



Memorandum

DATE: June 26, 2009

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Joseph W. Tovar, FAICP
Paul Cohen, Town Center Project Manager

RE: Background Information regarding the Town Center Subarea Plan process

At the July 9 dinner meeting, the staff will provide a preliminary overview of the Town Center Subarea Plan item on your Work Program. We are providing the Commission members with this memorandum and attachments a week early because there is a lot of reading to be done for the other item on your agenda – potential amendments to the City’s tree regulations. That material will come to you in a packet in early July.

Our discussion with you on the 9th will be preliminary and open-ended in nature because while we have some ideas to share with you, the staff would like you to help shape the design of the process. In preparing for this discussion, it quickly became apparent to us that there is quite a bit of background information to convey. We have grouped this information under a series of discrete headings below. Some of these are lists of relevant existing policies (see Section I below) or work program items you will be involved in over the next six months (Section II below), others are background studies or reports that you may have not see yet (such as the two University of Washington reports referenced in V.B below).

We have also provided our initial thinking about sites and issues to visit during the “walkabout” we have scheduled for July 23 (Sec. III). Also listed are some possible outreach methods and stakeholder groups we would like to engage (Sec. IV). Also listed are the various City staff members who are likely to be involved in various aspects of the overall Town Center effort (Sec. V.A), some other resources we will make available to you, and a draft project Schedule (Sec. VI). We will present a more detailed “critical path” diagram at your meeting showing how these various steps and pieces can fit together over the life of the project.

Attached to this memorandum are a number of items that we suggest you review before the July 9 study meeting. Some of this is fresh in your memory, such as the City Vision and Framework Goals (Attachment #1). Others may be less fresh, such as the Framework Policies for Town Center that were adopted in 2007 (Attachment #2). At your meeting it would be useful to discuss the five Framework Policies listed there, to take stock of what pieces have already been accomplished (e.g., FW-2 establishing the study area boundary and FW-4 which has provided

input to the design for Mile Two of the Aurora Project), and what tasks are about to begin (e.g., FW-5 regarding “wayfinding signs”). The “Signature Boulevard” portion of the City Vision, and several of the Framework Goals (Attachment #1) likely provide a good starting point to address FW-1 “Articulate a Community Vision for the town center at an early step in the development of detailed provisions for the subarea.”

The last two attachments to this memorandum (#5 regarding Shoreline, Burien, and Sammamish Town Centers and #6 describing “Form Based Codes”) are supplied for your use and information. We have also enclosed a DVD of national land use and walkability expert Dan Burden who participated in the City’s Shoreline Speaker Series back in 2007. Mr. Burden actually gave a walking tour of two areas along the Aurora Corridor, including parts of Town Center, and gave a lecture that evening with a critique of what he saw and illustrations from across the country of walkable communities. If you have technical difficulty viewing the DVD, please call Jessica at 801-2501 during normal business hours to see if she can help you. This same talk can be viewed as streaming video on the City’s website at <http://shorelinewa.gov/index.aspx?page=181>.

I. Key Existing Comprehensive Plan and other Policy Framework

- A. City Vision and Framework Goals – adopted 2009
- B. Town Center Framework Policies adopted in 2007
- C. Sustainability Strategy adopted 2008
- D. Housing Strategy adopted 2008
- E. Economic Development Strategy adopted 2006
- F.

II. Coordination with other Planning Work Program Tasks

- A. Permanent Regulations for the Regional Business (RB) zone – adoption Nov. 09
- B. Design Review regulations – winter 2010
- C.

III. Itinerary for Town Center walkabout on July 23

- A. Public Projects – recent, new and pending
 - 1. Completion of Interurban Trail through Town Center- 2007
 - 2. New City Hall – to open August 2009
 - 3. Mile Two of the Aurora Project – construction 2009-2010
 - 4. Expansion of Interurban Trail Park – Summer 2010
 - 5. Wayfinding Signage – design in Winter of 2010, construction Spring 2010
 - 6. New Shorewood High School – planning in 2009 – construction 2011
 - 7. King County/Metro TOD site at N. 192nd/Aurora
 - 8.

