could certainly take place between the property owner and WSF at any time, but at some point there would have to be some discussion with the community, as well.

Board Member Works referred to Edmonds Economic Development Plan Goal 1, Policy 1a, which calls for encouraging and expanding business expansion and retention programs. She also referred to Goal 3 which calls for diversifying the tax base and increasing revenues to support local services. She asked if staff has anything positive to report on their efforts towards these two goals. Mr. Clifton announced that Ace Hardware would be opening soon at Old Mill Town. He explained that staff placed calls to their headquarters throughout the past several years in an effort to locate a store in the community. He said he has also been working with other retail business owners, and a lot of discussions have taken place behind the scenes and cannot be reported to the public during the negotiation phase. He said he recently heard the comment that the City doesn't do anything to encourage businesses, but that is not true. Staff places and receives calls from numerous businesses on any given day. He said he has a list of commercial spaces that are vacant, as well as a list of businesses who are seeking space. He provides this information back and forth. Once the connections are made, negotiations take place between landlords and prospective tenants, which he is not involved in.

Mr. Clifton acknowledged that Ms. Gerend was much more aggressive in recruiting and retaining businesses, but he pointed out that he is now serving as the Community Services Director, the Economic Development Director, and is helping to fill the Development Services Director position, as well. He referred the Board to the activity list for 2008, which identifies staff's accomplishments. He noted that a lot has also been accomplished thus far in 2009, as well.

Board Member Stewart commended Mr. Clifton for doing a great job with economic development given his limited time. She asked about the types of businesses the City is seeking for the downtown. Are they looking for businesses where local residents can find everything they need or are they looking for businesses that attract tourists? She said she would love to shop in Edmonds if there were stores available to meet all of her needs in the downtown. Mr. Clifton said the type of business also depends on location. The downtown offers the kind of environment that attracts specialty retail shops, whereas Highway 99 attracts more national retailers. He said that, generally, the City focuses on those that have a smaller number of stores because they are a good fit not only for downtown Edmonds, but for the neighborhood centers, as well. The contacts he has made vary, and he has tried to leverage the City's available dollars as best he can. For example, the City partnered with the Port of Edmonds and the Chamber of Commerce to place advertisements in the Puget Sound Journal and other publications. The purpose of these ads was to attract the kinds of businesses that would be interested in locating in the downtown, but they also focused on tourism. He referred the Board to the list of locations where advertisements have been placed and noted that the advertisements are funded by the Lodging Tax. He reported that Lodging Tax Revenues are \$9,000 above where they were in 2008 at the same point in time. He further noted that Washington State is first in the country for in-state tourism and people are staying closer to home because of the economy. In addition, artists are using the Harbor Inn when they are performing at the Edmonds Performing Arts Center.

Board Member Stewart referred to an article in *THE EVERETT HERALD* on June 1st about local businesses. It stated that for every \$100 spent at independently owned stores, 68% is returned to the local community as opposed to only 33% for national chains. She said the City needs to bring people into the area through attractive living situations that provide amenities and services for them to walk to. All of the publications display Edmonds in all its glory, particularly the waterfront. It would be wonderful to have more outdoor seating and feature this amenity in publications and advertisements so that people get the sense that Edmonds is a place where people like to sit with each other and enjoy the beauty of the area.

Mr. Clifton advised that the City tries to emphasize the "shop local" program. While they cannot promote a specific business, they can promote an area or the City as a whole. In addition, the City recently installed 14 benches throughout the downtown. They are working on wayfinding signs to direct visitors to the public parking areas. They also have a program to replace existing flower poles in the downtown. He reminded the Board that an enhancement project is currently taking place along Highway 99, and Ms. Gerend was instrumental in securing \$350,000 in grant funding for the project. They are

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in the process of creating bid documents and they are hoping to go out to bid to get the projected completed in the near future.

Board Member Clarke asked for more information regarding the potential public/private partnership for the property near James Street. Mr. Clifton explained that the concept would involve merging the two properties to develop a public/private use. Leveraging the public and private dollars could involve any number of uses on the site. He reported that WSF is convening a group to discuss the concept further, and he has been invited to participate. The group would include a representative from the Port of Edmonds, as well as individuals from both sides of the ferry route.

Board Member Reed asked how the City's goals for redevelopment of the downtown would be impacted if the ferry relocation project does not come to fruition for quite some time. Mr. Clifton explained that WSF plans to test a reservation system on the Edmonds/Kingston route. This would allow riders to arrive up until 15 minutes before the ferry departs and tickets would be paid for ahead of time and scanned at the entrance. This type of program could significantly reduce the storage requirements and the queuing that takes place along SR 104. Mr. Clifton observed that if the Edmonds Crossing Project is eliminated, it would have a significant impact on the downtown area. The ferry system would continue to operate as it currently does. Even with a reservation system, there would still be cars coming down SR 104 and along Sunset Avenue and Main Street to load onto the ferry. The Edmonds Crossing Project would provide connectivity between the downtown and the waterfront and pedestrian friendly access. Even if the project, itself, is eliminated, the City could still designate the area as multimodal and figure out how to effectively, efficiently and safely link the transportation opportunities with adjacent properties.

