

D# 22 MINIMUM DENSITY IN THE CD ZONE

General Description

The City of Renton Planning Division made this docket item request. This item proposes to amend RMC 4-2-120B, Development Standards for Commercial Zoning Designations, to eliminate the exemption from minimum density requirements for legal lots ½ acre or less in size as of March 1, 1995 within the Center Downtown (CD) Zone, which is implemented by the Urban Center Downtown (UC-D) land use designation. In addition, this docket item looks at reducing the minimum density for the CD zone to 15 dwelling units per acre from 25 dwelling units per acre.

Impact Analysis

Effect on rate of growth, development, and conversion of land as envisioned in the Plan

This exemption for minimum density applies to approximately 40 percent of the total land area of the CD zone (320 lots out of 355 lots). The minimum density only applies to 60 percent of the land area (35 lots). The removal of this exemption would have an effect on many single-family properties in this zone. Because of this potential impact to the existing single-family lots in the CD zone, this docket item would also reduce the minimum density for the CD from 25 to 15 dwelling unit per acre. An average single-family lot size within the CD zone is approximately 4,500 square feet. The land use pattern that would result from redevelopment of these lots at the new minimum density could be duplexes and/or triplexes (based on lot size). This type of land use pattern would be compatible with the established single-family neighborhoods within the CD zone. This docket item would have effect on rate of growth, development, and conversion of land as envisioned in the Plan because of the proposed reduced minimum densities.

Based on the 2007 Buildable Lands Summary Report, the housing capacity identified for the CD zone is 770 units. These numbers were established without the anticipation that approximately 40 percent of the land within the CD zone would be exempt from minimum density requirements. If this exemption remains within Title IV, the City will need to reevaluate the housing capacity for the CD zone, as the 770 units would not be an accurate number to represent the actual housing capacity for this area.

This exemption mainly applies to lots that contain single-family dwelling units or small multi-family complexes (duplexes and triplexes). This exemption allows redevelopment of these small lots to continue in this type of land use pattern. This land use pattern may be appropriate for specific areas within the CD zone, for example the South Renton Neighborhood. Although, this type of development would not be compatible with existing land use patterns in other portion of the CD zone. The purpose statement for the Urban Center Downtown (UC-D) land use designation states that UC-D residential development is expected to support urban scale multi-family projects at high densities. The exemption is not consistent with the intended purpose of the areas land use designation; although, maintaining a minimum density of 15 dwelling units per acre would be consistent because redevelopment would be subject to a minimum density instead of none at all.

The removal of this exemption from Title IV would not preclude the existing single-family homes from remaining as such. If these lots are redeveloped, minimum densities established by the zone would be required to be met. Furthermore, requiring redevelopment at minimum densities may encourage land assembly, which could result in high quality, high-density development that is envisioned in the Comprehensive Plan that may not be built otherwise. Land assembly is an important aspect to establish quality urban infill development, as numerous small parcels and fragmented ownership hinder spontaneous market-driven transformations.

Effect on the City's capacity to provide adequate public facilities

Not applicable. There are no anticipated effects on the City's capacity to provide adequate public facilities created by the proposed changes.

Effect on the rate of population and employment growth

The 2007 Buildable Lands Report identifies the Assumed Future Residential Density for the CD zone at 97.75 dwelling units per acre. The future assumed density may be reduced if the minimum density is reduced to 15 dwelling units per acre versus 25 dwelling units per acre, therefore theoretically resulting in a negative effect on population growth in the Center Downtown. Removal of the exemption from minimum density would support the anticipated population growth established by 2007 Buildable Lands Report or the Comprehensive Plan for the CD zone. The combination of removal of the exemption and the decrease in minimum density would result in a potential population growth because 40 percent of the land area within the CD zone would be subject to at least 15 dwelling units per acre, where currently they are exempt from minimum density.

Whether Plan objectives are being met as specified or remain valid and desirable

Objective LU-PP indicated that development in the downtown should "provide a vibrant downtown district that provides a mix of high density urban land uses that support transit and the further synergism of public and private sector activities." Furthermore, Policy LU-200, LU-202, LU-204 and LU-207 indicate that the Center Downtown should be a place for the "widest mix of residential and commercial uses", "should strive for urban density and intensity", "should achieve an urban density and intensity of development that is greater than typical suburban neighborhoods", and should promote "medium to high-density residential development" respectively. Requiring minimum densities for all lots located within the CD zone would support the objectives and policies indicated in the Plan and these objectives would remain valid and desirable.

Effect on general land values or housing costs

This docket item is not anticipated to have an effect on general land values or housing costs.

Whether capital improvements or expenditures are being made or completed as expected

Not applicable.

Consistency with GMA, the Plan, and Countywide Planning Policies

The GMA, Countywide Planning Policies, and the Comprehensive Plan emphasize the importance of coordination between jurisdictions when planning for future growth. As noted above under “Whether plan objectives are being met as specified or remain valid and desirable” staff has identified consistency with the City’s Comprehensive Plan Objectives for the UC-D/CD designation.

GMA has identified 13 different goals that jurisdictions shall implement within their Comprehensive Plans. These goals include, but are not limited to, the encouragement of development in urban areas where adequate public facilities and services exist or can be provided and the reduction of inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development. This amendment is consistent with these two GMA goals.

The CD zone is located within a Designated Regional Growth Center as identified by Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC). In addition, Objective LU-RR has indicated that the City should “encourage additional residential development in the Urban Center-Downtown” which supports the Countywide Planning Policies as Renton is an Urban Center for King County. King County Policy U-109 supports development in Urban Centers to meet the region’s needs for housing. Small lot in-fill development at minimum densities would be consistent with Countywide Planning Policies. If redevelopment of small lots in the Center Downtown is less the established minimum densities then GMA, County and City Planning Policies would not be met.



PSRC's 2008, Regional Growth Center Map

Effect on critical areas and natural resource lands

There is no foreseen effect on critical areas and natural resource lands.

Effect on other considerations

Not applicable.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends approval of the docket request to remove the exemption from minimum density requirements for legal lots ½ acre or less in size as of March 1, 1995 and decrease the minimum density to 15 dwelling units per acre within the Center Downtown zone.

Implementation Requirements

Section RMC4-2-120B, Development Standards for Commercial Zoning Designations should be amended to reflect this proposal as identified in Attachment A.