B. Private Projects – recent, new and pending

1. Sky Nursery Remodel
2. Echo Lake Project
3. Leiser Office Building at N. 185/Midvale
4. Key Bank Remodel
5. Aurora Rents site at N. 175th/Aurora
- 6.

C. Other items and issues to note during walk

1. Topography and existing vegetation
2. Circulation details – sidewalks, driveways, unimproved rights of way
3. Character of existing adjacent residential neighborhoods on Stone and Linden and their connections (visual, pedestrian, vehicular) to Midvale and Aurora.
4. Existing business and land uses
5. Existing signage, including business signs and billboards
- 6.

IV. Outreach

A. Methods

1. No citizens advisory committee
2. Mail notice of open house, study sessions, hearings to stakeholder groups
3. Articles in Currents
4. Post large notice board signs at six sites, on which to post updated notices.
- 5.

B. Stakeholder groups

1. Neighborhood Associations that overlap with study area (See Attachment 4)
2. Economic Development Advisory Committee
3. Chamber of Commerce
4. Forward Shoreline
- 5.

V. Resources to support the project

A. City Staff

1. Joe Tovar, PADS Director
2. Paul Cohen, Senior Planner: Project Manager
3. David Levitan, Associate Planner: Transportation Master Plan analysis and Wayfinding Signs
4. Kim Lehmberg, Associate Planner: Private Sign regulation update for TC
5. Juniper Nammi, Associate Planner: Neighborhood LEED program
6. Miranda Redinger, Associate Planner: Innovative Housing

7. Steve Cohn, Senior Planner: Population/Employment targets analysis
8. Ray Allshouse, Shoreline Building Official and member Kirkland Planning Commission
9. Alicia McIntire, Aurora Project Planner
10. Nora Smith, City Neighborhoods coordinator: liaison with adjacent neighborhoods
11. Mark Mayuga, Economic Development Manager
12. Dick Deal, City Director of Parks, Recreation, and Community Services

B. Background Studies/Reports available for review now

1. UW Urban Planning studio report – 2007
2. UW Landscape Architecture report - 2008
3. Midvale Demonstration Area Ordinance – 2009
4. Central Shoreline Subarea Plan – 2002

C. Graphics

1. GIS base maps showing streets and parcel lines
2. Updated aerial photos (available early September)
3. Sketch-Up computer model
- 4.

E. Other

VI. Draft Schedule

- A. Summer 09 – design the process, conduct Town Center Walkabout(s), field trip to other Town Centers (Mercer Island? Burien? DesMoines?)
- B. Fall 09 – Public Open House(s), Commission study sessions, staff draft proposed Subarea Plan and implementing regulations
- C. Fall 09/Winter 2010 – public hearings on proposed Subarea Plan and implementing regulations
- D. Winter/Spring 2010 – City Council adoption

Attachments

- #1 City Vision and Framework Goals
- #2 Comprehensive Plan Appendix 5 – Framework Policies for Town Center Subarea Plan
- #3 Study Area of the Town Center Subarea Plan
- #4 Town Center Study area overlaid on Shoreline Neighborhoods Map
- #5 Town Centers article in AIA Forum Magazine, Spring 2009
- #6 Information about Form-Based Codes

Enclosure

DVD of Dan Burden presentation about walkability in Shoreline 08/06/07

2029 Vision Statement

Imagine for a moment that it is the year 2029 and you are in the City of Shoreline. This vision statement describes what you will see.

Shoreline in 2029 is a thriving, friendly city where people of all ages, cultures, and economic backgrounds love to live, work, play and, most of all, call home. Whether you are a first-time visitor or long-term resident, you enjoy spending time here.

There always seems to be plenty to do in Shoreline -- going to a concert in a park, exploring a Puget Sound beach or dense forest, walking or biking miles of trails and sidewalks throughout the city, shopping at local businesses or the farmer's market, meeting friends for a movie and meal, attending a street festival, or simply enjoying time with your family in one of the city's many unique neighborhoods.

