

# EUGENE CITY COUNCIL

## AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY



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### Work Session: South Willamette Special Area Zone

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Meeting Date: October 22, 2014  
Department: Planning and Development  
[www.eugene-or.gov](http://www.eugene-or.gov)

Agenda Item Number: A  
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#### **ISSUE STATEMENT**

This work session is an opportunity to update the City Council on the in-progress South Willamette Special Area Zone. The proposed zone will implement important elements of the Envision Eugene recommendations and the South Willamette Concept Plan. These code amendments are needed to ensure that future development better aligns with community needs and expectations in the area while providing capacity to accommodate future growth.

#### **BACKGROUND**

In March 2012, the City Council directed staff to implement the Envision Eugene recommendations which included the goal of accommodating all of Eugene's 20-year, multi-family housing and commercial job need inside the existing Urban Growth Boundary (UGB). As part of this effort, the council also directed staff to conduct a pilot project of *area planning* as a means of promoting compact urban development in certain locations while enhancing the livability and unique identity of each area.

#### South Willamette Concept Plan

The special characteristics of the South Willamette area, along with public support through a partnership with the Friendly Area Neighbors and Southtowne Business Association, helped identify this as a location to begin exploring the tools of area planning. Beginning in 2011, these efforts resulted in the [South Willamette Concept Plan](#).

The South Willamette Concept Plan describes a vision for the district that integrates land use, transportation, and public spaces. The vision emerged from numerous community conversations, including over 600 people who actively participated through public workshops, focus groups, questionnaires and email updates. Based on these conversations, the plan strikes a balance toward a moderate level of change and intensity that is sensitive to the scale and character of existing development. Key elements of the vision include:

- A well-connected, healthy, and walkable district
- Opportunities for more commercial jobs and residential density, including a greater

- diversity of housing types
- Guidelines for the physical form and scale of new buildings
- Concepts for active, successful streets and public realm
- Principles for transitions and compatible building design

In addition to many community partners, the Eugene Planning Commission also played an active role in developing the plan. On April 15, 2013, the Planning Commission unanimously recommended implementing the concept plan.

The Concept Plan itself is not a regulatory document, but aims to summarize the community's intent and inform the many actions required to realize the vision. In keeping with the action-oriented principles of Envision Eugene, the South Willamette Concept Plan includes a clear strategy for implementation. Actions fall into three main categories:

- Updating regulations to align with the community vision
- Enhancing public infrastructure such as streets and parks
- Investing in certain kinds of redevelopment projects, for example through the Multi-Use Property Tax Exemption (MUPTE) program

#### South Willamette Special Area Zone

The current code does not support the community's vision for the South Willamette area. Projects developed under the current code may not address important values or standards. In addition, accommodating future growth depends on identifying locations and standards for housing and job capacity within the existing UGB. The livability of these areas also requires special attention to street design, for example providing room for a safe and attractive pedestrian environment. The current code does not meet these needs.

The City Council is currently discussing revisions to the MUPTE program. Studies show that redevelopment is unlikely to happen without this or similar investments due to a significant gap in financial feasibility. The current draft of MUPTE under discussion by the council would extend the program to the South Willamette area and other core commercial areas. However, the program would not be activated until, or unless, code updates are adopted to help ensure the alignment of eligible projects with community expectations. In the absence of code updates, the area would remain ineligible for investments needed to accommodate growth inside the UGB.

The proposed *South Willamette Special Area Zone* addresses these needs by updating current regulations to match the community's vision set forth in the South Willamette Concept Plan.

Work on the proposed code update began in spring of 2013, following the Planning Commission's recommendation to proceed. Since that time, staff has engaged the community in exploring ways to address special challenges and issues identified during public discussion. As concepts evolved, staff initiated further efforts to raise awareness and answer questions about the project. To date, outreach has included direct collaboration with property owners, several public workshops, regular updates to neighborhood associations (Friendly Area Neighbors, Southeast Neighbors and Crest Drive Community Association), sharing information at neighborhood events, door-to-door contact with property and business owners, and stakeholder meetings. Additionally, reports,

Frequently Asked Questions, a short video, a questionnaire, and much more information is available to the public on the South Willamette Special Area Zone [project web page](http://www.eugene-or.gov/swsaz) (www.eugene-or.gov/swsaz). A summary of public engagement activities is provided in **Attachment A**.

