

Planning Commission Report

To: City Council

From: Planning Commission

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Date: March 20, 2013

File Number: L120157; L120156; L120155; SEPA 2013 00274

**Planning
Commission
Recommendation:**

1. Deny proposal to add new goal to Comprehensive Plan addressing sustainability (L120157)
2. Deny proposal to revise Comprehensive Plan policy language to encourage superior architectural design and green building (L120156)
3. Take no action at this time regarding proposal to raise State Environment Policy Act (SEPA) exemption thresholds in the Zoning Code (L120155)

Recommended Action: Do not adopt amendments to the Redmond Comprehensive Plan or Zoning Code.

Summary: The applicant submitted a three-part proposal as described below. As noted above, the Planning Commission recommended City Council deny proposals 1 and 2, and take no action on number 3 at this time.

1. Comprehensive Plan goals

Propose adding a new, ninth goal to the Comprehensive Plan in order to elevate the City’s commitment to sustainability. The new goal is also intended to better recognize the built environment as a mechanism for implementing sustainability.

2. Comprehensive Plan policies for building design

Related to the item above, the applicant proposes to revise policy language in the Comprehensive Plan in order to encourage innovative and green buildings. The proposal is also intended to shift the City’s design review philosophy from defensive to proactive. This could then inform a future update of Redmond’s design standards, which were identified as a future work item during the recent Zoning Code Rewrite process.

3. Zoning Code State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) exemption thresholds

The applicant proposes the City adopt higher SEPA categorical exemptions thresholds, concurrent with recent updates to SEPA rules under state law. A portion of the new rules became effective January 28, 2013, as part of the 2012 “Round 1” rule-making process, led by Department of Ecology. Categorical exemptions are a threshold at which no significant adverse environmental impacts are anticipated by a development activity occurring within the threshold. State law provides a range of threshold intensities for various land use types, and cities may choose to adopt a specific threshold level within the available range.

Reasons the Proposal should be Denied:

The three proposals should not be adopted. Reasons are as follows:

- 1. Comprehensive Plan goals**
 - Sustainability is already explicitly defined in the Comprehensive Plan
 - Proposal is inconsistent with other goals
 - Limits the scope of sustainability

- 2. Comprehensive Plan policies for building design**
 - Key terms contained in suggested language are not readily understood, such as the word ‘dynamic’
 - Duplicates existing green building policies and code requirements
 - Establishes an unreasonable level of green development expectations

- 3. Zoning Code State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) exemption thresholds**
 - To be addressed as part of a separate City-initiated Zoning Code amendment process later in 2013
 - Later action allows City to incorporate outcomes of Department of Ecology’s Round 2 rule-making, currently underway

Recommended Findings of Fact

- 1. Public Hearing and Notice**
 - a. Public Hearing Date**

The Planning Commission held a public hearing on February 27, 2013, which included oral testimony from the applicant and another representative from Natural and Built Environments, LLC. The applicant also provided written testimony, included as *Exhibit A*. The applicant’s oral and written testimony provided further clarification of the proposal’s intent, and additional supporting information such as national sustainability indicators and trends, and examples of how other cities in the Puget Sound Region are incorporating sustainability into various planning documents. The oral and written comment

period was closed by the Commission at the conclusion of the public hearing on February 27.

b. Notice

The public hearing was published in the Seattle Times. Public notices were posted in City Hall and at the Redmond Library. Notice was also provided by including the hearing in Planning Commission agendas and extended agendas, distributed to various members of the public and various agencies, and posted on the City's web site.

Recommended Conclusions

1. Key Issues Discussed by the Planning Commission

1. Comprehensive Plan goals

The applicant's intent of proposing a new goal to the Comprehensive Plan is to elevate the City's commitment to sustainability and better recognize the built environment as a mechanism for implementing sustainability. The Commission considered the merits of adding a new goal, and alternative language choices that could be used to carry out the applicant's request.

Ultimately, the Commission concluded that a new goal would not be helpful, which results in the recommendation for denial. The Commission's basis for this recommendation included:

- *Sustainability is already explicitly defined in the Comprehensive Plan.*
The Comprehensive Plan is already guided by explicit sustainability principles that express the community's intent for all aspects of sustainability. In addition, these principles were the basis for updates to the Comprehensive Plan goals and policies in each element, and were established through a robust community outreach process as part of the 2010-11 periodic update to the Comprehensive Plan.
- *Proposal could undesirably limit the scope of sustainability.*
The proposal would connect the built environment to achieving the environmental dimensions of sustainability. However, by not addressing the other two dimensions of sustainability as defined in the plan –economy and social equity - the proposal could limit the view of sustainability and conflict with other portions of the Comprehensive Plan.

- *Proposal speaks to implementation, while other goals speak to intent.*
The Commission also observed that the proposal acts more like a policy than a goal, because it speaks to *how* the City should achieve its goals. In contrast, the other eight goals are higher-level, describing *what* the City should look like.

2. Comprehensive Plan policies for building design

The applicant's intent of revising policies in the Comprehensive Plan is to encourage innovative and green buildings, and shift the City's design review philosophy from defensive to proactive. The applicant also observed that this could inform a future update of Redmond's design standards, which were identified as a future work item during the recent Zoning Code Rewrite process.

The Commission considered revising existing policies in the Community Character and Historic Preservation Element of the Comprehensive Plan, but ultimately concluded that a policy amendment is not advisable for the following reasons:

- *Proposal is not clear*
The proposal is not readily clear in its objectives, and uses certain terms like "dynamic" that are not well understood.
- *Proposal duplicates existing green building policies and code requirements*
Explicit support and incentives for green building and low impact development techniques already exist in Comprehensive Plan policies and Zoning Code regulations. If the applicant is seeking additional flexibility in development standards for green buildings, such a request would be more appropriately made via a Zoning Code Amendment, because it would directly address any hurdles to green development that a developer may be experiencing.
- *Proposal establishes an unreasonable level of green development expectations*
The Commission aims to balance the aspirations of innovative developers with those in the development community who practice more traditional techniques, and otherwise meet code requirements.

3. Zoning Code State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) exemption thresholds

The applicant proposes that the City adopt higher SEPA categorical exemptions thresholds, consistent with recent updates to SEPA rules under state law. The applicant did not request a specific exemption threshold, as the application was submitted prior to the state's completion of the first round of rule making.

The Commission recommended no action be taken at this time in recognition of staff's proposal to address this request as part of a separate City-initiated Zoning Code amendment later in 2013.

2. Recommended Conclusions of the Technical Committee

The recommended conclusions in the Technical Committee Report (*Attachment C*) should be adopted as conclusions.

3. Planning Commission Recommendation

At its February 27, 2013 meeting:

The Commission approved a motion to adopt the Technical Committee’s recommendation to deny the applicant’s request to add a new goal to the Comprehensive Plan by a vote of 5-0. The applicant’s proposal is thereby not supported by the Planning Commission.

The Commission failed to approve a motion that would have adopted the Technical Committee’s recommended change to policy CC-19 by a vote of 0-5. The applicant’s proposal is thereby not supported by the Planning Commission.

The Commission approved a motion to adopt the Technical Committee’s recommendation that no action be taken at this time with regard to raising SEPA exemption thresholds by a vote of 5-0. The Commission thereby recommends no action be taken at this time with respect to this portion of the applicant’s proposal.

List of Attachments

Attachment A: Public Testimony

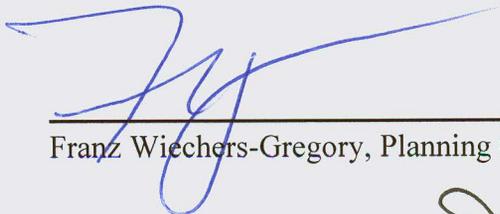
Attachment B: Planning Commission Minutes from February 27, 2013

Attachment C: Technical Committee Report with Exhibits



Robert G. Odle, Planning Director

3/15/13
Date



Franz Wiechers-Gregory, Planning Commission Chairperson

3/20/13
Date

Approved for Council Agenda 

John Marchione, Mayor

3/25/13
Date

To: Redmond Planning Commission
Re: Comprehensive Plan Focused Goal for Sustainability
From: The People at Natural and Built Environments

February 20, 2013

Dear Planning Commission members:

Please consider our request that a ninth goal to the Comprehensive Plan be added because of its high degree of importance to our City.

Comprehensive Plan Sustainability Guiding Principles - Why?

