



Memorandum

DATE: July 7, 2010

TO: Shoreline Planning Commission

FROM: Joseph W. Tovar, FAICP, Director P&DS
Paul Cohen, Senior Planner

RE: Study session on draft Town Center Subarea Plan

Summary

The study session's objectives are to:

- Help the Commission gain an understanding about the main policy initiatives included in the draft Town Center Subarea Plan
- Facilitate Commission discussion about whether additional policies should be added or whether any should be deleted
- Identify any additional information that staff should research prior to the hearings this fall.

Background/Analysis

Earlier this year the Commission developed a draft Vision Statement for the Town Center Subarea. That Town Center Vision Statement was distilled from several sources: (1) the City-wide Vision Statement (which in turn integrated the Sustainability, Economic Development, and Housing Strategies); (2) public input at the Town Center Open House last October; (3) the results of our online survey, and (4) the hands-on citizen Design Charrette held in April. More recently, the Commission has been focused by staff and our consultant, Makers, on the design standards that would be part of a Town Center design review process.

Before we proceed further into the details of possible implementing zoning for the Town Center Subarea Plan, it is appropriate to first begin shaping the Subarea Plan itself. To that end, the staff has prepared the first draft in Attachment A.

Proposal

As staff discussed with the Commission when you reviewed the SE Neighborhood Subarea Plan presentation, there is no one optimal way that a Subarea Plan should look. Some, like the Point Wells example, are heavy on the narrative and vision, and lighter on the policy. Some, like the SE Neighborhood Plan, have a large number of goals and policies, and comparatively little narrative. To some degree, the large number of goals and policies in the SE Neighborhood Plan was a result of the lengthy report and numerous recommendations of the citizen advisory committee process.

The draft Town Center Subarea Plan falls somewhere between these two examples. The draft opens with a bulleted narrative to provide a geographic and historical context for the Subarea. Next up is the Planning Commission's draft Town Center Vision. The staff then extrapolated from that Vision three major goals and approximately two dozen policies. An important component of the plan (something staff would propose to replicate in the coming Comprehensive Plan Update) is the deliberate use of pictures to illustrate some of the policies' intent or possibilities. We haven't included thumbnail photos illustrating all of the policies, because we are not sure which ones will survive to the next draft.

The purpose of this study session is to familiarize the Commission with the proposed format, sequence and substance of the Subarea Plan and to give you an opportunity to ask questions of clarification. The scope of the Subarea Plan is important to get right because it will provide the policy foundation for the details we will write into the draft Town Center Zoning. We want to be sure that the Planning Commission is comfortable, at least preliminarily, with the scope and focus of this working draft Subarea Plan before we invest a lot of time and energy in sketching out the details of the proposed implementing zoning. To clarify, we are not asking the Commission at this time to opine on the merits of any of the policies in this draft Subarea Plan. The time for that will be during the public hearing(s) this fall.

With whatever clarification the Commission provides, the staff will then begin work over the summer on a refined draft Subarea Plan and do research to answer questions you may pose. We will also then begin work on a companion Town Center Zoning map, new Town Center Zones, and the details of the design review process and design standards for Town Center.

In September we would return to another study session to review with you the next draft of the Subarea Plan and the first draft of the Implementing Zoning. After explaining both documents and asking questions you may have, we will then prepare for public hearings in October on both the proposed Town Center Subarea Plan and new Town Center Zoning.

If you have questions or comments about the recommendation, please contact Paul Cohen at pcohen@shorelinewa.gov (tel: 206-801-2551) or Joe Tovar at jtovar@shorelinewa.gov (tel: 206-801-2501).

