



City of Prineville
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
STAFF REPORT

Date: September 3, 2008
To: Prineville City Council
From: Scott Edelman, Senior Planner
Issue: Ordinance 1156 – Big Box Design Standards

Summary:

Ordinance 1156, if approved by City Council, would amend Chapter 153 of the Prineville Code of Ordinances as follows:

- The Site Plan and Design Review Provisions would be moved from section 153.098 to newly created section 153.020.
- The text within this section would be amended for purposes of clarification and consistency with other sections of Chapter 153.
- Section 153.021 would be created which details special requirements for the development of “big box” buildings, defined within the proposed text as any building in a commercial zone with a footprint of over 20,000 square feet or any building in an industrial zone with over 20,000 square feet of retail sales area.

The additional standards would apply to any new construction of a building that meets the 20,000 square foot threshold or to any addition to a building that would expand a building that already exceeds this threshold or which would cause a building to exceed this threshold. Additions not visible from a public street would be exempt from these standards. Buildings designated on the Historic National Landmarks register or within the Crook County Fairgrounds would also be exempt from the additional standards.

The primary purpose of the more stringent requirements on larger buildings is to protect the aesthetics and character of the Prineville community that could be significantly affected by the development of a traditional “big box” store. The standards include additional requirements and restrictions related to landscaping, architectural design, location of parking, pedestrian and bicycle accessibility, colors and materials, and special amenities.

While the proposed standards are written primarily as set, measurable requirements, they are not intended to be inflexible and they include language that allows the Planning Commission to approve alternate designs that they find to meet the intent of the criteria.

At a public hearing on August 5, 2008, the Planning Commission voted 5 to 1 to formally recommend the text amendments proposed in Ordinance 1156 for consideration by the City Council.

Background:

Chapter 153 of the Prineville Code of Ordinances includes Site Plan and Design Review Provisions in section 153.098. These provisions are enforced through the review of any site plan for new construction or additions to existing buildings, with the exception of single family and duplex residences. While these standards do give the City a level of review in regard to building appearance and site layout, they tend to be vague and provide little guidance for either the developers or reviewing body of proposed projects.

The Prineville Urban Area Comprehensive Plan, adopted by the City Council in 2007, includes a program to develop design standards that encourage quality architecture, break up the mass of large buildings, provide pedestrian amenities, disperse parking and encourage upper floor development. In accordance with this program, staff drafted design standards that would have applied to any development within any commercial zone, regardless of the size. This draft was refined by the Planning Commission in January and February of 2008 and then presented to the community at a public hearing on March 18.

Approximately 60 community members attended this initial hearing and fifteen people provided public testimony, all but one of these speaking against the proposed standards. The primary reasons given for opposition were that the proposed standards were too strict and might hinder development, that they were too vague and could not be fairly administered, and that this was not the right time to implement increased standards considering the challenges of the economy.

As the result of this testimony, the Planning Commission continued the hearing in order to revise the draft to address some of the concerns. A second public hearing was held on May 20. While there were fewer in attendance at this second meeting, eight members of the community spoke in opposition to the standards, stating that they were still too stringent and would create too large of a burden on developers. Several speakers also stated that they would have liked to be involved at an earlier stage in the process of developing these standards.

There was one common element in support of the design standards that came out in both of the public hearings; a number of people in opposition to broad application of the design standards stated that they would support stricter standards being applied to big box stores due to the potential impact these large buildings could have on the character and aesthetics of the community.

Based on the lack of support from the community, the Planning Commission decided to postpone further discussion of city-wide design standards and focus on regulating big box stores. After several workshops focused on narrowing the standards to focus on the larger

impact buildings, the Planning Commission held a third public hearing in which they formally recommended the text amendment proposed in Ordinance 1156. The recommendation was passed by a vote of 5 to 1. The Planning Commissioner who voted against the recommendation cited the primary areas of disagreement as the threshold for defining a big box (arguing it should have been 35,000 or 40,000 square feet, not 20,000), the amount of required landscaping and the requirements for bike lanes along the primary entrance into the site.

Discussion:

Whenever additional standards and regulations are applied to any development, the key is always to find the right balance between protecting the community against negative impacts and encouraging investment in the community. While standards can, and have been applied in other cities, to try and restrict "big box" development, the general consensus among the participants who spoke at the public hearings was that these stores are desirable to Prineville residents as long as they are attractive and fit into the character of the community.

