

CREATING ECONOMIC VITALITY A CITY CENTER THAT IS ECONOMICALLY STRONG THRIVING, LIVELY AND SOCIAL

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Goal: To preserve and strengthen the distinctive character and charm of downtown Edmonds by providing opportunities for retail/entertainment oriented establishments to cluster for the convenience of the public and to create mutually beneficial business relationships thereby creating a dedicated area for “destination retail/entertainment”.

Discussion: Downtowns are the social, cultural and economic centers of cities. In order to have a vibrant, lively, thriving and prosperous downtown core, the City must encourage uses that generate high levels of pedestrian traffic in a concentrated area within ground floor spaces along street frontages that encourage/promote/attract specialty retail shops (housewares, books/music, wine, food, antique, and clothing stores), personal services (hair/beauty salons), eating and drinking establishments (bakeries, coffee shops, restaurants, bistros), entertainment venues (music houses/theaters, art galleries, and cultural facilities) and education centers.....all of which will reinforce the distinctive charm/character of Edmonds. These uses tend to have windows with interesting displays, visibility into the businesses, and longer operating hours which add to a lively daytime and nighttime pedestrian environment within downtowns.

A City can spend millions of dollars on beautification, public parking, street trees, facade improvements, and a host of other things yet still have a lifeless downtown. After all, what makes a downtown work as a community center is what's happening IN the buildings. Clustering works - people are drawn to a critical mass of similar/complimentary businesses. Retail/entertainment areas are dependent upon synergy and lively activity, not interrupted with uses other than retail; eating; drinking; and entertainment oriented services on the ground floor. Requiring professional office uses to locate behind ground floor retail or on the second floor of buildings within a downtown core provides more street frontage spaces for these types of uses, thus creating a well-defined core that generates higher levels of ground floor activity.

By focusing on clustering retail/entertainment uses and requiring office uses to locate behind retail/entertainment or on the second floor of buildings within a specific geographic area, this could result in the establishment of a “niche” making Downtown Edmonds competitive with outlying areas; competitive environment in terms of attracting patrons and “local tourists”, as well as drawing desirable establishments that help further define Edmonds’ brand.

Recommendation: Support the passage of a proposed ordinance limiting office uses along designated ground level, street frontages (first 45 feet) of the downtown core.

CREATING ECONOMIC VITALITY

A CITY CENTER THAT IS ECONOMICALLY STRONG THRIVING, LIVELY AND SOCIAL

Introduction. Downtowns are the social, cultural and economic centers of cities. As such they should maintain a wide range of uses at a compact and walkable scale while providing appropriately designated areas for professional offices, service establishments, retail/eating/drinking/entertainment oriented uses, and recreational amenities offering various ranges of commodities and services. The City of Edmonds hosted a public meeting on November 8, 2012 during which Roger Brooks, Destination Development Inc., presented information on the topics of marketing and downtown destination development.

What makes an outstanding downtown? Mr. Brooks mentioned 20 critical ingredients and elaborated on each; these include:

- Nearly all begin with a plan - Importance of having one
- Defining a strong brand and retail focus
- Orchestrating recruitment of “critical mass” or “clustering”
- Establishing anchor tenants
- Lease agreements include defined operating hours and days (consistency)
- People living and/or staying downtown: hotels, condos, loft apartments
- Identifying pioneers with patient money and convincing them to invest
- Starting with just one block - a “demonstration project”
- Public washrooms
- Developing gathering places
- Creating positive first impressions - Community gateways
- Designing, fabricating and installing a wayfinding system (signage)
- A good first impression – District or Neighborhood gateways
- 20/20 signage equals \$\$\$ (blade signs?)
- Sidewalk cafes and dining
- Investing heavily in retail beautification
- Activities and entertainment
- Distinctive downtown district names
- Experiential marketing

Edmonds' current planning documents are supportive of several critical ingredients referenced above.

The City's Comprehensive Plan has goals and policies which include:

- "promote downtown as a setting for retail, office, entertainment and associated businesses supported by nearby residents and the larger Edmonds community, and as a destination for visitors from throughout the region"
- "define the downtown commercial and retail core along streets having the strongest pedestrian links and pedestrian-oriented design elements, while protecting downtown's identity"

The City's Economic Development Plan also contains goals that tie directly to some of the 20 critical ingredients, i.e.,....

- "revitalize the City's business districts, balancing redevelopment, preservation and the need for consumer amenities"
- "diversify the tax base and increase revenues"
- "strengthen the quality of life and vitality of the community for residents, workers and visitors to enjoy"
- expand social, cultural, artistic, recreational and other learning activities for all generations"

Goal 2 Policy 2i of the City's Economic Development Plan calls for more specificity, i.e., "Create synergy for commercial businesses where possible, for example, by implementing a **"retail core" area in the downtown**".