Attachments

Attachment 1 – Draft Town Center Subarea Plan



Shoreline Town Center Subarea Plan

DRAFT
07/08/10

Geographic and Historical Context

- Town Center is the geographic center of Shoreline and the crossroads of its three most heavily traveled roads, N. 175th St, N. 185th St., and Aurora/SR 99.
- Town Center is on the middle mile of the City's 3-mile long Aurora corridor.
- Shoreline's settlement patterns in the early 20th century focused in this area around Judge Ronald's original homestead and the Ronald schoolhouse.
- In the early 1900's, the North Trunk (red brick) Road and Interurban electric railway traversed this area, linking it to Seattle and Everett. The "Ronald Station" was located in the vicinity of the proposed Park at Town Center.
- Growing dramatically after World War II, Shoreline became an auto-oriented suburb characterized by large areas of relatively low residential density, a general lack of parks and sidewalks, and a low level of urban services.
- During the post-war decades, the Aurora/SR 99 corridor developed as a strip commercial highway, with a tremendous diversity of businesses. While these businesses largely served local and regional needs, the highway itself became congested, chaotic, unattractive and unsafe.
- The emergence of regional shopping malls at Alderwood and Northgate in the 1970's eroded Shoreline's primary market for certain retail goods and services.
- Several of the public facilities typically found in traditional downtowns began to locate in the Town Center area in the 1960's. These include the Shorewood High School, the Shoreline Fire Department Headquarters, the Ronald Sewer District Office and Yard, and the Shoreline Museum.
- During the last decades of the prior century, commercial and apartment uses typically found in traditional downtowns began to locate in this area, including grocery, drug store and other retail stores and personal services. These still co-exist with businesses serving a larger market area, such as auto dealerships.
- With the City's incorporation in 1995, additional civic pieces of an emerging Town Center came into being. The Interurban Trail through Town Center was completed in 2005 and the new City Hall opened in 2009.
- In 2011 the re-built Aurora Boulevard through Town Center will be completed, and construction will begin on a re-built Shorewood High School, with new buildings located immediately adjacent to the Town Center.

Town Center Vision Statement

Shoreline Town Center in 2030 is the vibrant cultural and governmental heart of the City with a rich mix of housing and shopping options, thriving businesses, and public spaces for gatherings and events. People of diverse cultures, ages, and incomes enjoy living, working and interacting in this safe, healthy, and walkable urban place.

Once a crossroads on the Interurban that connected Seattle and Everett, Shoreline's Town Center has evolved into a signature part of the City. The Center stands out as a unique and inviting regional destination while gracefully fitting in with its surrounding landscape and neighborhoods. Connections to neighborhoods and the region are convenient and accessible through a system of paths, roads and public transit. Citizens, business owners and city officials are justifiably proud of the many years of effort to create a special and livable place that exemplifies the best of Shoreline past, present and future.

Town Center is anchored on one end by the City Hall complex, Shorewood High School, the Shoreline Museum, and other public facilities. The linear park with the Interurban Trail provides a green thread through the center. City Hall not only is the center of government, but also provides an active venue for many other civic functions. On the other end, the revitalized historic five-point interchange again attracts people from throughout the community.

Town Center is a physically and visually attractive, inviting and interesting place where form and function come together to promote a thriving environment for residents, businesses, and visitors. Notable features include a number of green open spaces both large and intimate, enclosed plazas, storefronts opening onto parks and wide sidewalks, underground and rear parking, numerous ground-floor and corner retail options within mixed-use buildings, and internal streets within large blocks and other pathways that provide safe, walkable connections throughout the Center area both east and west and north and south.

Building heights range from one to three stories within transition areas adjacent to single-family residential areas such as Linden and Stone avenues, up to six stories in mixed-use buildings along sections of Aurora Boulevard, while buildings in the Midvale and Firlands areas are generally four to five-story mixed-use structures. Building materials, facades, designs, landscaped setbacks as well as public art and green infrastructure features represent a wide variety of styles and functions while maintaining a harmonious look and feel.

The City of Shoreline has long been committed to the realization of the three E's of sustainability -- environmental quality, economic vitality and social equity -- and Town Center has integrated and balanced each of these successfully.