In January of 2013, Beijing citizens wore face masks to protect themselves from the poisonous air created by their pursuit of stronger economics with a disregard for the environment and human concerns. While we have also made mistakes, we have attempted to slow our negative impacts on the planet while searching for solutions. "The tendency to deny a difficult and ominous reality as long as possible is extremely tempting." (John Lyle, *Regenerative Design for Sustainable Development*)

However, we can no longer ignore the reality that we are now at a turning point in our Earth's history. In order to sustain our planet's resources and foster a harmonious relationship between human and natural environments, we must act now, and we must act quickly to keep our air clean and our cities beautiful. No longer is the environment's degradation a concern of our grandchildren, but instead the principal concern of our generation as we have already begun to see the global consequences of the last century of neglect. It is now the time to focus our aim on protecting the riches of our planet to pave our way to a sustainable future, where city life is embodied by a green economy, rich public parks and wildlife sanctuaries, and a walkable metropolis centered around green transportation options.

Ranked 5th in the nation by CNN's *Best Places to Live*, Redmond has undoubtedly embraced community development with a focus on excellence. Redmond's economic, technological, and social leadership of the Eastside sets an example for Greater Seattle as a whole as well as far beyond county

lines. With leadership comes responsibility, and our City must act as a shining light in sustainability as powerfully it does in so many other aspects of governance.

Let Redmond's commitment to environmental principles be reinforced by this addition to the Vision Statement of the Comprehensive Plan, whereby a holistic approach based firmly in science and common sense is adopted in order to foster environmentally supportive growth and development, a flourishing Green economy through the reduction of waste and pollution, and a healthy and enjoyable living experience. Let Redmond lead the way and demonstrate once more why the City is ranked a *Best Place to Live*.

We ask you to make Redmond's Comprehensive Plan demonstrate its leadership and vision in sustainability. We have provided suggested wording options:

- **To encourage environmentally sustainable development, to conserve the natural environment, and increase long-term livability in our City.**
- **To encourage environmentally sustainable development and to conserve the natural environment *while* increasing long-term livability in our City.**
- **To protect the natural environment through the reduction of waste and pollution, and to foster healthy growth through the promotion of environmentally sustainable building practices.**
- **To protect the natural environment through the reduction of waste and pollution, and through the promotion of environmentally sustainable building practices.**

Thank you for your consideration,
From all of us at Natural and Built Environments



Building certified LEED Platinum projects
2013 Vision 5: Redmond's first Affordable Live Work Art Community
2012 Governor's Smart Communities Award Winner-Redmond
2011 Hammer Award, Built Green Builder of the Year

China's Lessons: January 2013



Beijing, the Capital City of the most populated country in the world, with pollution 50-70 times higher than what a person should breathe. Sustainability matters.

**REDMOND PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES**

February 27, 2013

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairman Franz Wiechers-Gregory, Vice Chair Vibhas Chandorkar, Commissioners Miller, Murray and Sanders

COMMISSIONERS EXCUSED: Commissioners Biethan, O'Hara

STAFF PRESENT: Pete Sullivan, City of Redmond Planning Department; Lei Wu, City of Redmond Planning Department; Sarah Stiteler, City of Redmond Planning Department

RECORDING SECRETARY: Lady of Letters, Inc.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairman Gregory in the Council Chambers at City Hall.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA:

There were no changes to the agenda.

ITEMS FROM THE AUDIENCE:

There were no items from the audience.

APPROVAL OF MEETING SUMMARY:

MOTION by Commissioner Miller and seconded by Commissioner Murray to approve the meeting summary of the February 20, 2013, meeting of the Redmond Planning Commission. Without objection, the motion was approved.

PUBLIC HEARING AND STUDY SESSION, Proposed Amendments regarding: 1) Comprehensive Plan Goals, 2) Comprehensive Plan Policies for Building Design, and 3) Zoning Code State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) Exemption Thresholds, presented by Pete Sullivan, City of Redmond Planning Department.

Chairman Gregory opened the public hearing. Pete Sullivan of the Planning Department said tonight, the Commission would hear from the applicant regarding the proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and the SEPA exemption thresholds. Mr. Sullivan summarized the notes from last week's study session on this topic. The first part of the three-part application would be to add a new goal to the Comprehensive Plan's eight existing goals. The applicant's intent is to elevate Redmond's commitment to sustainability and bring a greater recognition of what the built environment can do to contribute to sustainability goals, which have environmental goals, economic goals, and social equity goals.

The second part of the proposal would revise Comprehensive Plan policy to encourage superior architectural design. The applicant's intent is to facilitate development of innovative and green buildings and to create a more proactive set of design policies and requirements rather than a defensive approach, which the applicant believes is the current situation in Redmond.

The third part of the proposal would be to raise SEPA exemption thresholds in the Zoning Code. When the applicant submitted this proposal in spring of 2012, the state was undergoing a rule amendment process where the threshold that a city can accept for developments to exempt themselves from environmental review was being raised. That process has now concluded and the thresholds have been raised. The City has the opportunity now to raise its exemption thresholds. The applicant was making the City aware that this process was occurring and encouraged the City to make a commensurate increase in its thresholds. Staff recommends no action on this item at time. There was no specific recommendation from the applicant because at the time, the applicant did not know what the thresholds would be as the state process was still underway.

Staff has communicated with the applicant to say that the City intends to follow up on his proposal as part of a City-initiated Zoning Code amendment process later this year. The City also wishes to wait for completion of another rule-making process in 2013 to see if there are other changes to SEPA that could be folded into a broader set of amendments. Tonight, the Commission would hear mainly about the first two parts of the proposal, but the third part could be considered if that is deemed appropriate.

Staff is recommending denial of the request for adding the Comprehensive Plan goal. Staff believes that sustainability is already sufficiently defined in the Comprehensive Plan in the six sustainability principles that are at the front of the document. Part of the major two-year updating process from 2010-2011 was to weave sustainability into all policies of the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Sullivan said that was a theme of the update, and there was a large community engagement process that involved more than 75 people to define sustainability, what it means to the City of Redmond, and to ensure the principles capture that. Staff is not sure it would be helpful to state this in another goal. Also, the scope of sustainability is more limited to the built environment in the applicant's proposal versus the balance of environmental, economic, and social equity in the Comprehensive Plan now. The third piece of staff's objections deals with goals versus policies and the tone of the applicant's proposal. The proposal includes a goal that talks about a strategy of creating incentives with regard to sustainability. Mr. Sullivan said that was more policy-oriented. Goals talk about what the city will become. Policies are more oriented towards how those goals would be achieved.

The second part of the proposal, revising policy language to encourage superior architectural design, has received partial support from the Technical Committee, though not including the word *dynamic* used by the applicant, because that term was not well understood. Part of the applicant's proposal duplicates existing green building policies in the Comprehensive Plan and regulations in the Zoning Code that already do some of the

things staff believes the applicant is intending. Also, by setting too high a threshold in policy for green building and innovative building, while exciting and possibly an achievement with regard to sustainability, could set a level of expectation for other developers who otherwise might meet the minimum standards of the Code for always doing a five-star development. If developers meet the minimum standards, that would be acceptable as well.

The proposed amendment affected Policy CC-19 in Redmond's Community Character and Historic Preservation Element. It is a strikeout and insertion that clarifies that the City, creating outstanding public buildings, can serve as inspiration to the private sector to do the same. That situation is one way to further sustainability principles. Staff looked at key policies in the Comprehensive Plan and the Redmond Zoning Code that already speak to green building incentives and how to provide flexibility for developers when appropriate. The Technical Committee recommended no action with respect to raising exemption thresholds for SEPA because the City intends to follow up as part of a separate process. Staff is anticipating report approval on this item March 20th, 2013.

Chairman Gregory opened the public hearing and asked for public testimony. Ms. Angela Rozmyn of 7325 NE 140th Street, Kirkland, was the first to speak to the Commission. She said that sustainability needs to be a focus in the Comprehensive Plan. She said that right now, 50.7 percent of the energy in the United States is wasted between buildings, energy infrastructure, and transportation. Ms. Rozmyn said not enough was being done to support sustainability, and while Redmond was making steps to be better, more needed to be done. She pointed out Google's focus in the Redmond region to look more closely at sustainability, renewable energy projects, and lowering environmental impact. She displayed the U.S. drought monitor from the summer of 2012, which showed abnormally dry conditions nationwide. Such conditions can impact food production and food prices. She said the country is in a point of change, and said the time was now to make a difference.

Ms. Rozmyn displayed a slide about Beijing and how many people felt compelled to wear facemasks due to air pollution deemed unacceptable by the EPA. She appreciated the existence of the Impact Redmond website of the City, which she said was the right step. But, she wanted the City to step up its work on sustainability to make sure it was a focus moving forward. Commissioner Miller asked Ms. Rozmyn who she represented. She said it was a group called Natural and Built Environments. He thanked her for her presentation and asked her for any specific comments on the proposed amendments or to the Technical Committee's recommendations. She said that while there is a lot of sustainability language in the Comprehensive Plan, the top eight goals for the City appear to be more peripheral to her rather than top priorities. She would hope that anyone reading the Plan would really come away with sustainability as an important aspect of the City's approach to development.

