

# Agenda Report

TO: CITY COUNCIL

DATE: APRIL 28, 2003

FROM: CITY MANAGER

SUBJECT: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DEMOLITION MORATORIUM STUDY  
AREAS 1, 2, AND 12; INITIATION OF ZONING OVERLAY DISTRICT  
CODE AMENDMENT AND ZONING MAP AMENDMENTS

## **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended the City Council direct staff to initiate the following zoning code and zoning map amendments:

- To establish a Special Overlay District that would limit RM-32 multifamily development projects within the Overlay District to heights of 23 feet to the top plate and 32 feet to the highest ridgeline;
- To adopt the Special Overlay District for parcels designated RM-32 in whole or in part within Sub-Area C of Zoning Study Area 1, which is bounded generally by Altadena Drive, Colorado Boulevard, San Gabriel Boulevard, and Morningside Street and also within Zoning Study Area 12, which is bounded by Allendale Road, Euclid Avenue, and Marengo Avenue.

## **PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION**

The Planning Commission, April 9, 2003, recommended that the City Council adopt the staff recommendation above, with amendments, to initiate the zoning code and map amendment. The Planning Commission recommendation amended the staff recommendation as follows: to initiate the overlay zoning district in Zoning Study Area 2, as well as in the two areas recommended by staff.

In addition the Planning Commission recommended (1) that the standards for the overlay district respond to any future changes in the City of Gardens multifamily development ordinance, to maintain the purposes of the overlay district, and also (2)

that the wording of the recommendation be revised in order to clarify the boundaries of the proposed zoning district for Sub-area C of Study Area 1.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Staff recommends that the City Council initiate the process for zoning code and map amendments to limit the height of new multifamily development in Sub-area C of Study Area 1 and in Study Area 12, both of which were the subject of moratoriums on demolition to allow time to review changes in neighborhood character. The City Council adopted moratoriums on residential demolitions in three areas of the city, so staff could return with analysis concerning the effects of new development on neighborhood character and recommendations for measures where necessary to protect that character. In addition to the two areas recommended by staff, the Planning Commission recommends initiation in Study Area 2 as well. This report provides a summary of the analysis of the three Study Areas and recommendations to address potential changes there.

## **BACKGROUND**

Staff identified twelve multifamily designated Zoning Study Areas for study of the effects of new development on existing neighborhoods. In three designated Study Areas, the City Council adopted a moratorium on demolitions, for initial periods of forty-five days, because the pace of demolition approvals indicated that potential impacts on the existing neighborhoods were distinctly higher than in the remaining nine Study Areas.

This report summarizes the conclusions of the study in the three areas that were protected by moratoriums on demolition. The three Study Areas are Zoning Study Areas 1, 2, and 12. The other nine Study Areas will be considered at a later date.

If the City Council initiates the proposed zoning code and map amendments, staff will complete the necessary process for the amendments. Staff will hold neighborhood meetings to receive input from residents and property owners on the proposed changes. With the comments received, staff will return to the Planning Commission and the City Council for approval of the proposed amendments in May and June, respectively.

## **PROJECT ANALYSIS**

Staff analyzed the character of the existing development with a field survey that provided parcel-specific information of Study Areas 1, 2, and 12. In this field survey, staff collected information concerning the following topics: number of units, lot sizes, density, height, front yard setback, exterior materials, parking configuration, date of construction, historic significance, and exterior condition. Parcel-specific information for five of the topics was mapped: number of units, density, height, date of construction,

and exterior condition (see Attachments I-1, II-1 and III-1). Staff evaluated the patterns of parcel development in relation to the zoning districts within the Study Areas, primarily RM-16 and RM-32.

Density, the rate of change, height, and potential loss of historically significant structures are the most prominent factors affecting the character of existing neighborhoods in the Zoning Study Areas. After an analysis of each Study Area, staff identified four distinct options to consider in addressing the effects of new development on the Study Areas.