People are first drawn here by the city's beautiful natural setting and abundant trees; affordable, diverse and attractive housing; award-winning schools; safe, walkable neighborhoods; plentiful parks and recreation opportunities; the value placed on arts, culture, and history; convenient shopping, as well as proximity to Seattle and all that the Puget Sound region has to offer.

The city's real strengths lie in the diversity, talents and character of its people. Shoreline is culturally and economically diverse, and draws on that variety as a source of social and

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economic strength. The city works hard to ensure that there are opportunities to live, work and play in Shoreline for people from all backgrounds.

Shoreline is a regional and national leader for living sustainably. Everywhere you look there are examples of sustainable, low impact, climate-friendly practices come to life – cutting edge energy-efficient homes and businesses, vegetated roofs, rain gardens, bioswales along neighborhood streets, green buildings, solar-powered utilities, rainwater harvesting systems, and local food production to name only a few. Shoreline is also deeply committed to caring for its seashore, protecting and restoring its streams to bring back the salmon, and to making sure its children can enjoy the wonder of nature in their own neighborhoods.

A City of Neighborhoods

Shoreline is a city of neighborhoods, each with its own character and sense of place. Residents take pride in their neighborhoods, working together to retain and improve their distinct identities while embracing connections to the city as a whole. Shoreline's neighborhoods are attractive, friendly, safe places to live where residents of all ages, cultural backgrounds and incomes can enjoy a high quality of life and sense of community. The city offers a wide diversity of housing types and choices, meeting the needs of everyone from newcomers to long-term residents.

Newer development has accommodated changing times and both blends well with established neighborhood character and sets new standards for sustainable building, energy efficiency and environmental sensitivity. Residents can leave their car at home and walk or ride a bicycle safely and easily around their neighborhood or around the whole city on an extensive network of sidewalks and trails.

No matter where you live in Shoreline there's no shortage of convenient destinations and cultural activities. Schools, parks, libraries, restaurants, local shops and services, transit stops, and indoor and outdoor community gathering places are all easily accessible, attractive and well maintained. Getting around Shoreline and living in one of the city's many unique, thriving neighborhoods is easy, interesting and satisfying on all levels.

Neighborhood Centers

The city has several vibrant neighborhood "main streets" that feature a diverse array of shops, restaurants and services. Many of the neighborhood businesses have their roots in Shoreline, established with the help of a local business incubator, a long-term collaboration between the Shoreline Community College, the Shoreline Chamber of Commerce and the city.

Many different housing choices are seamlessly integrated within and around these commercial districts, providing a strong local customer base. Gathering places – like parks, plazas, cafes and wine bars - provide opportunities for neighbors to meet, mingle and swap the latest news of the day.

Neighborhood main streets also serve as transportation hubs, whether you are a cyclist, pedestrian or bus rider. Since many residents still work outside Shoreline, public transportation provides a quick connection to downtown, the University of Washington, light rail and other regional destinations. You'll also find safe, well-maintained bicycle routes that connect all of the main streets to each other and to the Aurora core area, as well as

convenient and reliable local bus service throughout the day and throughout the city. If you live nearby, sidewalks connect these hubs of activity to the surrounding neighborhood, bringing a car-free lifestyle within reach for many.

The Signature Boulevard

Aurora Avenue is Shoreline's grand boulevard. It is a thriving corridor, with a variety of shops, businesses, eateries and entertainment, and includes clusters of some mid-rise buildings, well-designed and planned to transition to adjacent residential neighborhoods gracefully. Shoreline is recognized as a business-friendly city. Most services are available within the city, and there are many small businesses along Aurora, as well as larger employers that attract workers from throughout the region. Here and elsewhere, many Shoreline residents are able to find family-wage jobs within the City.

Housing in many of the mixed-use buildings along the boulevard is occupied by singles, couples, families, and seniors. Structures have been designed in ways that transition both visually and physically to reinforce the character of adjacent residential neighborhoods.

