

**FIRCREST CITY COUNCIL  
STUDY SESSION AGENDA**

**MONDAY, AUGUST 19, 2019  
6:00 P.M.**

**COUNCIL CHAMBERS  
FIRCREST CITY HALL, 115 RAMSDELL STREET**

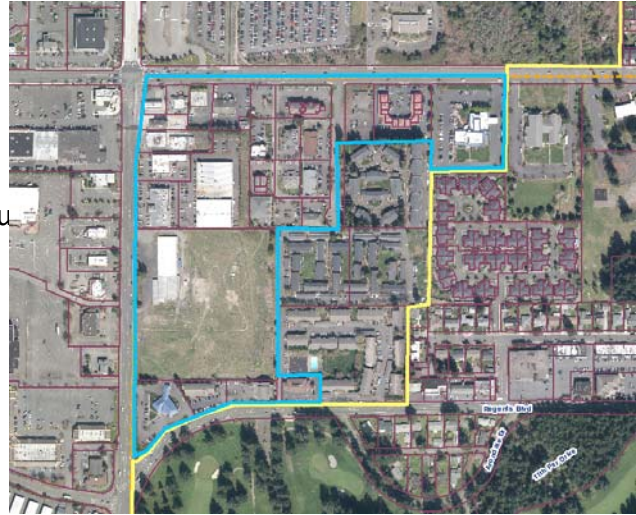
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1. Call to Order
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Roll Call
4. Agenda Modifications
5. [Commercial Mixed-Use Zone Discussion](#)
6. [Whittier Elementary School Redevelopment Discussion](#)
7. [Accessory Dwelling Units: Attached vs. Detached Approvals Discussion](#)
8. Adjournment

## Item 5: Commercial Mixed-Use Zone Discussion

### 19<sup>th</sup> and Mildred Center

**BACKGROUND:** Over the last two years, City staff has been studying the 19<sup>th</sup> and Mildred Commercial area. This area is zoned Commercial Mixed Use and includes the 9.5 acre vacant parcel, commonly known as the “Eaton Property.” Discussions and sessions have focused on coordinating and, possibly, matching adjoining jurisdictions in order to increase this area’s viability.



Here is an update on several related issues:

**Centers** – Staff has worked with the City of University Place and the City of Tacoma to request designation as a Countywide Center. The 19<sup>th</sup> and Mildred Center is one of 14 Countywide Centers that were recommended by the Growth Management Coordinating Committee (GMCC). The Pierce County Regional Council approved the centers at their July meeting.

The yellow line indicates the border of the Countywide Center. The blue line identifies the Commercial Mixed Use zoning district.

**U.P.** – The City of University Place continues to move forward and hopes to adopt a form-based code for their commercial areas. Form-based code focuses on regulating the physical form of projects in an area – and how the buildings, sidewalk, and streets interact – rather than separation of uses. In contrast, the Fircrest Municipal Code is considered a hybrid where the focus is more on what uses are permitted and provides a few development standards. Design guidelines are more advisory than regulation.

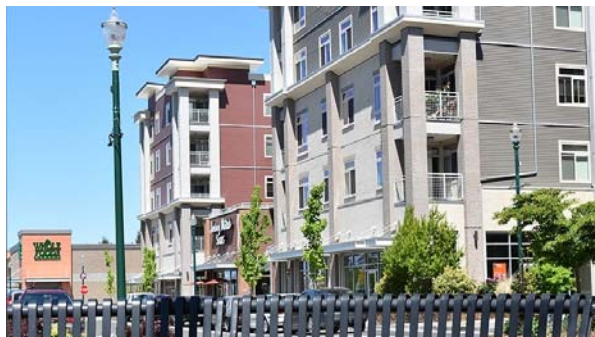
A great video and information can be found at: <https://formbasedcodes.org/definition/>

If they stay on schedule, they plan to hold a planning commission public hearing in September, with the Council reviewing it through the fall. The current draft is targeting the Narrows Plaza to be the greatest in intensity and density. Currently, they are considering increased maximum height to at least 75 feet, with possible bonuses up to 110'. The draft still needs to go through planning commission and City Council hearings.

