

Sammamish  
Park (PAA)

# Central Issaquah Subarea Plan

## Workshop #1

### Discussion Results

July 30, 2007

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The first Central Issaquah Subarea Plan Workshop was held Monday, July 30, 2007 at the Pickering Barn. Approximately 125 people, including members of the City Council and various Boards and Commissions, attended and participated in small group discussions about the future of the Central Issaquah area.

The purpose of the Workshop was to confirm the proposed Guiding Principles: Environment, Housing, Urban Design, Economic Development, Transportation and Innovation and to begin prioritizing subarea needs. Discussion topics included Pedestrian Orientation, Heights and Views, Transportation, Parks and Open Space, Housing, Economic Vitality and Sky is the Limit. Groups addressed other issues as well that fall under Miscellaneous. This document contains the high points of discussions from each group and is divided up into discussion topics.

This is the first of several workshops that will span the Central Issaquah Subarea planning process. We appreciate the input of all who attended and those who will contribute over the next two years.

## Table of Contents

<b>Pedestrian Orientation</b> .....	<b>1</b>
Pedestrian Orientation General .....	1
Mixed Use .....	1
<b>Heights and Views</b> .....	<b>2</b>
Heights and Views General.....	2
Height .....	2
Views .....	2
<b>Transportation</b> .....	<b>3</b>
Transportation General .....	3
Roadways.....	3
Transit.....	4
Nonmotorized .....	4
Nonmotorized General.....	4
Bicycles/Bicycle Lanes.....	5
Walkers/Sidewalks .....	5
<b>Parks and Open Space</b> .....	<b>5</b>
Parks and Open Space General.....	5
Parks .....	6
Open Space/Trails .....	7
<b>Housing</b> .....	<b>7</b>
Housing General .....	7
Housing in Mixed Use Developments.....	7
Affordable Housing.....	8
<b>Economic Vitality</b> .....	<b>8</b>
Economic Vitality General.....	8
Uses.....	9
Businesses .....	9
<b>Sky is the Limit</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>Added Table Discussions</b> .....	<b>10</b>
Miscellaneous .....	10
Parking .....	10
Subarea Divisions .....	10
Density.....	11
Urban Design.....	11

## Discussion Results

### Pedestrian Orientation

#### Pedestrian Orientation General

- Design guidelines for site and building for connections
- Small scale shops – neighborhood scale
- Culture, environment, character are important. Retain while accommodating growth. Keep small town feel.
- Link Front Street to Central Subarea – continue the “theme” of pedestrian oriented, pedestrian scale, interesting store fronts, sidewalk activities
- Weekends at Kirkland are ‘visitors’ for destination – there is lots to do and lots to see and always interesting ‘finds’ along the walkways
- Bellevue’s ‘destination’ is the walking corridor through Meydenbauer Park – used by workers, residents, shoppers and visitors
- Services and “needs” of residents close by – this is the secret of Kirkland’s success

#### Mixed Use

- Promote mixed use
- Encourage mixed use to the point of demanding it. Very important for transportation - mixed use a requirement go higher.
- Continue to allow mixed use, but do not force or mandate mixed use. Let the market decide.
- Zoning needs to be able to allow for broader variety of uses
- Mixed use (30% commercial or less) should be for local residents who live close to development (no major grocery, etc.)
- Mixed use should reduce traffic trips
- Mixed use is good for area – building height it too low – needs to be “reasonable” height (couldn’t agree on a number) for the specific use – residential is a different height than office, different again than retail – different “districts” should have different heights – “Financial District” of banks and real estate offices would have different height than a “Cultural District” Heights cannot detract from view corridors --- How best to put the uses together? Underground parking is impossible in certain soils, so structured parking is needed – need to mix cultures and uses and activities and all other and provide walking paths between uses – remember that we want people to be carrying packages, too.
- Mixed use needs parking for residential and the uses should have separate office and residential: Entrances, elevators however they can share the same parking – for example, office workers don’t want to share an entrance or an elevator with residents coming in from the beach or with groceries etc – keep them separate
- Increased height of buildings to combine retail, hotel and condo

## Heights and Views

### Heights and Views General

- Building height should be based on what is necessary to be economically viable (wedding cake does not work)
- Consider Bellevue as an example. Density and heights in downtown have addressed growth needs and preserved neighborhoods.
- Consider Trip generations and the need for sufficient parking when increasing heights (and therefore densities)
- Consider Retirement home (senior housing) locations so that they are closer to walking distance from doctors etc.. (bad example on hillside where there is no place to even walk)

