

## **1. PLANNING CONTEXT, CHARGE, AND PROCESS**

### **1.1 Planning Context**

Planning for the Maple Valley Place/Legacy Site (the Site) was both liberating and challenging.

In order to determine the best use of this new City asset, the City Council established a Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC) about a year after purchasing the Site. To encourage a creative atmosphere, the CAC was provided only a minimal amount of restrictions or instructions. In this way, the CAC essentially was asked to lead the thought process—with the community in mind—to form a recommended plan.

The Council required the CAC to work within the demands of the bond covenants (Appendix A and Section 2.3) and the guidance of the Charge from the City Council (Appendix A and Section 1.2). In addition to these documents the CAC had 50 acres of land, the support of a consulting team and City staff, and the CAC members' own energy, imagination, and commitment. Even the land use and zoning designations were up for reconsideration by the City Council if the CAC chose to recommend new designations to comport with the preferred plan.

Thus, the planning context was among the most liberating of municipal projects because nearly the full range of planning options was open to the CAC.

It was also among the most challenging because of the natural desire to solve a problem by learning what an assignment's goals, objectives, and parameters are and then working toward them.

### **1.2 Charge to the Citizen's Advisory Committee**

Despite the fact that the community and the City Council did not have a majority opinion for the use of the Site, it still was viewed as essential to give a written assignment to the CAC. Importantly, the City Council felt it was vital to articulate any and all features or recommendations that likely would not be received favorably by the City Council.

A draft Charge was discussed by the City Council on February 12, 2001 and adopted February 26, 2001 (vote 7-0).

The Council-adopted Charge to the CAC features a goal and six objectives as set out in subsections 1.2.1 through 1.2.7.

## 1.2.1 Goal

The goal of the Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC) is to recommend one preferred master site plan for the future use of the City's 50-acre parcel of land on Maple Valley Highway.

### *Commentary*

While the City Council anticipated that there would be several master site plan alternatives developed and evaluated (and, in fact, the consulting contract anticipated three "final" alternatives), the City Council desired to have a single recommendation advanced from the CAC.

For background, the Charge refers to the Site as being 50-acres, rather than the Site's actual 53.91 acres. This is because there was a series of public rights-of-way that existed on the Site when it was privately owned in anticipation of future roads and utility corridors. When the City incorporated in 1997, those rights-of-way accrued to the City. Then when the City purchased the property both the Site and its rights-of-way came under the City's ownership. The right-of-way issue came to light during the consulting team's preliminary Site investigation work.

## 1.2.2 Process and Responsibilities

The CAC shall:

- Work with the City's selected site planning consultant and City staff to become properly acquainted with the Site and the factors that influence it;
- Keep an open mind and objectively evaluate all reasonable options;
- Receive, help facilitate, and evaluate public involvement;
- Assist in keeping the City Council informed about the progress of the CAC's work through occasional formal presentations to the Council;
- Be entitled to request reasonable additional information to facilitate the creation of a quality recommendation;
- Regularly attend CAC meetings and participate proactively; and
- Make a final recommendation that the CAC believes is in the long-term best interest of the City.

### *Commentary*

The process that the CAC followed to achieve this Phase I report is summarized below.

Several steps in the process, such as the April 2002 colloquium and the September 2002 field trip were examples of the CAC exercising its option to "request reasonable additional information."

### **1.2.3 Site**

The site within the CAC's purview is the 50-acre parcel of City-owned land located at 25805 Maple Valley Highway.

#### *Commentary*

During one of the CAC's earlier meetings—January 10, 2002—the Site was named the “Maple Valley Place/Legacy Site.” This recommended name was accepted by City Council consensus later that month.

As the CAC's discussions evolved, there emerged a greater realization that the Site was more appropriately viewed within the context of the properties that surrounded it and its relationship to other key land uses in the City, such as Lake Wilderness, Lake Wilderness Park and Lodge, the Four Corners commercial area, the Rock Creek Open Space, and other features of Maple Valley. Accordingly, the Planning Principles that emerged focused on the Site itself, but acknowledged and made recommendations about the Site's interrelation with other aspects of the City.

### **1.2.4 Uses**

Of the 50 acres, at least 25 acres (or at least 50 percent) shall be used for public purposes. A “public purpose” may include active and passive park uses, open space, municipal or other governmental agency buildings or uses, or other public uses that are consistent with the bond covenants placed on the Site.

