

Planning Commission
Meeting Minutes
March 26, 2019



Approved: KMD

6:29:03 PM

Acting Chair Lavra called the meeting to order. Other Commissioners in attendance: Greg Tisdell, Adam Yanasak, Carly McGinn, and Michael Finch.

Commissioners Absent: Chris Holland, Kathryn Beck, Michael Zelinski, and Alex Lark

Planning Staff Present: Allan Giffen and Kathy Davis

City Staff Present: Nick Harper, Tim Benedict, Michael Brick

Commission Reports

None

Staff Comments

None

General Citizen Comments

None

Item I: Riverfront Redevelopment Plan Public Hearing

Allan Giffen, Planning Director, reviewed the role of Planning Commission, the Planned Development Overlay (PDO) criteria, the site-specific rezone review criteria, the proposed landfill site master plan graphic, the overall proposed plan for the landfill site, and changes to the development agreement.

Commissioner McGinn asked who was responsible for the ongoing maintenance of the 3-acre park. Mr. Giffen responded the City Parks Department.

Commissioner Yanasak asked about the criteria. Mr. Giffen responded the Planned Development Overlay (PDO) criteria are considered by staff and Planning Commission when the master plan is initially proposed. The current proposal is an amendment to the master plan so Planning Commission could consider the public benefit, the property's unique characteristics, the proposed uses, or impacts on the surrounding area. The rezone criteria are more generalized and are considered during Commission's review. The proposed findings and conclusions are in the resolution.

Commissioner Yanasak asked if the role of Planning Commission was just to review the amendments in the development agreement and landfill site. Mr. Giffen responded yes.

Gary Young, Shelter Holdings, stated that they are the landowners of the Riverfront Property. They have been involved with the property since 2013, and have been actively engaged with the Everett community. He stated that it has been a long and collaborative process with the City and the community. The proposed riverfront plan is the result of input from the community and the businesses that are excited about the location. The site also includes entertainment and recreational amenities. The housing energizes and supports the businesses that are excited to be at the Riverfront site. He asked for Commission's support.

Tia Heim, Shelter Holdings, stated that the team reviewed other successful lifestyle centers and discussed what things they thought made those centers successful. One change over the years, is the effect that online shopping has had on the retail market. They found that the most successful sites were anchored by multipurpose entertainment destinations. They wanted a site designed to accommodate community gathering spaces that provide a walkable and pedestrian experience. Successful lifestyle centers also included a residential element in order to create a 24 hour presence and activation.

In response to the question regarding the 3-acre park, she responded that the park is already owned by the City and is a separate parcel next to their project. In response to the number of residential units, the environmental impact statement (EIS) under the preferred alternative was for 1400 residential units. The two residential sites ended up with less density than had initially been anticipated. The buildout under the current proposal is only an increase of about 275 residential units and a decrease of 500,000 square feet of commercial retail use, so that more than offsets and is well below the threshold that was considered in the EIS.

Chris Forester, 10W transportation consultant, reviewed the trip generation for the site to make sure that the EIS that was done previously for the site covers the proposed project impacts. All the mitigation in the EIS was based on PM peak hour impacts. The current PM peak hour impact is much less than the preferred alternative addressed in the EIS. For the project, their findings indicated that upon full buildout of all six phases, the cumulative total PM peak hour trips from Simpson, Eclipse, and the commercial pad would be a little over 40% less than what was anticipated in the EIS. They determined that all the traffic mitigation outlined in the EIS adequately mitigated any and all project impacts. The analysis was reviewed by the City's traffic engineer and he concurred with their findings.

Commissioner Yanasak asked about traffic impacts. Mr. Forester responded that they define impact based on a threshold. Every City has a different threshold and level of service standard. Commissioner Yanasak asked about parking issues. Mr. Forester responded that parking is a separate issue.

Nick Haggen, landscape architect, Wiseman Design Group, presented information on pedestrian circulation, major open spaces and the central gathering area, and landscape character. He stated that the unique landscaping will give the project its own character and sense of place that won't be found elsewhere.

John Woodworth, SRM Architecture, reviewed the design of the buildings and brought samples of the materials being used in the design of the buildings. Citizen feedback was considered in the materials used in the building design. He discussed the design of the market and the residential buildings. He stated that the last building constructed during phase 1 is the theater.