Board Member Stewart recalled that many of the slides provided earlier by Council Member Bernheim illustrated examples of pedestrian overpasses over the railroad tracks. She asked if the City has any plans to construct a pedestrian overpass from the downtown to the waterfront if the ferry remains in its current location. Mr. Clifton said the concept has been discussed over the years. The big question is how to design and fund a project of this type. Another big question is how to integrate the overpass into what is developed on either side of the railroad tracks. He noted that the workgroup of 33 that was formed to consider development options for the downtown/waterfront area seemed to get hung up on building height, and they did not really look at the overall development plan to identify how buildings would relate to each other, pedestrian access and connectivity. Whatever is developed in this area must be integrated with what is developed on the other side of the railroad tracks.

Board Member Clarke referred the Board to property located on Highway 99 at approximately 105th Street. He noted the Seattle School District leased the land to a private developer for a shopping center project. The agreement required the developer to provide a pedestrian access over Highway 99. It uses a spiral approach over the roadway and all of the development in the area is single story. He suggested this same concept could be used to connect Brackett's Landing to the property owned by WSF. This would cost minimal dollars to construct. He questioned why the City has not considered this option. Mr. Clifton said the option has been discussed at various times. Board Member Clarke agreed but noted that the option has only been discussed as it pertains to proposed redevelopment. Mr. Clifton agreed that does not have to be the case. The City could proceed with a project of this type if they had available funding, as well as support from BNSF and ST.

Chair Bowman said that he and his wife own a retail business in downtown Edmonds, and they are constantly trying to bring new businesses and restaurants to the downtown. Prospective tenants visit the vacant sites but usually decide to locate elsewhere. Besides the existing building stock, he asked Mr. Clifton to share some of the reasons why businesses do not want to locate in Edmonds. Mr. Clifton said that retrofitting is often an issue for prospective tenants when they recognize their proposed use would require more improvements than they originally anticipated to meet the code requirements. He said there is also the perception that the demographics in Edmonds are not sufficient to support new businesses. Ms. Gerend explained that many national chains have radius agreements. Because of the City's proximity to Alderwood Mall, many businesses are precluded from locating in Edmonds. In addition, the physical building stock is definitely an issue. Previously, parking requirements were a concern, but this has been addressed. It is important to create first floor space that can accommodate restaurants because they need higher ceilings. She summarized that restaurants are great to have in the downtown to provide synergy. The City should also encourage more residents in the downtown to support the retail spaces. She noted the City only has a 180 degree catchment area because they are located on Puget Sound.

REVIEW OF EXTENDED AGENDA

Mr. Chave advised that a few modifications were made to the extended agenda, and staff would send out an updated draft to each Board Member next week.

Board Member Reed noted that the Board is on track to report their efforts related to sustainability and economic development to the City Council in December. He questioned what they would have to accomplish over the next six months in order to make this happen. He suggested the Board spend some time to map out the process so that everyone has a clear understanding of what will be required. Chair Bowman recalled the Board previously discussed the option of holding an additional off-site work session. He suggested that as the Board delves into the issue, the scope would likely widen. Once they obtain a certain knowledge base, they could have a special work session to prioritize the issues and identify those they specifically want to address in their presentation to the City Council. The remainder of the Board concurred.

PLANNING BOARD CHAIR COMMENTS

Chair Bowman recommended the Board focus on the fact that the City is so polarized on the building height that everything else gets lost. He expressed concern that the City Council is considering issues such as chickens and plastic bags while the economic issues are being placed on the back burner. They need to focus on the big issues. Board Member Clarke pointed out that Edmonds was featured twice in U.S. News over the past month, reporting on their discussions related to chickens and plastic bags.

PLANNING BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Board Member Works said she is glad to hear people at least talking about the need to cooperate with each other. She expressed concern that the Board's conversations not get off on "pie in the sky" plans that no one will support or move forward. There must be funding to implement whatever they come up with. Therefore, the Board should be practical in whatever they recommend to the City Council.

Mr. Chave reminded the Board that in 2004 the City hired an Economic Real Estate Consultant to answer the question of why the City was getting three-story buildings with sunken first floor retail spaces. The consultant's explanation was demonized by some in the community as justification for higher buildings, but that was not the purpose of the exercise.

ADJOURNMENT

The Board meeting was adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

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