Of the 50 acres, up to 25 acres (or up to 50 percent) may be used for any legally qualifying purpose, whether private, for-profit or public.

#### *Commentary*

This aspect of the charge is more fully explained in Section 2.3, “Constraints on the Use of the Site,” and in Appendix A.

### **1.2.5 Distribution of Uses**

There are no restrictions or predispositions as to how the uses are to be distributed throughout the Site, other than adopted City development requirements.

#### *Commentary*

There appears a certain mixed message in this aspect of the Charge. While the CAC was allowed to recommend land use and zoning changes to the Site, it is also true that the Site's

current and then-current zoning is “Multiple Use,” which requires prescribed minimum and maximum amounts of office, residential, commercial, and open space (see Appendix B).

### **1.2.6 Significant Trees**

The CAC shall place a high value on the retention of significant trees on the Site. The CAC shall endeavor to meet the requirements of the City’s significant tree ordinance by *retaining* significant trees, rather than through *replacement*.

#### *Commentary*

The City’s then-current significant tree ordinance strongly encouraged the retention of existing trees, but allowed existing trees to be removed if they were replaced according to a prescribed tree replanting formula. The Council’s desire for this Site was that as many of the existing trees remain as was feasible in conjunction with the development/use proposals.

### **1.2.7 Wilderness Theme**

In recognition of the statements in the *Comprehensive Plan*, the CAC shall endeavor to develop a master plan that honors Maple Valley’s rural setting. The Planning Commission is currently assisting with a definition of the term “Wilderness Theme.”

#### *Commentary*

The City’s first *Comprehensive Plan*, adopted November 22, 1999, made several references to the desire of the community to retain and enhance a Wilderness Theme. Unfortunately, the term Wilderness Theme was never defined in the *Plan* or in any other City document. When the CAC’s Charge was written, it was anticipated that the Planning Commission would be studying Wilderness Theme and arriving at a recommended definition. However, the Planning Commission was inclined to view Wilderness Theme as indefinable and perhaps inconsistent with an emerging suburban city.

The CAC has come to see that, to the extent any definition of Wilderness Theme is still of interest to the City, the urban design approach they have described for the Site would become a living definition.

### 1.3 Formation of Citizen Advisory Committee

The members of the CAC were named by the City Council on the same evening that the Council adopted the Charge for the CAC (February 26, 2001). Members included:

<u>Member</u>	<u>Representing</u>
Kristie Anderson	Lake Forest Estates
Ken Crotts (Alternate)	Lake Forest Estates
Jon Kinsley	Citizen-at-Large
Eric Larson	Citizen-at-Large
Jim Malone	Economic Development Committee
Dave Pilgrim <sup>1</sup>	Citizen-at-Large
Sue Van Ruff	Chamber of Commerce
Bill Woodcock	Citizen-at-Large

Additionally, the City Council appointed three City Councilors to serve ex-officio as resources to the CAC. The three were Councilor Victoria Laise Jonas, Councilor Steve Leppard, and Councilor Alana McIalwain<sup>2</sup>. Councilor Dave Draveling was named an alternate. Following preliminary meetings in 2001, CAC meetings became more regular starting January 10, 2002.

### 1.4 Planning Process Highlights

Throughout the more than three years that the Maple Valley Place/Legacy Site CAC has been working, it has undertaken and implemented an exceedingly wide array of special planning studies, public outreach efforts, explorations, and activities. These have augmented the CAC's regular meetings (a record of which is maintained in the City Clerk's office). They have included the following.

#### 1.4.1 Community Exploration of the Site

Essentially serving as the kick-off for the planning effort, the CAC invited the Maple Valley community to a "field trip" discovery exploration of the Site. The Site exploration was held Saturday, July 28, 2001 and participants were given a "field guide" and a series of idea cards or "swatches" linked together by a metal ring. Attendees were encouraged to walk through the entire Site and note its many features and qualities. Copies of the materials received by participants are provided in Appendix B.

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<sup>1</sup> Subsequently, Mr. Pilgrim was elected to the City Council effective January 1, 2002 and was replaced by resident Dick Hartung.

<sup>2</sup> Councilor Dave Pilgrim took Alana McIalwain's City Council position on January 1, 2002. Similarly, he assumed her ex-officio appointment to the CAC.