Robert Pantley, 2025 Rose Point Lane, Kirkland, next testified to the Commission. He noted that he served on the Code Rewrite Commission for the City of Redmond, and said that focusing on sustainability was an important goal of that group. He said that the word

sustainability is used a lot, and Redmond has done a lot of great things to further this idea. But he said that is not readily apparent in reading the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Pantley said the City of Seattle has done a lot of work on its Comprehensive Plan integrating goals of sustainability right up front. He said there is no question that a majority of their goals talk about sustainability. Mr. Pantley wanted to make sure Redmond's sustainability priority was front and center. He displayed a slide that spoke to a policy called **Toward a Sustainable Seattle**, which said: *Sustainability is a common-sense notion that health of our environment, our economy, our bodies, and our community as a whole are not only closely linked but dependent on one another.*

Mr. Pantley said that was a good statement, and his group, Natural and Built Environments, felt it would be very valuable to the average individual to know that Redmond is a leader in this regard. Other cities promote a strong and diverse economy but also protect and preserve environmental resources. He said sustainability should be a top goal in Redmond. The City of Bothell talks about celebrating and respecting its picturesque nature by achieving a harmony between the built and natural environments. Mr. Pantley said many cities around Redmond have made sustainability an up-front priority, and he said it would be appropriate for Redmond to do the same.

He continued that the Tudor Manor project in Redmond won the Governor's Smart Communities Award as a certified LEED Platinum project. Microsoft has had LEED Gold projects, as well. Mr. Pantley said a lot of sustainable projects are going on in Redmond, and Natural and Built Environments believes it would be best for the City of Redmond to show that goal of sustainability more prominently in the Comprehensive Plan. He said the eight goals of the current Comprehensive Plan do not reflect all of the effort that Redmond puts forth in creating sustainability.

Mr. Pantley said Natural and Built Environments believes in being collaborative in changing some of the language of the Comprehensive Plan's eight goals. He asked if the Commission would consider allowing his group to work with staff to change the language of the Comprehensive Plan's goals. Chairman Gregory noted that the first goal includes this language: *to conserve agricultural lands and rural areas, to protect and enhance the quality of the natural environment, and to sustain Redmond's natural resources as the City continues to accommodate growth and development.* He asked Mr. Pantley if that did not address sustainability in a meaningful way.

Mr. Pantley said he applauded the language of conserving agricultural lands and rural areas. However, he noted the City was doing a lot of building, and LEED Platinum buildings use one-third of the energy used by other buildings. More wasteful buildings, he continued, take away from a green economy. When buildings use LEED Platinum guidelines, or better, a huge amount of money becomes available for other uses, such as parks, schools, and healthcare. He said sustainability from an economic standpoint is critical, and noted that breathability outdoors and indoors was a concern, as well. He wanted to help the younger generation walk into a better environment that includes sustainability. Natural and Built Environments believes the City of Redmond should say that front and center.

Commissioner Murray said that the first goal of the Comprehensive Plan has three distinct parts:

1. To conserve agricultural lands and rural areas,
2. To enhance the quality of the natural environment, and
3. To sustain Redmond's natural resources as the City continues to accommodate growth and development.

Commissioner Murray asked Mr. Pantley if he believed the City was only applying sustainability to the natural environment and not to the built environment. Mr. Pantley said he did indeed feel that way. Commissioner Murray said no one on the Commission would disagree with the benefits of sustainability. Commissioner Murray works in Bothell, and the building where he works is one of only three LEED certified buildings in that City. He noted that Mr. Pantley used Bothell as an example of a city that had better language in its Comprehensive Plan, but that Redmond had more LEED certified buildings. Commissioner Murray wondered where the disparity was that Mr. Pantley referred to and if the words actually drive the consideration of the built environment. If that is the case, Bothell could be considered as a failure. Commissioner Murray asked if the intent of the Comprehensive Plan truly drove sustainable development, in that Redmond is more successful than Bothell when it comes to green building practices.

Mr. Pantley responded that the Zoning Code is developed from the Comprehensive Plan, a plan that he said was very well done in many aspects. He reiterated that cities like Seattle have more than half of their goals dealing with sustainability. Commissioner Murray brought up the Bothell example again. Mr. Pantley said Bothell is an example of a city that talks about sustainability but does not achieve it. Redmond, in his opinion, is working towards sustainability but not saying that properly in the Comprehensive Plan.

Commissioner Chandorkar thanked Mr. Pantley for his work and passion regarding sustainability. Commissioner Chandorkar asked where the Zoning Code specifically does not translate the sustainability goals or intentions of Redmond. Mr. Pantley said sustainability is more important than the City might want to believe. He said that the City wants to have 25 percent of the buildings built to reach a higher sustainability level. That is not reflected in the goals of the Comprehensive Plan, in Mr. Pantley's opinion. He said the average person is not seeing Redmond embracing sustainability in the way it actually does. It is almost like the City is doing the work but not getting the credit.

Commissioner Chandorkar noted that Mr. Pantley wanted sustainability to be an element of the Comprehensive Plan, which speaks to the Community Character Element. Commissioner Chandorkar asked why sustainability should be so high in the Comprehensive Plan when Redmond actually incorporates many of these elements in the City's vision, the Comprehensive Plan, and the Zoning Code. Commissioner Chandorkar was not convinced that sustainability would rise to the level of an element in the Comprehensive Plan and has trouble changing the Comprehensive Plan without having a really good reason to do that, particularly since sustainability is woven through the entire

document. Chairman Gregory added that the update of the Comprehensive Plan included a lot of discussion among the Planning Commissioners on whether sustainability should be an element or whether it would be more meaningful to make sure sustainability is woven throughout the Comprehensive Plan. There was a conscious decision by the Planning Commission to make sustainability meaningful by having it everywhere and actually executing sustainable projects rather than just paying lip service to the idea.

Mr. Pantley said the City of Redmond has done a great job of weaving sustainability throughout its Comprehensive Plan, but he was not sure than the average person would read the Comprehensive Plan and understand the City's commitment to sustainability. Chairman Gregory asked why an average person would read the Comprehensive Plan. Commissioner Miller said this was a discussion of semantics, and he agreed with Chairman Gregory. Extensive effort has gone into the Code rewrite process and the development of the Comprehensive Plan to use sustainability as a meaningful filter.

Commissioner Miller disagreed with Mr. Pantley that this was a conversation about the average person. He noted that even in this evening's discussion, the focus was on driving actions in the private sector to develop at a higher standard, which is not aimed at the average citizen. Commissioner Miller did not have a problem with that, and said he wanted the private sector be a leader on sustainability. However, he did not believe the City could put the bit into the private sector's mouth on this issue and pull that sector along, as it were. Commissioner Miller said the City could set the table and create an environment where sustainability is embraced and honored, but he did not think a change in the Comprehensive Plan goals would accomplish what Mr. Pantley would like to see. Commissioner Miller noted that the Commission supports sustainability wholeheartedly, but did not think changing the goals would support Mr. Pantley's laudable efforts.

Commissioner Miller asked how the City could get the private sector to lead on the sustainability front without being prescriptive with regard to regulations. He noted that if the regulations were too prescriptive, developers would question the City. Mr. Pantley said that originally, he thought sustainability would cover just a few projects. He said that sustainability should be infused in all projects. He said that, incrementally, it would be wise to require higher levels of sustainability sooner rather than later. When energy and water are not wasted, more money is available for other spending priorities. Mr. Pantley noted that doing a project using LEED Platinum standards only costs about two to four percent more than a regular project, and the returns are amazing. He would like to have the focus on sustainability noted up front in the Comprehensive Plan as well as woven through the document.

Commissioner Chandorkar said he agreed with Commissioner Miller that Mr. Pantley was talking about a laudable goal. Commissioner Chandorkar wondered if there needed to be a balance between developers like Mr. Pantley and developers who work within Code requirements, yet do not have the wherewithal to create LEED Platinum projects. Commissioner Chandorkar said the City probably wanted to achieve that balance through its Zoning Code. He asked if the specific changes Mr. Pantley is discussing should appear in the Zoning Code discussion rather than the current discussion of the Comprehensive

Plan. Mr. Pantley said ultimately, the Comprehensive Plan is reflected in the Zoning Code. He wanted to support the Zoning Code by giving a title to the book, so to speak. He asked that the Planning Commission put that title of sustainability in the Comprehensive Plan's top goals. He said it was ironic that other cities had such a title in their Comprehensive Plan documents but are not doing as much as Redmond in terms of sustainability. Mr. Pantley said there is a national code in the works dealing with green development that many developers were not up to speed with.