Environmental Quality

While respecting elements of its historic character, Town Center has become a model of environmentally sound building and development practices. The buildings themselves are state-of-the-art energy efficient and sustainable structures with zero carbon impacts. The Center's extensive tree canopy and native vegetation are all part of a strategic system for capturing and treating stormwater on site and protecting and enhancing overall environmental quality. Major transit stops along the mature boulevard provide quick and convenient connections to major centers elsewhere in the region. Civic spaces and parks have been designed for daily use and special events.

Economic Vitality

Town Center attracts a robust mix of office, service and retail development. The boulevard boasts an exciting choice of shops, restaurants, entertainment, and nightlife. The Center is a model of green industry and economic sustainability that generates the financial resources that support excellent city services, with the highest health and living standards. As a result, Town Center's success helps to make Shoreline one of the most fiscally sound and efficiently run cities on the West Coast.

Social Equity:

Town Center offers a broad range of housing choices that attract a diversity of household types, ages and incomes. Attention to design allows the public gathering places to be accessible to all. People feel safe here day and night. Festivals, exhibits and performances attract people of all ages and cultural backgrounds.

Summary:

Town Center is thoughtfully planned and built yet all the choices feel organic and natural as if each feature and building is meant to be here. In short, Town Center is a place people want to be in Shoreline in 2030.



Fig. 1 - Principles of Sustainability

Town Center Goals

Goal TC-1 Create a Town Center that embodies the sustainability values of environmental responsibility, economic development and social progress.

Goal TC-2 Create a “sense of place” in Town Center that provides a focal point for Shoreline’s civic life and community-wide identity.

Goal TC-3 Create an economically and culturally thriving Town Center through the coordinated efforts of the City, the School District, business organizations, community non-profits and neighborhood associations.

Town Center Policies

Policy TC-1 Create an urban form, mix of land uses, and walkability in Town Center that distinguishes it from the more commercially dominated and auto-oriented portions of the Aurora Corridor to the north and south.

Policy TC-2 Promote a blend of civic, commercial and residential uses in Town Center.

Policy TC-3 Increase the variety of housing stock in Town Center and increase opportunities for moderate cost housing.

Policy TC-4 Encourage additional retail, service, grocery, and restaurant uses to serve people who live or work in Town Center, or within walking distance of it.

Policy TC-5 Give clear visual clues to Town Center’s geographic extent with gateway treatments at its west entry on N. 175th Street, and at its north and south entries on Aurora Avenue N.



Fig. 2 Examples of town center entry signs

Policy TC-6 Post public “wayfinding” signs to direct motorists and bicyclists to public destinations within and near Town Center.

Policy TC-7 Provide amenities, uses, linkages and protections to make Town Center a viable residential area for new multifamily and mixed uses.

Policy TC-8 Publicize innovative “green” public projects like City Hall, the middle mile of the Aurora project and Shorewood High School, as models for private projects in Town Center.

Policy TC-9 Reduce the noise, visual and safety impacts of traffic on Aurora Avenue as it passes through the Town Center.

Policy TC-10 Create safe and attractive pedestrian crossings of Aurora, walkways to better link uses within Town Center, and more direct and attractive walkways from adjacent neighborhoods.

Policy TC-11 Identify Town Center architectural patterns (e.g., building forms, roof shapes, fenestration, materials, etc.) that provide context, create human scale and visual interest, and evoke the residential character of Shoreline.



Fig. 3 Town Center roof shapes of various pitches, materials, colors

Policy TC-12 Develop the Park at Town Center as a memorable, green, open space and link it to the City Hall Civic Center, and program both of these spaces for celebrations, public gatherings and informal “third places.”



Fig. 4 Farmer's markets, parades, lawn sports, and wi-fi access are several possible park uses

Policy TC-13 Promote multi-modal transportation within Town Center to link to other parts of Shoreline and the region.

Policy TC-14 Develop appropriate street section standards to recognize the different roles, contexts, and hierarchy of streets in Town Center.

Policy TC-15 Create street-specific standards for pedestrian amenities, light standards and other street furnishings.

Policy TC-16 Consider the creation of new rights of way or the vacation of other rights of way in order to facilitate better vehicular and pedestrian circulation as well as enhance parcel aggregation and more comprehensive site development designs.