#### **1.4.2 Town Hall Meeting 2001**

Following on the heels of the community exploration of the Site was the City's annual Town Hall Meeting. The principal topic of that year's Town Hall was to solicit ideas, suggestions, and input about how best to use the Legacy Site. About 150 citizens attended the Monday, July 30 meeting, many of whom had toured the Site the previous Saturday.

An annotated agenda of the Town Hall meeting and a summary of the Field Trip and Town Hall meeting are provided in Appendix B.

#### **1.4.3 Two-day Design Charrette**

The CAC debriefed the Town Hall meeting and had several subsequent regular meetings. In February 2002, the design team met at City Hall for a two-day design charrette to reflect upon what the CAC and the community had said so far and to attempt to translate that into a series of site design concepts. The community and CAC members were invited to drop in to observe the charrette process any time they wanted and for as long as they wanted. The CAC convened at the end of the two-day charrette to evaluate and provide initial reactions to the four concepts that had been created.

#### **1.4.4 Informal Dinner Meeting**

Each of the CAC's meetings to date had been structured similar to a Planning Commission meeting. For some, that structure seemed overly formal and somewhat limiting to the healthy, informal exchange of ideas many felt that the magnitude of the project deserved.

To break with this, one of the meetings of the CAC was an informal dinner meeting, held in the boardroom of the Tahoma School District and for which public notice was provided. In addition to freely discussing dreams for the Site, the meeting proved valuable for the CAC members to get to know each other better as individuals, which assisted in future discussions.

#### **1.4.5 Colloquium**

The appellation "Legacy" was proving both inspiring and daunting to the CAC by the spring of 2002. What is a legacy? How does a city create one?

On the evening of April 25, 2002 the CAC hosted a colloquium to explore the topic of municipal legacies. Colloquium speakers were:

- Walt Crowley, historian and author, proprietor of HistoryLink.org;
- Jerry Hillis, Seattle land use attorney;

- Roger Hoesterey, Regional Director of the Trust for Public Lands; and
- Charles Royer, Executive Director of the Children's Health Initiative of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and former three-term Mayor of Seattle.

The entire community was invited to attend this rich discussion, and the event was video taped. Each speaker presented his own perspective, but if there was a recurring theme, it was that legacies are created over time and they usually start with bold, controversial decisions that, at the time, may even seem ridiculous. Eventually, those once ridiculous decisions become among the wisest a city makes, thus creating a legacy.

#### **1.4.6 Discussion with Jim Ellis**

Jim Ellis was invited to be a speaker at the colloquium but was unable to attend. He extended an invitation to have a meeting on Thursday, July 18, 2002 in Seattle at the offices of Preston, Gates & Ellis.

Mr. Ellis successfully led the charge to clean up then-polluted Lake Washington in the 1950s; galvanized community support for a major park, recreation, and open space bond called Forward Thrust in the 1960s; championed light rail in the 1970s and beyond; steered the creation of the Washington State Convention Center; and gave life to the Sound-to-Mountains Greenway.

Mr. Ellis encouraged the CAC to take bold visionary actions that would last for generations but perhaps take generations to realize. His only hesitancy was that because the Site bore the name "legacy," the expectations might be too great.

#### **1.4.7 Town Hall Meeting 2002**

The 2002 annual Town Hall meeting again focused on the Maple Valley Place/Legacy Site. This time, the CAC members themselves led four small group discussions to explain the four design scenarios that were being explored. The scenarios were refinements of the four developed during the two-day charrette.

#### **1.4.8 Speakers Bureau**

In an effort to better spread the word about what the CAC was doing, certain CAC members went individually or in pairs to community organizations to share how the process was evolving and to display presentation boards of the concepts that were being evaluated. Groups that heard the speakers bureau included: the Greater Maple Valley/Black Diamond Chamber of Commerce, the Maple Valley/Black Diamond Rotary, the Maple Valley Historical Society, the South King County Arboretum Society, and the third grade class of Rock Creek Elementary School. Notes from the Speakers Bureau are contained in Appendix C.

#### **1.4.9 Field Trip to Bainbridge Island**

Many of the planning concepts that were being discussed at the CAC—open civic greens, City Hall/performing arts complexes, mixed use residential over commercial developments—were unfamiliar to some. This unfamiliarity made forming recommendations difficult. To gain perspective, the CAC took a field trip to Bainbridge Island on Saturday, September 14, 2002. Bainbridge Island was selected because it features, in a relatively compact area, high-quality examples of many of the concepts being discussed. It was also selected because the design team's leader, David Hewitt, resided on Bainbridge Island and thus had a working knowledge of successes there.