Several of the values and policies within the adopted Prineville Urban Area Comprehensive Plan address the need to promote quality development, including the following:

Commercial Zone Values and Policies

- Commercial projects that contain quality architecture, reflective of the locale and environment, mixed-uses, open spaces, pedestrian amenities, and adequate parking areas shall be required and promoted throughout the community as the city grows.
- Commercial projects that are aesthetically designed to blend in with the environment and are compatible with mixed-uses and residential areas will be encouraged over commercial developments that require large acreages and private parking fields.
- Existing strip commercial areas can be unsightly, unsafe, and create excessive vehicle trips. Successful development strategies should include methods for redeveloping and improving the curbside appearance and function of existing strip areas.
- New extensions of commercial strip areas shall be developed only when it can be proven that needed services could not be provided to the community without developing lands at the ends of existing strips. Such new extensions shall be designed as centers with shopping streets or lanes instead of direct highway access. Building setbacks in commercial strip areas shall be such as to minimize distances onto sidewalks and streets, thus encouraging safe and easy pedestrian and bicycle access.
- New commercial areas, not at the ends of existing strips shall be designed as commercial nodes or centers to avoid creating new strip areas.

Economic Values and Policies

- Ensuring a high quality of life and the small town atmosphere is essential to addressing citizen concerns about growth and economic development.

There are also values and policies in the Comprehensive Plan that reflect the need to maintain an economic environment that promotes investment into the community:

Commercial Zone Values and Policies

- Commercial zones shall be places that provide a wide range of services and goods to citizens in a convenient manner and without creating unnecessary subsidies.
- Commercial zone regulations should be flexible and include incentives to attract businesses to create a self-supporting community and competitive business environment.
- Commercial zones should provide adequate opportunities to locate and operate businesses so Prineville can be as self-sufficient as possible without requiring citizens to make excessive vehicle trips to other communities.

Economic Values and Policies

- Promoting an entrepreneurial climate for existing and new businesses is a key factor in strategic planning.

The standards proposed in Ordinance 1156 are intended to comply with these values and policies through the additional requirements for buildings that meet the 20,000 square foot threshold that allow flexibility for alternative means of meeting these standards. The following is a summary of the additional standards that would be applied to “big box” stores if this ordinance is passed:

- Architectural requirements including a minimum of five types of architectural features along 80% of the horizontal length of any wall visible from a public street.
- Regulations requiring a certain percent of window coverage based on the underlying zone, breaking up of vertical and horizontal wall and rooflines, and restrictions on certain types of materials and colors.
- Restriction of parking between a building and the street (the higher order street in the case of a corner lot) and dispersal of parking around the building.
- Landscape requirements to provide a visual buffer along public streets and residential properties and to break up the visual mass of the parking lot.
- Requirements to ensure bike and pedestrian accessibility, including clearly marked pedestrian pathways, securable bicycle parking facilities and bike lanes along the primary entrance into the site
- Special amenities to improve the appearance of the building/site and to provide amenities for pedestrians entering and using the site (such as wide sidewalks,

weather protection, outdoor seating, public art, or other amenities proposed by the developer).

The key task of the City Council is to determine whether these standards achieve the goal of protecting the community from negative visual impact and promoting the level of quality the community desires in commercial development without overly restricting the potential for investment and development.

City Council Action:

The City Council is requested to review the proposed ordinance 1156 to ensure compliance with the values and policies in the Comprehensive Plan and Council goals to determine whether the proposed standards are in the best interest of the community.

Options for Council action include:

1. Approve Ordinance 1156 as recommended by the Planning Commission.
2. Approve Ordinance 1156 with revisions to the recommendation by the Planning Commission.
3. Continue the public hearing on Ordinance 1156 to for additional citizen input and/or for further consideration and discussion among Council members.
4. Deny Ordinance 1156

Exhibits:

Exhibit A – Draft Design Review Standards

This is a color-coded document that shows the proposed changes to Chapter 153 of the Prineville Code of Ordinance and only includes the sections of Chapter 153 that would be amended.

Exhibit B – Ordinance 1156

This includes the full text of the ordinance if passed. Due to the length of this exhibit (245 pages) it is only being included in the Mayor's packet.