### Height

- Height limits in view corridors
- How do you protect one without destroying the other (views and corridors)? Do taller and skinnier to protect views.
- Allowing taller, narrow buildings as a means to preserve views should be studied.
- Identify areas where appropriate for more height
- Height and density near transit center
- More height allowed in some areas with views preserved in others
- Height – no more or where to put?
- Noise from I-90 – can buildings block the noise?
- Vancouver – height but open space
- Incentives are important to get height
- 6 stories is a reasonable height for area buildings. Current zoning seems to be correct on height.
- Six story height limits – limit the larger buildings (disperse them) to maintain views. “We like our forested views”. Four story may be more appropriate.
- Height might ruin character of Issaquah
- 6-story building feels too high
- 3 or 4 stories should be the tallest buildings allowed.
- NW/East Newport not more than 4 story with reasonable density
- Go up not out with development to save & protect public open space

### Views

- View protection is important. The new plan should address key view corridors to protect views in the future.
- Identify/protect view corridors (Mt. Rainier, Issaquah Alps)
- Panoramic views around city to identify important
- Identify view corridors
- Redevelopment wouldn't block views from neighborhoods on hills
- Not too high – gateway / Mts. To Sound Greenway

## Transportation

### Transportation General

- This subarea should have bus loops and be more pedestrian friendly – like Front street has become an Art center and has more cultural attractions, sidewalk interest, tables outside for lunch & dinners – the Subarea needs these too, plus more bus loops, and more frequency since the area is bigger – also more advertising and marketing –
- Don't prohibit cars – no “busses only” areas as then no one will come (or want to live) in Issaquah
- Residents and workers need help to get out of our cars – lunch breaks are spent in our cars driving from one side of town to the other side – “Let the area make sense” is needed
- City to promote other single occupancy vehicle options – smart cars, electric cars, Commute Trip Reduction employers to do the designate stalls
- More ways to cross I-90
- Bridges over I-90

### Roadways

- Front St/I-90 exit should be reconfigured
- Lack of connections across I-90
- I-90 undercrossing important connector
- It will be good to have the new I-90 crossing, but even more are needed. Look for additional opportunities.
- Crossing I-90 is a challenge all around: cars, bicycling, walking. Consider new crossings, including non-motorized only crossings.
- Newport is planned for four lanes and a turning lane – how is this going to work – make it good
- The City has helped improve circulation for cars in the area, through road projects and the ITS signal system. There is still room for further improvement.
- Some of the traffic signals seem to cause undue waiting times for cars. Consider shorter cycles for the traffic signals.
- Issaquah should try stop light cameras to discourage people racing yellow lights and running red lights. Issaquah has a lot of aggressive drivers.
- Look at high traffic accident locations when developing the plan. Consider how to make these areas safer.
- Traffic Flow on Gilman Blvd.
- Limit Car traffic without damaging businesses – reduce volume Gilman & SR 900
- Close off the little side streets to Gilman Blvd. (i.e.: Juniper)
- Eliminate crossings without lights
- Roundabouts – add them
- “Say no to cul de sacs.”

## **Transit**

- No P&R at south end of town Issaquah/Hobart Road
- Transit only lanes
- Growth should take into account collater (?) effect. Effect of density should be planned prior to the project.
- Increase local shuttle service inside city limits
- Better Metro connections between Issaquah and Redmond, Bellevue, and regional more frequency
- Better bus service – particularly to large employers
- Covered bus stops
- Do what we can to influence light rail
- Electric, commuter buses with bus lanes (San Diego is a prototype)
- Improve transit, light rail on I-90, multimodal plan for capacity, expand 200 and hours of operation
- Do density close to transit center; closer to transit center is more density
- Use 200 to make sure all of access to transit center – no matter where density is, even in residential areas on the hillsides
- Area needs to use Metro system more efficiency and effectively – many residents do not know about the Free Bee Route 200
- Expand the shuttle
- More transit service is needed to connect into neighborhoods. More people would use transit with better connections.
- Be able to take a local bus from Highlands and other residential hillsides to the valley retail and services – no one is going to walk or bike “up” the hills with packages
- Airport-like “Tram” or “People Mover” would be great addition to City to get folks to & from the neighborhoods on the hillsides into the retail valley
- Have a Tram from Squak, Talus and Highlands to downtown and park and ride.
- Encourage partnerships between the School District and Metro to shift older students to public transit rather than school buses.
- Expand busses so that kids can ride – we want to train kids to be comfortable riding a bus, get used to schedules, maps, etc.

