

Lacey Woodland District – Regulatory Strategy

I. Introduction

The recommended regulatory strategy to implement the Woodland District Strategic Subarea Plan is to develop a character and form-based code and regulating map, as opposed to the typical “Euclidean” use-based code and traditional zoning map. The development of a detailed character and form-based code and regulating map is outside the scope of the current project, and in any event would be premature until the details of the Strategic Subarea Plan are adopted. What follows is a potential framework for illustrative purposes to indicate what such a code and regulating map might encompass and the kinds of issues the city would need to address in creating such an ordinance.

II. A Future Form-Based Code and Regulating Map

The GMA defines development regulations as controls on the use of land, hence, both the future form-based code and regulating map will need to be more detailed and precise than the policies and maps in the Strategic Subarea Plan. The Future Place Types Map (Figure 1 below) shows half a dozen distinct districts within the Woodland District. This map, together with the Street Types Map (Fig. 2 on page 7), and the specific goals and policies in the Strategic Subarea Plan, provides the basic framework for a future form-based code and regulating map.



Fig. 1

Figure 1 shows a “Regional Destination/Retail/Entertainment” corresponding to the South Sound Center, and a “Destination Retail/Mixed Use” area corresponding to Market Square. Both of these “Place-based Districts” are large holdings in single ownership or a small group of owners. To maintain a balance between maximum site development flexibility for the owners and certainty about outcomes for the City, a Master Plan Development Permit process is recommended for these two areas. While the policies in the Subarea Plan provide guidance, and many of the standards discussed below will be relevant, the Master Planning Permit process enables mutual negotiation of site development alternatives for these large districts.

The “Edge Retail” lands along Pacific Avenue consist of a variety of parcels and commercial uses primarily oriented to that arterial with little opportunity for transit access or a fine block grain. In contrast, the “Retail Mixed-Use, SPSCC and Urban Neighborhood” Place-Based Districts that abut the Transit Center on the west, north and east have the finest block grain in the WD. These districts will constitute the WD’s future residential and cultural heart, have a much more developed pedestrian network, and are almost entirely within the five-minute “walkshed” of the Transit Center.

Typical of the form-based code approach, all these Place Based Districts would allow all uses except for those specifically prohibited. When taking this approach for their town centers or central business districts, many cities have developed lists prohibiting such uses as: wrecking yards, crematoria, and heavy manufacturing or fabrication. The City should consider which uses it wishes to specifically prohibit either District-wide, or potentially within parts of the WD. For example, the City may wish to also prohibit from the Urban Neighborhood area such incompatible uses as fast food restaurants, gambling, adult entertainment, and outdoor storage or display.

III. Potential Permit Processes

The City already has an administrative design review (ADR) process in its land use code. It is recommended that any new code for the Woodland District zones apply that process to the review of future development. The clarity and simplicity of any new character and form-based standards should enable them to easily be folded into the ADR process.

As noted above, a Master Plan Permit Process may be appropriate for several of the large property holdings in the WD. Many cities use this tool for large sites with a broad range of site development and use questions. The City of Kirkland, for example requires a Master Plan permit for development of large commercial and mixed use areas in single ownership. Below is an example of the criteria used for review of such a Master Plan permit in that city’s Totem Lake center.

Kirkland, WA

Totem Lake 5 Zone - A Master Plan for development of the entire subject property must be approved. The Master Plan must establish a circulation system for vehicles and pedestrians that integrates with existing and planned circulation throughout the TL 5 zone. The plan must be pedestrian-oriented and incorporate the following special Regulations:

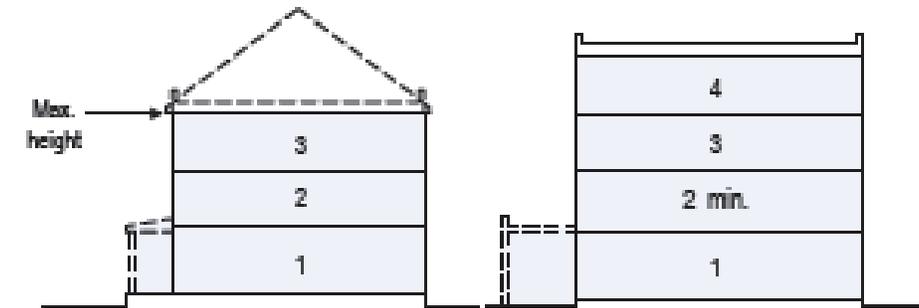
- Siting of buildings oriented to the pedestrian network
- Storefront orientation to pedestrian and vehicular circulation routes.
- Pedestrian connections internal to the site that provide convenient pedestrian mobility and contribute to pedestrian activity and visual interest.
- Shared vehicular connections to the serving arterial 124th Avenue NE.
- Clearly identifiable building and pedestrian access points and entryways.
- Provision of useable public spaces, plazas or pocket parks, and public amenities, such as art, sculpture, fountains or benches.
- Use of landscaping to emphasize entries into buildings and pedestrian areas, to enhance public spaces, and to screen blank walls and service areas.

