

EUGENE CITY COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY



Work Session: South Willamette Special Area Zone

Meeting Date: Wednesday, October 21, 2015
Department: Planning and Development
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 South Willamette Special Area Zone, which 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.

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 jobs 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 2010, these efforts led to the collaborative development of the [South Willamette Concept Plan](#).

The South Willamette Concept Plan describes a vision for the district that integrates land use, transportation, and public spaces into a more walkable, livable neighborhood with new opportunities for homes and businesses. The vision emerged from a three-year visioning process, including conversations with over 600 people who actively participated through public workshops, focus groups, questionnaires and email exchanges. Based on these conversations, the concept plan strikes a balance of gradual change and design protections to guide growth and development toward the most appropriate places. 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; and 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 MUPTE program

South Willamette Special Area Zone

Eugene's current zoning 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. For example, buildings may be built at the property line in the commercial zone, as was done at 13th and Olive, and the Hub apartment building on Broadway near Patterson Street. 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, while allowing additional housing and job capacity, does not meet these livability needs.

The proposed *South Willamette Special Area Zone* (Draft Ordinance in **Attachment A**, Quick Look summary in **Attachment B**) was developed to address 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, now SHiNA), sharing information at neighborhood events, door-to-door contact with property and business owners, and stakeholder meetings. Additionally, various reports, Frequently Asked Questions, a short video, a questionnaire, a [Redevelopment Analysis Report](#), and much more information is available to the public on the South Willamette Special Area Zone [project web page](#). A summary of public engagement activities is provided in **Attachment C**.

Beginning in May 2014, the Eugene Planning Commission 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 D**. 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
- Design Review as an alternate path for code compliance

Planning Commission Process

The proposed SW-SAZ code was finalized for the formal Planning Commission process in April of 2015. Legal notices were sent to area residents and property owners, as well as those within 500 feet of the zone. The Planning Commission held work sessions, an Open House, and a public hearing to hear public comments on the draft code. In addition, staff attended multiple community events and neighborhood meetings on the proposed code, as well as developing FAQs and a Quick Look summary to explain the code to a broad audience.

The Planning Commission's deliberations were held over the course of five meetings, with detailed discussions over issues including building height, transition standards, parking, and more. Adjustments to the code were made in response to public input, including lowering proposed building heights on East 30th Avenue to two stories, on Willamette Street near 32nd Avenue to three stories, and on East 23rd Avenue to three stories (see plan designation, zoning and building height maps in **Attachment E**). Open space requirements for multi-family development were also increased, along with a variety of other changes to the proposed code. In July, the Planning Commission voted 7-0 to forward the SW-SAZ on to the City Council. **Attachment F** contains the Planning Commission recommendations.

The staff presentation will summarize the Planning Commission's recommendation and highlight key issues the council has been hearing about since the commission's recommendation was finalized. Recent conversations have included comments at council public forums, a multi-neighborhood forum, and a City Club program in September.

Triple Bottom Line Analysis

Staff from across the City, including community development, sustainability, and human rights work groups, have been assisting planning staff with a triple bottom line analysis of the proposed SW-SAZ. Key issues and themes identified to date include:

- **Benefits of a 20 Minute Neighborhood.** The mixed-use character of the proposed district, along with the street improvements, establishes a model walkable neighborhood with greater connectivity and opportunities for a less car-dependent and more active lifestyle.
- **Diversified housing options.** The additional housing types in the SW-SAZ increase the range of residential options, creating a more nuanced variety of choices to meet the needs of a diversity of demographics and lifestyles.
- **Lower barrier to entry.** New housing types lower the barrier to entry for households by emphasizing small or shared lots and small living units. Reducing the amount of property and building that is required for a single-housing unit, reduces the price for each unit, and increases the number of people who can afford to live in the neighborhood.
- **Reduced pressure for urban expansion.** By maintaining a high quality of life regardless of increases in density, the proposed standards help to make living within the existing urban growth boundary desirable to multiple demographics, including those with the financial means to live in more remote locations.
- **Improved neighborhood aesthetics.** Higher quality in the built environment creates a more attractive place for people to be: to work, to live, to shop, and to dine. This increases the success of businesses and attracts new residents, which also enhances property values.
- **Displacement of residents and businesses.** When redevelopment does occur, existing tenants can be displaced, which is disruptive not only to those who are themselves displaced, but also to the overall community.

The full TBL analysis will be forwarded to the council once it is complete.

Next Steps

Staff will continue to provide information to the community through neighborhood association meetings, email updates, online information, and an informational workshop run collaboratively by the City and multiple neighborhood organizations, tentatively scheduled for the last week in October. The council has a public hearing scheduled for November 9. Following the hearing, the council will have the opportunity during a work session, tentatively scheduled for December 9, to discuss public comments and direct staff on what to bring back for action. Action will be scheduled following the December work session, pending enough time to prepare materials that respond to council's direction.

RELATED CITY POLICIES

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

Provide Housing Affordable to All Income Levels

Plan for Climate Change and Energy Resiliency

Promote Compact Urban Development and Efficient Transportation Options

Protect, Repair and Enhance Neighborhood Livability

Provide for Adaptable, Flexible and Collaborative Implementation

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. Draft Code: South Willamette Special Area Zone (SW-SAZ)
- B. South Willamette Quick Look Summary
- C. Summary of Community Engagement
- D. Timeline of Planning Commission Meetings
- E. Zoning and Building Height Maps
- F. Planning Commission Recommendation
- G. [South Willamette Concept Plan](#) (link to online document)

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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