**COT** – The area known as the James Center is currently zoned Community Commercial Mixed-Use. While the area has a traditional suburban development, the vision is to evolve it into a denser urban district. The standard building height in this district is 60 feet but additional height can be achieved with bonuses. The City of Tacoma is interested in coordinating on a centers plan.

**Fircrest** – Staff has entertained several developers interested in the Eaton Property. The majority of those are residential in nature – condos, senior housing, student housing, and apartments. The current zoning would allow residential on upper stories over at least one story of commercial in the first 250’ and on the back portion of the property. This section of the City is framed by two major arterials and dense construction is proposed to the west and north west. High density residential is to the east.

The current zoning would allow a maximum height of 55 feet, which is approximately 3-4 stories. The current market “sweet spot” is 75 feet. This would allow what the industry calls a 5 over 2. Five stories of wood construction over a two story concrete platform.



Bridgeport - University Place



Proctor Station

*Staff would recommend looking at increasing the height to the 75-foot mark and would recommend transitioning the Commercial Mixed Use zone from the traditional hybrid model to a form-based code model.*

*Also, staff would recommend continued coordination with both jurisdictions, as well as, Tacoma Community College, Pierce Transit and Sound Transit. This will present a challenge as each entity is at a different stage of planning, but coordination would benefit our most intense commercial area.*

#### **QUESTION(s):**

- What focus would Council like us to take as we move forward with coordination?
- What concerns does Council have with joint planning?
- What amendments would Council be most interested in?

## Item 6: Whittier Elementary School Redevelopment Discussion

### Development Code Related to Schools

**BACKGROUND:** The Tacoma School District has proposed a \$535 million bond that would include the replacement of Whittier Elementary. Whittier Elementary is located at 777 Elm Tree Lane and has a zoning designation of Residential-4 (R-4). Schools are allowed in the R-4 zone with a conditional use permit, but the design guidelines and standards were established for residential construction, not a new school.

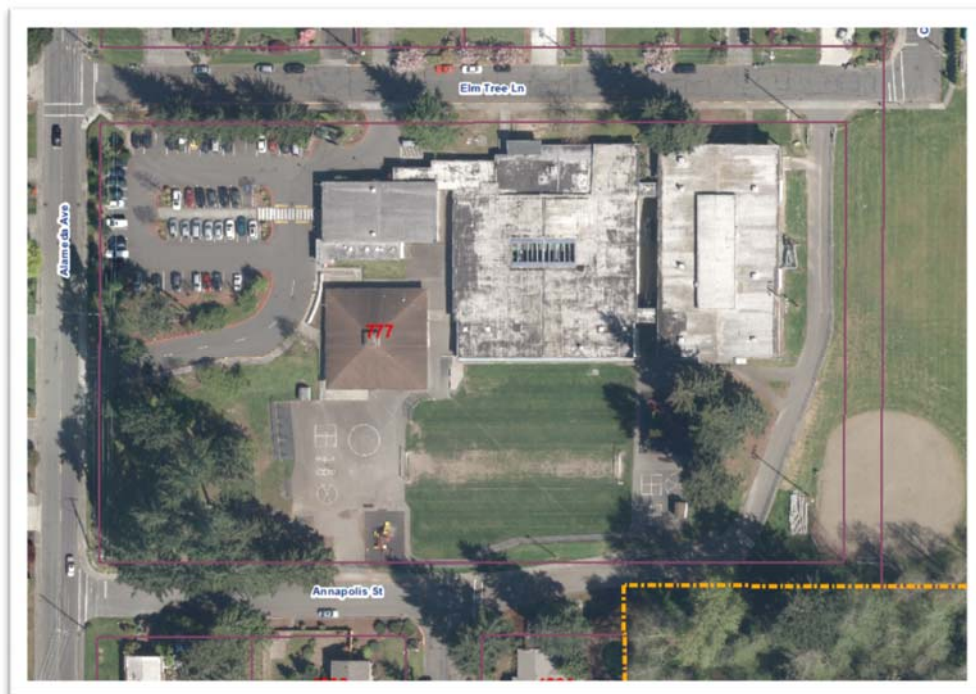
Staff has begun to review the current development and design codes to see if any amendments should be proposed.

