



South Willamette Special Area Zone “QUICK LOOK” SUMMARY

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BACKGROUND

The City of Eugene is working on a design code for the South Willamette area that sets special rules for new development to implement the [South Willamette Concept Plan](#) (SWCP), created by the community between 2011 and 2013. The vision includes an attractive, healthy, walkable neighborhood with successful businesses and new opportunities for jobs and housing. The proposed design code follows the recommendations of the South Willamette Concept Plan and will affect residents, property owners, and business owners as the district changes over time. This summary offers a “quick look” at a few of the most important changes proposed in the new code.

PLEASE NOTE: these are DRAFT proposals pending review and discussion by the community, Planning Commission, and the City Council. All standards are subject to change through this process.

1. New Uses and Building Standards for Human Scale and Active Streets

Proposed uses will closely follow the recommendations of the SWCP. The proposed design code will set new limits on the maximum height of new buildings and special standards for how new buildings relate to the street. These standards are aimed at setting up a good structure for a walkable, human-scale shopping and living district.

- Most uses will reflect existing development patterns, e.g. mixed use in commercial areas. Some areas, however, for example along 29th Avenue, will be changed to allow higher-density housing types.
- In most of the existing commercial areas, the maximum building height will be reduced from 10 stories (120 feet) to 5 stories (65 feet).
- Most areas will require a 15 foot “stepback” at 3 stories, which pushes the upper stories back from the street edge
- New buildings in mixed use and apartment/condo areas will be required to face the street; no parking will be allowed between the building and the street (this is also the current standard)

2. Special “Transition Standards” to Protect Existing Neighborhoods

As Eugene grows and changes, the community has asked for more reassurance that new development will be compatible with existing neighborhoods. The proposed design code will introduce new standards to help larger buildings fit well next to existing, single-family areas.

- Transition standards will be required for all mixed use and multi-family housing projects that are built adjacent to areas zoned for single-family homes, including R-1 and the proposed Single-Family Options (SFO) zone.
- Minimum interior lot setbacks will be doubled, from 5 feet to 10 feet
- Buildings will be limited to 25’ height along interior lot lines, with a sloped setback of 8:12 beyond
- Trees will be required for screening
- Setback for balconies along interior lot lines will increase 4 times, from 5 feet to 20 feet

- Code standards will allow flexibility by offering alternative ways to provide a buffer such as surface parking and open space
- Building height standards will also include significant height setbacks (75 feet) in key locations

3. Flexibility & Incentives

Redeveloping property in areas that are already built up can be difficult and expensive. Some flexibility is important to make projects more feasible and allow for creativity. In addition, give-and-take incentives can provide public benefits such as additional open space. The proposed design code will offer several new options.

- Additional building height will be allowed in MU and MU/AF subdistricts in exchange for open space designed for pedestrian use
- No additional height will be allowed in setbacks, setbacks, or transition areas
- Reduced parking will be allowed in exchange for more open space along streets
- To acknowledge the improved walkability and multi-modal access within the district, parking minimums will be reduced somewhat, with further reductions allowed in exchange for special parking measures such as shared parking (on-site), off-site parking (lots or garages), nearby transit stations, and time-flex parking.
- A parking plan will be crafted for the district to address parking needs as they change over time and minimize impacts to nearby residential areas

4. Higher Standards for Design

Good design supports both the livability and commercial success of a district. Although design excellence cannot be guaranteed by regulations, the proposed code will set basic design standards while allowing flexibility for different styles and project needs. Proposed design standards will focus on features that help create an attractive, walkable community, but will not prescribe style, color, or similar qualities.

- Buildings will be required to front at least 60% of the street-facing property line or special setback
- Up to 50% of the building frontage may be set back up to 15 feet from the front property line or special setback
- A main entrance must face the street; in special frontage areas, one entrance at an average interval of every 40 feet will be required
- In apartment/condo districts with “row house character”, one entrance per 30 feet will be required
- Entrances will be required to include design elements such as lights, cover, transom windows or others
- Weather protection (permanent awnings, covers) will be required over 50% of windows in retail oriented frontage areas
- Transparent glass and openings will be required over a minimum percent of wall area and length
- Building walls along streets will be required to break up the mass with articulation and design features
- Durable, quality materials will be required on the ground floor along streets

5. Single Family Options (SFO): New Opportunities for Housing

The changing needs of our community call for smaller, more flexible housing types that are not commonly available in Eugene today. The design code will introduce a new zone called “Single Family Options” that makes it easier to build these housing types with special standards that fit well with lower-density homes.