Commissioner Finch asked about building heights for buildings A, B, and C. Mr. Woodworth responded that they were typically the same, five floors over one. They are anticipating that the corners of buildings A and D were going to have higher ground floor heights to have more space for the commercial tenant – 18 feet heights compared to 15 feet heights in the other ground floor retail spaces. Commissioner Finch asked if there were roof decks proposed in Phase 1. Mr. Woodworth stated that there would be roof decks on the sixth floor of the building and they are located on the backside of the building facing west.

Commissioner McGinn asked about the decision to face the roof decks towards the freeway and not the river. Mr. Woodworth responded that those roof decks are meant to be smaller gathering areas. The buildings constructed during the last two phases will have much larger roof decks.

Eric Evans, Shelter Holdings, stated that the design of the buildings, the roof forms, the industrial materials, and the site character came from all the feedback from a community meeting. The project balances the retail, environmental constraints, building construction on the landfill, and a variety of housing to support the retail. He stated that the project has to be financially viable to move forward. In response to locating buildings adjacent to the river, Mr. Evans stated that there are environmental challenges of greater settlement closer to the river. There are concerns about liquefaction of the soil during earthquakes which could impact the strength of the pilings. Beyond the refuse and the settlement, the methane collection, the flexible utility connections to the buildings, the soils that cover the landfill are extremely susceptible to weather. The ability to achieve compaction for the utility trenches, every roadway fill, and sidewalk subgrade is dependent upon the team executing these activities in a very limited weather window from June to October. If they miss that window, the project would have to be delayed to the next weather window in 2020.

The project provides the entertainment and recreational opportunities as well as the housing that will greatly benefit the City, retail and community. Shelter Holdings has invested millions of dollars to this point. They have key anchor tenants interested in and engaged in the project. The project is ready to go with the support of the city and community, it would be shovel ready this summer. He asked for Commission's support to move forward.

Citizen Comments

Alex Alexander, 3914 52nd Street SE, was concerned about the potential for the Snohomish River to interfere with well-intended projects. Increasing water levels already projected will interfere with the project at Bigelow Creek. He distributed handouts. He stated that the existing bridge over Bigelow Creek wouldn't accommodate the increased amount of flood water that is projected for the next 40-50

years. He is recommending that the bridge be replaced. He proposed that a temporary bridge be built a half block to the south enabling construction of a new bridge. The bridge needs to be longer and higher.

Donna Gleisner, 2529 E. Grand, stated that she was aware that the landfill site was incredibly challenging and was excited to see it come to fruition. She felt that the proposal really missed the boat on the unique opportunity of having the development right along the river to showcase the natural beauty of the river. She suggested that the buildings step back to take advantage of the views. She was also concerned about 1.2 parking spaces per 2 bedroom units.

Katrina Lindahl, 2515 E Grand Avenue, didn't feel that the project adequately embraced the unique assets of the Snohomish River and the majesty of the Cascade Mountains. The focus of the development is to Riverside Boulevard which is a thoroughfare through the middle of the site. The retail on the street is separated from the river by a large parking lot. The public plaza should be expanded outward to the south and north as it reaches the river's edge to accommodate pedestrian access to the river. The plaza should be lined with retail spaces, restaurants and cafes or other businesses that may want to embrace the riverfront. An area for boats should be provided so people can dock and walk to the development. Phase 1 should include the buildout of the plaza east of Riverfront Boulevard, which is now slated for Phase 3. She felt the connection was needed sooner than later. She would like a connection to the walking trail from the south. She knew that the site was challenging but didn't want the landscaping compromised. She stated that the development should be a destination spot for people from the entire region to enjoy and utilize.

Vicky Rosenau, 2307 Maple, asked if all the retail was located at ground level. Mr. Giffen responded yes. She asked about the school district. Mr. Giffen responded that the Everett School District was negotiating school impact fees but he didn't have any information on what schools the children would attend.

Motion: Commissioner Tisdell made a motion to close the public hearing. Commissioner McGinn seconded the motion.

Vote: Commissioner Finch, yes; Commissioner McGinn, yes; Commissioner Yanasak, yes; Commissioner Tisdell, yes; and Acting Chair Lavra, yes.