CAC members had a walking tour of the Bainbridge City Hall/Saturday market/performing arts complex; the traditional Winslow downtown district; an effective mixed-use development with open space, ground-level retail, and residential above; an office/residential development that was woven sensitively into marshlands and a marina; and the Bloedel Reserve.

#### **1.4.10 Joint Meeting with City Council**

Though the CAC had met in joint session with the City Council previously, by late 2002 there was a series of questions about which the CAC needed feedback on or acceptance by the City Council. On December 12, 2002 the City Council and the CAC met again in joint session to hear a presentation by the CAC (led by Kristie Anderson) and to have the City Council provide guidance on three questions.

The first question concerned the scope of the Charge. The Charge was specific that the CAC was to develop recommendations about the Legacy Site alone (see subsection 1.2.3. above). Based on the concepts discussed at the colloquium by Mr. Ellis and the CAC's own observations on Bainbridge Island, it was apparent to the CAC that the Site must be viewed within the context of the entire City. If the Site were to be a catalyst for Maple Valley and set an example, it could not be planned only within the confines of the Site's boundaries, but instead as the Site relates to and could influence surrounding properties and connect the City. The City Council agreed and gave its encouragement to the CAC to think and plan beyond the boundaries of the Site itself.

The second question regarded athletic fields. Some on the CAC believed creating athletic fields on the Site was important, while others felt the clear-cutting of portions of the wooded Site that fields necessitated would change the quality of the Site. The CAC was aware that the City also was in partnership with the Tahoma School District to develop a multifield athletic complex near the Four Corners area on a 23-acre site. If the City Council could confirm its strong intent to develop fields there, the CAC would not recommend fields on the Legacy Site. The City Council confirmed their strong intent, providing caveats about the partnership relationship that the City would need to formalize with the School District.

Finally, the CAC was unanimous that City Hall should be built on the Legacy Site, but was aware that there were differences of opinion among the City Councilors about whether that should occur. Some on the Council wanted to keep their options open about where City Hall should be built. The City Council gave full license to the CAC to propose that City Hall be included as one of the key uses on the Legacy Site, but did not make a decision as to whether City Hall ultimately would be there.

#### **1.4.11 Economic Analyses**

Throughout the process, economic analyses were provided. The design team included Bill Lee of Economic Research Associates (ERA), San Francisco, who provided an early assessment of the Site and its near-term development potential. From a highest-and-best-use standpoint, ERA thought residential was the most likely near-term potential for the Site, though if given many years then other uses such as retail, office, and entertainment were possible if the City's and the region's development trends continued.

Economic overviews were also provided by Daryl Vange of Ravenhurst Development Incorporated, and public comment concerning economic viability was offered by Skip Rowley of Rowley Enterprises (Issaquah), which has owned and developed commercial and residential projects extensively in the Issaquah area over the last several decades.

In July, 2003, as the CAC was nearing completion on its preferred site design, the City retained Dave Leland of Leland Consulting (Portland, Oregon) to provide an economic viability assessment. Leland was selected because they have worked extensively with municipalities on dozens of similar projects. Mr. Leland researched the City, made two site visits, and reviewed the CAC's materials. His assessment of the site design as then conceived was unfavorable. He felt the private uses were poorly located, and the public uses were "hidden" on the Site thereby diminishing their role as "setting an example" or even being visible to the community. Additionally, it did not appear that the current plan provided enough development to create a sufficiently vibrant level of activity to achieve the established goals.

#### **1.4.12 Form of Report**

After reviewing Mr. Leland's findings, the CAC took a revised course for completing its report.

The CAC continued to hold firm to the goals, objectives, and planning principles that it had established over the preceding two years. It wanted these documented to provide guidance as to how the Site should be used and developed.

Where the CAC diverged from its original intent was not to provide a recommended site plan at this time. Instead, this document, which describes the Site, the process, and the performance aspirations, would serve as an interim report. The next step, once the interim report is acted on by the City Council, is to conduct a design or design/development competition. Substantially, this interim report could serve as the instructions for the competition. Economic analyses would

# *Maple Valley Place*

*CAC Report to City Council*

LEGACY PROJECT

*June 27, 2005*

be included more prominently in the competition process and the selection of a recommendation. A development strategy, including phasing and financing, could be created once the preferred site plan was recommended to, and acted upon, by the City Council.

At this time, the competition is slated for 2005.