

AMENDMENT 2006-M-04: SPRINGBROOK ASSOCIATES

DESCRIPTION: Springbrook Associates requested a Comprehensive Plan Amendment from Residential Medium (RM) to Commercial Corridor for the 5.61-acre property located just south of South 37th Street, and west of the dead-end at South 38th Street west of Talbot Road. Concurrent with this request is a requested rezone from Residential-10 (R-10) to Commercial Office (CO) for this same parcel of land.

ISSUE SUMMARY:

1. Whether the parcel in question meets policy requirements for Corridor Commercial with Commercial Office zoning given its geographic location and site constraints?
2. Would a designation of Medium Density Residential with R-10 zoning or Single Family and a concurrent R-8 zoning designation be a better fit for the parcel?

RECOMMENDATION SUMMARY:

Denial of the application changing the land use designation from Residential Medium to Corridor Commercial with a concurrent CO rezone.

BACKGROUND:

Land Use

The comprehensive planning for this parcel has been reviewed and considered several times over the last ten years. The 5.61-acre parcel currently under review was zoned P-1 (public use), similar to the Valley Medical Center complex south of this parcel, in the 1980's. When Renton's Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1995, this parcel was designated Center Institution (CI) along with the Valley Medical Center south of this property, and the medical/dental offices to the east. By 1999, the parcel's zoning designation was changed from P-1 to Commercial Office (CO) along with the medical/dental offices abutting on the east. The Valley Medical Center south of this parcel was also changed from P-1 to CO as the P-1 zone was phased out. In 2002, the property owner requested and received a re-designation and rezone from commercial office to the present residential classification.

The subject site is vacant. Panther Creek runs along the southern edge of the parcel and flows into the Panther Creek wetland west of the property. Properties to the north and west of the parcel are designated Residential Single Family and zoned Residential-8 (R-8). The properties to the north consist of single-family homes. Access to the subject property may be taken via an extension of South 38th Street or South 37th Street at Shattuck Avenue depending upon geographic constraints and the development proposal. Access from Talbot Road does not appear feasible due to parcel configuration and site constraints.

Environmental Conditions

The subject property consists of a fairly level area characterized by tall grasses on the northeastern portion of the property with some wooded slopes that descend to Panther Creek

that runs along the southern portion of the property. It is physically separated from most of Valley Medical Center by a steep ravine and Panther Creek. This wooded ravine presents a physical barrier that is unlikely to be overcome due to critical area regulations. The steep slopes and stream on the property will be protected by critical area regulations under any scenario, and will provide a passive open space for whatever develops on the northern portion of the property.

The level northern portion of the property is the area most likely to develop in the future, while critical area regulations will most likely preserve the southern portion of the property in some sort of Native Growth Protection Easement.

ANALYSIS:

The three most likely options available for this piece of property include:

1. Remaining Residential Medium designation with a Residential-10 (R-10) zoning designation as a transition between the medical center to the south and east, and residential areas north of the site.
2. Changing the designation back to allow office use with Corridor Commercial land use with a Commercial Office (CO) zone;
3. Changing to a Residential Single Family (RS) designation with a Residential-8 (R-8).

The property owners request consideration of returning this site to the former commercial land use designation. They are also requesting rezoning to the Commercial Office zone. They state that there is potential for development of a medical office similar to the two facilities located east of the site on South 38th Street. The property owners changed their marketing plan for this site, and believe that office is the best use of the property. Retirement residence would still be an allowed use under the Commercial Office zoning. A wide range of office uses with surface parking would be allowed in the Commercial Office zone. Building height to ten stories is allowed in the office zoning.

If the property were to remain Residential Medium designation with R-10 zoning, it would allow a mix of small-lot single-family detached unit types, townhouses, and small multi-family structures that are compatible with a single-family character. Alternately, a development could occur that was 100% detached single-family houses. Any development would be clustered with a large, passive open-space amenity (the wooded ravine and stream to the south) for residents. A development option that allows a mix of residential types could provide convenient housing for medical professionals working in the nearby medical center, or other commercial uses in the Green River Valley. In addition, retirement residences would continue to be a development option under this Comprehensive Plan/zoning scenario.