- Development types for the SFO zone will include courtyard homes, cluster cottages and single-family detached homes; a special SFO zone will allow row houses in certain areas only

- Each SFO development type, e.g. Cluster Cottages, will include special design standards
- SFO development types will be allowed through a building permit and will not require a Planned Unit Development (PUD) or other land use application except as needed for land division. The Willard School site will require a PUD if the site is sold for a non-school use.

6. Creating Great Streets

Attractive, safe and walkable streets are a key to creating the thriving district the community wants. South Willamette will benefit from special standards for the design of the “streetside realm” to promote consistency, pedestrian comfort, and business success. Importantly, to allow enough room for future pedestrian improvements, the proposed code will establish *special setbacks* along South Willamette Street, 29th Avenue, and the “Oak Shopping Alley” (between 27th and 28th Ave).

- Proposed “streetside realm” design standards will include pedestrian-friendly features such as street trees, bump-outs, crosswalks, planter strips, and pedestrian-scale lights.
- Proposed standards will only apply if existing improvements are demolished or newly constructed. Projects such as building renovations, additions or other small structures will not be required to construct the pedestrian zone to the new standards unless the pedestrian zone is damaged or removed during construction.
- Vehicular access from South Willamette Street will be limited; access from side streets, alleys and shared driveways will be prioritized when available. This limitation will apply at the time of redevelopment.
- Special setbacks along Willamette Street, 29th Avenue, and Oak Shopping Alley will preserve space for a great pedestrian realm over time. On South Willamette Street, new buildings will be set back 15 feet from the street-facing property line; on 29th Avenue, 3 to 7 feet; on Oak Shopping Alley, 7 feet.
- Property owners on South Willamette Street will have the option of creating on-street parking, wider sidewalks and pedestrian amenities at the time of redevelopment to support new commercial and residential uses; however this will not be required.

7. Design Review (Optional Alternative)

Many designers and developers want or need design flexibility for complex projects. For development projects that include housing, the City of Eugene is required by law to provide a “clear and objective” (i.e. measurable) path for project review. The City of Portland is the only city in the state that can *require* a “discretionary” (subjective) process like design review for projects that include housing. However, the proposed code will provide a *voluntary, alternative design review process* that applies design guidelines instead of clear and objective standards.

- The proposed code will include a new set of design guidelines specific to the South Willamette area
- These guidelines will address important design issues covered by the clear and objective code standards, however will provide the applicant with more flexibility in how to address them
- Applicants will need to show how the project design address the guidelines “equal to or better” than by meeting the clear and objective standard

What else do I need I need to know?

- Even though the code update suggests that things will change in the future, these changes will not happen overnight. In fact, given the difficult economics of redevelopment, change is expected to be very gradual. Even with incentives such as MUPTE, the analysis suggests that about 250 new multi-family housing units will be built in the entire district over 20 years. This is good news for those who

are concerned about change and not so good news for those who would like the long-term vision to happen sooner rather than later.

- Speaking of MUPTE, the City Council is considering extending the MUPTE boundary to the South Willamette Area. The current proposal would not “turn on” the program for this area until the proposed code is adopted and in place. This helps ensure that new development supported by MUPTE will better meet the community’s expectations under the new code.
- The Eugene Planning Commission has been discussing these concepts in more detail. Check out the “code concepts” discussion online (see agenda information for May 5th, May 19th, June 2nd, June 23rd, July 14th, July 21st, July 28th, Sept. 8th, Oct. 6th and Nov. 10th, 2014 at this link: <http://www.eugene-or.gov/AgendaCenter/Planning-Commission-2>). Webcasts of these meetings are also available here: <http://www.eugene-or.gov/index.aspx?NID=833> (or search “Eugene Planning Commission Webcast”).
- Check the project web page at www.eugene-or.gov/swillamette for updates and more information as the project moves forward.
- Our goal is to help as many people as possible understand what’s proposed and have their questions answered.

For more information:

Visit the project web site at www.eugene-or.gov/sw-saz

For specific questions, please contact Jennifer Knapp at (541) 682-5445 or Jennifer.L.Knapp@ci.eugene.or.us.