

BACKGROUND

The Commission, on March 24, 2004, initiated a study of the parcels that are zoned RM-32 Multi-family Residential in the block that is bounded by California Boulevard, South Lake Avenue, Oakwood Place, and Hudson Avenue (Attachment A.). Staff reviewed the existing development, including the land use, number of units, density, and heights. In addition, staff considered development in the surrounding area, especially the single-family RS-6 district to the west abutting the study area parcels. Staff reported an initial recommendation for a two-story overlay district to the Commission on December 6, 2004, and held a neighborhood meeting to discuss the option with residents and property owners on January 27, 2005. On March 9, 2005, the Commission, following a public hearing, recommended approval of the Height Limit Overlay District.

ANALYSIS

Height Limit Overlay District: The proposed HL-1 Height Limit Overlay District would limit heights to two stories, rather than the three stories now permitted, at the rear of larger RM-32 parcels. It would limit development at the rear of affected parcels to 23 feet at the top plate and 32 feet at the highest ridgeline, the top of the roof. A limit of 23 feet to the top plate, where the roof and the outside wall intersect, has the effect of limiting a structure to two stories. The proposed Height Limit Overlay District would affect only development sites in the RM-32 district that are 60 feet or more in width.

Under the City of Gardens development standards, the maximum height for development in an RM-32 district varies depending on the width of the particular parcel. For sites with widths of less than 60 feet, the limit is 23 feet to the top plate and 32 feet to the highest ridgeline. These sites would not be affected by the Overlay District, because they are currently limited to two stories.

For sites with widths of 60 feet or more there are separate height limits for the front 60 percent and the rear 40 percent of the parcel, where three stories are permitted. The limit in the front 60 percent is 24 feet to the highest ridgeline, with no limit on the top plate. For the rear 40 percent, however, the limit is 36 feet, again with no limit on the top plate, thus allowing three stories. The proposed Height Limit Overlay District would affect the rear 40 percent on sites that are at least 60 feet in width, limiting the rear 40 percent on the sites to two stories rather than the current three stories.

The proposed HL-1 Overlay District would not affect the limit for the front 60 percent on the wider parcels, which is already limited to two stories. In addition to the basic height limits described above, the City of Gardens standards also limit heights for the first 15 feet behind the required front yard area, i.e., the required setback. Both the required setback and the limit on height for 15 feet behind that setback are determined by the setbacks and heights of other

buildings on the blockface. If more than 50 percent of the buildings on the blockface of the project and of the blockface on the opposite side of the street have a one-story element at the street, the project is limited to one story for a distance of 15 feet behind the required front yard. Otherwise, the basic height limits for the parcel control the height at the front. This one-story limit would not be affected by the Overlay District.

Study Area: The area is bounded at the north by parcels zoned CD 5 (Central District 5), with a market and coffee and bagel shops, where residential densities were reduced to 16 units per acre with implementation of the Central District Specific Plan. On the west at the rear property lines, parcels are zoned RS-6, primarily single-family homes. Development on the opposite side of Lake Avenue is multi-family, zoned RM-32, and predominantly three stories.

There are nine parcels that are zoned RM-32 in whole or in part and subject to the City of Gardens standards, with the following addresses and development:

- 621 and 623 -- Parking for commercial development in the CD 5 district (variances for the parking lot, 1952 and 1958)
- 637 – 3 units, with a density of 13.3 units per acre and height of one story
- 647 – 4 units, 18.1 units per acre and height of two stories
- 651 – Vacant (formerly, 2 units, 9.0 units per acre)
- 657 – 4 units, 18.1 units per acre and height of one and one half stories
- 665 – 6 units, 26.6 units per acre and height of two stories
- 677 – 10 units, 45.2 units per acre and height of two stories

The rear portion of a ninth parcel, which fronts on California Boulevard, is within the RM-32 district, though the majority of the parcel is zoned CD 5.

All existing development on the nine parcels has a height of two stories or less.

Development is pending or under construction on three of the eight parcels on South Lake Avenue:

- 637 and 647 – 12 units, 26.9 units per acre (agendized for consolidated design review)
- 651 – 5 units, 22.6 units per acre (building permit issued March 14, 2005)

The twelve-unit project at 637 and 647 South Lake was submitted for consolidated design review on November 19, 2004 and was on the agenda of the Design Commission on February 28, 2005 and continued with other items to March 14, 2005. On March 14, 2005, the case was continued to April 11. On March 21, 2005, the City Council called for review the approval of a Vesting Tentative Tract Map, which the Subdivision Committee approved on March 9, 2005. The proposed Council hearing date is April 25, 2005. The project is three stories in height in the rear 40 percent, as currently permitted under the City of Gardens standards for the site, which is more than 60 feet in width.