1. Use of RM-16 Zoning District: Both the rate and the scale of development in the RM-16 districts are significantly lower than in the RM-32 districts. With three exceptions, recent development in the three Zoning Study Areas is within RM-32 (Multifamily) zoning districts, not RM-16. The height of multifamily development in RM-16 districts is limited to two stories, or specifically to 23 feet to the top plate and 32 feet to the highest ridgeline, rather than to the three stories up to 36 feet in height permitted in the rear portion of certain RM-32 parcels.
2. Special Height Overlay District: The current RM-32 standards permit development to a height of three stories and 36 feet to the highest ridgeline in the rear 40 percent of sites that are 60 feet in width or greater, though the front 60 percent is limited to two stories. On lots, or sites, of less than 60 feet in width, however, the height is limited to 23 feet to the top plate and 32 feet to the highest ridgeline (i.e., two stories) in the rear 40 percent of the site as well as the front 60 percent. A special height overlay district could limit the height of development to two stories, that is, to 23 feet (top plate) and 32 feet (highest ridgeline), in the rear 40 percent regardless of the width of the site.
3. Landmark District Designation: A landmark district protects the historically significant character of a neighborhood. Demolition may be denied for contributing structures within the district. New development is reviewed according to the specific requirements of the landmark district, in addition to those of the base zoning district (e.g., RM-16).
4. Revisions to the City of Gardens Ordinance: The City of Gardens standards, which regulate multifamily development, are currently under review to determine how effectively they implement the purposes of the ordinance. Revisions may provide greater consistency between the purposes of the ordinance and the outcomes, if problems are identified.

The three Zoning Study Areas vary in scale and character. Each of the three Study Areas is analyzed in Appendix A. Conclusions of that analysis are described below.

**Zoning Study Area 1:** Study Area 1 (Attachment I-1) includes 476 parcels that are zoned RM-16 and RM-32 in an area generally bounded by Bonnie Avenue on the west, San Gabriel Boulevard on the east, Colorado Boulevard on the north and Del Mar Boulevard on the south. Of the 476 parcels, 285 parcels, or 60 percent, are presently zoned RM-16.

For purposes of detailed analysis, three smaller sub-areas within Study Area 1 were independently analyzed. **Sub-area A**, which is defined as the area between Bonnie Avenue on the west and Grand Oaks Avenue on the east is primarily zoned RM-16, with RM-32 zoning in those areas with densities that are already above 16 units per acre and generally adjacent to the commercial properties on Colorado Boulevard (see Attachments I-1, I-2, and I-3).

**Conclusion – Sub-area A:**

*Development on RM-16 sites in the area is uncommon and, when it does occur, has been at a scale consistent with the existing neighborhoods. The RM-32 zoning reflects prior development at greater densities, and proposed projects are located within those areas where the greater density is predominant. Staff recommends no change in the base zoning districts for the area between Bonnie Avenue and Grand Oaks Avenue.*

**Sub-area B**, which extends from Grand Oaks Avenue on the west to Altadena Drive on the east, consists of 100 parcels. The zoning for this area is exclusively RM-32 (see Attachment I-1). It includes a mix of uses, but especially multifamily housing at densities above 16 units per acre (see Attachment I-2). Twenty parcels are developed at densities higher than 32 units per acre (see Attachment I-3). Development is predominantly from the period between 1960 and 1989 (see Attachment I-5). Older structures exist, but projects are proposed or are under construction on five of these parcels (see Attachment I-1).

**Conclusion – Sub-area B:**

*The character of the area between Grand Oaks Avenue and Altadena Drive is consistent with the RM-32 zoning, and the projects proposed for the area reinforce its existing character. Staff recommends that the zoning remain RM-32.*

**Sub-area C** within Study Area 1 extends from Altadena Drive on the west to San Gabriel Boulevard on the east, plus six parcels on the east side of San Gabriel Boulevard at Morningside Street. The parcels between Colorado Boulevard and Morningside Street that front on north-south streets are generally zoned RM-32. The parcels that front on Morningside Street itself are zoned RM-16, with the exception of the two large corner parcels at Altadena Drive (see Attachments I-1 and I-2). Densities within the RM-32 district vary from single-family densities to densities above 32 units per acre (see Attachment I-3). Dates of construction vary, with little consistency except in the block bounded by Vinedo Avenue and San Gabriel Boulevard, Colorado Boulevard and Morningside Street, where Study Area development is exclusively from the period between 1960 and 1989 (see Attachment I-5). Building heights are one and two stories (see Attachment I-4) for projects at the full range of densities in the area.