Policy TC-17 Connect adjacent residential neighborhoods to opportunities for services, transit and civic amenities in Town Center, and explore public improvements and programs to enhance the viability and sustainability of these areas as residential areas.

Policy TC-18 Protect adjacent residential areas from impacts generated by developments in Town Center.

Policy TC-19 Celebrate and convey the heritage of the community through preservation and interpretation of artifacts and places in Town Center.



Fig. 5 Interpretive can signs orient and educate about Red Brick Road, Historical Museum, Interurban Station

Policy TC-20 Increase context-appropriate private project designs, predictability and flexibility in the permit process by crafting a form-based development code, a design review process, illustrated design standards, and a menu of options.

Policy TC-21 Encourage structured parking for commercial, multifamily and mixed use developments, and explore opportunities to reduce parking requirements due to the availability of transit, walkability, and housing types.

Policy TC-22 Abate the remaining billboards, or re-locate them out of the Town Center, and craft a form-based sign code that orients and sizes commercial signage based on the function and speed of serving streets.

Policy TC-23 Site and screen surface parking lots and outdoor storage with landscaping, low walls or fences, arbors, small perimeter structures and other treatments to soften visual impacts.

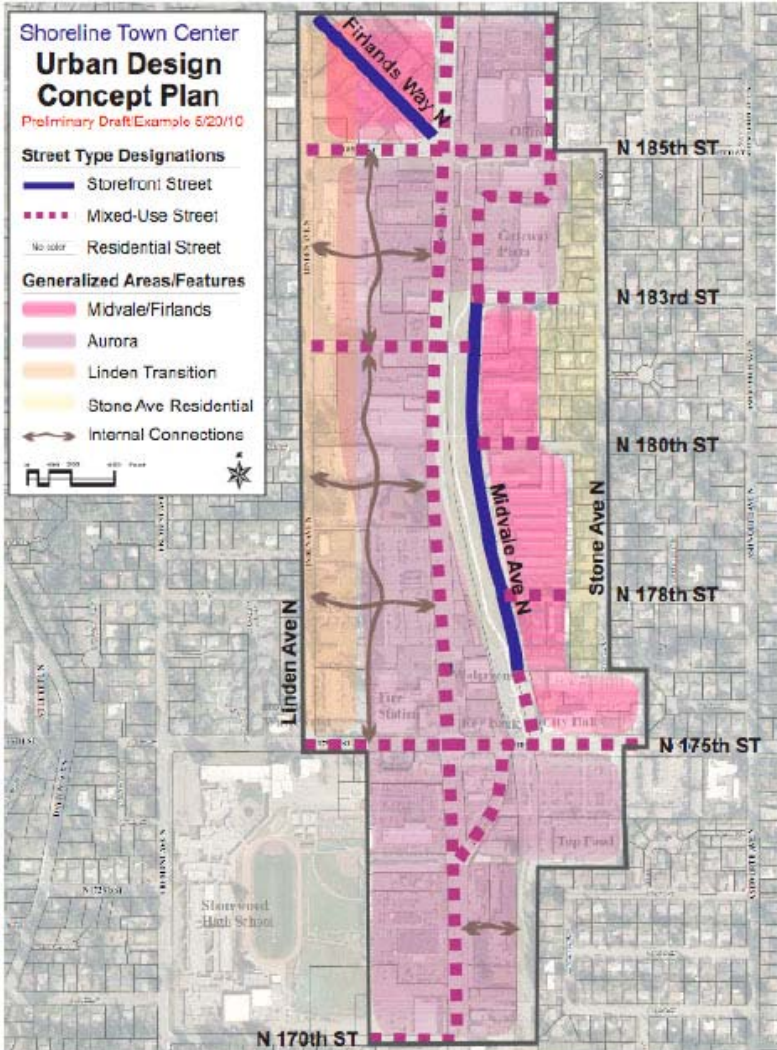


Fig 6 – Urban Design Concept Plan