



CITY OF WHITE SALMON
Joint City Council and Planning Commission Workshop
Wednesday, November 2, 2023

COMMISSION AND ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL PRESENT

Commission Members:

Greg Hohensee, Chair
Michael Morneault
Seth Gilchrist
Tom Stevenson
Ross Henry (Absent)

Staff:

Erika Castro Guzman, City Project Coordinator

Consultant:

Structura Naturalis Inc.
Michael Mahaffey

CALL TO ORDER/ ROLL CALL

Mayor Marla Keethler called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. A quorum of planning commissioner and city council members was present. Ten audience members attended in person and by teleconference.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. Housing Code Update

Mayor Marla Keethler initiated a workshop with the city council, planning commission, and housing consultant Michael Mahaffey to discuss proposed changes to the existing zoning code aimed at spurring development. Consultant Michael Mahaffey presented a draft ordinance with highlighting modifications.

During the workshop, the council and commission discussed the pressing need for housing solutions, including zoning changes and clear criteria for approval. Mahaffey underscored the advantages of higher-density neighborhoods and shared examples of successful communities with tight setbacks and close-knit living spaces.

Mahaffey advocated for a land development regulation approach that prioritizes physical form over the separation of uses. He also emphasized the support for smaller, more affordable housing options and the necessity of clear and objective development processes.

The housing consultant delved into various aspects of the city's development plans, including the need for a view shed overlay zone and finding the right balance between preserving views and privacy. He acknowledged the importance of a measured and incremental approach to mitigate potential impacts and unintended consequences.

Mahaffey discussed the impact of state-mandated changes on local efforts, emphasizing the importance of being proactive rather than reactive. He also highlighted the significance of addressing unintended consequences and the need for a diverse mix of housing options for different life stages.

The group also explored the potential benefits of allowing larger lots and split lots to accommodate multi-generational families and create opportunities for renting out extra spaces. They discussed the need to incentivize building and renting out additional units to increase the supply of available housing.

The group delved into the details of the code and emphasized the importance of clear understanding between the city council and planning commission. They also addressed concerns about zoning categories and the prescribed division of land in the city.

Council member David Lindley and others deliberated on the decision to partition the land into quarter-acre sizes and the inclusion of the RL zone in the current land use map. They also considered the possibility of making changes to the RL zone and addressing infrastructure deficiencies.

The group recommended simplifying and streamlining development regulations, including removing redundancies, clarifying language, and considering different building heights for specific areas. They also suggested the possibility of consolidating certain sections of the ordinance to avoid conflicting provisions.

The city council and planning commission explored the potential increase in building height to address housing needs. They considered the correlation between height and achieving larger goals, concerns about increased building heights capturing views and raising home values, and the need for careful implementation to address unintended consequences.

The planning commission and others discussed the need to code for the desired development and suggested measuring the maximum height of the living space instead of the building. They stressed the importance of involving the community proactively in determining the character of tall buildings to avoid future conflicts.

Housing consultant Michael Mahaffey and others discussed the need for clear and pre-approved models for building designs in the neighborhood, including addressing issues like building height. They also talked about the possibility of simplifying the math involved in determining building height and considering regulations for certain animals in the city.

Mahaffey and the group considered the dimensions of the lots and the setback requirements, exploring different permutations to see how they would fit on a lot. They further discussed the measurements and specifications of the zone, including the recommended setback from the alley and the potential width of the units.

Mahaffey discussed different parking options, mentioning that if there were two spaces, one could have a remote space. He clarified that examples were not recommendations, just illustrations of possible layouts.

The group expressed concerns about removing manufactured home districts without implementing a form-based code, as it could lead to undesirable development. Mahaffey suggested focusing on ADUs (Accessory Dwelling Units) and small buildings for increased density instead of waiting for larger, potentially expensive buildings to be constructed.

Housing consultant Mahaffey discussed the need for provisions in a form-based code to make it easier to develop multi-family housing while also considering the potential unintended consequences on neighbors. It was suggested to include certain provisions now and continue working on a more complete form-based code in the future.

Council member Patty Fink explored the possibility of allowing both standard code and form-based code for zoning, similar to Oregon. She also considered the idea of having more flexibility in granting adjustments and variances to meet the needs of the community and avoid discouraging housing development.

Planning Commission Chair Greg Hohensee discussed concerns about clear and objective standards for variances, the need for planning commission involvement in reviewing impactful variances, and the importance of consistent interpretation of the code.

Mayor Marla Keethler emphasized that the goal of the zoning update was to achieve diverse and attainable housing based on years of work and community outreach.

Mayor Keethler and others discussed the challenges faced by the city due to outdated and unintentional code, as well as the need to catch up with planning efforts. They proposed various changes to zoning regulations, including making certain uses permitted instead of conditional, reducing setbacks, and promoting mixed-use development in commercial areas.

Mayor Keethler and housing consultant Mahaffey discussed the potential for reevaluating the land use designation of the Riverfront District, considering mixed-use and residential buildings.

The city council discussed the importance of directing the planning commission towards their desired changes and highlighting any differences from existing state laws. They agreed that it would be helpful to clearly communicate the proposed changes and identify areas where they deviate.

Mahaffey discussed the need to consider making changes to existing codes and incorporating provisions from the state to address issues such as nonconforming structures and increasing the number of ADUs. The group expressed uncertainty about how to provide direction and discussed considering comparisons between recommendations and recent state laws regarding ADU development.

Mayor Keethler and others discussed the need to address various comments and concerns raised during the meeting and come up with a draft recommendation. They

identified height and the commercial district as areas where there was disagreement and prioritized addressing issues related to affordable housing.

The city council and planning commission discussed various aspects of the ADU regulations, including height, setbacks, and connection fees. They also considered making ADUs outright permitted uses instead of conditional use permits and discussed design standards, parking requirements, and the possibility of reducing parking spaces for ADUs near transit stops.

Consultant Mahaffey and the group discussed the issue of parking in White Salmon, considering options such as public overnight parking, shared parking spaces, and transportation demand management. They also debated the potential impact of reducing parking requirements on the small town feel and the need for practicality in a four season area.

Mahaffey and others discussed the need for changes in the code to address the attrition of automobiles and make non-conforming uses conforming. Mayor Marla Keethler emphasized the importance of creating housing options for those who have been displaced and ensuring that the changes benefit the community members who need them the most.

The group had a general consensus on the need for system change and follow-through in addressing affordable housing issues. They explored various approaches, such as ADUs, community loan trusts, and incentivizing smaller and more affordable units, to create a better balance in housing options.

ADJOURNMENT

The workshop was adjourned at 8:33 p.m.



Greg Hohensee, Chair



Erika Castro Guzman, City Project Coordinator