Conclusion – Sub-area C:

*This relationship suggests the need to reduce the potential height of development in the rear 40 percent of parcels in the RM-32 district in this area. Staff recommends initiation of amendments to the zoning code and the zoning map (1) to establish an overlay district with a two-story limit on the rear 40 percent of parcels in RM-32 districts and (2) to adopt such an overlay district in the area between Altadena Drive and San Gabriel Boulevard.*

*The present code prohibits heights above 23 feet at the top plate and 32 feet at the highest ridgeline on RM-32 parcels that are less than 60 feet in width. The overlay district would extend that prohibition to parcels 60 feet in width or greater. The overlay would both limit the height of RM-32 development and also discourage consolidation of parcels to create sites that are inconsistent with the character of development in the area.*

**Zoning Study Area 2:** Study Area 2 (Attachment II-1) includes the 69 parcels that are zoned either RM-32 or PD-8 within the area bounded by Marengo Avenue and Euclid Avenue, Alpine Street and Wallis Street. Of the 69 parcels, 57 parcels are zoned RM-32 and 12 parcels at PD-8, also permitting 32 units per acre (see Attachments II-1 and II-2). Adjacent to the Study Area to the east, parcels are zoned RS-6. Parcels zoned RS-6 and fronting on the east-west streets separate the Study Area parcels from the rear areas of RS-6 parcels fronting on Euclid Avenue. As a result, three-story RM-32 development may abut the RS-6 parcels only at their side property lines, not at the rear property lines of the RM-32 parcels.

Conclusion:

*Staff recommends that the existing RM-32 and PD-8 be maintained in Study Area 2, because the designations are the most consistent with the existing character of development, especially the density, in the Study Area. However, it is noted that the Planning Commission recommends that an overlay district be considered for Study Area 2 as well.*

**Zoning Study Area 12:** Study Area 12 (Attachment XII-1) includes a total of 41 parcels. Of the 41 parcels, 33 parcels are zoned for single-family houses, RS-6. Another parcel and a portion of a second is zoned PS for public or semi-public space. Seven parcels are located, in whole or in part, within the RM-32 district and are the focus of the study.

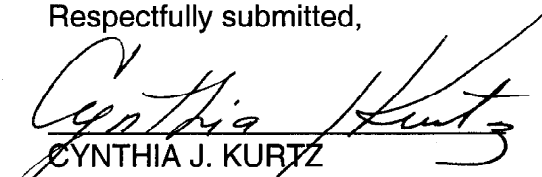
Conclusion:

*Staff recommends that the RM-32 zoning district be retained and that an overlay district be adopted to limit heights to two stories, as described above. The two-story overlay district will assure compatibility between the height of any future development within the RM-32 district and the single-family parcels that abut the rear portions of certain RM-32 parcels.*

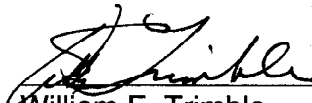
**FISCAL IMPACT**

If the City Council initiates the zoning code and map amendments, staff will complete and implement the amendment process as part of existing budgeted work program.

Respectfully submitted,

  
CYNTHIA J. KURTZ  
City Manager

Prepared by:

  
William E. Trimble  
Planner

Approved by:

  
FOR Richard J. Bruckner  
Director of Planning and Development

Appendix A: Analysis of Zoning Study Areas

Attachments:

- I Maps for Zoning Study Area 1
  - I-1 Zoning and Proposed New Dwelling Units
  - I-2 Existing Number of Dwelling Units
  - I-3 Density
  - I-4 Number of Stories
  - I-5 Year Built
  
- II Maps for Zoning Study Area 2
  - II-1 Zoning and Proposed New Dwelling Units
  - II-2 Existing Number of Dwelling Units
  - II-3 Density
  - II-4 Number of Stories
  - II-5 Year Built
  
- XII Maps for Zoning Study Area 12
  - XII-1 Zoning and Proposed New Dwelling Units
  - XII-2 Existing Number of Dwelling Units
  - XII-3 Density
  - XII-4 Number of Stories
  - XII-5 Year Built