

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES STAFF REPORT

For Planning Commission Meeting of April 16, 2013

SUBJECT: R4C/R2A Recommendations Report

PROPOSED CITY PLANNING COMMISSION MOTION

Whereas, In March 2009, City Council directed the Planning Commission to review the zoning of certain residential neighborhoods in the Central Area to provide City Council with a report and recommendations for potential ordinance changes to these districts;

Whereas, In September 2009, City Council appointed members to the R4C/R2A Zoning District Study Advisory Committee (AC), which met 11 times to gather public input and discuss potential approaches to zoning changes in the R4C and R2A neighborhoods;

Whereas, The AC provided its recommendation report to the Planning Commission on May 4, 2012;

Whereas, The Planning Commission's Ordinance Revisions Committee (ORC) met 10 times since July 2012 to examine the tools recommended by the AC, research other tools and provide additional knowledge that complements the AC recommendations; and

Whereas, The Planning Commission reviewed the recommendations provided by the ORC at its working session of April 9, 2013;

RESOLVED, That the Planning Commission hereby forwards the R4C/R2A Recommendations Report dated April 11, 2013 to City Council, consistent with Resolution R-09-079; and

RESOLVED, That the Planning Commission hereby recommends that the City Council support the changes identified in the report and authorize Planning Commission and Planning staff to draft ordinance amendments consistent with the report recommendations.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the R4C/R2A Recommendations Report be **approved** because the amendments would help address citizen and staff concerns within the R4C Zoning District, implement the recommendations of the City's Master Plan and encourage appropriate development within the R4C and R2A zones.

STAFF REPORT

Attached is the final R4C/R2A Recommendations Report. The report is the result of a comprehensive multi-year study, directed by a City Council resolution and involving the R4C/R2A Advisory Committee, the Planning Commission's Ordinance Revisions Committee, citizen input, and Planning staff.

The Council resolution (attached) cited four "Priority Action Strategies" from the Central Area Plan (Chapter 7, Master Plan Land Use Element) to guide the study process. The Priority Action Strategies are:

HN1 – Analyze zoning nonconformities related to area, height and placement regulations for the Central Area neighborhoods and determine if amendments are needed to make the regulations more consistent with established development patterns

HN12 – Amend the zoning ordinance and map to clearly identify areas to be maintained or encouraged as housing

HN14 – Reinforce student neighborhoods in the area south and west of Central Campus by developing new zoning definitions and standards that support organized group housing opportunities

HP 17 – Develop site design standards that encourage creative design, while maintaining sensitivity for existing neighborhood character

The Council resolution directed the Planning Commission to provide City Council with a report and recommendations for potential ordinance changes to the R4C and R2A districts to implement the priority action strategies.

BACKGROUND

The R4C/R2A study process began in late 2009, when the City Council appointed a citizen advisory committee to identify potential zoning changes to address community concerns about redevelopment in the R4C and R2A zoning districts. The R4C/R2A Zoning District Study Advisory Committee (AC) met regularly for a year and a half to solicit feedback and identify potential solutions.

In May 2012, the AC completed a report containing its recommendations (attached). The report identified zoning tools that could be used to guide appropriate redevelopment, primarily in the R4C district. The report also highlighted the importance of character in existing neighborhoods and looked to de-incentivize demolition of existing structures to create new, larger structures.

In July 2012, the ORC began its work to examine and build upon the recommendations of the AC. The ORC and Planning staff have met 10 times since then. In addition to these meetings, the ORC and staff conducted a walking tour of several R4C neighborhoods.

The goals of the ORC have been to examine the tools recommended by the AC, research other tools and provide additional knowledge that complements the AC report. The work completed by

the AC helped emphasize the fact that some of the goals of the City master plan are not being served by existing zoning tools. The ORC expanded the scope of research into possible solutions beyond what the AC was able to consider.

The ORC's recommendations were reviewed by the Planning Commission at the April 9, 2013 working session. As a result of that discussion, recommendations regarding parking and third floor step backs were revised and narrative explaining the Phase 2 recommendations was added.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In summary, the Planning Commission has reviewed and confirmed the Advisory Committee's recommendations for non-conformities, rezoning, R4C minimum lot size/width and density. The Planning Commission recommends small changes to setback and parking requirements for the R4C district. Finally, four substantive changes to the AC recommendations are proposed and summarized below:

Lot Combinations – The majority option on the AC was to institute a maximum lot size of 6,535 sf, equal to an allowable density of three units. The ORC felt that, due to the wide variety of lot sizes in the R4C district, this requirement might unduly limit appropriate redevelopment. In addition, a maximum lot size could make existing larger lots non-conforming due to their size. As a result, the ORC recommends that lot combinations be required to receive Planning Commission approval as part of an associated site plan review. Review standards would be developed that the Commission would apply to determine if the combination and associated redevelopment is compatible with the surrounding area. Design and massing standards would also be developed. These review standards would give Planning Commission and/or City Council the discretion to approve projects that meet character and scale of the existing neighborhoods but require a larger parcel size. This discretion would be based on standards that will allow each project to be judged on its specific characteristics. This approach could allow creative projects, with small scale massing of buildings on a larger lot. Large lots also allow the opportunity for inclusion of storm water and landscape improvements.

Overlay District/Design and Massing Standards – The AC and the ORC grappled with ways in which to protect the residential development pattern, massing and streetscape of the R4C district. The AC ultimately recommended the creation of overlay districts on a neighborhood-by-neighborhood basis. The ORC felt this approach had merit, but given the wide variety of neighborhoods in the R4C zone, instead focused on an area identified in the Central Area Plan for "group housing opportunities," located generally south and west of Central Campus (see attached map). After implementation of the "Phase 1" recommendations for all R4C-zoned parcels, this "Phase 2" initiative would rezone this area to allow for flexibility through use of premiums and floor area ratio limitations, in exchange for community benefits such as adherence to pedestrian-friendly and architectural design standards.

Conflicting Land Use Buffer – A change to the Landscape Ordinance in 2011 expanded the conflicting land use buffer requirement in R4 districts to apply to the screening of buildings, in addition to vehicular use areas. This change has resulted in an increase in variance requests for redevelopment in R4C districts, given the small size of the lots. This issue was not discussed by the AC. The ORC recommends that the conflicting land use buffer be returned to the pre-2011 requirement for screening of vehicular use areas only.

R2A Changes – The AC chose not to recommend zoning changes for the R2A zoning district because the current redevelopment issues are minimal. The ORC recommends further study to determine if the R2A lot size should be reduced to 6,000 square feet to allow opportunities for duplex conversions. This number is based on the lot size requirement prior to being raised to 8,500 sf in 1984.

A chart comparing the existing code, the AC recommendations and the Planning Commission recommendations is attached as part of the R4C/R2A Recommendations Report

NEXT STEPS

If approved by Planning Commission, the report and resolution will be forwarded to City Council in May as a communication item. The draft Planning Commission resolution requests that City Council support the recommendations and authorize the Commission to begin work on ordinance amendments. After action by City Council, staff will proceed with drafting appropriate ordinance language in coordination with the ORC. All proposed ordinance changes will require public hearings at Planning Commission and City Council and will need City Council approval for adoption.

Prepared by Matthew Kowalski
Reviewed by Wendy Rampson

Attachment: April 11, 2013 R4C/R2A Recommendations Report
May 4, 2012 R4C/R2A Zoning District Study Advisory Committee Report
March 2, 2009 City Council Resolution R-09-079

c: City Attorney