Chairman Gregory thanked Mr. Pantley for his testimony and said the Commission did not disagree with the goals and the laudability of sustainability he was talking about. He noted that the Commission will focus very precisely on whether the Comprehensive Plan goals should be changed or additions should be made. Chairman Gregory closed the oral and written public hearing process at this point and moved to the study session.

Commissioner Miller said he agreed with Mr. Pantley that more could be done to promote sustainability. Commissioner Miller disagreed with the Technical Committee's semantic objections towards words like *dynamic*. He said reasonable people know what that word means. That said, Commissioner Miller noted he did not take Comprehensive Plan amendments lightly. He said the goals of sustainability have been woven through the Plan very thoroughly. Commissioner Miller said the Zoning Code is really where sustainability happens, and said the Commission could take a hard look at strengthening language encouraging exceptional work. He said there was no harm in doing that.

Commissioner Chandorkar disagreed with Commissioner Miller regarding the word *dynamic*. He said it was not clear to him what *dynamic building* would be. He did agree with Commissioner Miller that changing an element in the Comprehensive Plan requires a much higher level of reasoning, and he thought with the concept of sustainability woven into the Comprehensive Plan, there was not a need to change Comprehensive Plan elements. He would encourage the City and the applicant to look further at this issue when the topic of parking lots comes up in the future. During the next Comprehensive Plan change, language regarding sustainability could be more explicit. Commissioner Chandorkar said that sustainability could be stated up front, as the applicant has suggested, but did not think now was an appropriate time.

Chairman Gregory said the sustainability drives all of the goals for Redmond in terms of what makes the City livable. If a certain quality of life cannot be sustained, then that quality of life is no good. He said the eight goals of the Comprehensive Plan, in his view, define what Redmond is. Thirty years ago, Chairman Gregory was a consultant on a project called **Redmond Talk of the Town**, dealing with the Redmond Town Center, which was formerly a golf course. Hundreds of people took part in ten different workshops on that project, which was very controversial. All of the goals that came out of that work, back in the mid-1980's, made it clear to Chairman Gregory that Redmond is meeting sustainability goals, or getting there. Redmond has a distinctive character and is one of the most livable cities in the country. Sustainability has to be the driver on keeping that character alive, but Chairman Gregory is hesitating to make sustainability the title of

the book, to use Mr. Pantley's phrase. The title of the book, for Chairman Gregory, is livability and the core theme is sustainability.

Commissioner Miller asked for the slide from Mr. Pantley that discussed LEED projects in Redmond. Commissioner Miller said, in many cases, LEED activities come from a well-funded developer such as Microsoft, which Commissioner Miller said was great. However, he said it was difficult to legislate that which is exceptional and extraordinary. He noted that the four percent more Mr. Pantley said it would cost to create a LEED development is the margin many people are living on right now. Commissioner Miller said he was not sure what the economic consequences would be to make the changes the applicant is suggesting.

Commissioner Sanders pointed out that the goals of the City both lead and end with the word *sustainable* in them. She said that concept was woven well throughout the Comprehensive Plan. Staff said a concrete way to improve the implementation of these goals is through the zoning guidelines that will be revisited in the near future. She said that would be a good time to address the applicant's concerns. She agreed with Commissioner Chandorkar that a very significant motive would be needed to change the Comprehensive Plan goals. She noted that the staff presented a second choice, about a partial acceptance of the applicant's proposal, which was something she disagreed with. She said the proposed language is more limited than what the City has already, by specifying private sector instead of community. She appreciated the conversation and Mr. Pantley's work, but would prefer to adopt staff's recommendations.

Chairman Gregory called for a motion. Chairman Gregory said he was asking to move the issue forward and adopt a recommendation to concur with the Technical Committee report recommends. MOTION by Commissioner Miller to take the Technical Committee issues individually, seconded by Commissioner Sanders. Chairman Gregory obliged the motion.

MOTION by Commissioner Murray to adopt the first recommendation of the Technical Committee report and deny the request for changing Comprehensive Plan language. MOTION seconded by Commissioner Sanders.

Chairman Gregory called for any discussion of the motion. Commissioner Murray noted that he agreed with all the discussion at this meeting, and he did not think a title change in the title of the book translates into action. He said in the details of the Zoning Code, the City has a commitment to the principles of sustainability, as well as in the introduction of the Comprehensive Plan and in its goals. He said the City was succeeding in these goals, in that Redmond is a model for sustainability among other cities. Changing the Comprehensive Plan, Commissioner Murray continued, would require much further thought. The fact that a sustainability element was already considered to be added and intentionally not included supports the idea that this has already been discussed and that the City is doing well with the sustainability concept as it stands.

Chairman Gregory called for a vote on the MOTION dealing with the first item in the Technical Committee report. The Planning Commission voted unanimously to recommend denying the request to change the Comprehensive Plan goals, Item #1 in the Technical Committee report.

The second item in the Technical Committee report deals with parcel support. Chairman Gregory called for a motion. MOTION by Commissioner Murray to adopt the recommendation to revise policy language to clarify that the City supports excellent architectural design. MOTION seconded by Commissioner Chandorkar.

Chairman Gregory called for discussion of the motion. Commissioner Murray said he would vote no on this motion, as he is comfortable with the language as it stands. Other Commissioners agreed. Commissioner Chandorkar agreed with Commissioner Sanders' comment that this should be addressed to the community rather than to the private sector. He wondered if the language dealing with *sustainable models* should be strengthened a bit to say *examples of innovation and sustainability to the community*. Beyond that, he was fine with the existing language. Commissioner Murray disagreed, not because he thought strengthening language was a bad idea. He said that if the Commission started a process this way, every policy in the Plan could be changed. He was comfortable that the intent of sustainability was present. Commissioner Chandorkar said he agreed.

Chairman Gregory called for a vote on the MOTION to adopt a recommendation to revise policy language to clarify that the City supports excellent architectural design. A yes vote would create a change to the red language noted in the staff report. A no vote would keep the language as is. There were no votes in favor, and the MOTION failed. Chairman Gregory summarized that the Commission did not support revising policy language as noted in Item #2 of the Technical Committee report.

Chairman Gregory said the third item of the Technical Committee report, calling for no action at this time, prompted a question to staff. Chairman Gregory asked if a MOTION was needed on this item. Mr. Sullivan said a MOTION could be phrased as follows: the Commission recommends the City Council takes no action, provided that staff will follow up with another process.

MOTION by Commissioner Murray that the Planning Commission would adopt a recommendation the City Council takes no action on the SEPA thresholds, Item #3 of the Technical Committee report, provided that staff will follow up with another process. MOTION seconded by Commissioner Miller. The MOTION was approved unanimously. Chairman Gregory called for a short recess at this time.

STUDY SESSION, Transportation Master Plan (TMP) Update, presented by Lei Wu, Senior Transportation Engineer, City of Redmond Planning Department.

Ms. Wu said the purpose of her briefing was twofold: to introduce the proposed review and adoption process approach and the framework questions, and to obtain comments from the Commission members regarding the proposal and topics the Commission would

like to discuss in the review process. Ms. Wu noted that the TMP was, for Redmond, established in 2005. It is the first comprehensive document that directs the development of the transportation system. It is a functional plan of the Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan provides policies and vision, and the TMP contains details on how to achieve those policies and vision. The City policies and Growth Management Act (GMA) requirements direct that the TMP should be updated on a regular basis. Also, the update responds to some of the major changes since 2005.

Since the beginning of the TMP update, staff has been working closely with the Planning Commission and the City Council. Staff has consulted with the Planning Commission on important steps in the process, including (1) summaries of community involvement activities such as community events and stakeholder workshops; (2) themes developed from community input in sustainable and Comprehensive Plan policy principles; and (3) a list of capital improvements needed to complete the City's transportation system. Staff last talked with the Planning Commission about this topic in 2011. Shortly after that, the City went through a major revision, such that the Transportation Planning and Engineering Division moved from Public Works to the Planning Department. Thus, the leadership of the TMP update changed. That change brought an emphasis on integrating transportation with the City's overall vision. That integration requires that there is a clear alignment between transportation and the overall vision.

Staff has developed a strategic framework to show all the connections that illustrate that alignment. As part of that, staff has made sure that the TMP work is consistent with the capital investment strategy and the budget priorities of the City. Since the beginning of this TMP update, staff has conducted robust community involvement, which started with a city-wide traffic diary survey. That survey reached 400 households and nearly 500 city employees. Information from this survey has informed the plan update. There have also been three community events and two stakeholder workshops to capture every segment of the City possible. Through the public outreach, the community envisioned the future of transportation for the City and how to get there. Staff is planning an online survey to get comments on the draft plan. Social media, emails, and press releases will be used to advertise the survey.

Commissioner Sanders asked how the survey would be distributed and who would be able to take it. Ms. Wu said the survey would be online and would be distributed using a web address. The survey is open to anyone, completely voluntary, and not based on any specific sample size. Staff has built a database that includes contact information from organizations and individuals that have been involved in this process in the past, and they will be invited to participate again. The hope is to include information from the new survey during the Commission's review process.

