

**UDC UPDATE PROJECT**  
**UDC PUBLIC FORUM**  
**FACILITATED DISCUSSION WITH THE GENERAL PUBLIC**  
**RE: URBAN CENTERS SUBPROJECT**

AS DISCUSSED ON DEC 6, 2007 AT 9:00 A.M. AND 6:00 P.M.

|   |
|---|
| <p><b><u>Comments related to Urban Centers – 9:00 a.m.</u></b></p> <p><i>*Staff comments are denoted in italics.</i></p>  |
| <p><b>Key Question #1 - What uses are appropriate for an urban center? Urban village?</b></p>   |
| <p>The list of uses allowable in an Urban Center (shown in the Urban Centers 101 handout) is too specific and should include businesses such as a jeweler. What is the reason for these uses on the list?</p> <p><i>David Killingstad (DK) – The list indicates what is in our code now.</i></p>  |
| <p>An example of an urban center should be provided and include how an urban center should function, the role of local cities and how urban centers fit into local cities’ conceptual planning.</p>   |
| <p>It would be wise to provide flexibility and have performance standards for urban centers. The county should have a mechanism to evaluate these performance standards and the decision maker should be given the flexibility to decide what would be a logical candidate for uses.</p>  |
| <p>What is the distinction between urban centers and urban villages?<br/>         What is the relationship between policies related to urban centers and the Executive’s initiative on greenhouse gases and energy reduction? How do we design urban centers so that they are energy efficient and reduce reliance on the single-occupancy vehicle? We need to consider some of these and similar issues as we refine policies.</p> <p><i>DK – Some of the key questions that are listed in the handout consider pedestrian walkability, climate change and other uses mentioned. We will need to change the Comprehensive Plan (CP), if we find that we don’t have enough policy guidance.</i></p> |
| <p>Policies related to urban centers and climate change cannot proceed separately.</p> <p><i>DK – Climate change policy may be considered in the process but it may not be amended immediately.</i></p>   |
| <p>Urban centers should be located on transportation corridors. Have we defined where those corridors are? Have we defined where future urban centers should go?</p> <p><i>DK – Yes, we have delineated boundaries as part of the ten-year update, although this doesn’t mean that there may not be additional areas designated in the future.</i></p>  |
| <p>Community Transit has posted a public review draft of their six-year Transit Development Plan on their website. Community Transit is being specific about where transit will be located. Emphasis is placed on eight transit corridors and the plan substantiates why locations were selected based on surrounding densities and zoning. Capital facilities are being planned for and implemented in these areas.</p>  |
| <p><b>Key Question #2 – What mechanisms should be used to create a connection between an urban center and existing, lower-density neighborhoods?</b></p>  |
| <p>If we are interested in reducing carbon generation, then services associated with the urban village atmosphere should be included in an urban center. A small grocery store amidst the neighborhood would reduce personal vehicle transportation.</p>  |

