

**GIG HARBOR CITY COUNCIL
BUILDING SIZE ANALYSIS WORKSESSION
June 7, 2004 6:00 p.m. – Civic Center Community Rooms**

PRESENT:

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

Staff: Mark Hoppen, John Vodopich, Steve Osguthorpe, Maureen Whitaker and Molly Towslee.

Mayor Wilbert opened the worksession at 6:05 and thanked every one for coming. John Vodopich, Community Development Director, explained that this session was to address building size limitations in the Downtown Business (DB) zone. He described the comparison chart and other handouts prepared for the meeting. The Mayor then began calling on members of the audience to speak.

Chuck Hunter – Mr. Hunter explained that he is a proponent of the 6,000 s.f. footprint limitation to keep the town in scale. He said he was also interested in a grandfather clause for the Uddenberg complex to allow it to be rebuilt. He said that several 6,000 s.f. buildings next to one another would look like one building, but would have a different façade on each building that would help it not to look so large. Mr. Hunter then discussed the articles in the Gateway regarding the vision for the downtown area, explaining that without city money as incentive, you couldn't get the property owners together to do anything. He again stressed that he favors the 6,000 s.f. limitation, adding that the smaller footprint would allow the Design Review process to work more efficiently.

Jim Zusy – Mr. Zusy asked Mr. Hunter if he intended for just one 6,000 s.f. building per lot. Mr. Hunter responded no, that more than one could be built if the lot size permitted.

Jim Pasin – Mr. Pasin explained that due to the unique situation in the downtown zone, the west side of Pioneer needed different treatment than the east side. He said that the buildings on the west side of Pioneer should not exceed 16,000 s.f., and those on the east side have no limitation. He said that the zone should allow 100% coverage because that is what already exists. He said that the lots along Harborview Drive should match those in the Waterfront zone. He voiced concern about the DRB requirements for buffering in the transition zone, suggesting that because of the limitation of these properties, this requirement be waived.

Jack Bujacich – Mr. Bujacich discussed his concerns with building heights adding that he supports the 6,000 s.f. footprint limit. He stressed that parking is an issue that needs to be addressed. John Vodopich explained that the regulations require any new construction to provide for on-site parking. Mr. Bujacich then said that he was in favor of grandfathering the QFC site. Councilmember Ekberg explained that currently, it could rebuild, and only if limitations were placed would it be a problem.

Councilmember Young discussed non-conformity issues and when a non-conforming building should be brought into conformance. He suggested zoning the Thriftway site differently than the rest of the DB zone to address the desire to allow this size building at that location. There was discussion regarding whether the ability to rebuild should be tied to a specific or existing use. Then Councilmember Young discussed the problem with obtaining financing for a non-conforming use and the possible diminishment of the property value. Jack Bujacich stressed that the Council is not here to establish value, but to protect Gig Harbor.

Councilmember Ruffo said that everyone has said that they want to protect the character of Gig Harbor. He stressed that what needed to be done is to find a way to do that legally, and to simplify the process to maintain or improve property values and still give the community what it wants.

Councilmember Franich said that he concurred, and that the 4,000 – 6,000 s.f. limitation is the range that would fit the character of this area. Councilmember Picinich agreed with comments in support of the 6,000 s.f. limit, adding that the QFC building should be grandfathered.

Linda Gair – Ms. Gair spoke to the desire for a viable downtown to compete with Gig Harbor North and the recent downturn in the economy. She explained that the number one problem is parking. She stressed that they would like to see more retail downtown while maintaining the character. This should include pedestrian access and the ability to see the water, adding that the 6,000 s.f. limitation would allow peek-a-boo views of the water. She used Carmel, California as an example of how smaller building could be successful. She recommended that any new construction preserve retail on the ground floor, and asked that existing buildings be grandfathered.