The five-unit project at 651 South Lake received a building permit on March 14, 2005. It received consolidated design review approval in July 2003, and a major modification was approved in March 2004. The project is subject to, and complies with, the two-story limit (i.e., 23-foot limit to the top plate) for sites less than 60 feet in width under the City of Gardens standards in PMC 17.22).

Existing development on four of the six residentially developed parcels exceeds density of 16 units per acre. A project also exceeding 16 units per acre (i.e., 651 South Lake) is in plan check. Based on the existing and approved development on five of the six parcels, staff does not recommend reducing the permitted density from 32 to 16 units per acre, thus making development of five parcels nonconforming. In addition, proposed development on two parcels, including one of those that already exceed 16 units per acre, is pending. The RM-32 district is appropriate for development in the area.

Three-story development, which is allowed on sites 60 feet or greater in width, however, has the potential to be incompatible with the RS-6 single-family district at the rear property lines. Development on Hudson Avenue is one and two stories in height, as is existing development in the study area. The HL-1 Height Limit Overlay District (PMC 17.28.050) limits heights on parcels 60 feet or greater in width to the two-story limit (i.e., 23 feet to top plate) that applies to parcels less than 60 feet in width. The Overlay District would limit multi-family development at the rear of the parcels to heights that are more compatible with the single-family neighborhood at the rear property lines. In addition, it would reduce the incentive to consolidate parcels to create development sites that are larger than are characteristic in the study area and in the single-family neighborhood at the rear.

In contrast to the development that is characteristic of the RM-32 multi-family district on the east side of Lake Avenue, there is no existing development of three stories within the study area.

CONSISTENCY WITH GENERAL PLAN AND ZONING CODE

The proposed zoning code provisions and zoning map amendments are consistent with the City's General Plan and purposes of the zoning code and will advance the specific objectives and policies listed below:

Land Use Element

Objective 1 – TARGETED DEVELOPMENT: Direct higher-density development away from Pasadena’s residential neighborhoods and into targeted areas, creating an exciting urban core with diverse economic, housing, cultural and entertainment opportunities.

Policy 1.9 – Other Geographical Areas: Limit development outside targeted development areas.

The proposed overlay district in the Study Areas will limit the scale of development outside the targeted development areas while permitting the density allowable under the General Plan diagram.

Objective 5 – CHARACTER AND SCALE OF PASADENA: Preservation of Pasadena’s character and scale, including its traditional urban design form and historic character, shall be given highest priority in the consideration of future development.

Policy 5.4 – Neighborhood Character and Identity: Urban design programs, including principles and guidelines, shall recognize, maintain and enhance the character and identity of existing residential and commercial neighborhoods.

Housing Element

Policy 1.1 – Preserve the character, scale, and quality of established residential neighborhoods.

Zoning Code

The proposed zoning map amendment is consistent with the specific purposes for the multifamily zoning districts in the Zoning Code’s Chapter 17.22 Residential Zoning Districts, which include:

Relate new development to the existing environment in scale, material and character so that Pasadena’s inherent human scale, visual and functional diversity may be maintained and enhanced.

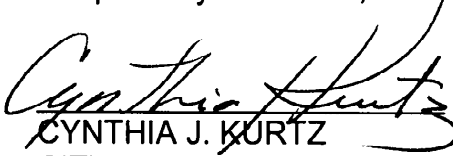
ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION

An Initial Environmental Study recommending a Negative Declaration has been completed for the proposed zoning code amendment and proposed zone changes. The study determined that the proposed changes will not have a significant impact on the environment. The draft Initial Study and Negative Declaration was available for review beginning on February 17, 2005.

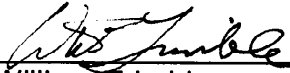
FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with approval of the proposed zoning map amendment.

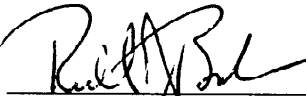
Respectfully submitted,


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Attachments:

- A. South Lake Study Area Map
- B. Negative Declaration and Initial Study
- C. Department of Fish and Game – De Minimis Impact Finding