



CITY OF KIRKLAND

Planning and Community Development Department
123 Fifth Avenue, Kirkland, WA 98033 425.587-3225
www.ci.kirkland.wa.us

MEMORANDUM

To: David Ramsay, City Manager

From: Eric Shields, Planning Director
Jeremy McMahan, Planning Supervisor

Date: July 2, 2008

Subject: DOWNTOWN CORRESPONDENCE

RECOMMENDATION

Authorize the Mayor to sign the attached response letter.

BACKGROUND DISCUSSION

The City has received the attached e-mail correspondence related to parking modifications, private amendment requests, design review, and pedestrian safety.

Attachments:

- E-mail from Glenda Schmidt
- Council Reading File memo on parking modifications
- Draft response letter

From: Glenda Schmidt [mailto:glenda@schmidtfinancialgroup.com]
Sent: Wednesday, June 25, 2008 6:22 PM
To: KirklandCouncil
Subject: Parking and PARs

I love living and working in Kirkland but some things about Kirkland trouble me. The buck stops with you so I'll direct my questions to you.

Why does Kirkland zoning code allow developers automatic parking modifications? It doesn't make sense to continue this 'give away'.
Why can't parking modifications be stricken from the books? Why can't the Parking Advisory Board, City Hall and City Council take action on this immediately? Why should I support a municipal parking structure when City Hall is giving away parking spots on every new development project?

Why does City Hall invite Private Amendment Requests biannually? We have zoning code and a Comprehensive Plan and yet we feel the need to overtly open the door to requests for development projects exceeding current code every other year? What's driving our willingness to change existing code/CP on such a frequent basis? Should developers be redefining existing code/CP? Does this benefit the community? The Comp Plan is about managed growth. What's the PAR about?

Does City Council need to re-examine its process for permitting new development projects? Personally I like the concept of a Design Review Board but I'd like to see the Planning Department held responsible for adherence to the zoning code and Comprehensive Plan. Once that hurdle is crossed, the DRB can do what they're trained to do; i.e. craft better looking buildings and landscapes than we'd otherwise get.

As downtown Kirkland gets developed, I'm very concerned about pedestrian safety and increased traffic. This is a walker/runner/biker/dog friendly city. City staff does NOT have a handle on this and mitigation measures do NOT adequately address the problem. We spend more time on building materials, building facades, set backs, step backs, shadowing and landscape features than we do this impending liability issue. Do we need accident reports and fatalities to get City Council's attention?

Thanks for listening.

Property Owner/Resident
225 Fourth Avenue, B402
Kirkland, WA 98033



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CITY OF KIRKLAND

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MEMORANDUM

To: David Ramsay, City Manager

From: Jeremy McMahan, Planning Supervisor

Date: December 14, 2007

Subject: Council Reading File, Parking Requirements for CBD projects

BACKGROUND

At the recent City Council study session with the Parking Advisory Board (PAB), some Council members expressed concern about modifications to parking standards that have been approved in downtown Kirkland. The concern was that if we know we have a parking shortage in downtown Kirkland, why would staff approve a proposal providing less parking than the maximum required by code. This memo provides some background and data on parking requirements.

RESIDENTIAL PARKING

The base multi-family residential parking requirement for most zones in the City is 1.7 stalls per unit. This rate has not been adjusted in many years and, in most cases, does not take into account the location of the residential project. The notable exception is in the Totem Center area where parking standards were not codified with the assumption that the area will have a strong transit orientation in the future. The Zoning Code also establishes administrative procedures that allow applicants to request a modification from the required number of spaces (KZC 105.103.3). The Code requires that the modification request must provide an adequate and thorough parking demand and utilization study prepared by a licensed transportation engineer or other qualified professional. The City traffic engineer must approve the scope of the study. Although transportation demand management measures may be proposed to further reduce parking standards, none have been proposed for downtown projects. The Planning Official has authority to approve or deny parking modifications. Within the CBD, staff now reviews all parking modification requests with the PAB, although the Code provides no statutory authority to that body.

