

Aven, Heather M.

From: Michael E. Smith FAIA <mike@mikesmith-architect.com>
Sent: Thursday, November 5, 2020 11:39 AM
To: Pool, Lisa A.
Subject: Comments on RM zones

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

First:
In new developments that include developing new streets, the Public Works department asks for a 7' to 10' wide utility easement bordering the public right of way. The problem with this is that as density increases, this is very valuable land that is better served as building area. I understand the reason for the utility easement is so that the streets do not need to be torn up every time a new connection is needed, but I believe the greater public good is served by allowing this land to be buildable.

Second:
The Public Works department has an unwritten policy of not allowing roof overhangs to project into easements or public rights of way. The problem with this policy is that it forces designers to locate buildings even further back, impacting the ability to meet density goals. The theory behind this policy is that if a backhoe needs to dig adjacent to a building the backhoe operator is much less likely to hit the roof overhang. In reality, seldom if ever are utilities located so close to a building that a backhoe needs to be that close to begin with. The International Building Code, adopted by the City of Bellingham, expressly permits overhangs to encroach into a public easement or right of way. Projections below 8' above grade are not permitted, and starting at 8' projections are allowed at a 1:1 ratio, up to a defined maximum based on the width of the easement. This puts the Public Works policy in direct conflict with the adopted City code. This needs to be resolved, and I believe it should be consistent with the International Building Code, thereby giving designers greater flexibility in meeting density goals.

Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to comment.

Michael E. Smith FAIA
A Fellow of the American Institute of Architects
360-220-1089
www.mikesmith-architect.com