The TMP document starts with an introduction chapter, which includes an executive summary. This introduction includes the transportation vision and strategy framework. Chapter 2 describes the major changes since 2005. Chapter 3 describes the most relevant transportation performance measure for tracking progress. Chapter 4 deals with the multi-modal transportation system, and includes the system plans for a variety of travel modes,

including streets, transit, pedestrian and bicycle travel, freight movement, parking, and travel demand management. Chapter 5 is Regional Transportation, which describes Redmond's interest and major issues in terms of the interactions the city needs to have within the region. The emphasis is on SR 520, the East Link light rail, express bus service, and King County's Metro bus service. Chapter 6 describes the needs and gaps Redmond has in terms of taking care of and maximizing the use of the current transportation system. In addition to the building of new capital improvements, the city also needs to efficiently use the existing system and take care of it. Chapter 7 lists the eighteen-year investment plan for transportation. It includes projects and programs. Chapter 8, the last chapter, is a three-year action plan that describes the most important work items that Redmond should do to set the stage for delivering the long-term plan.

Ms. Wu said the strategic framework flows from Redmond's vision, the Comprehensive Plan, and the community priorities. The four city-wide general principles are the following:

1. Safety
2. Maintenance
3. Environmental Stewardship
4. Economic Vitality

These general principles affect everything the City does, including transportation. There are five strategies identified by staff to direct the achievement of the transportation vision, in terms of what kind of programs, projects, and activities the City does. Some dashboard measures have been identified as well to check progress and guide course corrections as needed.

Staff is proposing that the review process starts in March 2013 with an anticipated recommendation from the Planning Commission in May 2013. Right now, five study sessions plus a report approval meeting are planned. The review would follow the outline of the draft document. This process would start March 27th. In the first two study sessions, staff will make presentations. The first one will cover half of the draft document, and the second presentation would cover the second half. In the two study sessions, staff would conduct issue identification for the draft document. Also in the second study session, the public hearing would begin. In the following three study sessions, the Commission will discuss and resolve issues, chapter by chapter. By the fifth study session, the hope is to complete the recommendation from the Commission.

The strategic framework and visions are fundamental to the draft document, so staff has proposed some questions based on the framework and questions. This approach is similar to the review approach the Planning Commission used for the Comprehensive Plan. The questions are as follows:

1. Whether the TMP is aligned with the vision.

2. Whether there is anything missing from the five strategies proposed and if the transportation dashboard measures are most relevant in terms of measuring progress.
3. Whether each chapter adequately addresses the strategies and if anything is missing.
4. Whether the TMP adequately reflects the 2030 planning horizon.

Commissioner Chandorkar asked if there is a sustainability overtone to the transportation discussion. Commissioner Murray said there was, and Ms. Wu agreed. She noted that one of the first community events on transportation was held with a Comprehensive Plan update team and the TMP update team. The topic of Sustainable Redmond was discussed, including the environmental stewardship that is noted in the citywide general principles. Economic development, another principle, is also a matter of sustainability. Commissioner Chandorkar asked if there were ways to note parts of the TMP that specifically target sustainability. Ms. Wu said that could be part of a future discussion. Commissioner Chandorkar noted that electric car charging stations and the construction of parking structures could play into that discussion.

Ms. Wu said that, as part of the upcoming review and adoption process, staff has met with Planning Commission liaisons Commissioner Miller and O'Hara. Some of the comments about the process include that it would be important for staff to connect with people and organizations that have been involved and shown interest in the TMP update. Staff is connecting with those people through the online survey as well as through the public hearing. Ms. Wu asked the Commission to consider keeping the public hearing open for two weeks.

The first suggestion from Commissioner Miller would be to have a thorough discussion on programs as well as capital projects, such as the transportation demand management program, the neighborhood traffic calming program, and the parking program. Also, in discussing transportation performance measures, staff wants to show the expected progressions, such as where Redmond is today, where it wants to be, and what might be a reasonable outcome in the middle. A third comment from Commissioner Miller deals with the Overlake area, where significant growth is expected. There is a concern over how the transportation system will accommodate the travel needs in this area.

Commissioner Miller, one of the Commission's Transportation Plan liaison, thanked Ms. Wu for her work on this topic. He noted that the process ahead would be robust but challenging, in terms of getting through four chapters a night. Ms. Wu said Commissioners would have two weeks to review the draft document. Commissioner Miller wanted to understand what changes have occurred in this document over the past year, in that TMP has been put through a whole new set of filters. He was very interested to see what tangible differences have developed through the realignment with City vision and capital investment strategies. Commissioner Miller wanted to make sure the Commission provided review and that the public engaged in the process would have an opportunity to react to any of those differences appropriately. He saw this as a bit of a

yellow flag, in that people involved previously would be challenged to get into this process in detail.

For the Commission's part, the five framework questions presented, in Commissioner Miller's opinion, are exceptional questions to review, particularly the performance measures as a means of translating policy, vision, and goals into action or at least data used for future action. Beyond that, the questions are open to the Commission's comments and he noted that some new members are now on the Planning Commission since the Transportation Plan was last updated. He told Commissioners Murray and Sanders, to whom this was a relatively new document, that it would be a challenge ahead. Commissioner Miller would like to hear comments on the process and if the presented framework would accomplish the goals of the update.

Commissioner Murray said he was concerned that, on April 10th, the Commission was scheduled to present issue identification for the entire document. The issues would then be resolved in the next two meetings. Commissioner Murray said it would be overwhelming to generate every issue for every chapter by April 10th and conduct a public hearing, too. Commissioner Chandorkar pointed out that the Commission would have a document two weeks before April 10th, giving the Commission two weeks for identification and two to three weeks of resolution. Commissioner Murray said he would be more comfortable with that process. He was also concerned about having competing agenda items during the next two months.

Chairman Gregory said the agenda would be kept clean of other items, but asked how the state legislative session would impact the TMP process, specifically dealing with SR 520. Ms. Wu said she was tracking developments at the state level. Chairman Gregory said it was highly possible the state would have a special session, extending into May. Commissioner Murray said it would be nice, during the TMP update process, to point out which sections would be impacted by legislative changes at the state level.

Commissioner Miller said he wanted to make sure the Commission was looking at apples to apples when considering funding for maintenance and operations vis-à-vis capital investments. There is a chapter on facilities planning and another on operations and maintenance, and the Commission should have a real assessment of dollars per year spent on operations maintenance as opposed to capital development. Commissioner Chandorkar asked who would be expected to attend the public hearing and what would be expected from them. He asked how much notice they would have for that hearing, as well. Ms. Wu responded that there would probably be some representatives from Microsoft and the senior population, but she was not sure who else would show up. Commissioner Chandorkar anticipated more community involvement, based on Ms. Wu's recommendation to stretch the public hearing to two meetings. He wanted to make sure there would be notice for people to attend the hearings. Ms. Wu promised robust advertisement of the hearing.

Commissioner Chandorkar asked if the build-out plan would be discussed and the changes that have happened since the last TMP discussion. Ms. Wu said yes. She said it

has been a year since this was last discussed, and some changes have indeed happened. In her opinion, the main changes dealt with clear alignment between the TMP and the City vision, making sure the strategic framework deals with all aspects of the Plan and that every chapter in the Plan maps back to that strategic framework. Commissioner Chandorkar asked for a link to the existing TMP to read as a point of comparison. Ms. Wu said she would do that.

Commissioner Sanders asked, under the transportation vision, about the issue of moving people, goods, and freight. She asked what the difference was between moving goods and freight. Ms. Wu said, for this language, freight means products from manufacturing businesses in southeast Redmond. Goods would be what businesses and residents need on a daily basis. She said if the language seems redundant, it could be revised. Chairman Gregory said it would be fair to consider freight as commercial products and goods would mean everything else that gets transported.

Commissioner Miller asked how the yearlong hiatus in terms of updating the Plan might have affected deadlines from the state for a functional plan and/or capital investment strategies approval. Ms. Wu said not much impact is expected, and staff is working with the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) to look at the draft plan and how it addresses relevant requirements of the Growth Management Act (GMA).

REPORTS/SCHEDULING/TOPICS FOR NEXT MEETING(S):

Ms. Stiteler reported that at the City Council meeting the night before this meeting, there was a study session on the development review and technology updates, and what new customers of the City's website are experiencing. This includes the E-Track portal as well as EnerGov. Redmond is becoming an accessible and sustainable city with the Comprehensive Plan, Zoning Code and permitting system and review online. The Planning Commission will convene again on March 13th for a retreat at Matt's Rotisserie Restaurant at Town Center from 5:30 to 8:00 p.m.

