

Memorandum

Date: May 1, 2014

To: Chris Jordan, City Manager

From: Chris Kerr, Community Development Director

Subject: CDC-13-01 – Economic Development Regulatory Streamlining Project (CDC 13-01)

Purpose

On May 12, 2014, the Council will be holding a public hearing on Comprehensive Plan and CDC amendments related to the Economic Development Regulatory Streamlining Project. The public hearing draft being considered by the Council is found in Exhibit “A”. The purpose of the proposed amendments is to modify our codes and processes to remove inefficient and unnecessary regulatory barriers to businesses and developers, and to create greater opportunities for positive economic development in the City. Final adoption of these amendments is a City Council priority for this year.

Background

On April 1, 2013, at a joint worksession between the City Council and Planning Commission, the following purpose statement for the project was approved:

In support of the City Council’s goal of promoting economic development and business activity in the City, this project will review and modify our existing codes and processes to;

- (1) Remove ineffectual and redundant regulatory and procedural practices that act as barriers to economic development and businesses; and*
- (2) Incorporate best practices to streamline and provide incentives for future economic development activity in the City.*

Since the project “kick-off” in April of 2013, Staff worked with the Economic Development Committee to solicit input for the project (then labeled “Cut the Red Tape”), specifically targeting feedback from existing businesses, those who have had experience developing in the City, Planning Commissioners and the Chamber of Commerce. Prior to drafting any of the code amendments, staff held meetings with professional organizations and completed an internal interdepartmental review of our current City practices to identify areas that could be reformed and improved. Additionally, working through the EDC, an extensive community outreach effort was completed that included:

- One-on-one interviews with business operators, potential private developers and investors;
- Survey hosted online on the City’s web site (over 60 respondents);
- Email to every licensed business in the City requesting feedback;
- Standard press release to all media outlets;
- Headlined in the West Linn Update mailer (over 9,000 households)
- Postcards distributed in person and in bulk throughout the community (over 250 dispersed)

- Inclusion in individual Councilor e-blasts
- Individual Tidings article focused exclusively on the project; as well as numerous other 'mentions' about the project in other articles in the Tidings;
- Promotion on the City's main web page and constant presence on the City's Economic Development web page;
- Multiple promotions utilizing the City's social media catalog, including e-newsletter (5,600 recipients); Facebook (2,300 friends), Twitter (521 followers) and the LinkedIn group "West Linn Business Exchange";

With this input, and after holding six public meetings on the topic, the EDC recommended approval of a list of amendments that they forwarded to the Council (Exhibit "B"). In July, after receiving additional feedback from the Planning Commission on the list, the Council authorized Staff to proceed with drafting specific code amendments for their consideration.

Since the project began last spring, over 20 advertised public meetings have been held to discuss these amendments. These included 12 Planning Commission meetings, 6 EDC meetings, 4 City Council meetings, and two neighborhood association meetings.

Discussion

Although the individual amendments are discussed in detail in Exhibit "A", below are some examples of how some of the amendments proposed in this package which would have a direct and immediate positive impact on economic development in West Linn:

- Encouraging desirable public improvements (e.g. bike racks, sidewalks);
- Making variance criteria more objective and defensible;
- Providing greater flexibility in building design and lot layout;
- Providing for a variance category to address minor deviations/issues (signs, landscaping);
- Creating a new "special waiver" opportunity for commercial sites to provide for more creative design;
- Increasing predictability and lowering costs to the City for appeals of land use cases;
- Removing numerous unnecessary/redundant submittal requirements;
- Encouraging shared parking, where appropriate;
- Permitting use of on-street parking when it is available;
- Providing for simpler process to address minor modifications to CUP's;
- Modifications to design review criteria to provide more clarity and predictability;
- Modifying use tables to encourage desirable, compatible uses (e.g. hotels); and,
- Encouraging A-frame signs in pedestrian commercial districts.

Since receiving the Planning Commission's recommendation (Exhibit "C"), the City Council held a series of worksessions to determine which items to include in the final public hearing draft being reviewed (Exhibit "A"). The Council removed several proposed items from the July 10 list of items from consideration at this time (e.g. tree protection, conditional use criteria etc.), but no new items have been introduced to this amendment package.

During their worksession discussions, the Council identified three areas in particular that they wanted to discuss in detail at the public hearing; these were:

1. De novo vs. on-the-record appeals;
2. Requiring trails over 200 feet to require Class II Design Review (PC review);
3. Consideration of a potential additional 50' buffer on commercial properties adjacent to residential uses;

Options:

After accepting testimony at the public hearing, the Council may:

1. Direct Staff to prepare an Ordinance for adoption on the amendments either as proposed or with minor modifications;
2. Keep the record open to accept more public testimony on the amendments;
3. Identify alternative code language for consideration at a later date; or
4. Give staff alternative direction as desired.

Recommendation: Option 1.

Exhibits:

- A. May 12 City Council Public Hearing Draft
- B. EDC recommendation: Amendments for consideration – July 10
- C. July 26 Staff Report to the Planning Commission
- D. Planning Commission recommendation
- E. Public Testimony received
- F. Public Outreach summary (prior to August 2013)
- G. Approved minutes EDC / Planning Commission