



Historic Preservation Commission/Fairhaven Urban Village Plan

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Cc: ccmall

History:

This message has been forwarded.

Hello Nicole,

Thanks for your invitation to submit suggestions for Historic Preservation Commission discussion prior to their January 24 meeting for review of the Draft Fairhaven Urban Village Plan. I believe Commissioner comments on the following subjects would be of interest to other reviewing bodies, the public, and Fairhaven Neighbors.

- 1) Floor Heights/Energy Efficiency: A primary purpose of Urban Village planning is prevention of sprawl together with energy conservation and efficient use of resources. The Fairhaven Plan Draft proposes new, mandatory regulation for minimum floor heights within new buildings. Will new, mandatory requirements for minimum 14' floor heights on ground floors, minimum 12' floor heights for upper levels that include commercial uses and minimum 10' floor heights for upper level residential uses impact energy usage within these new buildings?
- 2) Building Heights/Historic Consistency: The Fairhaven Plan Draft proposes building heights of up to 66' in the Historic Influence Area surrounding the core Historic District. Though a thriving commercial area once including many hotels, theaters, saloons and other enterprises existed in the area at the turn of the 19th century, until very recently no buildings ever built in this area have exceeded 35 feet. Are building heights greater than 35' in the Influence area necessary for historical consistency? Similarly, with the exception of one notoriously unsuccessful building, the Fairhaven Hotel, all of the buildings ever built in the Historic core exceeding 35' still exist. Will new buildings taller than 35' diminish the significance and cultural esteem of the historic buildings in the Historic core? Are building heights greater than 35' in the core necessary for historical consistency?
- 3) Parking/Historic Consistency: Presently, regulations require City Council approval for buildings exceeding 35' in the Historic core, together with a finding that parking supply is adequate for any additional floor area within the building that surpasses a 35 foot design. These conditions are not included in the Plan Draft. The 2011 *Parking Study* discloses on-street parking supply in the Historic core is inadequate for present uses. Expanded, off-street parking supply is needed in the Historic core. Are there important historic features within the core that preclude certain off-street sites as appropriate areas for compliant surface parking or compliantly designed parking structures?
- 4) Building Setback Trigger/Design Review/Historic Consistency: The Fairhaven Draft Plan proposes building floors above 35' be setback 15' from the sidewalk. None of the historic buildings in the area feature this design motif. Are 15' setbacks on upper floors of new buildings consistent with existing Design Review and existing nomenclature of historic buildings?
- 5) Historic Demolition/Economic Incentive: Many of the contributing historic buildings within the Historic District are less than 35' tall and are unregistered for any historic preservation protections. Will new height standards of up to 55' in the Historic District accelerate and promote demolition of existing smaller historic buildings for replacement by more profitable 55' structures?

6) Low Cost Development/Urban Villages Disadvantaged: The Fairhaven Draft Plan inadequately addresses parking requirements for the area, substituting a *Parking Study* that counts many private spaces as available for an overall parking scheme. An existing *Parking District* mistakenly believes it has purchased an exemption from required parking standards. Will the mistaken belief that parking standards have been eliminated in Fairhaven, together with the generous development envelope proposed for new Fairhaven projects, foster a local investment environment that disadvantages development in other Urban Villages where standards are less relaxed?

The upcoming Historic Preservation Commission meeting likely will be informative, thanks in advance for including these items for discussion in addition to those items already targeted for HPC focus. Also, thanks again for the exertions made so far in the promulgation of an Urban Village plan. I look forward to a final draft that will improve the area equally for all.

Sincerely,

David Carlsen