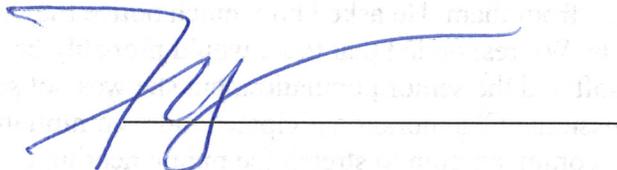
ADJOURN

MOTION by Commissioner Sanders to adjourn. Chairman Gregory adjourned the meeting at approximately 8:34 p.m.

Minutes Approved On:

Planning Commission Chair

March 20, 2013



TECHNICAL COMMITTEE REPORT

To: Planning Commission

From: Technical Committee

Staff Contacts: Robert G. Odle, Planning Director, (425) 556-2417
Lori Peckol, AICP, Policy Planning Manager, 425-556-2411
Pete Sullivan, Senior Planner, 425-556-2406

Date: February 8, 2013

File Numbers and Title: Citywide Comprehensive Plan Amendment -
Three privately-initiated proposals from single applicant as follows:

1. Add new goal to Comprehensive Plan addressing sustainability (L120157)
2. Revise Comprehensive Plan policy language to encourage superior architectural design (L120156)
3. Raise State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) exemption thresholds in the Zoning Code (L120155)

Recommendation and Reasons: Recommendations regarding the three-part proposal are:

1. Deny request. Comprehensive Plan is already guided by explicit sustainability principles that express the community’s intent for all aspects of sustainability. The applicant’s proposal speaks to implementation and takes a narrower view of sustainability than is intended in the Comprehensive Plan.
2. Partial support. Revise policy language to clarify that the City supports excellent architectural design, but do not include references to “dynamic” design as proposed by the applicant, because that term is not clearly understood.
3. No action at this time – staff will propose an increase to SEPA thresholds in 2013 as part of a separate City-initiated Zoning Code amendment. This allows the City to incorporate other changes to SEPA rules that are expected as part of another round of state-led updates in 2013.

I. APPLICANT PROPOSAL

A. APPLICANT

Natural and Built Environments, LLC. Represented by Robert Pantley, Manager.

B. BACKGROUND AND REASON FOR PROPOSAL

The applicant's proposal was received in response to the City inviting proposals for the 2012-13 Comprehensive Plan Amendments.

The purpose of the proposal - as explained in the application and in further discussions with the applicant – is summarized below.

1. Add new goal to Comprehensive Plan addressing sustainability

The applicant proposes to add a new goal to the Comprehensive Plan (text shown in *Exhibit B*) in order to elevate the City's commitment to sustainability. The applicant believes that the built environment is under-recognized by the City as an opportunity to implement sustainability. For example, innovative development can further sustainability goals by reducing water and energy use, reducing waste through use of recycled materials, and providing affordable housing near where people work. The applicant states that by adding the proposed goal, the Comprehensive Plan would reinforce that the type of sustainable development described above is allowed and encouraged in Redmond.

2. Revise policy language to encourage superior architectural design

Related to the item above, the applicant proposes to revise policy language in the Comprehensive Plan (text shown in *Exhibit C*) in order to encourage innovative and green buildings. The applicant believes modifying policies related to architectural design could facilitate this objective. The applicant's view is the current policies are defensive, meaning they seek to avoid undesirable design of the built environment. The proposed amendment, would thereby convey a more proactive stance of encouraging great design. The policy refinement would also inform a future update to *Redmond's Design Standards*, which is an anticipated follow-on action from the recently-completed Zoning Code Re-write.

3. Raise State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) exemption thresholds

The applicant proposes the City adopt higher SEPA categorical exemptions thresholds, concurrent with recent updates to SEPA rules under state law. A portion of the new rules became effective January 28, 2013, as part of the 2012 "Round 1" rule-making process, led by Department of Ecology. Categorical exemptions are a threshold at which no significant adverse environmental impacts are anticipated by a development activity occurring within the threshold. State law provides a range of threshold intensities for various land use types, and cities may choose to adopt a specific threshold level within the available range.

The benefit for SEPA-exempt development activity is that the project proponent avoids fees and time durations associated with environmental review. A snapshot of current SEPA categorical exemption thresholds in Redmond are shown below, alongside the new threshold levels available under state law. A project that is categorically exempt under SEPA review is still subject to the provisions of the Redmond Zoning Code addressing critical areas, transportation standards, and many other development standards.

Development type	Current SEPA Exemption Threshold (RZC 21.70.090)	Maximum SEPA Thresholds, Effective January 28, 2013 (WAC 197-11-800)
Residential	20 dwelling units	30 single-family units 60 multi-family units
Office, school, commercial, recreational, service, storage building, or parking lot	12,000 square feet 40 parking stalls	30,000 square feet 90 parking stalls
Barn or farm-related structure	30,000 square feet	40,000 square feet
Landfill or excavation	500 cubic yards	1,000 cubic yards

The applicant did not propose a specific threshold increase for Redmond, as the Round 1 rule-making process was still underway at the time of application. Thus, the applicant's intent is to bring to the City's attention that new threshold levels are available, and encourage the City to follow up with an appropriate increase in Redmond's Zoning Code following completion of the state-led rule-making process.

II. RECOMMENDATION

Technical Committee recommendations regarding the three components of the proposal are shown below. Per item #2, recommended edits to the Comprehensive Plan are shown in *Exhibit A*.

1. Add new goal to Comprehensive Plan addressing sustainability

Deny request. The Comprehensive Plan is already guided by explicit sustainability principles that express the community's intent for all aspects of sustainability. In contrast, the applicant's proposal speaks to implementation, which is more appropriately addressed via Comprehensive Plan policy, or as Zoning Code regulation. In addition, the applicant's

proposal takes a narrower view of sustainability than is intended in the Comprehensive Plan.

2. Revise policy language to encourage superior architectural design

Partial support. Revise policy CC-19 to reinforce that the City supports excellent architectural design, but do not include references to “dynamic” design as proposed by the applicant, because that term is not clearly understood.

3. Raise State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) exemption thresholds

No action at this time. Staff will propose an increase to SEPA thresholds later in 2013 as part of a separate City-initiated Zoning Code amendment. This approach allows the City to incorporate other changes to SEPA that are expected under “Round 2” rule-making in 2013.

III. PRIMARY ISSUES CONSIDERED

A. ISSUES CONSIDERED AND ALTERNATIVES

Below is a summary of the initial issues staff identified in response to the proposal, follow up discussions with the applicant, and alternative approaches considered by staff.

1. Add new goal to Comprehensive Plan addressing sustainability

The applicant’s proposed text edits are shown in *Exhibit B*. Staff met with the applicant to better understand the proposal’s underlying intent, which is to improve the definition of sustainability and create incentives for architectural excellence and related green building techniques. Among staff’s concerns regarding the proposal are the following:

- Sustainability already defined
The Comprehensive Plan is already guided by explicit sustainability principles that express the community’s intent for all aspects of sustainability. In addition, these principles are the basis for updates to the Comprehensive Plan goals and policies in each element.
- Scope of sustainability
By connecting sustainability specifically to architecture and green building in the Comprehensive Plan goals, the applicant’s proposal limits the view of sustainability that is intended in the Comprehensive Plan. In addition, the applicant’s proposal speaks to implementation while the rest of the goals speak to intent.

The applicant clarified he believes that the term *sustainability* is not sufficiently referenced in the Comprehensive Plan, and adding the proposed goal is a way to make the term more explicit. The applicant was open to modifying the proposed text in order to achieve this objective and avoid the issues noted above.

The applicant also indicated that encouragement for high-performance green buildings should be stronger, and adding the new goal would also accomplish that dual objective.

Staff considered modifications to the Comprehensive Plan goals to determine whether the proposal could be modified to meet the applicant's objectives and improve how the Comprehensive Plan addresses sustainability.

The applicant's proposal does speak to a major theme of the 2010-11 periodic update to the Comprehensive Plan. Indeed, sustainability was identified early in the scoping process as a central consideration, and became an organizing principle for the update as a whole. Because significant consideration was given to how sustainability should be expressed in the document during the recent periodic update, it is important to ensure future text modifications are consistent with, and build on initial foundation created during the 2010-11 update.

During the 2010-11 periodic update, staff consulted with Planning Commission and City Council to determine a preferred approach for addressing sustainability. The Commission and Council agreed that instead of creating a new *sustainability element*, the principles of sustainability would be woven throughout the document as a whole. Updates to narrative, goals and policies would thereby be informed by six sustainability principles, which were reviewed and approved by Planning Commission and City Council early in the two-year updating process. The sustainability principles are explicitly documented in the Comprehensive Plan's *Introduction* to reinforce the importance of sustainability as one of the Plan's central themes, as shown below.