IV. Potential Standards for a Form-Based Code

One of the chief departures of a form-based approach from the traditional use-based approach is the use of concise and simple text supplemented by graphics, as opposed to sparse use of graphics and excessive use of legalese. With the use of flexible use categories described above, specific form and design standards in the WD Code can increase simplicity, clarity and ease of understanding.

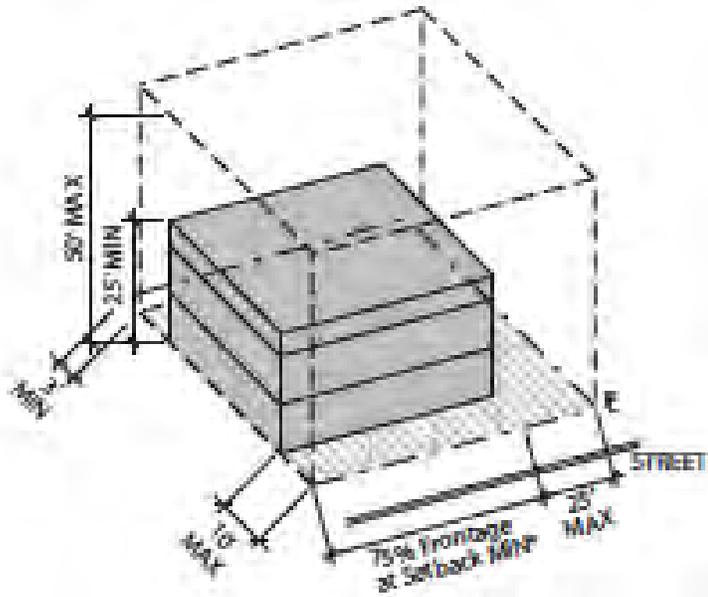
Following are illustrative examples from different jurisdictions that have adopted form-based and design/character based codes as well as some preliminary concepts for sign standards keyed to the Woodland District's nodes and streets. These concepts would be appropriate to consider as part of a future project to create a Woodland District Character and Form-based Code.

***Pass Christian, MS* Measuring Building height**



Comment: Human scale of buildings is as much a function of perceived height of structures as actual dimensions. Some codes therefore measure and regulate buildings by number of stories as well as number of feet above grade. In Pass Christian, maximum and minimum building heights are measured to the top of the exterior wall, rather than to the peak of the roof. This would allow more flexibility for alternative roof shapes of various pitch and to screen rooftop appurtenances.

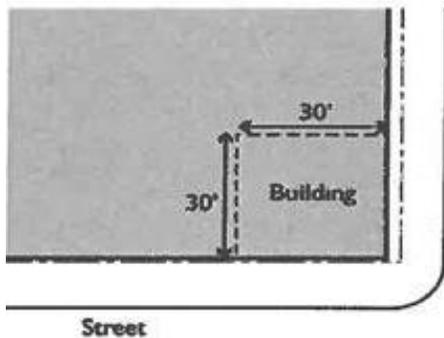
Knoxville, TN Building scale and façade at back of sidewalk



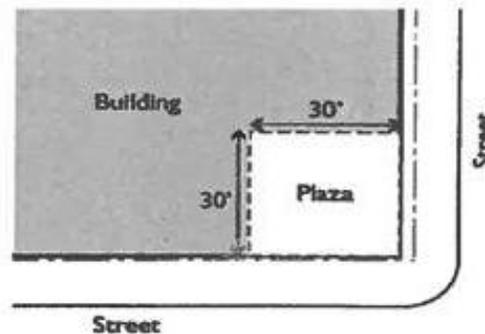
Buildings built to the sidewalk define the street, and provide a “street wall” that is the marker of an urban area. A continuous street wall with windows and doors on the street provide an enjoyable urban experience, and create a “walkable” neighborhood.

