

January 17, 2020

## Everett Planning Commission

My comments focus on Agenda Item 4 - Building Heights.

I am not able to attend the Planning Commission meeting in person on January 21, 2020 so I am providing these written comments. In reviewing the materials from the various meetings on the building height topic I have not found the reason or goal for changing building heights. Building heights are controversial especially in view areas. Building heights affect the scale of buildings in neighborhoods and can change the character of a street and neighborhood. The current height regulations in single family zones are excessive. I have attached the PowerPoint presentation I presented to the Planning Commission on December 3, 2019 for your information and attention. I can provide more examples of buildings built in Everett under the current building height code which are out of scale in the neighborhood they are located. The current code approach to calculate building heights was developed over many years. It is the result of trial and error based on the experience of buildings built where property owners pushed the extremes to build homes as tall as possible to capture views for themselves. These property owners were not concerned how their construction would affect their neighbors and other property owners. I suggest the goal in changing the building height regulations should be to create a community where views are for the benefit and enjoyment of the community and neighbors. Walls of homes blocking views for a few is not a desired result.

The proposal for 2.5 stories in the Urban Residential 1 zone is an interesting proposal but is not a height calculation. A story is not a height measurement it results in a design standard. The story concept needs to be combined with a maximum height in feet. I suggest the following heights in the proposed Single-Family areas.

- Urban Residential 1: 25 feet (This is the height in the City of Edmonds which is a community which values its views for all.) Reduce building

heights in UR1 to 25 feet rather than increasing to 30 feet. An increase in height from 28 feet to 30 feet is not justified and will create new out of scale buildings in single family areas. This is especially true if attached single family homes like townhouses are permitted. Townhouses create a wall of multiple family units and an increase in height combined with allowing townhouses would have a dramatic impact.

- Urban Residential 2: 28 feet

The standards for how the height are calculated should not be changed. Continue the existing system for base elevation and height calculation. This standard has been working, but for the allowed height, and I do not know a good reason to change it.

In proposed section 19.22.100 B. 1. take out item b) **how heights are measured** from items which can be modified. To allow for modification of how the heights are measured has the potential to create very out of scale residential homes. The only reason for someone to ask for a modification is to increase the height of a building over the zoning code standard. A standard should be established and then have all apply the standard equally. Allowing the increase in height through a modification process is not justified and would likely only occur on lots which are on steep slopes with views. Lots on flat terrain would not be looking for a modification. The modification process takes the predictability of what can be built in a neighborhood away from citizens and property owners.

I am supportive of the staff recommendation to EMC 19.04 Definitions in “Base elevation” to remove **filing and grading permit** from the definition.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Dave Koenig

koenigd7@gmail.com

# BUILDING HEIGHTS

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PLANNING COMMISSION

DECEMBER 3, 2019

DAVE KOENIG

# VISION FOR EVERETT NEIGHBORHOODS

- Not very often major code changes are done by communities.
- This is an opportunity to make an improvement to neighborhoods.
- The goal in changing the building height regulations should be to create a community where development results in a benefit and for the enjoyment of the community and neighbors including views.



# CITY OF EDMONDS

- Edmonds is a community which values its views and has a height standard in single family neighborhoods of 25 feet.
- The Edmonds downtown heights are at a lower level so residents up hill can maintain their views.

# PROPOSAL TO ACHIEVE VISION

- Reduce building heights in URI to 25 feet rather than increasing to 30 feet.
- In proposed section 19.22.100 B. 1. take out **b) How heights are measured** from items which can be modified.
- EMC 19.04 Definitions in the “Base elevation” remove **filing and grading permit** from the definition.
- Continue to use the existing approach to measure heights using the amended “Base elevation” definition.
- Table 22-2 add to table: Front yard setback maximum 1 floor up to 18 feet maximum.



CURRENT  
CODE  
3 STORY  
EXAMPLE

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# SCALE COMPARISON

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THREE STORY  
HOUSE  
DROPS OFF  
IN BACK

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# HISTORIC HEIGHT EXAMPLE

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