|  |
|--|
| Parks and recreational centers should be included as uses in an urban center.  |
| <b>Key Question #3 – How should access to and within urban centers projects be maintained?</b>   |
| Who is the target audience of the urban center? If it is the elderly, then we need to be thinking about what types of access will be necessary in order to get those with limited physical abilities transportation to social or health service locations.   |
| There needs to be a way to limit existing neighborhoods from prohibiting traffic calming measures and safe corridors for pedestrians. We should make it clear to decision makers that existing neighborhoods should not be able to defeat some of these efforts.   |
| It seems like “us” vs. “them” mentality regarding residents in the surrounding neighborhood vs. urban center residents. Connectivity needs to be maintained in order to integrate the center into the surrounding area/neighborhood.   |
| A fundamental requirement of all planning should begin in the neighborhood. The county should be accessing that cross section of the population by going into neighborhoods, knocking on doors and talking to people directly.<br><i>DK – We are going to be talking to all stakeholders and one of those groups are people who live adjacent to urban centers.</i>  |
| If an urban center is proposed within the UGA of an existing city, then what is the process to involve local neighborhoods and the local jurisdiction?<br><i>DK – Though it is related to this discussion, this comment is addressed by Key Question #11, so let’s hold off on this question until later.</i>  |
| <b>Key Question #4 – How should construction of public sidewalks on a neighborhood or street-wide basis be made a priority within designated urban centers?</b>  |
| Parking should be corralled like it is at universities, but place all parking in one area. The single-occupancy vehicle should be eliminated in the urban center.  |
| Aren’t public sidewalks mandatory? I am confused how that wouldn’t be considered a priority?<br><i>DK – Beyond frontage improvements, developers will argue that their obligation ends at the property lines. The burden is on the county to show that a project’s impacts extend beyond the frontage.</i>   |
| Can we just put that in the code?<br><i>DK – The contention with developers is that their obligation to install improvements ends at the property line.</i>  |
| Eliminating the single-occupancy vehicle is not a “crazy” notion, it is a really great idea. There are projects like this all over Europe! The problem faced by developers is that they are unable to implement innovative features because innovation does not comply with fire regulations requiring 20-foot drive aisles in front of every unit. Though there are ways to mitigate the issues, such as using grasscrete drive aisles, Snohomish County will not allow them.           |
| This scenario exemplifies how developers are stymied in the process of trying to provide Low Impact Development. So, how is the coordination going? To some degree, fire districts hands are tied due to changes in zones or plan designations. They don’t want to have to buy urban fire fighting equipment to fight fires, so developers become limited by those decisions.<br><i>DK – The EDDS standards are being revised and the Fire Marshal is involved in those discussions.</i> |
| As we look at alternative construction methods, how do we use geography to know where we should be building structures? How are design standards taking into account potentially earthquake active areas? If an underground garage is built as a measure to improve traffic flows, will it be required to be built to earthquake standards? Is that part of the planning process or taken into consideration here?   |

|  |
|--|
| <p><i>DK – The Urban Centers Demonstration Program doesn’t lessen the requirements of the building code. It may modify the landscaping code, but not the building code itself.</i></p> <p><i>Suzy Burgin – This should be a high priority! Sidewalks’ connectivity in urban centers could be treated the same way the roads master plan is treated. We cannot have chunks of sidewalk and then not any – it won’t be an urban center if so.</i></p>  |
| <p>The first project will carry the burden for the rest of the urban center. There has to be a way to relieve that first project from carrying the financial brunt of sidewalk improvements.</p>   |
| <p><b>Key Question #5 – To what degree should the county mandate a square footage requirement for non-residential uses in an urban center project? Should first floor retail be required for all projects?</b></p>   |
| <p>Using Juanita Village as an example, where much more retail is integrated, the mandate that first floor commercial/retail is difficult for development because the market largely determines the success. In the City of Kirkland, developers of multifamily are allowed to place an amenity/congregating/exercise area as the “storefront” so that it gives the appearance of retail.</p>  |
| <p>Are civic uses being considered for the urban centers? Are there places that one will be able to go into that do not require money to be spent?</p> <p><i>DK – Civic uses are allowed in an urban center.</i></p>   |
| <p>Is that what already exists?</p> <p><i>DK – Yes, but we don’t require a square footage of retail. A project could include 50 units of multi-family housing and 1200 sq. ft. of office. Do we want to set a threshold for retail?</i></p>  |
| <p>The county needs to do a detailed economic study related to where urban centers should be designated in order to be successful. Studies should include traffic analyses. For instance, an appropriate location would be within the Edmonds urban core or on the east side of the 164<sup>th</sup> urban center while inappropriate places would be along Alder Way or on the west side of the 164<sup>th</sup> urban center. Once studies are complete, they should be put into code.</p> |
| <p>The market is an important factor in determining the feasibility of first floor retail. To increase predictability, you may want to consider allowing uses other than retail on the first floor for a period of time and then require the transition to retail at a later date.</p>   |
| <p>Brent Russell (Community Transit) - The county should require a square footage requirement. I’m not sure how to calculate (size of land, population, number of units) then work its way down from there as part of negotiations with the developer. The onus to prove that retail won’t work should be on the applicant, who generally has the resources to do that.</p>  |
| <p><b>Key Question #6 – Under what circumstances should single use projects (i.e. residential or commercial only) be allowed in an Urban Center? Urban Village?</b></p>  |
| <p>Smaller urban villages should provide residential projects to accommodate the blue collar workforce that usually live there.</p>  |
| <p>Day care facilities and low-income housing projects would be enhanced by requiring a human services component in urban centers/villages.</p>  |
| <p>Current Urban Center Demonstration Program (UCDP) regulations only allow single-use projects under certain conditions. Does that mean they are precluded from being in centers?</p> <p><i>DK – No, we have three conditions of which applicants have to meet to justify proposing a single-use project in the urban center. Otherwise mixed use is mandatory in urban center demonstration projects.</i></p>  |
| <p>One of the primary problems with making mixed-use projects economically feasible is that the lots themselves are smaller and irregularly shaped. Is there a legal way to create a rule, so that a certain percentage is obligated to be retail?</p>   |