South San Francisco, CA Block Corner Treatments

Buildings must be located in accordance with the required setbacks within 30 feet of every corner.



Public plazas may be at the street corner provided buildings are built to the edge of the plaza.



Comment: Form-based codes orient building mass, windows and entrances of new

private development to the public realm that begins at the back of the sidewalk. Because street intersections are functional and visual focal points in the public realm, the corners of buildings at intersections are likewise important places to design with the pedestrian in mind. Some codes require beveled building corners with prominent architectural features like clocks or entrances, still others require open plazas, as this example from South San Francisco.

Shoreline, WA Site Frontage requirements



Development abutting retail street frontages shall meet the following standards.

- *Buildings shall be placed at the property line or abutting planned sidewalks if on private property. However, buildings may be set back farther if public places (as specified in subsection F of this section) are included or a utility easement is required between the sidewalk and the building;*
- *The primary building entry shall be located on a street frontage and, if necessary, recessed to prevent door swings over sidewalks, or an open entry to an interior plaza or courtyard from which building entries are accessible;*
- *Minimum weather protection at least five feet in depth, along at least 80 percent of the facade width, including building entries.*



Through-Block Connections

- All buildings shall have visible, clear, and illuminated walkways between the main building entrance and a public sidewalk. The walkway shall be at least eight feet wide;
- Continuous pedestrian walkway shall be provided to the entries of all businesses and the entries of multiple commercial buildings.

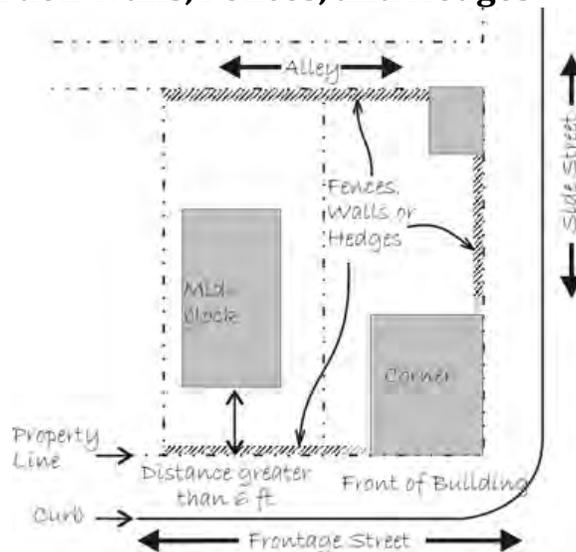


Roofline Modulation

Rooflines shall be modulated at least every 120 feet by emphasizing dormers, chimneys, stepped roofs, gables, or prominent cornices or walls. Rooftop appurtenances are included as modulation. Modulation shall consist of a roofline elevation change of at least four feet every 50 feet of roofline.

COMMENT: Lacey already regulates horizontal and vertical modulation in multifamily structures. See Table 14T-54 referred to in LMC 14.23.080.

Hercules, CA Garden Walls, Fences, and Hedges



Fences, garden walls, or hedges are strongly encouraged and, if built, should be constructed along all un-built rights-of-way which abut streets and alleys as shown in the diagram. They shall be at least 25% opaque with a maximum height of 42".

Maximum Block Size

A maximum perimeter of any block shall be no more than 1,600 linear feet. The minimum dimension of each block face shall be no more than 500 feet.

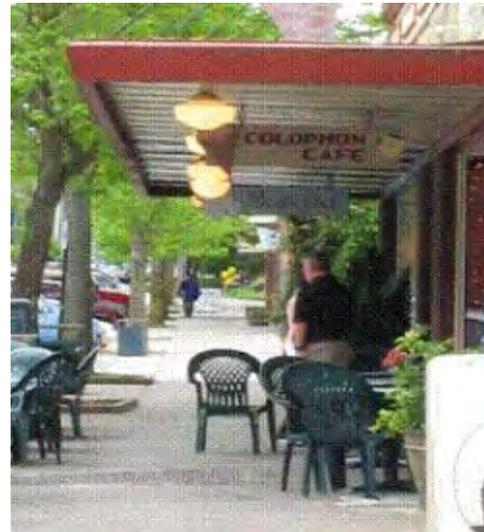
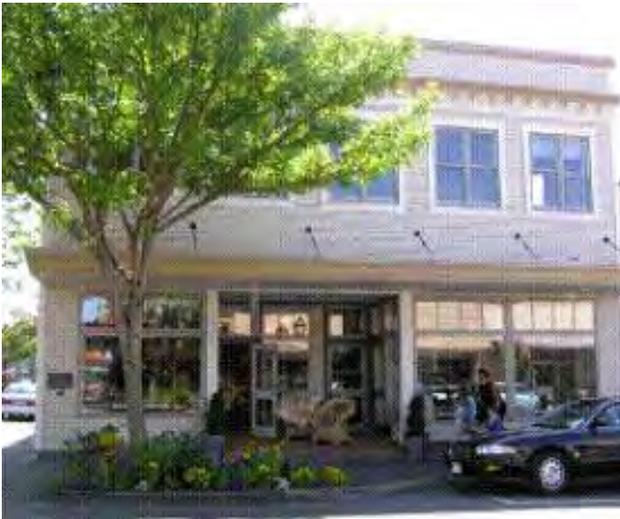
COMMENT: The City should consider adopting maximum block size to create a more walkable and pedestrian friendly district. This would be consistent with the block grid shown on the Woodland District proposed "Future Street Types" Map on Fig. 2, below.