## **Nonmotorized**

### **Nonmotorized General**

- When properties begin to redevelop there should be pedestrian corridors that they need to dedicate.
- Biking and walking should be a focus in the plan.
- Easy connections for all non-motorized (across Gilman, Newport, shopping center to center)
- More pedestrian and bike corridors and safety issues
- Safety for pedestrians/biking
- Trailhead City – better connections

- Pedestrian overcrossing – would it be worth the money? Just use the I-90 undercrossing trail.
- SR 900 / Big Commercial Developments – internal pedestrian circulation needed.
- Need safe corridors to get from night activities like movies (north of I-90) to restaurants (south of I-90) also safe corridor for daytime activities from State Park (north) to residential areas (south of I-90) well lit and safe for all – places to rest and make the walkways “inviting”
- Various modes of transportation
- Aging population needs bus circulation and ease in pedestrian circulation

### Bicycles/Bicycle Lanes

- SR-900: no safe bike from Renton to Issaquah
- Bike racks!
- Need to carry bike and pedestrian paths throughout subarea and into adjacent areas
- When looking at bicycle needs, remember that commuters and recreational cyclists have different needs. The area should have both on-street lanes and separate paths or trails.
- Focus on routes to schools for bicycle improvements. More kids would bike to school with improved facilities.
- Look at European models for Issaquah in the new plan. Many creative bicycle facilities can be found there.
- Current bicycle facilities seem to have light use. Bicycling should be part of the transportation solution, but it is only a limited part. It is as much recreation as transportation.
- Bike lanes everywhere!!!! If you build it they will come.

### Walkers/Sidewalks

- Better sidewalk connections, especially along Newport Way and other major roads
- Sidewalk connections – underserved particularly at certain time of the day
- Sidewalks on Newport Way NW, and other residential “unsafe” roads
- Walking
- Pedestrian streets
- A pedestrian bridge is needed across SR-900. Signal cycle times make it difficult to cross at average walking pace.
- Better pedestrian access and safer bike trails.
- Better Pedestrian access on all roads and subdivision.
- Once people see other walkers, they will walk too – we need weather protection too, so we can walk in our rainy months

## Parks and Open Space

### Parks and Open Space General

- Better education of Issaquah’s marketing – trails, parks, open space
- Retain as many trees as possible in developed areas

- Need to incorporate natural environment into the built environment
- More parks and open space are needed in the subarea. Linear park – peds & bikes
- Implement pedestrian easement along Issaquah Creek from Gilman South.
- Jogging type tracks around the perimeter of parks and within the parks.
- Love separated paths
- Preserve wetlands near here.
- Keep our Trees
- I-90 looking east (after Eastgate) to Green Hillside of Tiger & Squak is a great feeling of “coming home” peaceful green setting – view of Lake Sammamish and View of Mt Rainier (along Lake Sammamish Parkway) is amazing – we need to keep this for always
- Link existing parks together with trails, paths, and greenways.

### **Parks**

- Improve parks – More Parks – water features in Parks
- Parks close to housing
- Neighborhood parks as part of housing/transit center
- Scattered small parks and linear parks very important
- Don't want a mini Central Park around Lake Sammamish
- Where will children play with high density development – little pocket parks
- Pocket parks are needed in the area. Plazas are also needed. Think about opportunities for both public spaces and private spaces.
- Pocket parks should be the focus in the plan.
- Make pocket parks pedestrian connected to creek park/trails
- Area needs more small parks. The large parks are already in place.
- Community pea patches/dog park
- Recreation should include opportunities during bad weather. Consider synthetic playing fields.
- Need a large central park/pedestrian mall (like D.C.)
- Have an Urban/Central park (like Bellevue)
- A large, central park is not needed in the plan area because the State Park and Tibbetts Park are close by and Darst Park is near the center of the plan area already. The Community Center green also seems to serve this role for the entire city for large gatherings.
- Promote pedestrian promenades
- Need parks of all sizes
- Parks are good – but we do recognize they can be expensive and makes it expensive to live here.
- Clean up Lake Sammamish Park – get rid of “gangster” types and neglect and bring back feeling of safety and families
- Linear park along creek
- Fields of turf so they can be used all year

## **Open Space/Trails**

- Trails provide interconnection from residential areas to commercial
- Emphasize new trails that encourage people to walk
- LID – infiltration! No harm to aquifer or creek.
- Maintain wetland buffers
- Don't forget about wildlife and habitat needs in the plan. This is part of what makes Issaquah special.
- "We love our trails"
- Go up not out with development to save & protect public open space