The improvements put in place in the early decades of the 21st century have made Aurora an attractive and energetic district that serves both local residents and people from nearby Seattle, as well as other communities in King and Snohomish counties. As a major transportation corridor, there is frequent regional rapid transit throughout the day and evening. Sidewalks provide easy access for walking to transit stops, businesses, and connections to adjacent neighborhoods.

Aurora has become a green boulevard, with mature trees and landscaping, public plazas, and green spaces. These spaces serve as gathering places for neighborhood and citywide events throughout the year. It has state-of-the-art stormwater treatment and other sustainable features along its entire length.

As you walk down Aurora you experience a colorful mix of bustling hubs – with well-designed buildings, shops and offices – big and small – inviting restaurants, and people enjoying their balconies and patios. The boulevard is anchored by the vibrant Town Center, which is focused between 175th and 185th Street. This district is characterized by compact, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly development highlighted by the Shoreline City Hall, the Shoreline Historical Museum, Shorewood High School, and other civic facilities. The interurban park provides open space, recreational opportunities, and serves as the city's living room for major festivals and celebrations.

A Healthy Community

Shoreline residents, city government and leaders care deeply about a healthy community. The city's commitment to community health and welfare is reflected in the rich network of programs and organizations that provide human services throughout the city to address the needs of all its residents.

Shoreline is a safe and progressive place to live. It is known region wide for the effectiveness of its police force and for programs that encourage troubled people to pursue positive activities and provide alternative treatment for non-violent and nonhabitual offenders.

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In Shoreline it is believed that the best decisions are informed by the perspectives and talents of its residents. Community involvement in planning and opportunities for input are vital to shaping the future, particularly at the neighborhood scale, and its decision making processes reflect that belief. At the same time, elected leaders and city staff strive for efficiency, transparency and consistency to ensure an effective and responsive city government.

Shoreline continues to be known for its outstanding schools, parks and youth services. While children are the bridge to the future, the city also values the many seniors who are a bridge to its shared history, and redevelopment has been designed to preserve our historic sites and character. As the population ages and changes over time, the City continues to expand and improve senior services, housing choices, community gardens, and other amenities that make Shoreline such a desirable place to live.

Whether for a 5-year-old learning from volunteer naturalists about tides and sea stars at Richmond Beach or a 75-year-old learning yoga at the popular Senior Center, Shoreline is a place where people of all ages feel the city is somehow made for them. And, maybe most importantly, the people of Shoreline are committed to making the city even better for the next generation.

Framework Goals

The original framework goals for the city were developed through a series of more than 300 activities held in 1996-1998. They were updated through another series of community visioning meetings and open houses in 2008-2009. These Framework Goals provide the overall policy foundation for the Comprehensive Plan and support the City Council's vision. When implemented, the Framework Goals are intended to preserve the best qualities of Shoreline's neighborhoods today and protect the City's future. To achieve balance in the City's development the Framework Goals must be viewed as a whole and not one pursued to the exclusion of others.

Shoreline is committed to being a sustainable city in all respects.

- FG 1: Continue to support exceptional schools and opportunities for lifelong learning.
- FG 2: Provide high quality public services, utilities, and infrastructure that accommodate anticipated levels of growth, protect public health and safety, and enhance the quality of life.
- FG 3: Support the provision of human services to meet community needs.
- FG 4: Provide a variety of gathering places, parks, and recreational opportunities for all ages and expand them to be consistent with population changes.
- FG 5: Encourage an emphasis on arts, culture and history throughout the community.
- FG 6: Make decisions that value Shoreline's social, economic, and cultural diversity.
- FG 7: Conserve and protect our environment and natural resources, and encourage restoration, environmental education and stewardship.
- FG 8: Apply innovative and environmentally sensitive development practices.
- FG 9: Promote quality building, functionality, and walkability through good design and development that is compatible with the surrounding area.
- FG 10: Respect neighborhood character and engage the community in decisions that affect them.
- FG 11: Make timely and transparent decisions that respect community input.
- FG 12: Support diverse and affordable housing choices that provide for Shoreline's population growth, including options accessible for the aging and/or developmentally disabled.
- FG 13: Encourage a variety of transportation options that provide better connectivity within Shoreline and throughout the region.

