

CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION

East Main Station Area Comprehensive Plan Amendment (CPA) – Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) & Vision

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Community Development

DIRECTION NEEDED FROM COUNCIL

DIRECTION

Proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendments for East Main station area were deferred by City Council in December 2018. This is Council's second study session (the first was held January 22, 2019). Staff is seeking direction from Council on various elements of the CPA, which will inform changes to the proposed policies of the CPA.

RECOMMENDATION

Approve the direction for the revised Comprehensive Plan amendment as reflected in Attachment A, direct staff to prepare the ordinance for final Council action and direct staff to return to Council for another study session to discuss and approve land use code amendment guiding principles.

BACKGROUND & ANALYSIS

Overall

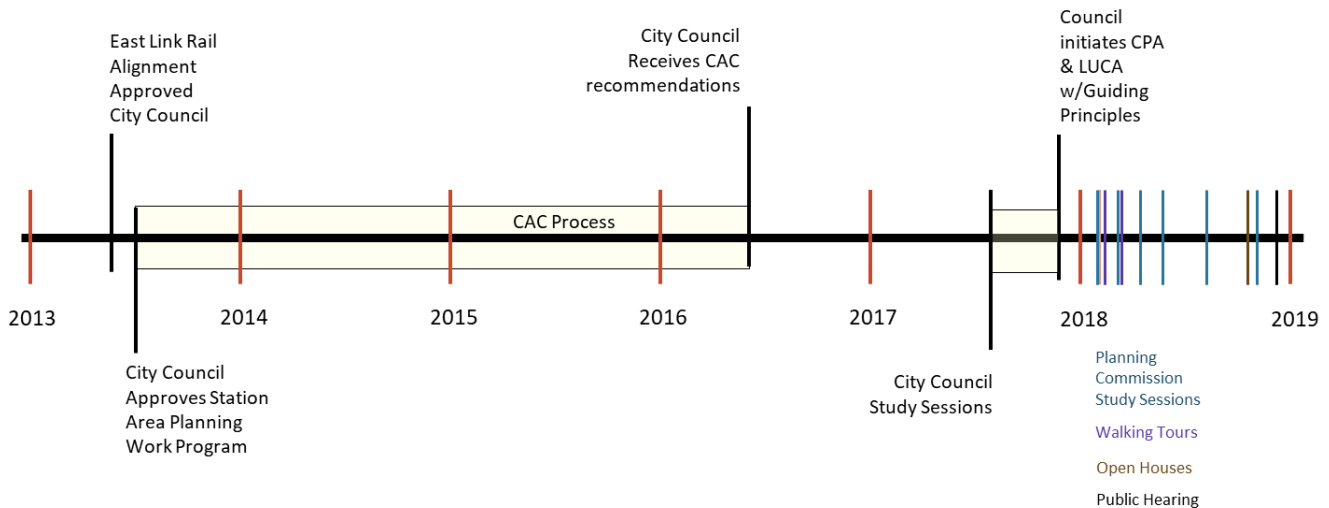
The City Council initiated station area planning around the planned East Main light rail station in order to leverage the opportunity for redevelopment to take advantage of the regional light rail investment. The vision developed by the Council through use of the East Main Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) is a new development type for this area and requires both Comprehensive Plan and Land Use Code changes to guide development.

City Council deferred action on the East Main TOD District Comprehensive Plan amendment (East Main CPA) on December 10, 2018. The purpose of the deferral was to allow Council additional time to study the policy proposals for implementing the TOD district. This will be accomplished by:

- Reviewing the vision for the East Main Station Area TOD (January 22);
- Reviewing follow-up information and options in response to Council direction (April 22);
- Reviewing and affirming policy language for preparation of the East Main CPA ordinance (April 22); and
- Reviewing and affirming land use code amendment guiding principles (date TBD).

History

The following timeline illustrates the history of the East Main Station Area before Council began its review of the proposed CPA.



Synopsis of the First Study Session (January 22, 2019)

- Council asked if the plan amendment Guiding Principles established by Council are consistent with the recommendations.
- Council asked for information about potential impacts if 114th Avenue SE is partially, or fully, closed as a result of WSDOT plans for I-405 improvements.
- Council expressed support for a pedestrian bridge over 112th Avenue SE and directed staff to retain that language in the plan amendment.
- Council acknowledged that several topics in the Planning Commission recommendation are land use code or development review specific and should be moved from the plan amendment to the code.
- Council discussed the issue of public vs. private ownership of streets and open space.

Framework for Second Study Session (April 22, 2019)

Presentation and/or discussion of the following:

- Recap of the plan amendment.
- Review of the City Council's guiding principles with the recommended plan amendment.
- Transportation staff will discuss transportation planning issues with 114th Avenue SE and potential impacts from WSDOT's plans for expansion of I-405.
- Moving topics from the plan amendment to the land use code amendment (LUCA) or development review process.
- The issue of public streets and open space.
- The next steps, which will include the LUCA guiding principles.