## **Housing**

### **Housing General**

- Transit capacity essential
- Height bonuses for housing/mixed use
- Focus on providing amenities that enhance quality of life. These are the things that will attract residential demand in the area.
- Keep in mind the needs of families in housing. Higher density housing usually not family friendly.
- Area seems to have few single people or seniors. Attempt to provide a variety of housing.
- Housing should include expanded options for a full range of needs.
- Housing is a challenge. Multi-family developments typically house fewer kids and newer condos have even fewer due to high costs. Consider working class family needs.
- What is the "attraction" of Central Issaquah – why would anyone want to live there? It needs to be accessible for old and young, and have places to sit and rest, and be connected with other great attractions – there is no place in the subarea where one would want to live now
- Need more for 30 year old age group to find attractive for their home – culture, entertainment, restaurants, activities – "singles" activities like cool shopping, cool art, cool activities == being more "chi chi" and hip
- Make a place where people can live and be surrounded by services and cultural activities and attractions and have mobility options for young and old

### **Housing in Mixed Use Developments**

- Mixed use – some required for neighborhood scale
- Mixed uses that are gathering places – services
- The Commons would be a good area to consider for future mixed use and housing.
- Focus on a mix of all housing, not just "affordable" housing
- Integrate residential into commercial areas
- Mixed use – condo home and business owner in same building. Good concept but..... does it work?

## **Affordable Housing**

- Mixed use could assist affordable housing
- Affordable housing – perpetuity
- Affordable housing is important. Diversity is important.
- Gilman Gulch and Juniper should continue to be housing areas.
- Affordable housing is best addressed by non-profit agencies rather than developers. The YMCA and YWCA are examples of groups that have produced results.
- Incentives would help developers provide more affordable housing. Look at permits and fees that can affect development costs.
- Affordable housing can not exist on its own. It must be supported by key services. Encourage a human services campus to support affordable housing.
- Too early to know about housing. Affordable housing options will depend on the location.
- Affordable Housing is needed
- More opportunity for affordable if you have the space in the structure

## **Economic Vitality**

### **Economic Vitality General**

- Economic engine shifting to the north part of the city not a good thing.
- Destinations (places of interest, City square)/amenities (cafes, gathering places)
- Encourage tourism
- Multiple sources of vitality
- Subarea to become commercial center but maintain old town area
- Development / redevelopment decisions are market driven. Keep a market based focus.
- Issaquah is an attractive market place. Focus on attracting a variety of new, quality businesses that can serve the community.
- Developers will respond to a compelling vision in the plan. Avoid excessive regulation.
- The area already has a mix of styles and densities, keep flexibility for the market in the future.
- Redevelopment is a key for the plan and should be supported.
- Look at potential to increase tourism and incorporate tourist perspective in plan. Issaquah is the urban edge and has unique qualities/location. Maximize this potential.
- Gilman Village – has empty stores – no longer does bus tours - what went wrong
- Gilman Village – struggling/needs to be energized – the surrounding neighborhood (to the south) needs to re-develop to be linked somehow to Gilman Village so they seem like the same neighborhood – and serve each other – the pedestrian scale and parking “outside” the inner ped scale of Gilman Village works well, but they need the energy of the neighborhood to the south
- Residential areas by Gilman Village need to redevelop and stay affordable (work force housing) and become an area to be proud of, instead of worn down
- Make Issaquah a more special place that attracts people to its center
- Be vibrant

## Uses

- Day care
- Provide a variety of uses with the area to attract a wide variety of age groups at various times of day
- Should zoning allow more heavy industry? Could be good mix to include a light industrial park.
- Encourage/recruit more quality, higher-end restaurants to attract professional workers for lunch and after work functions. Look at the proximity of restaurants to offices. Restaurants need a strong lunch business to succeed.
- Subarea needs places for live bands and entertainment – places where live music sounds good – good acoustics – outdoor venue for live bands – different than the community center’s Concerts on the Green – more blues & jazz – like the winery concerts
- A winery (or two or three) would be a great addition to the subarea
- Keep AtWork a viable part of the subarea – work force training for special populations
- Auto dealers/Auto shops are not pedestrian friendly on Gilman blvd – these should not be encouraged in a ped oriented area
- Create a Native Plant Nursery at AtWork as part of the Green City – provide jobs, training for special population, and AtWork can ‘harvest’ native plants from pre-construction sites and then provide them to the newly built projects

## Businesses

- Jobs – keep jobs = offices – family wage jobs; mixed use should include jobs, not just services
- Concern about security with mixed uses
- Impact on small business with new development: increase in foot traffic, visibility, advertise area as destination/services
- Displacement of businesses during redevelopment
- Voice for small business – both private and government
- Create environmental/support for small businesses
- Need to work with banking community to ensure developers can integrate innovative ideas into the development
- Support small business
- Simplify permit process for small business
- Consider small business needs in the plan and do not focus just on large scale development.
- Economics drive lease rates and availability of commercial space. Look at permit fees and other development costs if seeking to retain affordability for small businesses.
- The Mercantile Building and Gilman Village seem to serve start-up and small businesses. Not sure an incubator is needed.