|   |
|---|
| <p>Lot size and topography should be considered when trying to attract retail use. Is the County thinking about use of work/live units? Current code is very limiting in terms of what property owners can do on irregularly shaped lots.</p> <p><i>DK – We made a decision to allow live/work units on certain sites. We could write code to formalize that. The live/work units were on the outskirts of the urban center. Live/work units include a ground floor home occupation (ex. transcription, etc), which is a low traffic use.</i></p> |
| <p><b>Key Question #7 – How much public realm (i.e. open space, plazas, sidewalks, etc.) should be required for each project?</b></p>   |
| <p>The county, especially the south part of the county, has been shorted open spaces/parks. We need to take inventory of the open spaces that are still left and work hard to preserve and restore some of it for the urban village. For the sake of public health and water quality, we need to restore open spaces in urban villages. This should be seen as a serious budget item, perhaps spending \$10M to \$20M over the next 20 years.</p>   |
| <p>I don't want to see one tree required per four units. Let's make sure that we have good regulations and that these public spaces are preserved; they are all we have left.</p>   |
| <p>The City of Mill Creek performed a study and in response to a shortage of public parks, put in a two-acre neighborhood park that is supported heavily by the community. There will be some retail, but the open space serves multiple uses.</p>  |
| <p>Open space planning should consider hydrologic continuity so that the hydrologic function is preserved in urban areas.</p>   |
| <p>The answer is that we need more. We need to be careful not to confuse preservation of the natural environment with having public spaces. It is very important to define what public spaces are and locate them in urban areas. Grading is difficult in urban areas so the space that is preserved will be minimal. Often, the built environment is well landscaped but the code doesn't say how much open space is required.</p>   |
| <p><b>Key Question #8 – Should parking requirements be reduced in urban centers/urban villages? If yes, should the reduction be accomplished quantitatively (fewer spaces required) or qualitatively (use of shared parking)?</b></p>   |
| <p>If a project meets all other requirements, then it should qualify for a reduction. If a project does more than is required, then it should be open for negotiation with decision makers in terms of re-calculating parking requirements, etc.</p>  |
| <p>The new university that is coming would be a great opportunity to demonstrate some of these techniques.</p>  |
| <p>Shouldn't the mass transit movement preclude this or try to minimize this?</p> <p><i>DK – That's the idea behind the center. Emphasis is placed on people using alternative modes of transportation.</i></p>   |
| <p><b>Key Question #9 – How far into architectural standards and guidelines should the county go in regulating urban center projects?</b></p>   |
| <p>Do not regulate colors and styles. Future regulation of building orientation should be required to take advantage of passive solar to curb future energy use.</p>  |
| <p>Look at Lake City Way and imagine how it may look in five years. It is not attractive. How do you legislate good taste? It is interesting to note how the projects that appeal to us are located in jurisdictions with stringent design guidelines.</p>  |
| <p>Regulating color is too prescriptive, but regulating bulk, lighting and scale are all very important even in areas that are adjacent to urban centers.</p>   |
| <p>There is a fine balance between regulating design. Often times, professionals must balance the</p>   |