In practice, a number of multi-family and mixed use projects in the City have received parking modifications over the years. On a per unit basis, projects have ranged from 1.28 to 2.23 stalls per unit, with an average of 1.71 stalls per unit. On a per bedroom basis, projects have averaged 1.03 stalls per bedroom. In general terms, the data tends to indicate that residential parking demand is lower for units built in a more urban mixed use area (e.g. - downtown or Juanita business districts). This data is promising given the City's growth management objective to locate higher density housing close to shops, services and transit service. In areas like downtown, data provided by applicants show a better correlation

between the number of bedrooms and parking demand than between number of units and parking demand. Staff has worked with the PAB to conduct an independent evaluation of parking utilization in a number of downtown residential projects to evaluate the actual demand and to see if guest parking was spilling over into the public parking supply. Survey findings indicate that peak parking utilization ranged between approximately 60% and 80% and residential guest parking appeared to be accommodated within the private supply. This data suggests that the parking supplied by these developments is adequate to meet their needs.

RETAIL PARKING

It should be noted that there have been no modifications requested or approved for the number of retail parking stalls required in downtown projects (1 stall per 350 square feet). However, issues have been identified by the ParkSmart program because employees of downtown projects that provide parking are choosing to or required to park in the municipal garage. We do not have data at this time to know if that is because of supply issues (i.e. – City requirement is too low to meet customer plus employee demand) or simply a desire by retailers to provide more apparent parking to customers. The City has not traditionally involved itself in the ongoing management of private parking and we do not currently have requirements that employees park on-site.

CONCLUSION

While staff is confident that the residential parking demand of new projects is being met within those projects, the question is often asked why we would not require the additional parking to be built regardless of the project's parking demand. The primary advantage to building excess parking into projects would be if that parking were somehow made available to the public, it could ease the perceived deficit in the public supply. The challenge with that approach is that the City does not have authority to cause any private parking to be made publicly available. If there were some public financial participation in the surplus parking, then terms could be negotiated.

At the policy level, some cities like Bellevue regulate parking maximums rather than minimums and others like Seattle have districts with no parking standards. A recent report from Transportation Choices (delivered to Council on September 4, 2007) gave the City high marks for transportation sustainability. Their top three recommendations on improving our "sustainability quotient" were parking flexibility or parking maximums, metering parking, and encouraging more shared parking.

Cc: David Godfrey
Eric Shields

July 15, 2008

DRAFT

Glenda Schmidt
225 Fourth Avenue
Unit B402
Kirkland, WA 98033

RE: Parking and Private Amendment Requests

Dear Ms. Schmidt:

Thank you for your letter regarding various code and policy questions. Regarding parking modifications, you are correct that the Zoning Code allows parking modifications when a licensed transportation engineer can demonstrate that the proposed parking supply will meet the project's demand. You also correctly point out that there is a need for additional public parking in the downtown and options are currently being studied by the Parking Advisory Board. A number of modifications have been granted in the downtown for residential parking based on demand studies (no modifications have been granted from commercial parking requirements). The City has conducted an independent parking utilization study of a number of downtown projects and found that the supply is meeting the actual residential demand. It is worth noting that developments are only required to meet their own parking requirements. Since projects are only required to meet their own demand, any surplus parking that might be built into the project would not be available to the public.

Regarding private amendment requests (PAR's) to the Comprehensive Plan, the Kirkland Zoning Code does establish a process for citizen's to initiate requests. The Planning Commission and City Council must conduct a threshold review of all private requests and must find that the proposal demonstrates a strong potential to serve the public interest before it receives detailed consideration. Private requests that don't meet the threshold are folded into the normal cycle of scheduled neighborhood plan amendments.

Regarding your comments on design review, with the current quasi-judicial appeals before Council right now, we will refrain from weighing in on the current development review process.

Lastly, to respond to your comments about pedestrian safety, the City Council shares your belief that Kirkland is friendly for walkers, runners and cyclists and we continue to support efforts that increase pedestrian safety. These come in the form of public education, including public service announcement videos, engineering measures like the redesign of pedestrian flags that increased usage almost 70% in six months, and traffic enforcement efforts that target drivers who don't yield

to pedestrians. To view the videos, watch Channel 75 (KLIFE) or logon to the City's website at www.ci.kirkland.wa.us .

Your letter poses many thoughtful questions and the City Council appreciates your taking the time to share your thoughts. If you have any additional questions, please contact Jeremy McMahan, Planning Supervisor at 425.587.3229.

Sincerely,
Kirkland City Council

by James Lauinger, Mayor

cc: Jeremy McMahan, Planning Supervisor
David Godfrey, Transportation Engineering Manager