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FG 14: Designate specific areas for high density development, especially along major transportation corridors.

FG 15: Create a business friendly environment that supports small and local businesses, attracts large businesses to serve the community and expand our jobs and tax base, and encourages innovation and creative partnerships.

FG 16: Encourage local neighborhood retail and services distributed throughout the city.

FG 17: Strengthen partnerships with schools, non-governmental organizations, volunteers, public agencies and the business community.

FG 18: Encourage Master Planning at Fircrest School that protects residents and encourages energy and design innovation for sustainable future development.

Appendix 5

Framework Policies for the Town Center Subarea Plan

The following policies establish the framework for development of the land use, capital facility and programmatic aspects of the Town Center Subarea Plan.

FW-1 Articulate a community vision for the town center as an early step in the development of detailed provisions for the subarea.

FW-2 Establish a study area boundary (Figure 1) to provide context for evaluating the opportunities and potential impacts from future development of commercial and mixed uses along Aurora Ave. N.

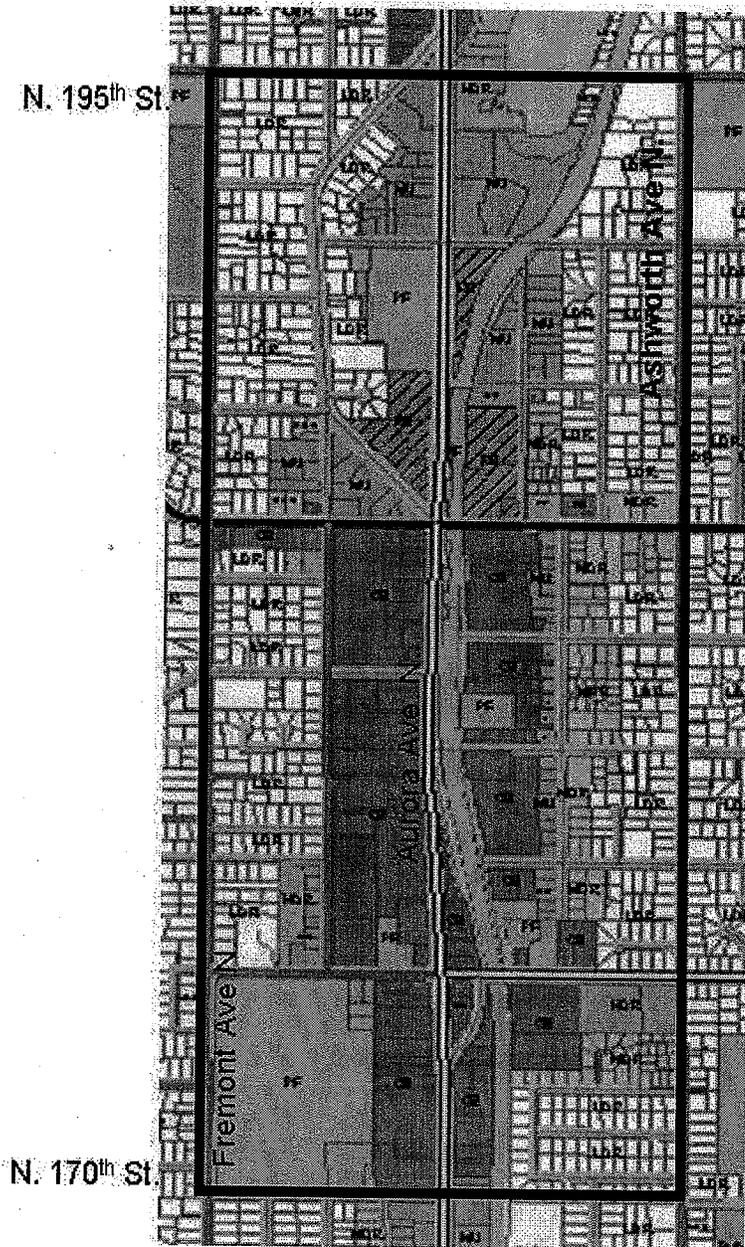
FW-3 Engage Shoreline residents and businesses in detailed design processes for a) a park site on both sides of the Interurban Trail and b) Midvale Ave N.