|   |
|---|
| intent of the design guidelines with their own subjective review of the project.  |
| <b>Key Question #10 – How should the public be involved in the design review process for urban centers?</b>   |
| The county should provide education to urban citizens with regard to urban centers and villages. The county should provide ideas, resources, and materials to urban citizens and involve them in the planning process. The county public process will be much more meaningful and the infusion and exchange of information will all improve.  |
| The public needs more opportunity to be informed and educated besides at the public hearing.<br><i>DK – The point at the first meeting is for the public to tell the applicant what they want in a preliminary atmosphere before any plans are put in place; like a design charrette (design workshop). Then at the second meeting, the applicant can come back and show the public how their concerns have been addressed.</i> |
| Two meetings still doesn't seem sufficient to cover all the issues.   |
| The amount of money that a developer pays to hire an engineer to change draft plans, to merely move a unit a few feet could add an additional 50K or 60K to the project due to changes in elevations of manholes or various other reasons.  |
| A solution for public involvement is part of sustainability report– it requires built green for Multifamily, includes credits for a series of charrettes for the developer who did that through the entire process. Makes a big difference in public process.   |
| What about the resistance from the building community? State law says that the county only gets one public hearing and developers are only required to do one public hearing. Sometimes, there are no members of the public that make comments.<br><i>DK – Code requires public notice.</i>   |
| For urban villages, the county has to create a more streamlined process. The current process is too long and unpredictable for the small landowner. The floating zone solution is perfect. Cite criteria for commercial. Hearing Examiner should be able to make a decision on smaller projects but more formal design review board for larger projects.  |

|  |
|--|
| <b>Comments related to Urban Centers – 6:00 p.m.</b>   |
| <i>*Staff comments are denoted in italics.</i>   |
| <b>Key Question #1 - What uses are appropriate for an urban center? Urban village?</b>   |
| What requests has the county had; anything beyond retail on the ground floor with condominiums above?<br><i>David Killingstad (DK) –Initially, an issue involved the size of big-box retail buildings. Should there be a limit?</i>  |
| It seems like we list more inappropriate than appropriate uses.  |
| Has the Urban Centers Demonstration Program received a lot of interest from developers?<br><i>Ryan Countryman (RC) – 13 or 14 projects to date.</i><br><i>DK – Ryan talks to interested parties, initial submittals.</i>   |
| There are towns that close off their urban core to the automobile. Maybe cars aren't necessarily appropriate in the urban village.   |
| To place a Costco or other big-box retail store through an urban center does not make sense. If the topography is unique and boxes off a corner of the area and the pedestrian is forced to walk around it anyway, then a large retail store adjacent to the urban center may work. This is a circumstance |

|   |
|---|
| <p>where a big-box retail store may not be appropriate, but might be allowed.<br/> <i>DK – Maybe a smaller grocery store would make the urban center less auto-oriented. In Long Beach, Calif., there is a WalMart with a parking garage (offering valet parking) that is within a center. There may be some situations where we may want to rethink what we allow in an urban center.</i></p>  |
| <p>Parking is limited on most university campuses. If regulations dictate that cars are not allowed, then most people will not use vehicles to get there. Grocery stores like Safeway are also a good idea for mixed-use. There is a development in Bellevue and another in West Seattle with housing on top. There are places where this is working.</p>   |
| <p><b>Key Question #2 – What mechanisms should be used to create a connection between an urban center and existing, lower-density neighborhoods?</b></p>  |
| <p>What exactly is the process of the Urban Center Demonstration Project?<br/> <i>DK – Initially, there is an informal scoping meeting to outline the process.</i></p>  |
| <p>So there are no implied commitments?<br/> <i>DK – No, applicants can drop out if they would like.</i></p>  |
| <p>What is cottage housing?<br/> <i>DK – Homes that are typically 1200 or 1300 square feet. The cities of Shoreline and Mukilteo have some good examples of successful cottage housing projects. Units are usually built around a common green and garages may be separate structures. Cottagewood on 164<sup>th</sup>, near Swamp Creek, is also another good example where the largest unit is 1500 square feet and units are built around a special feature.</i></p>   |
| <p>Is this question addressing “connections” or “buffers”?<br/> <i>DK – Connections.</i></p>  |
| <p>We should be focusing on connecting urban centers to existing, lower-density neighborhoods rather than creating barriers. An example is the density in Lake City.<br/> <i>Craig Young (CY) – We also need areas or “connections” for stormwater to flow through the ground as interflow. There are many ways to achieve this interflow goal through multiple use corridors – such as pedestrian trails, wildlife corridors, and transportation corridors (corridors which also link parks and open space). It is much more difficult to make these connections using only site-specific development standards.</i></p> |
| <p>I lived in Juanita Village for a year where residential units were only allowed one parking stall. When two parking stalls per unit are required for a project, half the site plan turns out to be parking! Ideally, urban centers would have a transit node. It would be great if residents only needed one vehicle per unit. The county should be looking at cutting parking requirements in half and seeking consistency in development review.</p>   |
| <p><b>Key Question #3 – How should access to and within urban centers projects be maintained?</b><br/> <i>DK – This question implies both pedestrian and automobile access. Do you think that there should be a balance or should emphasis be placed on pedestrians over vehicles or vice versa?</i></p>  |
| <p>Look at Highway 99 revisions and how vehicles access large shopping areas. It is very difficult to get out of shopping areas. Adjacent streets surrounding shopping centers should absorb some of this traffic during rush hour so that major arterials do not get clogged.</p>  |
| <p>Societies on the west coast are married to their automobiles. We put so much emphasis on roads rather than alternative connections. In Europe, primary connectivity was rail, their infrastructure was enormous and that’s the infrastructure that needs to be put in place in our urban centers. Mobility has to change, climate change dictates this. Urban centers need to be located where rail exists and be built up with the future of rail connectivity in mind. Pedestrian and bicycle paths are a</p>  |