Motion Carried.

Shelter Holdings Response to Comments

Eric Evans, Shelter Holdings, responded to the comments made regarding the public spaces, the landscaping and consent decree, the roof decks, the methane and groundwater collection systems, the trails and pedestrian pathways, the roads, the three acre park, the parking, and the phasing.

Commission Discussion

Commissioner Finch appreciated the presentation by Shelter. He asked about the decision not to include Building 2A in the initial phase given the requirement to fence off the area, and asked about the plan to activate the central gathering space in advance of building out Phase 2. Mr. Evans responded that the phasing plan was developed to insure that accommodations were made to all of the uses and the required open space and parking. Phase 1 is very costly. They have to build the Riverfront Boulevard, methane collection, and loop waterline from the bridge all the way to 36th, and all the stormwater connections for the overall community. They don't want to build too much but at the same time build enough that they cover some of those costs.

Commissioner Finch asked about the timeline for the phases. Mr. Evans responded that in June 2019, they will build the road which will take about one year. It is about two years to build 300 units of housing, so from June 2019 – April 2021, they hope to be open and then from there every phase is intended to be a year after.

Commissioner McGinn thanked the landscape architect for his presentation, the additional renderings, and his explanation of what the vision is. She was concerned about a disconnect between development of the site and the river. She would like to see the incorporation of some of those same concepts introduced in the plaza area to the river itself to encourage more activity on the riverfront and the trail. From a safety viewpoint, she was concerned about the isolation from that walking trail from any activity happening within the development. She stated that it was a little irresponsible to be including public amenities that are disconnected visually and physically from the public plaza activity. She also would like to create a stronger pedestrian connection between the three acre park and public plaza to help address some of her public safety concerns. Encouraged similar landscape concepts along the waterfront trail. She would like to have some of the parking redistributed throughout the site so that there is more area for public open space along the river.

Mr. Evans responded that he has biked and walked the Lowell-Riverfront trail. He hasn't heard any information regarding bad experiences on that trail. The encampments are in areas that are well removed from the trail. There are only certain locations along the trail that are in proximity to the river. Commissioner McGinn commented that it is in those areas where it would be most beneficial to bring some of the plaza activity towards the riverfront. Mr. Evans responded that the community did support the overlook at the end of the plaza as the pedestrian connection to the river. Commissioner McGinn responded that she was referring to the trail that is more to the south and in closer proximity to the river. Mr. Evans stated that phasing of the project was structured in such a way so that each phase could be vibrant on its own and sustain. It is important in the process to recognize that they are approving a concept or master plan, not a specific parking location at this time. A lot of that will happen as the project evolves.

Mr. Giffen stated that the design guidelines address a lot of the project details that are not addressed at the master plan site level. The development agreement and design guidelines will help guide how the spaces are planned in more detail at the construction phase.

Commissioner Tisdel was excited to see the project move forward.

Nick Harper, Deputy Mayor, stated that Mayor Franklin is very enthusiastic about the project. She has reviewed all three iterations and felt that this was the best plan that has come forward. Everett doesn't need a million square feet of retail, Everett needs 1250 living units for families. He stated that Mr. Evans and Mr. Young and their team has done an incredible job with a very difficult site. He commented that the stories the previous developers told this community about this property were challenged at best in terms of what could be expected. He felt this was not only a good plan but a really good plan. He stated that Administration couldn't be more supportive of the hard work and the opportunities that the project would create.

Motion: Commissioner Finch made a motion to approve the revised Resolution 19-07.

Commissioner McGinn asked if there would be an opportunity to have additional discussion about subsequent phases in the future. Mr. Giffen responded not before Planning Commission and City Council. The developer will work with the City on how the development agreement, design guidelines and development standards get implemented on a phase by phase basis at the time of construction.

Commissioner Tisdel seconded the motion.

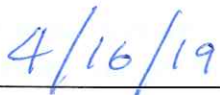
Vote: Commissioner Finch, yes; Commissioner McGinn, yes; Commissioner Yanasak, yes; Commissioner Tisdel, yes; and Acting Chair Lavra, yes.

Motion Carried.


8:53:09 PM ADJOURNED.




Planning Commission Secretary



Date



Administrative Assistant



Date