Council Guiding Principles and the Plan Amendment

At the time the Council endorsed the East Main CAC report articulating the vision for this area as a vibrant neighborhood oriented to and served by transit, it adopted a set of principles to guide the Planning Commission process. At the time the guiding principles were adopted, we were piloting an approach to bring both the Comprehensive Plan amendments and the LUCA implementing those policies together as a package. Since the initiation of that effort, the LUCA was separated from the CPA. The following table provides a brief assessment of how the recommended CPA complies with those guiding principles that are applicable to the Comprehensive Plan. Note below that some of the guiding principles are applicable to the LUCA work, and will continue to guide the work moving forward.

Council's Plan Amendment Guiding Principle	Description and Consistency with Attachment A Policy Language (Apr 22)
1) E Main should fit with Downtown and Wilburton.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent. • Downtown is primary center. E Main & Wilburton mirror and complement the downtown edges. There is a rail station in each and walksheds draw from all 3 districts.
2) Unique character & identity. Don't extend downtown boundary.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent. The physical layout of a TOD development will create a development pattern that is uniquely different than downtown. • The downtown boundary was not extended into the E Main TOD.
3) Gateway to Bellevue. Reinforce iconic design.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent • Iconic, gateway development is captured in the Land Use Vision policy 1 of the CPA.
4) Regs/design guidelines achieve TOD, optimize rail station, economic feasibility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent. Goals and policies directly mention or describe criteria in this principle. An example is Land Use Goal: To develop regulations that provide for a compact urban-scale transit-oriented district that optimizes the benefits of the light-rail investments and complements existing neighborhoods.
5) Consider larger floorplates on 114th Ave SE for tech.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent.. Land Use Element, Comprehensive Plan Map section, Policies, Part E-Specific reference to larger floorplates and technology uses. (Proposed to be moved to LUCA)
6) Any material difference 65'/75' height for 112th Ave stepback.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pending • This is more appropriately addressed at the LUCA.
7) Non-motorized trails TOD to trails in Mercer Slough.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent.. Proposed policy in CPA, Transportation section, policy #9 calls for a pedestrian system to the station area and other destinations, such as Mercer Slough and other nearby parks and open spaces.
8) Ongoing public input during implementation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public input solicited throughout the plan amendment process. • Public input will be solicited in LUCA and area rezoning phases.
9) Complete CPA/LUCA in 2018 & evaluate concurrent process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPA & LUCA separated late 2018. • Process evaluation pending CPA/LUCA completion.
10) Implement consistent with CAC Vision & CAC Guiding Principles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposed CPA language (Attachment A) is consistent with CAC • LUCA and area-wide rezoning will follow CPA.
11) Assess if LUCA is consistent with CPA and comp plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pending. • This will be required during the LUCA phase.

114th Avenue SE – Potential Closure

Council requested information about potential impacts if 114th Avenue SE were partially or fully closed as a result of WSDOT's plans for expansion of I-405. Transportation staff will be available at the meeting to address this directly.

Additional Detail about Final Recommended Comprehensive Plan Amendment

At the January study session, staff highlighted several specific policies in the CPA transmitted by the Planning Commission that were more suited for discussion at the LUCA phase of the project, due to the specificity of the concepts. Since the January study session, staff met several times with the major stakeholder involved in the process to develop a better understanding of interests and to clarify the steps in the East Main planning process:

- Developing the broad vision (done when the Council endorsed the East Main CAC report);
- Translation of that vision to the broad policy framework that guides both city actions and private development (in front of the Council now with the proposed CPA);
- Implementation of those policy provisions that guide private development and establish the associated expectations around public infrastructure to support the vision (next steps, with the LUCA work); and
- Review of specific development proposal to apply the regulations to a unique property and specific uses and buildings (following LUCA adoption, through design review).

As a result of those discussions, further consensus was built around moving some of the specific concepts included in the Planning Commission's CPA transmittal to the LUCA process for further discussion and review as part of the entire LUCA package. The Planning Commission is anticipated to continue their review of the LUCA following Council's action on the CPA.

As a result, several of the proposed policies reviewed by the Council in January have been removed from Attachment A. Removing these policies and discussing the concepts as part of the LUCA ensures that the Comprehensive Plan remains visionary in scope and broad in policy. A development regulation applied as comprehensive plan policy could limit development flexibility and create obstacles for redevelopment. To reverse that would require another plan amendment to delete specific provisions, which would further delay any development.