Paul Gustufson – Mr. Gustufson said that we are losing the quaintness of the town. He spoke in support of the 6,000 s.f. limit and against the town center concept. He said that we have to stop the out of scale buildings, both commercial and residential. He recommended keeping the quaintness through scale and focus on the design review process. He voiced his dislike of the BDR building, asking that Council protect the view of the hillside as well as the water.

Councilmember Ekberg discussed the impact of several 6,000 s.f. buildings built side-by-side and how that would differ from just one 10,000 s.f. building. The smaller buildings would still block the view of the water.

Councilmember Dick said that DB zone is unique in that there are no side yard setbacks. You may have the entire block filled in 6,000 s.f. chunks. If you work on design, it can make it look not so big, but it will still block the view anywhere in this zone.

Charlene Sandoval Ms. Sandoval asked if the setbacks could also be changed during the process to limit building size. Councilmember Young explained that one reason that the zone has no side yard setbacks is due to the desire to keep the characteristic of the downtown where all the buildings are close together.

Lita Dawn Stanton. Ms. Stanton explained that that area is already built out with zero setbacks. She said that people don't want to change what is already here. Councilmember discussed the configuration of the buildings between Judson, Soundview and Harborview Drive.

Mr. Hunter said that when you get closer to the residential areas, you need to reduce the scale. He stressed that an effort must be made to make sure that the transition zone works.

Mark Hoppen, City Administrator, restated two concerns that had been addressed. The first is the transition zone, and the second is the ability to set the building height at the natural grade rather than at the finished grade.

Mr. Bujacich stressed that you have to maintain the view corridors or you destroy the property values.

Councilmember Franich said that in order to address the visual impacts, there also needs to be height limitations. Someone in the audience commented that they could live with bigger square footage if the height issue was addressed.

Rosanne Sachson – Ms. Sachson said that the concerns need to be addressed through both zoning and design. She recommended a comprehensive Design Manual that would educate architects to the city's requirements. She responded to Councilmember Ekberg's question on whether she had seen the city's Design Manual, explaining that she had seen the manual and had offered to help with the amendments, but no one had taken her up on the offer.

Mayor Wilbert talked about the shops in Paris and how the upper floors had wrought iron plant shelves that helped to make the buildings more appealing.

Ms. Stanton offered landscape photos of Gig Harbor as a guideline for what should be maintained. She explained that the whole point of design review is to replicate existing structures over time. If the buildings are too big, this will not happen and the whole look of the city changes. Scale is important.

Tony Sandoval – Mr. Sandoval agreed with comments by Councilmember Ruffo to keep the process simple. He suggested limitations and protection of the views to preserve the quaintness.

Charlene Sandoval – Ms. Sandoval suggested that those who want to build larger structures could go elsewhere.

Barbara Brandt – Ms. Brandt explained that someone could push up all the dirt and after several years it becomes the original footprint. She stressed that you must stress scale, because height isn't going to count.

Jim Zusy – Mr. Zusy said that he is struggling to understand the comments to “maintain Gig Harbor.” He asked if this meant to just repaint the existing or to come up with something better. He said that he would like to build a better retail space at the old Hide & Sea / Howard Cox machine shop location, but the limitation on parking prevents much of a building to be constructed. He said that other cities have remote parking lots that a business could purchase spots rather than having on-site parking. He addressed setbacks, explaining how people throw garbage in the vestibule of his building. He said that in the retail district, it would be better to have a solid face rather than small setbacks between buildings. He said that he did not believe that the 6,000 s.f. limitation is a magic number, and that it should be a matter of design and articulation.

Councilmember Franich responded, explaining that one thing that is unique to the downtown business area in regards to parking is the presence of residents next to Mr. Zusy's site. The respect for the quality of life of the residents on Harborview Drive needs to be taken into consideration. What goes on in the business district has a direct affect on the residents on Harborview Drive.

Mark Hoppen stated that on July 1st, the Planning Commission is holding a public hearing on the update of the Design Manual, which will be the first opportunity for comment. He said that the majority of the comments were about building design, and recommended that citizens review the document and come to the meeting and speak.