In Redmond a sustainable community means:

- *Having a shared community identity that is special and unique, based on Redmond's beautiful natural environment, its vibrant employment areas and diverse community of residents;*
- *Having equitable access to goods, services and employment;*
- *Having housing choices that are accessible to residents with various incomes, ages and abilities;*
- *Valuing environmental quality and supporting choices that minimize impacts to the environment;*
- *Recognizing the importance of community awareness, education and engagement; and*
- *Having a strong local economy.*

In addition, the Comprehensive Plan goals were revised to incorporate sustainability, for example better expressing the need for equitable access in housing, transportation, stores and services.

Because sustainability is explicitly defined in the document, and informed other updates to narrative and policies throughout the document during the 2010-11 update, staff disagrees that sustainability is not sufficiently addressed in the document, and does not believe a new goal is warranted. However, staff did consider whether a modification to an existing goal could reinforce the City's commitment to sustainability.

For example, staff considered the following amendment to existing Comprehensive Plan Goal #8:

Comprehensive Plan Goal #8: To cultivate a well-connected community, working together and with others in the region to implement a common vision and distinguish Redmond as a leader in sustainability for Redmond's sustainable future.

Though the above statement may express an intent to further strengthen Redmond's commitment to sustainability by elevating aspirations to a regional level, the Technical Committee ultimately determined that this alternative is not helpful because at the regional level, the term is less defined; used less consistently; and without standards for accountability.

The Committee's conclusion is that sustainability was thoughtfully and sufficiently defined during the 2010-11 periodic update and is explicitly documented. In addition, *sustainability* is intentionally listed as a heading in the online table of contents for the document, to draw attention to the theme for first-time readers, as shown in Figures 1 and 2 below.

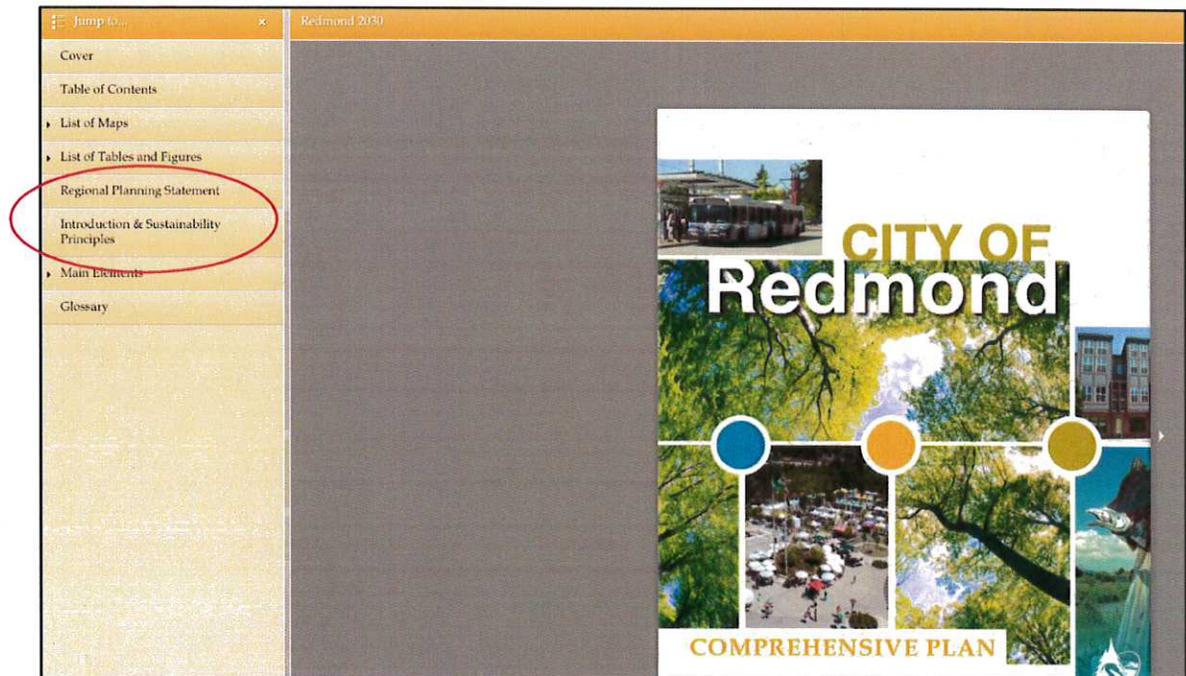


Figure 1: "Sustainability" is included in the jump menu for the Comprehensive Plan's digital version.

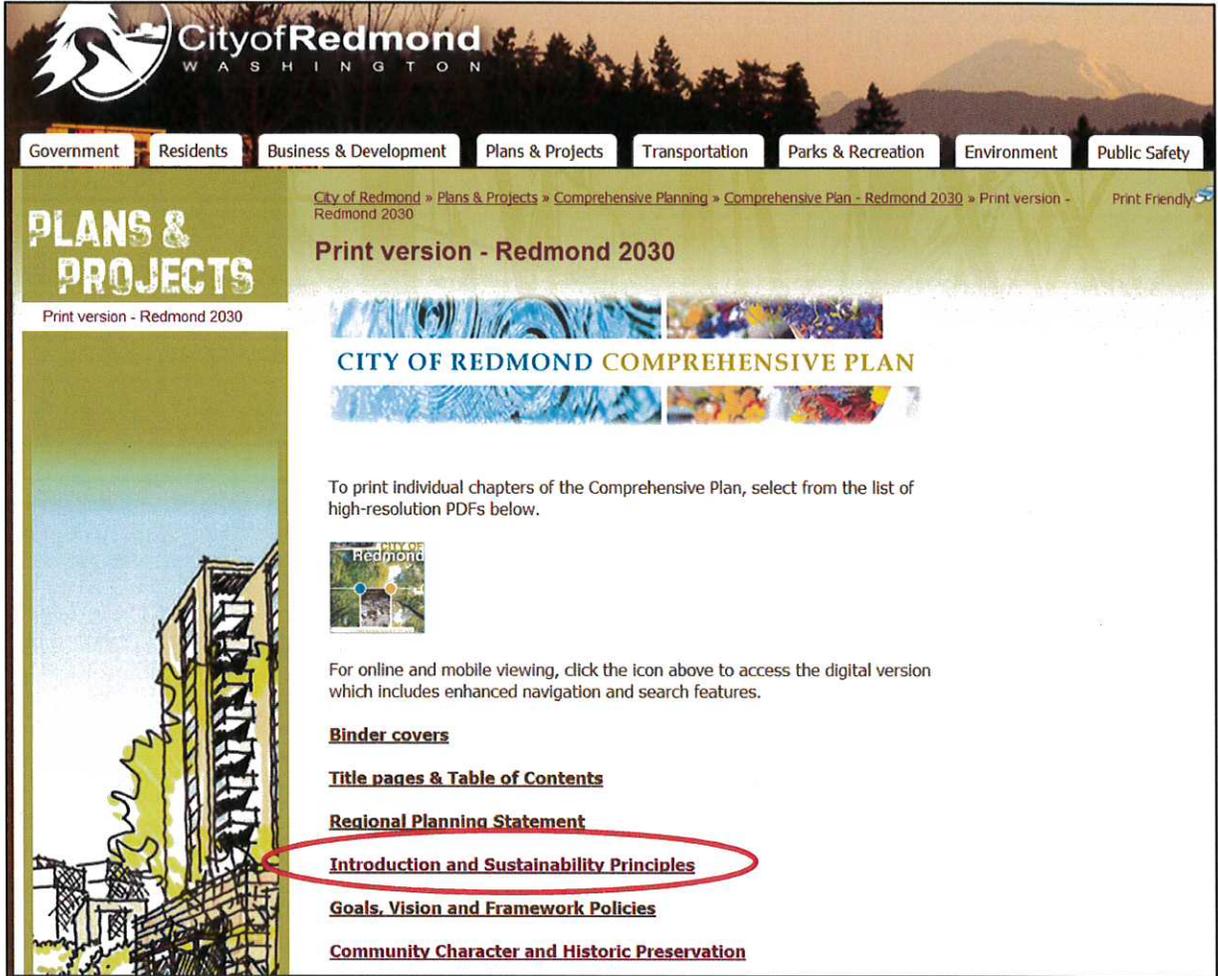


Figure 2: "Sustainability" is included as a section heading for the Comprehensive Plan on the City's web site.

Because the applicant's initially-proposed language is not suitable for goal language because it speaks to implementation, and no viable and needed alternative has emerged, the recommendation from Technical Committee is to deny the proposal.

The Committee also recognizes that encouraging architectural excellence and green development via incentives was embedded in the proposal. However, as noted above, such strategies are better suited to policy and code amendments, rather than an amendment of the Comprehensive Plan goals. The applicant's Proposal #2, as shown below, was then given consideration to determine whether it could be a mechanism for supporting architecture and green development objectives.