FW-4 Design roadway, transit and pedestrian facilities consistent with the City's preferred "Flexible alternative" for Aurora Avenue between N. 165th St. and N. 205th St.

FW-5 Prepare a program of civic directional or 'way finding' signage and evaluate refinements to city sign regulations to reflect the emerging function and visual character of Aurora Avenue.

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FIG. 1 STUDY AREA



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GGLO

A Downtown for Every 'Burb

"Town Centers" are planned for three Seattle suburbs

Joseph W. Tovar, FAICP

Frank Lloyd Wright once said that the rise of the automobile "threw open the door to the cage of the city." In his vision of "Broadacre City," each "Usonian" home was situated on an acre of land and served by high-speed highways. The imagery of low-slung homes sprawling across a vast landscape was compelling and romantic, foreshadowing post-war suburbanization.

In contrast, the regional form envisioned by Washington's Growth Management Act (GMA), adopted in 1990, is a compact urban landscape, connected by multiple transportation modes, encompassed within a landscape of farms, forests, and rural countryside. This compact urban landscape is only about 16% of the total land area of the central Puget Sound region, with the balance designated as rural, farm, and forest lands. The anti-sprawl ethic of the GMA in some ways reflects, in other ways shapes, our thinking about the place of the individual in the community and the place of the man-made landscape within the natural one.

Long established cities like Seattle, Everett, and Tacoma have very distinct downtowns, but the region's thirteen cities incorporated since 1990 have largely had to create their "town centers." Some, such as Burien, had the street grid of a nascent business district in place for many years, but lacked strong residential or civic components. Others, such as Shoreline, had no well-developed downtown grid, growing instead around commercial corri-



GGLO

ABOVE: Burien Town Center Building Design by GGLO TOP: Burien Town Center Master Plan

dors along major highways. Sammamish is an example of a third type, on the metropolitan edge, with an even less articulated road grid, but enjoying the flexibility of larger parcels of relatively undeveloped land.

Burien

There were many reasons why Burien chose to create a mixed-use town center. Scott Greenberg AICP, Planning Director for Burien, said, "We wanted to build on our existing downtown area to create a sense of place and identity. The Town Square project is a public-private, mixed-use development, with our new city hall, a regional King County library, and residential. We see it as a business, government, and cultural focal point for the community, and a catalyst for redevelopment and revitalization for the larger downtown area." He also said that by focusing residential growth in the downtown area, the city hoped to support and preserve Burien's well-established residential neighborhoods.

The Burien Town Square project sits on ten acres and is served by a new street grid that is essentially complete. It will contain 400 housing units in a combination of townhouses and mid-rises, 70,000sf of new retail/office space, and a one-acre public park. The 45,000sf regional library/city hall complex is scheduled to open in May of 2009.

Burien currently has an administrative design review process and adopted design guidelines with a 90-day estimated review time. The broad design objectives are to: promote quality development and reinforce a vision of an attractive, pedestrian-oriented downtown with a small town atmosphere; convey a sense of permanence, attention to detail, quality, and investment. A “design departure” process is available if the applicant can demonstrate how the original intent of the standard will still be met. Burien also adopted the SEPA “urban infill” exemption for the Town Square project. Greenberg said, “We are considering expanding this residential and mixed-use project exemption to the entire downtown Burien area. This would streamline the review process.”

Sammamish

The city of Sammamish adopted its Town Center Plan for many of the same reasons as Burien. Planning Director Kamuron Gurol said, “We wanted to create a central gathering spot with a sense of place. We also wanted to increase the housing choices in Sammamish, provide public amenities, and focus new growth into a center rather than disperse it across the city.” The less-developed land use pattern of Sammamish helps explain the larger expanse of its Town Center, including the 20-acre Sammamish Commons Park with natural features incorporated into the overall scheme.