Jeanne Derby - Ms. Derby said that 6,000 s.f. refers to the footprint only, not the whole square footage. She addressed parking, and asked about the possibility of the city purchasing property for public parking. Mr. Hoppen responded that no one is willing to sell or lease downtown property for that purpose. Ms. Derby then asked about the property south of the Yacht Club. Mr. Hoppen said that this location is too far removed from the downtown to be desirable.

Ms. Sachson said that her house is across the street from the last business on Harborview, and every morning the employees from the two offices across the street park in front of her house clear up to the Malich property. She suggested contacting Stan Stearns to ask him if he would like to make money by allowing the employees to park in his lot. She also suggested timed parking in this area which would encourage the employees to park off the main street.

Ms. Sandoval suggested that the city purchase the property across from CenturyTel or the Spadoni property as public parking. It was determined that these lots are too far removed from the downtown area to be efficient.

Ann Lovrovich. Ms. Lovrovich asked how the 16,000 s.f. building size came about. Staff said that it was a recommendation by the Planning Commission.

Bruce Gair - Mr. Gair gave an overview of how the Planning Commission arrived at that square footage by measuring the existing structures from the Tarabochia buildings around down past Mary Bonneville's to the alley. He said that they recommended the 16,000 s.f. in order to allow them to rebuild in case those buildings were destroyed, but stressed that this doesn't mean that the Planning Commission wants other 16,000 s.f. buildings in the downtown. He continued to explain that he was a member of the parks ad hoc committee a few years ago, and one main issue was parking. A parking garage or underground parking for public use of a private building was discussed. He then stressed that you cannot depend on the Design Review process to solve the problem. He said that the Planning Commission is now beginning the process to update the Design Manual, and *strongly* encouraged everyone to come to the public hearing in July and be part of the process.

Councilmember Conan said that he sees the downtown business zone as three separate sections, and it may need to be divided that way. The downtown "core" is the quadrangle between Pioneer, Soundview, Harborview and Judson, including all the properties going north. He recommended that there be no setbacks but retain the 6,000 s.f. building footprint to retain the scale. The next section would be south of Judson Street where QFC and KeyBank are located, and allow larger buildings. The section north of Pioneer to Rosedale west of Harborview requires setbacks and a 6,000 s.f. footprint limitation because this area transitions into residential. North of Rosedale on Harborview may require side yard setbacks because it is next to residential. The 6,000 s.f. footprint will help to retain the scale, but to respect residents, but in the core area, you don't need the setbacks.

Mr. Zusy asked about property owner's rights and compensation. Councilmember Conan said that the greater good outweighs that to a certain point and difficult decisions have to be made. Ms. Zusy explained that it seems like the new owners in this area have built big huge homes right next to their building, but they have nothing to say about that. She continued to say that if the city would just take a look at what she and her husband would like to do with the property rather than listing the restrictions.

Bill Fogarty. Mr. Fogarty explained that he attended a recent Downtown Revitalization seminar and what they said to do is to come up with a common vision and work together between the property owners and retailers and city government to decide. He said that in the downtown corridor, the largest building area is 1100 s.f. from a merchant's standpoint. If you go with the 16,000 s.f. footprint, it would take 20 of his shops for one building. The current 56 merchants downtown are all 800 to 1000 s.f. operations with rents of approximately \$1 per square foot. If you allow the larger building the rent will jump to \$4 or \$5 per square foot per month, and they will not be able to compete.

MOTION: Move to implore our staff to put in a plan or ordinance stating that we consider limiting the DB zone to 6,000 s.f. footprint and grandfather existing

buildings at their current size to maintain the character of the DB zone. .
Staff should further recommend height, zone, scale, architecture, setback
alternatives
Ruffo / Picinich –

Councilmember Franich asked if there should be a limit on the grandfather clause so that the grocery store couldn't be any larger than 30,000 s.f. Councilmember Ruffo explained that it should be the existing structure, and not tied to the use.