If the property were to change to the Residential Single Family Comprehensive Plan designation with R-8 zoning, it would allow development primarily of single-family houses that would likely gain access from Shattuck Avenue South or an extension of South 38th Street. There are few options for redevelopment under this scenario, as the primary and most

economical use in this zone is single-family residences. Development under the R-8 zone must meet a minimum of 4 dwelling units per acre density.

	CC/CO Scenario	RS/R-8 Scenario	RM/R-10 Scenario
Commercial Office or Medical Office	Yes	No	No
Retirement Residence	Yes	No	Yes
Single-Family	No	Yes	Yes
Attached Townhouses	No	No	Yes
Attached Flats (no more than 4 attached per building)	No	No	Yes

CAPACITY ANALYSIS:

Modeled theoretical capacity is 48 dwelling units under the R-10 option. Under the R-8 option, theoretical capacity would drop by 14 units to 34 dwelling units. Existing theoretical capacity of the CO zone at this location is 365 employees or jobs. This is the assumed amount increase in employment capacity with the proposed rezone to CO. These figures assume that approximately 0.54 acres of land will be undevelopable due to steep (40%+) slopes, and wetlands located on the site. Information gathered at the project level may find more accurate land measurements for critical area calculations. The applicant has not supplied any potential development scenarios for this site.

REVIEW CRITERIA (Find at least one)

- The request supports the vision embodied in the Comprehensive Plan, or
- The request supports the adopted Business Plan goals established by the City Council, or
- The request eliminates conflicts with existing elements or policies, or
- The request amends the Comprehensive Plan to accommodate new policy directives of the City Council

The request is not supported by the vision embodied in the current Comprehensive Plan given the changed policy direction adopted in the Comprehensive Plan in 2004 for Corridor Commercial designations (see below). The request does not eliminate conflicts with existing policies or amend the Comprehensive Plan to provide new policy direction. Commercial zoning would promote economic development (Business Plan Goal #1).

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMPLIANCE:

In 2004, the Center Institution Land Use designation was eliminated, and policies for a new Corridor Commercial designation were adopted. The Corridor Commercial designation includes policy direction and mapping criteria for Commercial Office uses.

The site in question no longer meets policy criteria for Commercial Office zoning under the umbrella of the Corridor Commercial Land Use designation. Mapping criteria for the Corridor Commercial designation are set in Policy LU-133 and include the following three criteria

1. parcel is located on, and having access to, streets classified as principle arterials;
2. location has high traffic volumes; or
3. location has a land use pattern characterized by strip commercial development, shopping centers, or office parks.

Talbot Road is a principal arterial, however, this site does not have functional access to Talbot Road due to parcel configuration and site constraints. The potential access is off of South 38th St., or South 37th St. at Shattuck Avenue. These roads do not have high traffic volumes. The existing land use pattern is neither strip commercial nor office park.

The proposal does not support the vision embodied in the Comprehensive Plan for Corridor Commercial designations as adopted in 2004. The site better meets the criteria for the Medium Density Residential designation. The range of allowed uses would expand and diversify housing opportunities for the area adjacent to the Valley Medical Complex. The development types allowed in a Medium Density Residential area is more likely to fit into the context of the neighboring single-family neighborhood and provide a transition between the medical center to the south and the single-family neighborhood to the north.

The site does meet four out of six of the mapping criteria for Residential R-10 zoning:

1. Development patterns conducive to medium-density development are established;
2. Vacant lots exist or parcels have redevelopment potential for medium-density infill development;
3. The site can be buffered from existing single-family residential neighborhoods having densities of eight (8) dwelling units or less; or
4. The site can be buffered from adjacent or abutting incompatible uses.

ZONING CONCURRENCY:

A concurrent change from Residential-10 (R-10) to Commercial Office (CO) to zoning designation is proposed.

DECISION CRITERIA FOR CHANGE OF ZONE CLASSIFICATION

Based on the information available, staff cannot make the findings for a rezone of this property based on the following review criteria. At least one of the following circumstances applies:

1. The subject reclassification was not specifically considered at the time of the last area land use analysis and area zoning; or
2. Since the most recent land use analysis or area zoning of the subject property, authorized public improvements, permitted private development or other circumstances affecting the subject property have undergone significant and material change.

The City considered both the Commercial Office, Residential 10, and Residential 8 zones during the last zoning discussion about this property. In addition, the City reviewed the following environmental information.