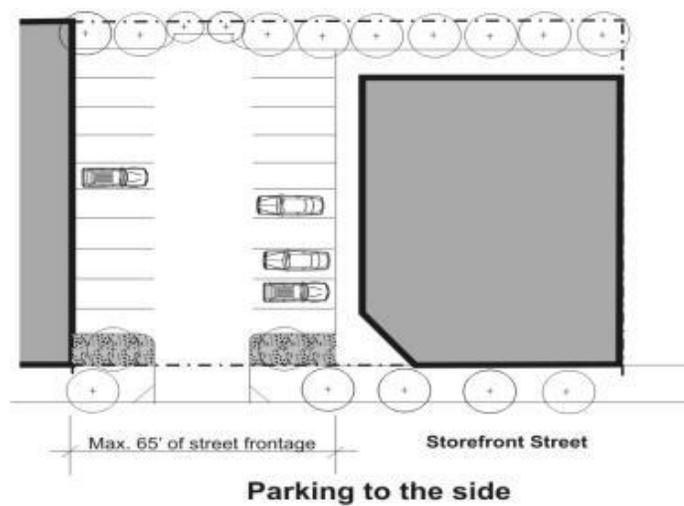
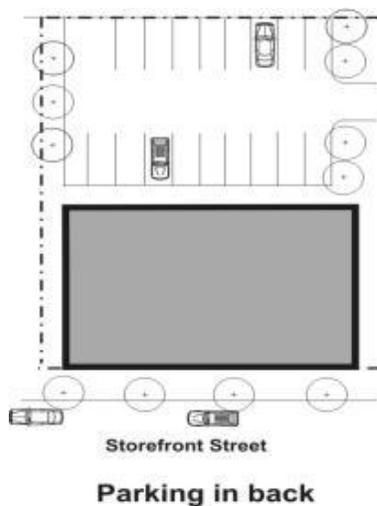
Fig. 2

Edmonds, WA Building entrances

- Entrances to buildings shall be visible from the street and accessible from the adjacent sidewalk.
- Entrances shall be given a visually distinct architectural expression by one or more of the following elements: a. Higher bay(s); b. Recessed entry (recessed at least three feet); or c. Forecourt and entrance plaza.
- Overhead weather protection required. Options include awnings, canopies, or marquees.



Minimize parking lot impacts by placement on the lot



Comment: Wherever possible, on-site parking should be placed to create minimum disruption to the street wall and pedestrian environment.

Framework for a form-based sign system

A future city project to prepare a character and form-based code would provide an opportunity to craft an integrated system and standards for the Woodland District Goal SG-1 states: “Use the design of signage to strengthen district identity, visibility, and wayfinding.” The existing challenges, opportunities and desired future character of the “Edge Retail” along Pacific Ave is very different than that of the “Urban Neighborhood” surrounding Woodland Square, or the “Regional Retail Destination” of South Sound Center. A character and form-based approach to sign regulations, keyed to these unique factors, is a logical component to a future Form-Based Code for the Woodland District.

Following are some examples of how design and form principles could be applied to signs standards in the Woodland District.