A new Sammamish City Hall of 38,000sf and adjacent parkland were early investments in the public infrastructure for Sammamish Town Center. The plan calls for up to 2,000 new residential units and up to 600,000sf of retail and office. Building heights up to six stories are permitted, with the primary use likely to be residential rather than office due to the city’s place in the region. The city of Sammamish is in the process of preparing development regulations and design guidelines to promote high quality development, emphasize walkability, and describe appropriate aesthetic character.

Gurol said: “We welcome the input of developers and architects about the most efficient design review process. We hope to meet the needs both of the community and those who make the major investment and design decisions that will implement our Town Center Plan.” He stressed that it is important for the city to streamline the development review process, provide flexibility for design creativity, and a high degree of certainty for site plan layout and design requirements. He also said “City governments can set the stage by land acquisition and infrastructure investments that demonstrate the community’s commitment to accomplishing the vision.”

Shoreline

Shoreline developed as a classic “bedroom community” only fifteen minutes away from the jobs, services, and amenities of Seattle. It built its identity and reputation on great schools and parks, but lacked either a seat of local government or a commercial “center.” Instead, low-rise strip commercial development coalesced for decades along the three-mile long Highway 99/Aurora corridor. Soon after incorporation in 1995, the city of Shoreline decided to transform Aurora Avenue North into an urban boulevard with landscaped medians, underground utilities, decorative street furniture, broad sidewalk, and bus lanes to complement the four lanes of general purpose traffic.

The extreme makeover of the first mile of Aurora is now complete, and work begins this year on the “middle mile” which bisects the city’s designated “Town Center.” A cluster of facilities within several blocks of N. 175th Street at Aurora Avenue lend a civic character to the area. The main headquarters of the Shoreline Fire Department sits at this key intersection, while the new 60,000sf City Hall is under construction a block to the east. These two public buildings bracket the Interurban Trail, (a bicycle/pedestrian path that parallels Aurora) a linear park, a historic red-brick road, and the second mile of the Aurora project. Bus rapid transit will reach this Town Center by 2013, serving a transit stop adjacent to the park site. A block to the west are the local museum and Shorewood High School, which is about to undergo a major renovation.

The city hopes that public investments in these amenities and transportation improvements will attract residential and commercial development. A new Town Center development code is under review, including design standards and development incentives to build mixed-use, mid-rise projects up to six stories in height. The environmental analysis will establish how much of the city’s 20-year growth target can be accommodated in their transit-served, mixed-use Town Center.

Growth Comes to the “Center”

Each of these new cities is building a “Town Center” as a functional and symbolic focus for community life, to increase housing choice, and support transportation investments. Each calls for mixed-use, mid-rise compact building forms at the heart of their centers. And though each Town Center sits on a fraction of its city’s geographic area, it is there that each city intends to accommodate a significant percentage of GMA-mandated residential growth targets. Each of these cities also recognize the importance of good design and intend to employ design standards and design review processes to ensure community and context-appropriate architecture.

The GMA vision of compact urban development is even more compelling in view of Washington’s climate change objectives to decrease vehicle miles traveled and greenhouse gas emissions. Regional initiatives, such as the Cascade Agenda, stress the importance of making cities lively and attractive magnets for new growth in order to conserve the rural and resource landscape. Building successful town centers as focal points for civic, cultural, and residential life will therefore be important not only to these individual cities, but the region as a whole. ■

Joseph W. Tovar FAICP is President of the Washington Chapter of the American Planning Association. He has been the Planning Director for the city of Shoreline for three years, helped draft the Growth Management Act in the early 1990s and spent twelve years interpreting the GMA as a member of the Growth Management Hearings Board.

