

Memo



To: Midland City Planning Commission
From: Grant Murschel
Director of Planning & Community Development
Date: January 17, 2019
Re: Downtown Transition and Midtown Zoning Review

Background

Since early 2018, City staff has been engaged with residents and property/business owners within the Midtown neighborhood to discuss planning for the future of this historic area. Prior to engagement, staff had noted the following needs or issues within the existing policies or regulations of the City as it applies to future development (these are listed in no particular order):

1. Inability to develop mixed use of residential with business or office space;
2. Legacy industrial zoning;
3. Suburban commercial zoning (e.g. RC Regional Commercial);
4. Extensive and burdensome requirements for setbacks, parking, landscaping, etc.;
5. Missing Middle Housing types being functionally illegal within residential zoning;

Staff initially engaged the neighborhood during an open house session on April 19, 2018 and floated the idea of mixed-use planning (or Multi-Use Center as its formally known within the Future Land Use chapter of the City Master Plan) within the areas currently planned for Commercial land use in the City's Master Plan. This idea was originally met with favorable reviews but as the Master Plan updating process continued, many property and business owners within this area became skeptical and voiced opposition to the change. Ultimately, the Planning Commission voted to remove the Midtown Multi-Use Center from consideration and decided that further engagement with members of the neighborhood was needed before instituting such a change.

It was also during the Master Plan updating process in 2018 that a resident of the neighborhood began to question the zoning regulations that currently apply to blocks that are between Indian Street and Grove Street. Concerns were raised with the current OS Office Service and DNO Downtown Northside Overlay zoning districts that apply, specifically their non-allowance by right or conditional use of single-family residential homes and their allowance by right of midrise residential, office, commercial or mixed-use buildings. As conversations with members of the neighborhood continued, it became apparent that many homeowners within these blocks were concerned about potential new development that would be out of scale with the existing homes and offices that currently exist within these blocks.

December 2018 Neighborhood Design Workshop

On December 12, 2018, City staff conducted a Neighborhood Design Workshop with members of the neighborhood to try and gain a better understanding of what their desires are for the future. The transition between downtown and Midtown and the specific area between Indian Street and Grove Street was of particular discussion.

During the two hour session staff received feedback on a variety of topics including important neighborhood assets, condition of housing stock, zoning regulations, walkability and bikability, and the potential Ashman and Rodd two-way restoration. This feedback led staff to conclude that the following should take place within a relative short period of time (next 2 months):

1. Specific review of the zoning within the blocks between Indian Street and Grove Street should be brought forward to the Planning Commission;
2. Review of the residential zoning within the Midtown neighborhood should be done to better understand how Missing Middle Housing is functionally illegal under current regulations.

Discussion on Tuesday, January 22, 2019

Staff is planning to present information on the specific blocks in question and the zoning provisions as they exist. A comparison of current zoning allowances against the stated desires of the neighborhood will be included. Staff will also spend time reviewing specific provisions that make it functionally illegal or overly burdensome to develop Missing Middle Housing types currently.

Direction Needed

Following presentation by staff, discussion of the issues and concepts presented should take place. Staff will be asking for further direction as to the next steps in the process. Potential steps could include initiating a formal zoning map/text amendment, asking for additional information, modifying the extent of the zoning change modifications, or a combination of these.



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