|   |
|---|
| <p>plus, but our main focus should be how are we getting rail here and how will we keep it here.<br/> <i>CY – We should explore the idea of using smaller electric shuttle busses to circulate around our urban centers with narrower streets – they would connect to regional transportation centers and provide an alternative to private vehicles.</i><br/> <i>Michael Zelinski (MZ) – Community Transit was at the morning UDC Public Forum session and they are in the process of planning for bus rapid transit which should be operational by 2009. Community Transit is looking at alternate locations and where future locations will be while waiting for regional rail to extend to this area.</i><br/> <i>DK – Proposition 1 would have placed mass transit adjacent to the urban center at 164<sup>th</sup>.</i></p> |
| <p><b>Key Question #4 – How should construction of public sidewalks on a neighborhood or street-wide basis be made a priority within designated urban centers?</b></p>  |
| <p>Allow more zero lot line development as an incentive. Allow creativity and design flexibility.</p>   |
| <p>Reduce the number of sidewalks or require sidewalks on just one side of the street. Designate sidewalks for joggers/skaters/bikers that are separated from the road by a natural buffer (addressing runoff).</p>   |
| <p>Developers don't seem to understand the concept that they are obligated to create safe passages for communities when new developments bring additional traffic and higher densities to an area. Longtime residents, like me, are who end up paying for the higher density and populations. Developers should be required to pay into a sidewalk fund.</p>  |
| <p>Developers pay mitigation fees for roads, fees to the state, fees for off-site impacts and both park and school fees. Shoulders near Paine Field are deficient. Pedestrians should be a priority in urban centers. Segments of roads within Juanita Village use a type of brick which make it undesirable for automobiles.</p>   |
| <p>We need to find ways to reinforce good behavior by developers. Codes should find a way to give developers reasons that they can instead of the reason that they cannot.</p>  |
| <p><b>Key Question #5 – To what degree should the county mandate a square footage requirement for non-residential uses in an urban center project? Should first floor retail be required for all projects?</b></p>  |
| <p>Residents of urban centers should be prepared for retail. Developments should be able to modify use over time. The first floor should not only be commercial. In the beginning, developments should have the opportunity to transition into retail.<br/> <i>CY- The mix of commercial uses should at minimum meet the basic living needs of urban residents. They shouldn't have to travel to get basic necessities.</i></p>   |
| <p>We need to be asking ourselves, what would it take for someone to live here and not own a vehicle? The Fully Contained Community (FCC) doesn't require the applicant to provide a detailed analysis of what uses are going to take place.</p>  |
| <p>Residents should be made aware that properties within urban villages may transition into retail.<br/> <i>DK – One of the challenges is that retail doesn't fill up right away, so the retail space sits vacant until the market catches up.</i></p>  |
| <p>There is no good solution for all of this.</p>   |
| <p>The code needs to be understandable and rules need to be less subjective.</p>  |
| <p>The county should promote economic development in the urban center so that it triggers revitalization. The county should promote incentives for small business owners and residential development. The county should implement standards that create a theme or some type of central commercial center.</p>  |
| <p>The use has to be proportionate and there should be a formula that exists that will reveal the right</p>   |

