

Council Business Meeting

October 15, 2019

Agenda Item	Initiation of an Ordinance Amendment Relating to Plaza and Public Space Standards	
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SUMMARY

Before Council is a request to direct staff and the Planning Commission to evaluate and propose amendments to the Ashland Land Use Ordinance addressing the applicability of the public space (plaza) requirement for large scale building projects within the Downtown Design Standards overlay area.

POLICIES, PLANS & GOALS SUPPORTED

Council Goals and Priorities 2019; Value Services Tier 2 Moderate Priority – Economic Development

PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION

The City Council has not previously reviewed this item.

BACKGROUND AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

All properties in the City of Ashland have zoning designation that sets parameters for allowed uses and limits on building height, lot coverage and buildable floor area, among other provisions. Additionally, the Ashland Land Use Ordinance contains several special districts and overlay zones which further regulate development within specific geographic areas. For example, a property can be located within the C-1-D base zone (Commercial-Downtown), but also be located within a designated Historic District, and be subject to the Downtown Design Standards and Detail Site Review overlays. Design standards applied throughout these overlays ensure that future developments are compatible with the neighborhood and enhance the character of the area.

Recently the Planning Commission and staff were approached by a local property owner who suggested that the requirements for plaza public space in the Detail Site Review (DSR) overlay functioned to discourage new multi-story development within the downtown. Within the Detail Site Review overlay public spaces (plazas) are to be incorporated into developments that include a building square footage of greater than 10,000 sq. ft. This required plaza space is to be equal to 10% of the building's total gross floor area.

The origin of plaza space standards dates back to the early 1990's due in part to an increasing amount of concern over a desire to construct larger buildings. As the historic scale of buildings was, and remains, a key element that defines community character, there was concern that large buildings could potentially undermine Ashland's charm. Two prominent individuals in the community at the time, Allan Drescher and James Ragland approached the City Council requesting that Council direct planning staff to address building size by placing a limit on the size of buildings that could be constructed. The Mayor and council formed an ad-hoc committee - Large Scale Development Committee. Out of that committee came a 3-tiered approach to address large buildings, Basic Site Design, Detail Site Design and Large-Scale development standards for buildings of 10,000sq.ft. in gross floor area. Much of the committee's discussion centered around larger commercial projects, such as the Tolman Creek shopping center. The plaza space requirements were generally correlated with much larger single-story developments, intended to provide usable outdoor space for patrons and employees but also serving to break up the mass and mitigate the scale of larger

structures. In recent years, in part due to changes in market conditions, three story developments on small parcels have become economically viable and have led to several land use application approvals where buildings exceed 10,000 sq. ft. and are subject to the public space requirements.

The Planning Commission discussed the issue at a study session ([August 26, 2019](#)) and expressed that further discussion was merited including potential ordinance changes to address how the plaza requirement should be refined to reflect and potentially distinguish between development of multi-story buildings within the Downtown and Historic District Overlays, and other parts of the City outside these areas. Although the Planning Commission's discussion explored how this public space standard could be reconsidered throughout the City's Detail Site Review Zones, staff believes the issue raised relating to downtown property could be addressed more expeditiously by focusing on its application within the downtown and historic district areas at this time. This would allow the code amendments to specifically consider the impact on proposed multi-story developments within the context of the downtown historic district. A review of the application of the plaza requirement in other areas of the City could be undertaken as a separate action as a future date.

An illustration identifying the boundary of the Downtown Design Standards overlay is shown below. Additionally, a photograph has been provided showing an existing public space/plaza required as part of the land use approval for the building at 175 Lithia Way.

FISCAL IMPACTS

Removing impediments to multi-story development that results in new construction, specifically for properties located in the Downtown Design Standards Overlay, would benefit and diversify the local economy through an increase in floor space that can accommodate a greater variety of businesses and other land uses. Additionally, proposals for new construction and redevelopment result in the collection of standard development fees, calculated according to the approved fee structure at the time of permit issuance.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the City Council direct planning staff to work with Planning Commission to prepare amendments to the Land Use Ordinance to address the applicability of the public space (plaza) standards for large scale buildings within the Downtown Design Standard Overlay.

ACTIONS, OPTIONS & POTENTIAL MOTIONS

I move that the City Council ask Planning Staff and the Planning Commission to initiate amendments to the Land Use Ordinance addressing the applicability of the public space (plaza) requirements as part of large scale building proposals within the Downtown Design Standards Overlay area.

REFERENCES & ATTACHMENTS

- Thalden letter dated 3/12/2019: http://www.ashland.or.us/SIB/files/2019-08-27_Plaza_Thalden_submittals.pdf
- [Planning Commission Minutes 8/27/2019](#)
- Non-Residential Development Standards: <https://ashland.municipal.codes/LandUse/18.4.2.040>
- Additional Standards for Large Scale Projects: <https://ashland.municipal.codes/LandUse/18.4.2.040.D>
 - Subsection 18.4.2.040.D.2 Public Spaces: <https://ashland.municipal.codes/LandUse/18.4.2.040.D.2>

Existing Public Space Example – Lithia Way



175 Lithia Way