Some of the areas staff is reviewing:

- Current parking standards
- Creating a maximum height for public buildings (separate from residential max height)
- Overall design guidelines – The adopted design guidelines are advisory in nature. While an applicant must demonstrate how they have addressed each guideline, the specifications are listed as *shoulds* not *shalls*.

Staff would like to briefly walk through the standards in these areas with the City Council and then discuss the following question.

**QUESTION:** Are there changes in these specific areas that the Council would like staff to draft changes for, and are there any additional areas Council would like staff to review or address?



## Item 7: Accessory Dwelling Units: Attached vs. Detached Approvals Discussion

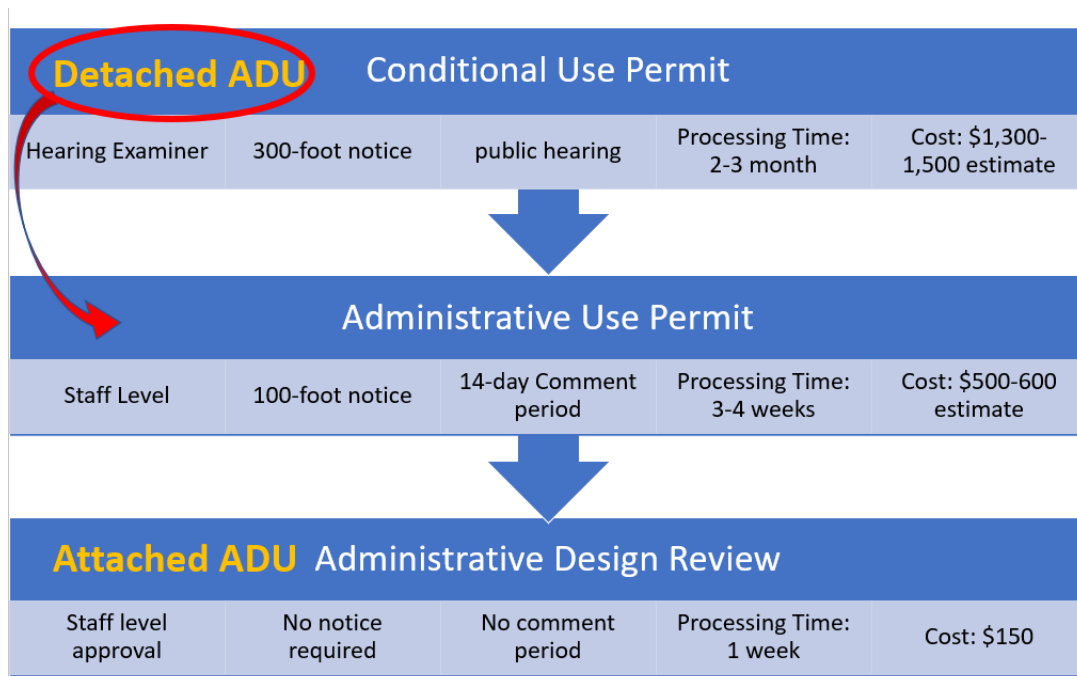
### Detached ADU Review Level

**BACKGROUND:** The Fircrest Municipal Code has allowed both attached and detached accessory dwelling units since at least 2000. There are 13 approved ADUs in the City (7 detached; 6 attached). No known complaints have been received related to the approved ADUs. While attached units are reviewed at the staff level with no public notice, detached units require a public hearing before the planning commission. This is in essence a two-step difference in review. The conditional use permit process puts a greater expense and time constraint on the applicant. Council previously changed the utility billing for ADUs to make them more affordable.

*Staff is recommending that the review level for detached accessory dwelling units be lowered from a conditional use permit to an administrative use permit.*

#### Considerations:

- The approval criteria would not change
- Would still require notification and a public comment period
- Would save applicant time and money



**QUESTION:** Shall staff move forward with lowering the review level for detached accessory dwelling units from a conditional use permit to an administrative use permit?