Defining and Enhancing the Downtown Core by Establishing a Retail/Entertainment Focus. When information provided by Mr. Brooks is combined with goals and policies contained within City adopted plans, what stands out is the issue of defining a retail focus and creating a critical mass or clustering within the downtown core.

In order to have a vibrant, lively, thriving and prosperous downtown core, the City must encourage uses that generate high levels of pedestrian traffic in a concentrated area within ground floor spaces along street frontages that encourage/promote/attract specialty retail shops (housewares, books, wine, food, antique, clothing and music stores), personal services (hair/beauty salons), eating and drinking establishments (bakeries, coffee shops, restaurants, bistros), entertainment venues (music houses/theaters, art galleries, and cultural facilities) and education centers.....all of which reinforce the distinctive charm/character of Edmonds. These uses tend to have windows with interesting displays,visibility into the businesses, and longer operating hours which add to a lively daytime and nighttime pedestrian environment within the Downtown.

Creating, implementing and maintaining a vibrant, lively, thriving and prosperous downtown core. In addition to marketing, installation of physical improvements, and recruitment of certain types of businesses, one way to enhance/strengthen the “retail/dining/drinking/entertainment” core is to preserve ground floor space along designated commercial street frontages for commercial retail/service oriented uses/businesses where possible.

- The term preserve or preservation equates to possibly limiting office uses along the ground floor of designated street frontages within Edmonds (this would apply to the first 45 feet only measured from public rights-of-way or sidewalk). Office typically means a building or separately defined space within a building used for a business which does not include on-premises sales of goods or commodities. Requiring professional office uses to locate behind ground floor retail or on the second floor of buildings within the downtown core, e.g., land zoned BD1, would provide more street frontage spaces for these types of uses, thus creating a well-defined core that generates higher levels of ground floor activity and hopefully establishing a “niche” making Downtown Edmonds competitive with outlying areas. Starting with BD1 zoned land only could serve as an initial phase, i.e., a “demonstration” and if successful, could be expanded.

NOTE: need to better understand differences between retail/restaurant/entertainment and service uses?

- Ultimately, the desire is to provide opportunities for retail oriented establishments to cluster for the convenience of the public and for efficient business operations in mutually beneficial relationships to each other, and finally to enhance and protect the retail/entertainment oriented core of downtown from the intrusion of incompatible activities which might impair the areas’ appearance or functioning as a convenient, lively, and thriving retail/entertainment oriented area. It is intended that all uses in this area maintain ground floor visibility to serve patrons on an unannounced or drop-in basis, conduct a majority of their business face-to-face on the premises with their customers, and maintain retail storefronts comparable to traditional retail sales operations, including display of goods and services for sale.

There are significant reasons for supporting and maintaining a focus on retail/eating/drinking/entertainment uses along street frontages within the BD1 zone or downtown core area; these include:

- Clustering works - People are drawn to a critical mass of like-businesses; think food court, gas stations or auto malls. Retail areas are dependent upon synergy and lively activity which is interrupted when uses other than retail/eating/drinking/entertainment oriented/service exists on the ground floor adjacent to public rights of way/sidewalks.

- There is power in “Critical Mass” - A great case study? Walnut Creek, California - similar in size to Edmonds, 20 minutes from Oakland, and half an hour east of San Francisco. In their downtown they have more than 85 restaurants - and you can walk to all of them within 7 or 8 minutes. The locals hang out in their own town, and now it's become a major destination city for ALL of Northern California. That's the power of "Critical Mass."
- Creating a dedicated area for "destination retail/entertainment," often referred to in planning circles as "festival retail." This is where a City can have a "restaurant row" and many non-chain, non-franchise, businesses that are organic to Edmonds. Included in this mix must be a couple of "anchor tenants," just like a mall.
- A City can spend millions of dollars on beautification, public parking, street trees, facade improvements, and a host of other things and still have a lifeless downtown. After all, what makes a downtown work is what's IN the buildings. The rest is ambiance - important - but not the ultimate reason we spend time downtown. A City and business community MUST help orchestrate the business mix - expressing support to establish a retail/dining/entertainment core helps dictate the kind of businesses to recruit.
- Office uses typically close in the early evenings and weekends, creating dark, lifeless streetscapes, thereby discouraging a pedestrian friendly environment extending into the later evening. The resulting impression of the area is that it is not inviting, interesting, nor friendly to walk around.
- Because Edmonds' downtown has many one and two-story buildings and a low height limit, Downtown Edmonds is challenged with getting the density of customers necessary that would allow more sparse retail to survive without the synergy from a consistent clustering of retail/service uses.
- "Charming & thriving downtowns" to which people strive to emulate: Walnut Creek, Carmel and Palo Alto, CA, etc., do not allow new offices or housing at the street level.