Town Centers at a Glance			
	Burien	Sammamish	Shoreline
Date incorporated	1993	1999	1995
2008 population	31,000	40,000	53,000
Land area (sq. mi.)	7.5	18	12
Population/sq. mi.	4,133	2,222	4,416
Area of Town Center	89 acres	240 acres	55 acres
Capacity for new units in Town Center	4,500	2,000	5,500
Maximum building height	12 stories	6 stories	6 stories

Information from the Form-Based Code Institute

<http://www.formbasedcodes.org/index.html>

Definition of a Form-Based Code

January 29, 2008

A method of regulating development to achieve a specific urban form. Form-based codes create a predictable public realm primarily by controlling physical form, with a lesser focus on land use, through city or county regulations.

Form-based codes address the relationship between building facades and the public realm, the form and mass of buildings in relation to one another, and the scale and types of streets and blocks. The regulations and standards in Form-based codes, presented in both diagrams and words, are keyed to a *regulating plan* that designates the appropriate form and scale (and therefore, character) of development rather than only distinctions in land-use types. This is in contrast to conventional zoning's focus on the micromanagement and segregation of land uses, and the control of development intensity through abstract and uncoordinated parameters (e.g., FAR, dwellings per acre, setbacks, parking ratios, traffic LOS) to the neglect of an integrated built form. Not to be confused with design guidelines or general statements of policy, Form-based codes are regulatory, not advisory.

Form-based codes commonly include the following elements:

- *Public Space Standards*. Specifications for the elements within the public realm (e.g., sidewalks, travel lanes, on-street parking, street trees, street furniture, etc.).
- *Building Form Standards*. Regulations controlling the configuration, features, and functions of buildings that define and shape the public realm.
- *Administration*. A clearly defined application and project review process.
- *Definitions*. A glossary to ensure the precise use of technical terms.

Form-based codes also sometimes include:

- *Architectural Standards*. Regulations controlling external architectural materials and quality.
- *Landscaping Standards*. Regulations controlling landscape design and plant materials on private property as they impact public spaces (e.g. regulations about parking lot screening and shading, maintaining sight lines, insuring unobstructed pedestrian movements, etc.).
- *Signage Standards*. Regulations controlling allowable signage sizes, materials, illumination, and placement.
- *Environmental Resource Standards*. Regulations controlling issues such as storm water drainage and infiltration, development on slopes, tree protection, solar access, etc.

Eight Advantages to Form-Based Codes

1. Because they are prescriptive (they state what you want), rather than proscriptive (what you don't want), form-based codes (FBCs) can achieve a more predictable physical result. The elements controlled by FBCs are those that are most important to the shaping of a high quality built environment.
2. FBCs encourage public participation because they allow citizens to see what will happen where-leading to a higher comfort level about greater density, for instance.
3. Because they can regulate development at the scale of an individual building or lot, FBCs encourage independent development by multiple property owners. This obviates the need for large land assemblies and the megaprojects that are frequently proposed for such parcels.
4. The built results of FBCs often reflect a diversity of architecture, materials, uses, and ownership that can only come from the actions of many independent players operating within a communally agreed-upon vision and legal framework.
5. FBCs work well in established communities because they effectively define and codify a neighborhood's existing "DNA." Vernacular building types can be easily replicated, promoting infill that is compatible with surrounding structures.
6. Non-professionals find FBCs easier to use than conventional zoning documents because they are much shorter, more concise, and organized for visual access and readability. This feature makes it easier for nonplanners to determine whether compliance has been achieved.
7. FBCs obviate the need for design guidelines, which are difficult to apply consistently, offer too much room for subjective interpretation, and can be difficult to enforce. They also require less oversight by discretionary review bodies, fostering a less politicized planning process that could deliver huge savings in time and money and reduce the risk of takings challenges.
8. FBCs may prove to be more enforceable than design guidelines. The stated purpose of FBCs is the shaping of a high quality public realm, a presumed public good that promotes healthy civic interaction. For that reason compliance with the codes can be enforced, not on the basis of aesthetics but because a failure to comply would diminish the good that is sought. While enforceability of development regulations has not been a problem in new growth areas controlled by private covenants, such matters can be problematic in already-urbanized areas due to legal conflicts with first amendment rights.

~ Peter Katz, President, Form-Based Codes Institute