## Sky is the Limit

- LID over I-90 or raise I-90
- 2 different subareas – north and south of I-90

## Added Table Discussions

### Urban Design

- Costco – good example of corporate headquarters
- Costco is an example of a large employer that could have more outdoor amenities for its employees.
- Costco Headquarters workers walk daily to Tullys for coffee since the ped route is interesting and safe and green – the route is well done and used a lot
- Issaquah grew too fast in the past and as a result lost much of its character.
- Issaquah grew too fast in the last 10 to 20 years. The new plan should help better define the area and enhance unique qualities.
- Make an effort to avoid chain stores and restaurants. Everything ends up the same as any other place.
- Avoid cookie-cutter designs. Chain stores always look the same. Develop local character.
- This is a very large area. Build on existing qualities and create smaller, defined areas with unique character.
- London, though a very large city, should be considered for design lessons. Each area of the city has a distinctive character.
- Make an effort to help the area change from one story strip malls. Encourage different styles in the future.
- Look at area as a location to bring people together and create gathering places.
- Think about public spaces where people can be social or rest near work sites. These can help build a sense of community.
- The area near the Chamber of Commerce building has potential for a gathering place or mini park. If the trolley is completed, this location would benefit and become more of a destination.
- Put an emphasis on public art. These amenities help make the area more attractive.
- Better lighting
- Capture “powerful” points like lake/residents/activities and link them in a BIG, Visible, GREEN way
- Issaquah has great sign code – keep I-90 view as green hillsides and not big Eastgate/Factoria signs
- Design for people

### Density

- Density should be well planned. Planning where commercial space is provides best leverages around it.
- We can plan to have more density and preserve our natural beauty.
- Density – A question came up on, “could we reduce some density” – our State requirement is met. Table is neutral on this. Tended towards less.

### Subarea Divisions

- Subarea can be broken down into smaller areas that reflect different styles and levels of development

- Need to develop models for the various areas
- Develop a vision for each area
- Where should growth be?
- Develop and market different zones or neighborhoods within the plan area. Develop variety within the area.
- Do not treat the area in a one-size-fits-all manner. Create districts within the plan area and develop unique qualities in each one.
- Where is the THERE in the Central area?
- Define the Center of Issaquah

### **Parking**

- Be cautious about parking requirements for residential in the area. Most households have at least one car per person. One space per unit is not enough.
- Include careful study of parking issues in the plan. There is a lot of free parking now, but the parking lots could be developed with creative solutions. Consider things like centrally located parking structures.
- Parking is important to retailers
- Kirkland has figured out available parking and retail balance (Redmond has not figured out the balance)

### **Miscellaneous**

- Ask the City Council to check with Kirkland and Redmond and other communities (before adopting a new plan) to find out, “What went wrong” and “What went right” with their redevelopments so Issaquah doesn’t need to reinvent the wheel.
- Embrace where we are going and do it or not and miss the opportunity
- Multi-dimensional
- Develop incentives to get multiple property owners to work together
- Guiding principles are all related. It’s hard to deal with just one.
- Issaquah character
- Downtown Issaquah is the valley floor
- We don’t want to become a Bellevue or Factoria – very tall buildings, more congestion (no consensus)
- We all agree there will be growth
- What are we afraid of?
- Preserve values and why we all chose to live here.
- Provisions for cultural diversity
- Don’t make same mistakes as Issaquah Highlands
- Relationship to downtown
- Future Meetings: Need pictures and plans to demonstrate what area looks like and potential areas for redevelopment. Pictures to show styles of development that can occur. Identify good and bad; creation of defensible space.
- Squak Mountain is a good neighborhood that will connect with plan area. Look at connections outside the plan area.

- Take steps to retain any historic facades that may still be present. Incorporate them into any new developments.
- Access to the library downtown is difficult when making a left turn off Sunset. This is outside the plan area, but please look at this issue.
- Emphasize Issaquah as a gateway to urban Puget Sound to the west and as a gateway to nature and recreation to the east.
- Do more LEED
- Focus: Create Green City: Mt Rainier View; Green Buildings; LEED Buildings; Open space and natural areas; Green Ped corridors; Green View corridors – mountains – lakes; Honor history – these are all the images that best capture the essence of Issaquah
- Speaking of Factoria, also keep Issaquah's Tiger and Squak Mt as wooded hillsides – and try to keep as much green hillsides as possible – plant more trees and install landscaping in Highlands to buffer the urban view