Other Cities:

- City of Kirkland, WA (Central Business District (CBD) Zones 1A and 1B)
- City of Encinitas
- City of Coronado
- San Diego (Gas Lamp District)
- Redwood City
- Minneapolis, MN
- City of Alameda
- City of Arcadia
- San Luis Obispo

Assessment:

If the City Council were to support the passage of a proposed ordinance limiting office uses along designated street frontages (first 45 feet) of the BD1 zone, this should accompany a requirement to re-evaluate the ordinance within two years to ensure that the ordinance is having a positive effect on the downtown core and vicinity in general.

If the implementation of this proposal is successful, the City may want to consider applying it along Main Street and 5th Avenues extending west and south of the central core respectively.

DRAFT

16.43.020 Uses.

A. Table 16.43-1.

Permitted Uses	BD1	BD1 GFSF	BD2	BD3	BD4	BD5
	Commercial Uses					
Retail stores or sales	A	A	A	A	A	A
Offices	A	X	A	A	A	A
Legal/Law Firms	A	X				
Financial	A	X				
Advising	A	X				
Mortgage	A	X				
Banks (without tellers)	A	X				
Accounting	A	X				
Counseling	A	X				
Architecture	A	X				
Engineering	A	X				
Advertising	A	X				
Insurance	A	X				
Fitness related businesses	A	X				
Real Estate	A	X				
Service uses	A	A*	A	A	A	A
Retail sales requiring intensive outdoor display or storage areas, such as trailer sales, used car lots (except as part of a new car sales and service dealer), and heavy equipment storage, sales or services	X	X	X	X	X	X
Enclosed fabrication or assembly areas associated with and on the same property as an art studio, art gallery, restaurant, micro breweries/distilleries or food service establishment that also provides an on-site retail outlet open to the public	A	A	A	A	A	A
Automobile sales and service	X	X	A	A	X	X
Dry cleaning and laundry plants which use only nonflammable and nonexplosive cleaning agents	C	X	A	A	A	X
Printing, publishing and binding establishments	C	X	A	A	A	C
Community-oriented open air markets conducted as an outdoor operation and licensed pursuant to provisions in	A	A	A	A	A	A

the Edmonds City Code						
	Residential Uses					
	BD1	BD1 GFSF	BD2	BD3	BD4	BD5
Single-family dwelling	A	X	A	A	A	A
Multiple dwelling unit(s)	A	X	A	A	A	A
	Other Uses					
	BD1	BD1 GFSF	BD2	BD3	BD4	BD5
Bus stop shelters	A	A	A	A	A	A
Churches, subject to the requirements of ECDC 17.100.020	A	?	A	A	A	A
Primary and high schools, subject to the requirements of ECDC 17.100.050 (G) through (R)	A	X	A	A	A	A
Local public facilities, subject to the requirements of ECDC 17.100.050	C	C	C	C	A	C
Neighborhood parks, natural open spaces, and community parks with an adopted master plan subject to the requirements of ECDC 17.100.070	A	A	A	A	A	A
Off-street parking and loading areas to serve a permitted use	B	X	B	B	B	B
Commuter parking lots in conjunction with a facility otherwise permitted in this zone	B	X	B	B	B	X
Commercial parking lots	C	X	C	C	C	X
Wholesale uses	X	X	X	C	X	X
Hotels and motels	A	A	A	A	A	A
Amusement establishments	C	C	C	C	C	C
Auction businesses, excluding vehicle or livestock auctions	C	X	C	C	C	C
Drive-in/through businesses	X	X	C	A	C	X
Laboratories	X	X	C	C	C	X
Fabrication of light industrial products not otherwise listed as a permitted use	X	X	X	C	X	X

Day-care centers	C	X	C	C	A	C
	BD1	BD1 GFSF	BD2	BD3	BD4	BD5
Hospitals, health clinics, convalescent homes, rest homes, sanitariums	X	X	C	C	A	X
Medical Dental Optometrist (without retail) Therapy (without retail) Counseling	A A A A A	X X X X X				
Museums and art galleries of primarily local concern that do not meet the criteria for regional public facilities as defined in ECDC 21.85.033	A	A	A	A	A	A
Zoos and aquariums of primarily local concern that do not meet the criteria for regional public facilities as defined in ECDC 21.85.033	C	X	C	C	C	A
Counseling centers and residential treatment facilities for current alcoholics and drug abusers	X	X	C	C	A	X
Regional parks and community parks without a master plan subject to the requirements of ECDC 17.100.070	C	C	C	C	C	C
Outdoor storage, incidental to a permitted use	D	X	D	D	D	D
Aircraft landings as regulated by Chapter 4.80 ECC	X	X	D	D	D	D

- A = Permitted primary use
- B = Permitted secondary use
- C = Primary uses requiring a conditional use permit
- D = Secondary uses requiring a conditional use permit
- X = Not permitted

GFSF = Ground Floor designated Street Frontage – First 45 feet measured from public rights of way

* Services not providing retail/dining/entertainment functions as a primary component of the business are not allowed within BD1 GFSF (first 45 feet).