Councilmember Franich said that he thought that it should be limited to the existing square footage of use. Part of what people like about the complex is the variety of shops. If you don't limit the uses by square footage, you could lose that. Councilmember Ruffo said that this would result in a limitation on a property right, which the city cannot do.

Steve Osguthorpe, Planning / Building Manager, clarified that any structure or any use that is non-conforming is already grandfathered. If you adopt the 6,000 s.f. footprint, the existing buildings will become non-conforming and therefore, grandfathered. He continued to explain that you cannot enlarge it, or if more than 50% is destroyed, you cannot rebuild. The only way to address what is being described is to come up with a different non-conforming criteria, stressing that he is unsure of the legality of doing that.

Councilmember Ruffo explained that while trying to maintain the character of the downtown, he is also trying to property the rights of the property owners. He asked what needs to be done to accomplish that. Councilmember Franich voiced concern that this would be giving the property owner rights that others do not have.

Councilmember Young explained that you cannot anticipate market fluctuations and property owners must have the ability to adapt to avoid empty spaces.

Councilmember Ekberg asked if the motion could address the option of three different zones. Councilmember Dick agreed that there are three different visions for the area.

Councilmember Young asked that the process be slowed down, recommending further workshops to collaborate on the three zone concept. He said that there are groups working on ideas for a vision.

Councilmember Ruffo agreed that there isn't enough information. Councilmember Ekberg pointed out that the motion is just to come back with ideas and at some point it needs to be put into ordinance form. Mark Hoppen said that he believes that staff has enough information to come back with a potential plan, and Council could then decide how to proceed.

AMENDED MOTION: Move to direct staff to put a plan together regarding the DB zone with the options for three separate sections that considers limiting the footprint of new buildings to 6,000 s.f.,

considers grandfathering existing buildings within current size, and staff further recommend zoning, height, scale, architecture, setbacks, and parking alternatives to maintain the character of the DB zone.

Ruffo / Ekberg –

Councilmembers discussed the timeline and the ability to gain further public input. It was recommended to put together some illustrated concepts to show the public and hold another worksession to get everyone involved. Then the ordinance can be drafted.

Councilmember Dick voiced his concern with the grandfathering issue. He said that this issue can be better addressed by developing a common vision for each area, then solving the problem through a different method. There was discussion about the best method to address this concern. Councilmember Franich said that he thought grandfathering, whether the west side or downtown, is the method that would work. Further discussion took place.

MOTION: Call for the question.

Ekberg / no second required – unanimously approved.

AMENDED MOTION:


Move to direct staff to put a plan together regarding the DB zone with the options for three separate sections that considers limiting the footprint of new buildings to 6,000 s.f., considers grandfathering existing buildings within current size, and staff further recommend zoning, height, scale, architecture, setbacks, and parking alternatives to maintain the character of the DB zone.

Ruffo / Ekberg – unanimously approved.

On July 19th, a workshop will be scheduled to review the plan.

There were no further comments and the worksession ended at 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:


Molly Towslee, City Clerk

Waterfront Building Size Recommendations excerpted from the January 12, 2004 Pertteet Engineering Report

WM

Recommendation: Make no change to the existing limit of 3.5 ksf per lot

WR

Proposed building size limit: 3.5 ksf per structure. This size limit will only affect nursing homes, which are a conditional uses in this zoning category.

Recommendation: Adopt the Planning Commission proposed size limit change

WC

The proposed size limit will limit the size of commercial structures in the Waterfront Commercial area. While this may have the unintended result of encouraging larger residential structures, the limit will provide a transparency for views to the harbor. Some existing buildings may be over the size limit and will be nonconforming structures if this standard is adopted. The existing WC zone in the area of the waterfront north of the existing WM zone should be changed to WM.

Recommendation: Adopt the Planning Commission proposed size limit, revise WC zoning designation north of the existing WM zone.