2. Revise policy language to encourage superior architectural design

The applicant proposed text edits as shown in *Exhibit C*. Again, staff met with the applicant to identify the intent of the proposal, which is to create incentives for architectural excellence and related green building techniques. Staff concerns with the proposed language are as follows:

- Terminology – meaning of ‘dynamic’
The term “dynamic” is proposed by the applicant. Dynamic can refer to something that is energetic, creative, or situation-specific, however in discussions among staff the term was not well-understood or clear.
- Duplicates existing green building policies
Support for green building techniques already exists in Comprehensive Plan policies (see *Exhibit E* for list of references to existing green building policies), so no further amendments for this portion of the applicant’s request were recommended.

Staff and the applicant identified the *Community Character and Historic Preservation Element* as the presumed location for the proposed language, particularly policies CC-17 – CC-20, which address architecture and design review. The following modifications were considered:

CC-19 Design and build Redmond’s public buildings in a superior way and with high-quality materials, ~~to serve as innovative and sustainable models to the community,~~ furthering Redmond’s sustainability principles and inspiring the private sector to do the same.

*CC-20 Encourage design that is high quality, dynamic, and attractive, and ~~design that~~ *promotes variety between different developments and different areas in Redmond to maintain and create a sense of place.**

The modification to CC-19 is recommended because it clarifies that great design of City buildings should also serve as inspiration to the private sector, and is intended to implement sustainability principles. The Technical Committee ultimately did not support the modification to CC-20, as use of the word dynamic is not clear.

Another reason for limited staff support of the applicant’s proposal, is that it could set an unreasonable level of expectations for developers who otherwise meet Zoning Code requirements. While the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code do allow for some flexibility in development standards in support of site specific conditions or in support of green development, the City does not want to mislead the public that all requirements, like building and fire safety codes, are negotiable. If the applicant is seeking additional flexibility in development standards for green buildings, such a request would be more appropriately made via Zoning Code Amendment, because it would directly address any hurdles to green development that a developer may be experiencing.

3. Raise State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) exemption thresholds

The Technical Committee recommends no action at this time with respect to item #3. The applicant is aware the City intends to propose increases to SEPA exemption thresholds in 2013 as part of a separate City-initiated amendment process, in response to changes resulting from Department of Ecology's 2012 and 2013 rule-making process. The City's current SEPA exemptions thresholds are the highest allowable under state SEPA rules based on Redmond's population (see Section I above, for comparison of Redmond's current thresholds and exemptions now allowed under state law).

The City is considering raising thresholds in response to the outcome of the 2012 "Round 1" rule-making process. The separate City-initiated Zoning Code Amendment that would propose the increase to Redmond's SEPA thresholds would occur later in 2013, in order to allow the City to incorporate other SEPA changes anticipated as part of "Round 2" rule-making in 2013.

IV. SUPPORTING ANALYSIS

A. EXISTING CONDITIONS

1. Add new goal to Comprehensive Plan addressing sustainability

Sustainability is currently defined in the Comprehensive Plan's Introduction. The section titled, *Shaping and Realizing our Future*, includes a definition of the term, and describes how it is an organizing principle across all chapters. That section also describes the community outreach process that helped define sustainability for Redmond, culminating in six sustainability principles that help guide City actions over the 2030 time horizon. Those principles, and how they should be used, are also contained in the section note above.

2. Revise policy language to encourage superior architectural design

The Comprehensive Plan's *Community Character and Historic Preservation* Element addresses urban design. The section titled, *Buildings and Site Design* contain seven policies related to design of public and private buildings; design standards and development review; community character; crime prevention; and landscaping and environmentally-sensitive design. Policies CC-19 and CC-20 most directly address the applicant's proposal because they address high quality, attractive, and diverse design.

3. Raise State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) exemption thresholds

Categorical exemptions for various types of developments activity are adopted via Redmond Zoning Code Section 21.20.090. That section refers to the type and intensity of development that is exempt from environmental review under SEPA, and also references the applicable portions of Washington's Administrative Code (WAC) that establishes the exemption thresholds available to local jurisdictions.

B. COMPLIANCE WITH CRITERIA FOR COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENTS

Comprehensive Plan Policy LU-16 and RZC 21.76.070.J provide that all amendments to the Redmond Comprehensive Plan must meet the criteria detailed below. The following is an analysis of how this proposal complies with the requirements for Comprehensive Plan amendments.

1. Consistency with the Growth Management Act (GMA), the State of Washington Department of Commerce Procedural Criteria, and the King County Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs).

The proposed modification to CC-19 encourages great design while being sensitive to private property rights, and the rights of developers who otherwise meet Zoning Code requirements. Protecting property rights are one of the 14 planning goals of the Growth Management Act.

2. Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan policies and the designation criteria.

The proposed modification to CC-19 is consistent with Framework policy 40 (FW-40) which calls for “a built environment that is high-quality, attractive and inviting to people.” The recommendation does not impact designation criteria.

3. Consistency with the preferred growth and development pattern in the Land Use Element of the Comprehensive Plan.

The recommendation is consistent with Redmond’s preferred growth and development pattern.

4. The capability of the land, including the prevalence of critical areas.

The recommendation does not impact land capacity or critical areas.

5. The capacity of public facilities and whether public facilities and services can be provided cost-effectively at the intensity allowed by the designation.

The recommendation does not impact public facilities or services.

6. Whether the proposed land use designations or uses are compatible with nearby land use designations or uses.

The recommendation does not impact land use designations.

7. Whether the allowed uses are compatible with nearby uses.

The recommendation does not impact nearby land uses.

8. If the purpose of the amendment is to change the allowed use in an area, the need for the land uses that would be allowed by the Comprehensive Plan amendment and whether the amendment would result in the loss of the capacity to meet other needed land uses, especially whether the proposed amendment complies with the policy on no net loss of housing capacity.

The recommendation does not impact land use regulations.

9. Potential general impacts to the natural environment, such as impacts to critical areas and other natural resources.

The recommendation does not impact the natural environment.

10. Potential general economic impacts, such as impacts for business, residents, property owners or City Government.

The recommendation does not have public or private economic impacts.

11. Potential general impacts to the ability of the City to provide fair and equitable access to services.

The recommendation does not impact the City's ability to provide fair and equitable services.

12. For issues that have been considered within the last four annual updates or Comprehensive Land Use Plan amendments, whether there has been a change in circumstances that makes the proposed plan designation or policy change appropriate or whether the amendment is needed to remedy a mistake.

Policy CC-19 was reviewed as part of the 2010-11 periodic update to the Comprehensive Plan. The recommendation clarifies that great design of public buildings can serve as inspiration to the private sector.

V. AUTHORITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL, PUBLIC AND AGENCY REVIEW

A. Amendment Process

Redmond Zoning Code (RCZ) chapter 21.76 requires that amendments to the Comprehensive Plan be reviewed under the Type VI process. Under this process, the Planning Commission conducts a study session(s), an open record hearing(s) on the proposed amendment, and makes a recommendation to the City Council. The City Council is the decision-making body for this process.

B. Subject Matter Jurisdiction

The Redmond Planning Commission and the Redmond City Council have subject matter jurisdiction to hear and decide whether to adopt the proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendment.

C. Washington State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA)

A SEPA checklist was submitted on January 29, 2013, and is currently under review. A Determination of Non-Significance is anticipated, and will be available for review upon completion.

D. 60-Day State Agency Review

State agencies received 60-day notice of this proposed amendment on February 4, 2013.

E. Public Involvement

The Planning Commission will receive oral and written testimony as part of a public hearing scheduled for February 27, 2013. Staff notified known stakeholders regarding the proposed amendment.

F. Appeals

RZC 21.76 identifies Comprehensive Plan Amendments as a Type VI permit. Final action is by the City Council. The action of the City Council on a Type VI proposal may be appealed by filing a petition with the Growth Management Hearing Board pursuant to the requirements

VI. LIST OF EXHIBITS

- Exhibit A:** Staff Recommended Amendment to the Comprehensive Plan policy *CC-19 (Community Character and Historic Preservation Element)*
- Exhibit B:** Applicant's Proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendments – *Add new goal to Comprehensive Plan addressing sustainability*
- Exhibit C:** Applicant's Proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendments - *Revise policy language to encourage superior architectural design*
- Exhibit D:** Applicant's Proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendments - *Raise SEPA exemption thresholds*
- Exhibit E:** SEPA Threshold Determination (under review - to be issued soon and will be attached to this report)
- Exhibit F:** SEPA Threshold Determination (under review - to be issued soon and will be attached to this report)



Robert G. Odle, Director of Planning and
Community Development

2/9/13

Date



Tim Fuller, Director, Public Works

2/9/13

Date