Winter Springs, FL Building Mounted Signs



- *Maximum gross area of signs on a given façade shall not exceed ten (10) percent of the applicant’s façade area.*
- *Signs shall maintain a minimum clear height above sidewalks of eight (8) feet.*

Comment: Signs with individual letters affixed directly to the building face, such as the “Great Clips” and “FedExKinko” signs above, scored very well in Lacey’s Visual Preference Survey. Such signs create a single “form” integrating sign and building architecture. The individual letters become the “copy” while the building wall becomes the “field” behind the copy. The “Peets Coffee” sign above illustrates how when the “field” is a separate plane from the building wall, it can still appear “rooted” to the building. This effect is partly due to the relative flatness of the “field” and partly due to the proportion of the field to the building façade.

In contrast, cabinet or “can” signs appear less “rooted” and more generic in dimensions and appearance. The cities of Kirkland and Shoreline require that where “can” signs are utilized in certain districts that the copy be light on a darker

field, rather than the reverse. The “Peets Coffee” sign is an example of light copy on dark field.

The type of signage illustrated here would be most appropriate in “Urban Neighborhood” and “Retail-Mixed Use” areas shown on Fig. 1.

Mesa AZ Freeway Landmark Monument Signs



The City of Mesa, Arizona has allowed shopping malls or centers to have a sign up to 100 feet tall oriented to state highways. From the examples shown above, it is apparent that Mesa has not seen fit to limit the amount of information or total signs on such “Freeway Landmark Monument Signs.”

Kirkland, WA Freeway Oriented Mall Sign



The City of Kirkland, Washington allowed this single tall shopping mall sign to be oriented to I-405. In contrast to the Arizona examples, this very tall sign identifies only the center and not the number of tenants, or even an anchor tenant. It also

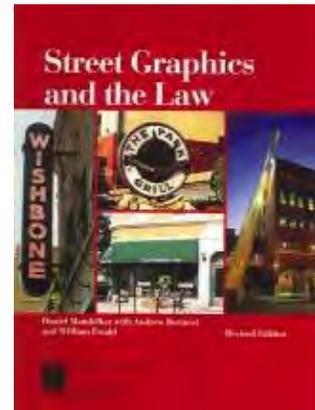
utilizes “channel lume” style lettering on the monument face and has a somewhat sculptural architectural character.

COMMENT: The “South Sound Center” mall does have a large freeway sign oriented to I-5. A form and character based approach to such “Freeway Landmark Monument” signs could be crafted to result in a larger, more prominent presence facing I-5. As noted below, the amount of copy on a sign, and the use of logos, has a strong influence on how legible and effective it can be.

Street Graphics A Concept and System for signs on arterials



The typical American commercial arterial



A different approach

COMMENT: The above image of Pacific Avenue in the 1960’s is typical of the anonymous clutter that has grown up along many American commercial arterials. Many things contributed to this chaotic, unattractive, landscape: too many pole signs, too many billboards, too much information on too many signs.

Many sign codes have addressed parts of this problem, for example, by prohibiting billboards or pole signs. The ongoing challenge is to provide needed visibility for businesses in environments such as Pacific Avenue while avoiding clutter and information overload. The use of low-rise sign monuments has not been entirely satisfactory for a variety of reasons. Those sign issues could be addressed as one component of a future form-based code project.

The concept of regulating the amount of information on signs bears consideration. The term “street graphics” refers to a system which sets limits not so much on the actual number of square footage of signs, but more on their location in the landscape (i.e., their “form”) and, significantly, the amount of information any one sign contains.

Using a “street graphics” system, the amount of information on a sign is measured by the number of “bits” of information, wherein each syllable or logo equals one bit

and each “broken plane” or “shape” of the sign, such as a rectangle or an oval, counts as one bit. This system is illustrated with the three examples below.



Example A



Example B



Example C

Example A has 43 total bits of information (one logo, 7 broken planes, 35 syllables)

Example B has 31 total bits of information (no logos, 7 broken planes, 24 syllables)

Example C has 19 total bits of information (one logo, 5 broken planes, 13 syllables)

While not a panacea for all sign issues in the “Edge Retail” districts, it would appear that controlling the total amount of information on a sign is one concept worth testing as part of a future “character and form” approach to sign regulation. The objective should be to provide businesses with needed identification while preventing information overload for drivers on Pacific, Sleater-Kinney and College.

Better private signage is one of several actions that the City can take to help develop a visible, distinct and memorable “brand” for the Woodland District. The City should also consider: (1) updated WSDOT signs in I-5 to direct motorists to “the Woodland District;” (2) new wayfinding signs on Sleater-Kinney, College and Pacific to improve awareness of the Urban Neighborhoods along 6th Avenue and around Woodland Square; and (3) improved street tree and landscaping standards to further enhance the visibility of business from these arterials.