|  |
|--|
| amount of retail and residential that can be supported. Once this is determined, then the county should mandate that facilities be built into this concept.  |
| There is not a formula to determine the success rate. Success of developments is usually determined by marketing, location and timing.   |
| <b>Key Question #6 – Under what circumstances should single use projects (i.e. residential or commercial only) be allowed in an Urban Center? Urban Village?</b>   |
| What would a single-use project be?<br><i>Ryan Countryman (RC) – Some of the properties on Highway 99 can support a lot of uses, but smaller ones are only viable for residential because the size and shape does not lend itself to mixed-use. Someone may want to come in and put in a large office building but they don't want to put apartments on top of it. Some large sites can support mixed-use, but there are enough exceptions that we want feedback.</i>  |
| Height limits serve as a disincentive to innovative development and preservation of open space.  |
| Why is there a height limit?<br><i>DK - 45 feet for surface parking and 90 feet for structured parking</i>   |
| But why?<br><i>DK – Newberry Square residents decided to market all 29 of the homes in their neighborhood and one of the reasons is that they sit 100 feet below the base of the urban center. That is an issue of compatibility, taller buildings and a question of whether or not it is appropriate to have a ten-story building next to a single-family home. Reconsiderations are all up for discussion and are on the table.</i>  |
| <b>Key Question #7 – How much public realm (i.e. open space, plazas, sidewalks, etc.) should be required for each project?</b>   |
| Flat spaces ought to be covered with something green wherever possible.<br><i>CY – There has to be connectivity (for pedestrians and stormwater interflow) - we need to map how we are going to provide connectivity from Point A to Point B and require projects to show how their open space will fit on the connectivity map. We can do 3D modeling to show how LID techniques (including higher three- or five- story developments) would fit with the landscape and existing development, and get a visual feel for project alternatives. As land values increase, then these exercises will be more feasible. Even in urban areas, we can create occasional quiet natural refuges.</i> |
| The connectivity concept mentioned is really important and it should be required that open space remain part of developments. When we don't set some sort of standard then developers see that as no set standard at all. There is no buffering or separation between projects, so that is the sort of beautification that needs to happen in public spaces in terms of the flow of design.  |
| <b>Key Question #8 – Should parking requirements be reduced in urban centers/urban villages? If yes, should the reduction be accomplished quantitatively (fewer spaces required) or qualitatively (use of shared parking)?</b>   |
| Both   |
| As urban centers become more dense and land values increase, then language that demands structured or underground parking should be implemented.   |
| Parking structures in Europe are really well hidden and high-rises blended into the design of surrounding uses. We need to find ways to reduce the number of vehicles and we need to think about population, we need to find solutions and more tools to cope.   |
| <b>Key Question #9 – How far into architectural standards and guidelines should the county go in regulating urban center projects?</b>   |

|  |
|--|
| <p>The county should go no further. These projects attract high-end design teams that produce high quality designed developments.</p>  |
| <p>The quality of projects is often a function of land values. Landscaping standards in the PCB zone are extensive, yet some projects do not display the connectivity concept. Sometimes code restrictions siphon creativity potential. A good site plan will meet performance standards, but those standards need to be well thought out to reduce risks.</p> |
| <p>Incentives, such as tax reductions, tax exemptions, subsidies or special grants can and should be used to encourage people to follow architectural design guidelines. Incentives should be used over regulations.</p>   |
| <p>All projects look the same. They are snapshots in time from the same schools of architecture and you get the same result.</p>   |
| <p><b>Key Question #10 – How should the public be involved in the design review process for urban centers?</b></p>   |