

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Andrew Warren, Planning and Building Department Director

RE: Zoning Ordinance Amendment #60/Ordinance #2001 – Zoning Ordinance Amendment to create a new Downtown Northwest zoning district

DATE: October 11, 2024

The Downtown Northwest zoning district overlay is a voluntary, geography-based district in the Downtown area, specifically the land bounded by North Main Street, Turner Street, and Prices Fork Road. The Planning Commission heard and made a recommendation on the ordinance in December 2022. However, at the Town Council work sessions, there was significant discussion regarding overall maximum building height, and related design elements.

Based on Town Council direction, revisions were made to the draft ordinance text. Town Council referred the revised ordinance back to the Planning Commission for review. The revised draft ordinance provides the following changes: (1) Existing building height in DC is 60 feet; (2) Proposed Maximum height 60'-75', higher interior to the site; (3) Maximum of 35' abutting St. Luke and Oddfellows Hall; and (4) Building step back locations. After several revisions to the draft ordinance, the Town hosted a public input meeting to go over the changes and received public comment on Thursday, June 13, 2024. Please find the meeting notes attached.

Planning Commission held a public hearing on Tuesday, August 6, 2024. The public hearing was continued to Tuesday, September 3, 2024 when it was subsequently closed without further action. The Commission directed staff to further study the impacts of height on the surrounding areas and report back at a future work session. Staff has worked with Chris Jennette, Camiros Ltd. (consultant) to review potential ordinance revisions in regards to building height and will present this along with a number of 3-D model renderings at the work session on Tuesday.

Attachment:

- Public Input Meeting Notes – June 13, 2024

PUBLIC INPUT MEETING

ZOA #60 Downtown Northwest Zoning Amendment Request

Thursday, June 13, 2024

5:30 PM

Town staff present included Kali Casper, Matt Hanratty, Kinsey O'Shea, Kasey Thomsen and Grayson Bennett.

Kali Casper, Assistant Planning Director opened the meeting by giving a short presentation. Casper gave a brief overview of the district and the details of the zoning ordinance amendment.

The meeting was open to all questions and comments:

- An attendee suggested to let the public process run a natural course with this amendment instead of taking it to Town Council with already set-in-stone parameters.
- An attendee asked if the Town plans to do more study about the appropriate density for this area because higher standards require higher development costs. Having the density (site standards, footprint, height, etc.) appropriate and adequate for this district will be critical for producing projects that developers can build. The attendee stated that have concerns about the current amendment draft particularly regarding the feasibility of the 75 foot height.
- A participant asked what would happen if owners in the district do not adhere to the 3.5 acres minimum standard.
- A participant asked if there is a neighborhood that exhibits what Council wants this district to look like.
- An attendee stated that 3.5 acres is a lot of land for this area. They asked if there was a mechanism that could meet all the other requirements but have lower acreage. The attendee stated that a 2.5 acres project might be better for the area than 5 or more by-right properties.
- An attendee asked about the total area of the district. The attendee stated that there could only be one rezoning possible.
- An attendee asked if one 3.5 parcel gets rezoned to this district, what would happen with any remaining acreage in the district.
- A participant asked if a higher building height could be obtained through a conditional use permit request.
- A participant asked about the options, if any, if a smaller property within the district wanted to make changes.
- An attendee asked if there has been any consideration to creating more visibility for the Odd Fellows Hall by moving it to a different location and creating more space for developers in that area.
- An attendee asked how the Odd Fellows Hall responded to this request.
- A participant asked who to send comments to regarding this amendment request and what the deadline is for comments.
- A participant asked if there has been any discussion about the Town wanting to develop a certain parcel and asking the developers to work together to submit a plan. The participant

stated that the height regulations need to be studied more or developers will not be able to develop a viable project.

- An attendee asked if there is a chance that the height regulations may change.
- An attendee asked about the height of the VT Foundation building. The attendee asked why that height is not proposed in this district.
- An attendee asked if the height measurement is taken from street level. The attendee asked about the height of the Midtown Hotel building and how its height was measured.
- A participant asked how the amendment addresses street parking. The participant stated that street parking is particularly needed for urban developments.
- A participant stated that the height needs to accommodate topography
- An attendee asked if the Downtown Study currently being conducted comes back with results that this amendment is not feasible for the area, what the Town's next step would be.
- An attendee asked how a zoning amendment is started and how does the process work.
- A participant asked if it wouldn't be more efficient to submit a project and ask for a variance.
- A participant asked if there will be a public presentation of the Downtown Study results.

The public input meeting was adjourned at 6:29 pm.