Since May 2014, the Eugene Planning Commission has discussed the proposed code concepts in detail over the course of 11 meetings. A summary of Planning Commission activity related to the South Willamette Special Area Zone is provided in **Attachment B**. Discussions covered a wide range of important objectives, including:

- Establishing new transition standards to increase compatibility
- Significantly increasing design standards for development
- Adding limited flexibility in exchange for public benefits such as open space
- Establishing standards and protecting space for a great pedestrian realm on South Willamette Street
- Providing for a slow, incremental transition to future street standards while minimizing impacts and adding value for existing property owners
- Providing opportunities for new jobs and housing
- Including new opportunities for small housing types

The staff presentation will summarize the character and content of public conversation to date. In addition, the presentation will highlight key issues raised during the review process and describe how the proposed code will seek to balance each while delivering on project objectives.

#### Next Steps

Based on public input and Planning Commission discussion to date, a final draft of the code will be presented later this fall. Following additional public review, the Planning Commission will make a recommendation to the City Council for adoption of the South Willamette Special Area Zone in early 2015.

Staff will continue to update the community through neighborhood association meetings, email updates, online information, and an open house event.

#### **RELATED CITY POLICIES**

The South Willamette Special Area Zone implements all of the Envision Eugene pillars, with emphasis on the following pillars and strategies:

##### *Provide Housing Affordable to All Income Levels*

- Plan for a higher proportion of new housing stock to be multi-family...intended to expand the variety of housing types and prices available.
- ...programs and actions will be put in place to increase the number of multi-family homes that are constructed in the downtown, along key transit corridors, and in core commercial areas.
- Expand housing variety and choice by facilitating the building of smaller, clustered and attached housing

*Plan for Climate Change and Energy Resiliency*

- Plan for growth so that an increasing proportion of residents live in 20-minute neighborhoods where residents can meet most of their daily needs near their homes without the use of an automobile.

*Promote Compact Urban Development and Efficient Transportation Options*

- Facilitate the transformation of downtown, key transit corridors and core commercial areas as mixed-use neighborhoods that foster active, walkable, community living by providing a mix of residential, commercial, retail and public uses in proximity to one another.
- Use urban design to integrate a mix of commercial and residential uses, transportation, parking, parks and open space, and historical and cultural resources.
- Make compact urban development easier in the downtown, on key transit corridors and in core commercial areas.

*Protect, Repair and Enhance Neighborhood Livability*

- Future actions (such as land use code changes or plan amendments) that impact allowable density in neighborhoods will only be undertaken through a public process (such as area planning or neighborhood planning) that integrates the compatibility goals of the Infill Compatibility Standards and/or Opportunity Siting projects.
- Implement the Opportunity Siting (OS) goal to facilitate higher density residential development on sites that are compatible with, and have the support of, nearby residents.

*Provide for Adaptable, Flexible and Collaborative Implementation*

- Develop a range of implementation tools to realize the community vision of Envision Eugene. The range of existing and new tools may include:
  - Design based tools such as area planning, form-based codes, design review and design standards.
  - Removal of code barriers
  - Capital improvements that increase the value of an area and attract private investment
  - Partnerships and collaboration with neighbors, public agencies and institutions and private developers,
  - Financial tools such as tax relief, fee reduction or restructuring, loans and other market interventions.

**COUNCIL OPTIONS**

This is an informational work session; no action is required at this time.

**CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION**

No action is required at this time.

**SUGGESTED MOTION**

No action is required at this time.

**ATTACHMENTS**

- A. Summary of Community Engagement
- B. Summary Planning Commission Activities
- C. [South Willamette Concept Plan](#) (link to online document only)

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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