

DATE: February 3rd, 2023

TO: Chair Ledell and Planning Commission members

FROM: Becky Coutinho, Associate Planner and Bryan Snodgrass, Principal Planner
Community Development Department

CC: Rebecca Kennedy, Deputy Director, Community Development Department

RE: February 14 workshop review of Evergreen and Grand Commercial Corridors Strategy
Implementation

Introduction

The February 14 workshop is intended to update the Planning Commission on the status of the Evergreen and Grand commercial corridors implementation process. This memorandum includes a recap of the associated Strategy Document adopted in 2022, and recent and upcoming work intended to result in zoning code changes and various other implementation measures in 2023.

Strategy Document

The Evergreen and Grand Commercial Corridors Strategy document (see Attachment A below) was adopted by City Council on February 28, 2022, intended to guide future zoning code text changes and other land use, community development and transportation implementation.

Both Planning Commission and City Council reviewed the document through a combined nine workshops and four public hearings. Community outreach occurred through one in-person and four virtual community meetings, direct communications with individual stakeholders, the project website, and surveys and communication through the City of Vancouver Be Heard page. The process began in early 2020 and lasted until late 2021.

Within the corridors, the Strategy includes three different character areas – a Main Street Commercial Mixed-Use Corridor, a Residential Mixed-Use Corridor, and a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Hub. Within these areas the proposed regulatory changes would include allowances for ground floor commercial uses, building height limitations, minimum off-street parking requirements, and requirements for building to achieve an ‘active edge’ at the ground floor. Specifically, the current standard requiring first floor non-residential uses is recommended to be maintained along Grand Boulevard, with

additional flexibility recommended along Evergreen Boulevard and the BRT hub. The current 50 foot maximum is proposed to be modulated, with increased heights up to five stories allowed on the west side of the BRT hub, four stories allowed on most of Grand and Evergreen Boulevards, and a three-story limit on other portions of Evergreen. For parking, one space is proposed to be required per 1,000 feet of commercial floor area. No minimum is proposed for ground floor retail in mixed-use buildings. One space is proposed per residential dwelling unit. To create active edge along the development, it is recommended to require a maximum front setback of 0-5 feet at the ground floor only regardless of building height, as well as establishing front door access and minimum ground floor transparency requirements for both commercial and residential uses.

In addition to land use regulations, there are several additional regulatory and programmatic recommendations in the Strategy. Some of these include adopting standards that support activating vacant and underutilized spaces, developing design guidelines bolstering local identity and street activation that considers development affordability, and encouraging streetscape improvements in all redevelopment projects. The Strategy recommended and an effort is currently underway to extend the City’s Multi-Family Tax Exemption (MFTE) program to this area, calibrated to implement the vision and goals for the corridors and add workforce housing. The Strategy recommends other longer-term non-regulatory programmatic investments, including the creation of a business district organization to support art, events, and other placemaking activities.

Implementation Work

Following the adoption of the Strategy, City Staff completed a competitive request for proposal process to secure a consultant to aid in the work of creating development regulations and additional implementation measures. Cascadia Partners, a full-service urban planning, real estate, environmental sustainability, and public engagement consulting firm was chosen. The consultant began work in October 2022 and will be part of the presentation at the February 14 workshop.

Cascadia Partners thus far has provided analysis of existing corridor conditions, completed an inventory collecting site specific information, summarized the code concepts, and provided updated recommendations that are supported by a preliminary pro forma analysis. A consultant memo and pro-forma analysis is included in the workshop materials.

Staff and the consultants have identified adjustments to some of the specific provisions of the Strategy Document, listed below. Pending worksession discussion, we envision engaging property owners and the community about these in the coming months. These include:

	Current Development Code	2022 Strategy Document	Proposed New Code
Maximum Building Height	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 50-feet throughout, typically 4 stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3-5 stories, varying by parcel	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 4 stories along Evergreen and west Grand, 5 stories at Mill Plain/Grand transit node.

<p>Building Bulk and Massing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Silent beyond height limits and setbacks. Commercial abutting lower density residential requires 10-foot setback • Upper portions need ½ foot setback for each foot of building height above 20 feet. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No standard directly proposed to address the development form beyond active edge requirements, maximum front setback of 0-5 feet at the ground floor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum height step down only on rear face within 25 feet of a residentially zoned site • Maximum building width, with breaks within the building
<p>Required Ground Floor Commercial</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least half of frontage along arterial/collector streets must be commercial or office 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More flexibility along Evergreen, keep existing requirement on Grand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow for either ground floor commercial or residential along Evergreen. Require ground floor commercial along Grand
<p>Required Minimum Off-Street Parking Spaces</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0.75 per multi-family unit near frequent transit such as Evergreen and Grand • 1/300sf for goods and services, 1/250sf for eating and drinking, 1/400sf office 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zero for ground floor retail • 1/1000sf for commercial uses • 1 per unit for residential 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0.5 per multi-family unit • 1/1000sf commercial, zero for ground floor retail

More details including graphics and the pro-forma economic analyses used to support the above are contained in the Cascadia Partners memorandum, and the presentation for the February 14 workshop.

Project Next Steps

Following this Planning Commission workshop will be public outreach including open houses meetings with the general public and key stakeholders including business owners along the corridors. Once community input is gathered, staff will return to Planning Commission for another Workshop in April provide the community feedback and project status updates. Staff then then have two City Council Workshops in May and July, with additional public outreach occurring in June. The Planning Commission Public Hearing is scheduled for July 25th and the City Council Public hearing is scheduled for August 21st.

In addition to the development code changes being proposed, project staff will also be reviewing programmatic recommendations to implement other policy goals identified in the Strategy document including:

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- Create a neighborhood business association to advocate for existing business needs
- Create a business district to support art, events, and other placemaking
- Extend the Multi-Family Tax Exemption (MFTE) program calibrated to implement the vision and goals for the corridors and add workforce housing
- Attract and retain neighborhood-serving businesses
- Establish a storefront improvement program to support existing businesses
- Establish a signage and placemaking program along Grand Boulevard and in the BRT Hub
- Identify opportunities to support houseless communities and promote community safety
- Explore strategies to maintain economic diversity and housing affordability, especially for low- and moderate-income households
- Consider height bonuses in exchange for attainably priced workforce housing units
- Improve connectivity to nearby destinations such as downtown Vancouver, the Fort Vancouver National Historic Site, and the Pearson Field Airport as an economic development strategy.
- Create a cohesive, walkable, and safe multimodal environment providing access to and through the study area, increase signage to improve user safety and comfort, traffic calming and streetscape improvements, and explore Transportation Demand Management strategies in the study area to support safe and easy use of multiple modes.
- Design transportation infrastructure and streetscape improvements to facilitate multi-modal access to transit and promote accessibility for people of all abilities around the future BRT station platforms.
- Streetscape improvements including widened sidewalks to 12-15 feet to accommodate retail, pedestrian, landscaping, and street furnishing zones.
- Support roadway improvements to Grand Boulevard south to 5th Street, including an enhanced pedestrian crossing at 6th Street to support access to the School for the Deaf, reduced speed limits and traffic calming measures.
- Leverage environmental remediation funding opportunities as an incentive to develop eligible sites

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Attachment(s):

- A. Evergreen and Grand Commercial Corridors Strategy
- B. Cascadia Partners Memo
- C. Cascadia Partners Pro Forma Feasibility Analysis