The following are the specific policies removed from the recommended CPA in Attachment A:

- Land Use Element, Comprehensive Plan Map, Policy E:
Consider allowing larger floor plates for office uses to accommodate the building types desired by technology companies.
- East Main Station Area, Goals & Policies, Land Use, Goal, part 4, itemized list:
...additional height can optimize open spaces at the ground level; limiting the majority of parking access to the perimeter of large sites reduces vehicle congestion in the pedestrian environment; and on sites with varying topography, establish a consistent datum for the ground plane that allows for level, accessible and connected pedestrian spaces.
- Transportation, Vehicular Mobility, #13, 2nd sentence and #14:

Explore options to provide continuing access from Main Street to 114th Avenue SE and provide vehicular connections from a new north/south street east of 112th Avenue SE to Main Street.

- Establish a system of streets with public easements organized in a block grid.
- On large sites, use large, below-grade garages to promote shared and efficient use of parking resources and to limit vehicular congestion in the pedestrian environment.

Public Streets and Open Space

Also, at the January study session, staff provided a recommendation to modify the Planning Commission's proposed CPA with respect to terms used around streets and open space. The final recommended CPA included in Attachment A eliminates detail that had previously been inserted about the nature of ownership (references to "accessible to the public" and "public easements" etc) in favor of the use of the generic term "public". The following are some of the rationale behind the staff recommendation:

- The term 'public' in relationship to streets is much more than accessibility. It also includes mobility, proximity, connectedness, place making, mode choice, public health and safety, among others. The modifications and qualifiers to the term 'public' that appeared in the Planning Commission transmittal all address the nature and extent on an ownership interest, which is not the focus of the term in the Comprehensive Plan. It is a broader term used throughout the plan, oftentimes used to identify a user group. Examples include: public realm, public schools, public hearing. Why is this distinction important? The proposal to change, for example, 'public street' to 'publicly accessible through private easement' changes the intent to an ownership perspective only and the broader meaning of the public, as a user group is minimized.
- The issue of ownership of the streets and open spaces is a separate issue that is determined during development review based on existing city-wide transportation and development codes that have been applied to development all over the city. This is best practice used by local governments nationwide and it is how the City determines the nature and location of public infrastructure. The use of 'public' to describe 'public' streets, for example, is not intended to predetermine the nature of the public ownership interest.

The staff recommendation on this topic is reflected in Attachment A, and represents a change to the Planning Commission's transmittal in several policies, including:

- Goals and Policies, East Main Station Area, Pedestrian and Bicycles, 9
Establish a clearly-defined public ~~publicly accessible~~ pedestrian system ~~through public easements~~ to the station area and other destinations, such as Mercer Slough, and other nearby parks and open spaces.
- Goals and Policies, East Main Station Area, Open Space, 31
Establish an public open space system in the station area that incorporates:
 - a) Abundant landscaping;
 - b) Well-integrated publicly accessible plazas, paths, open spaces and other gathering places; and

c) A clearly-defined public pedestrian system that is connected to destinations within and surrounding the station area.

Other

Replacement language for the Generalized Street Diagram (end of proposed policy language):
Create a new north-south street that runs east of and parallel to 112th Avenue SE and create two new east-west streets ~~connections~~ to connect 112th Avenue SE to 114th Avenue SE, as needed.

One of the major land owners proposed additional language that read if warranted at the end of the proposed narrative above. Staff recommends that the underlined language in the narrative above be used instead. The term 'warrant' in the context of transportation has specific implications. Staff recommend that 'connections' be changed to 'streets' for consistency with the use of 'streets' in the first half of the sentence.

Next Steps

The plan amendment policy discussion will conclude once Council has completed its review and direction for the policy language. It is recommended that Council hold another study session to discuss the Land Use Code Amendment Guiding Principles which will set up the next phase of the implementation of the East Main Station Area Plan.

Conclusions

Attachment A is staff's recommended policy language for this plan amendment.

1. The Planning Commission's recommendation is used as the base document.
2. The policies that are land use code and development review related are proposed for deletion and are shown in strike through format.
3. Policies where 'public' is recommended have been modified.
4. A small change to the section 'Replacement language for the Generalized Street Diagram' is recommended to be added.

POLICY & FISCAL IMPACTS

Policy Impact

The vision developed by the Council through use of the East Main Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) is a new development type for this area and requires both new policy in the Comprehensive Plan and Land Use Code changes to guide development. The decisions made relating to this station area plan amendment will have significant implications for setting the tone for the area and may influence planning around other station areas in the future.

Fiscal Impact

No fiscal impact has been identified for this agenda item.

OPTIONS

1. Approve the direction for the revised plan amendment policy as reflected in Attachment A, direct staff to prepare the ordinance for final Council action and direct staff to return to Council for another study session to discuss and approve land use code amendment guiding principles.
2. Provide alternative direction for the revised plan amendment policy as reflected in Attachment A, direct staff to prepare the ordinance for final Council action and direct staff to return to Council for another study session to discuss and approve land use code amendment guiding principles.

ATTACHMENTS & AVAILABLE DOCUMENTS

- A. Proposed East Main Transit Oriented District Plan Amendment

AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL LIBRARY

East Main Staff Report and SEPA review