“Since the most recent land use analysis of this area (ca 1997-98), the listing of area Chinook salmon as an endangered species under the Endangered Species Act makes redevelopment of this property as an office-type development increasingly unlikely. Increased stream buffers and potential limits to impervious surfaces will make that type of development difficult to achieve and possibly undesirable in an area so close to Panther Creek. The lower intensity development types allowed under the R-10 zone will be much more compatible with the surrounding environment and allow the property owner a better chance of making economic use of the property.”

No new information or changed circumstances have occurred on this parcel or in the vicinity to create a material and significant change.

Since that time the City’s new Critical Areas regulations adopted stream buffer standards. This site is constrained by Panther Creek, a Class II stream that has a standard 100-foot minimum buffer. This new code requirement reinforces the conclusion that a lower intensity use is appropriate on this site.

CONCLUSION:

Although the parcel is abutting the medical center to the south, it is cut off from that use by Panther Creek ravine. The medical offices to the east block visibility of the parcel from Talbot Road. In the last zoning review of this site, the City found that the property has its best development potential in some form of residential use. There is no new information or change of circumstances in the vicinity that change the conclusion reached in 2002. The policy direction and new critical area regulations adopted in 2004 and 2005 reinforce the finding that residential use is still appropriate for this site.

Under the Medium Density Residential R-10 scenario, property owners can still market this property as a mix of multi-family and detached single-family units, as only small-lot detached

dwellings, or as a retirement residence. The retirement residence development type is also available under R-10 zoning.

The subject property contains a number of critical areas including a riparian corridor and steep slopes of varying degrees. This calls for efficient development of the site in order to maximize economic use of the property while protecting critical areas. The Residential Medium/R-10 scenario allows a variety of housing types. However, it is most likely to produce greater numbers of units with less impervious surface than the Single-family or Center Institution scenarios. All scenarios will be required to maintain setbacks from protected critical areas through existing City Code.

The Residential Medium/R-10 scenario requires multi-family development to be in a scale and form that is compatible with nearby single-family residences. There is no change in the Residential Medium policies or the Residential-10 zoning that alters this requirement. In addition, the Residential Medium/R-10 scenario still provides support to the adjacent Valley Medical Center, and allows a transition to occur between the single-family zone to the north, and the medical institution to the south.

Adopted Commercial Corridor Land Use Designation Text

Purpose Statement: *The Commercial Corridor district is characterized by concentrated, pre-existing commercial activity, primarily in a linear urban form, that provides necessary goods and services for daily living, accessible to near-by neighborhoods, serving a sub-regional market and accommodating large volumes of traffic.*

It is the intention of City objectives and policies that Commercial Corridor areas evolve from “strip commercial” linear business districts to business areas characterized by enhanced site planning incorporating efficient parking lot design, coordinated access, amenities, and boulevard treatment. Commercial Corridor areas may include designated districts including concentrations of specialized uses such as the Auto Mall, or features such as transit stops and a combination of businesses creating a focal point of pedestrian activity and visual interest.

Commercial Corridor areas are characterized by medium intensity levels of activity. It is anticipated, however, that intensity levels in these areas will increase over time as development of vacant space occurs, increased land value makes redevelopment feasible, and land is used more efficiently. In these districts, provision of pedestrian amenities is encouraged, as are opportunities to link adjacent uses and neighborhoods.

Objective LU-DDD: *The Commercial Corridor land use designation should include:*

- 1) Established commercial and office areas;*
- 2) Developments located on large parcels of land;*
- 3) Projects that may be highly visible from principal arterials;*
- 4) Uses dependent upon or benefiting from high-volume traffic;*
- 5) Uses that provide significant employment; and*

6) *Businesses that provide necessary or desirable goods and services to the larger community.*

Policy LU-333. The Commercial Corridor Land Use designation should be mapped in areas with the following characteristics:

- 1) *Located on, and having access to, streets classified as principle arterials;*
- 2) *High traffic volumes; or*
- 3) *Land use pattern characterized by strip commercial development, shopping centers, or office parks.*

Policy LU-334. *The Commercial Corridor designation should be implemented through Commercial Arterial, Commercial Office, or Light Industrial zoning.*

Policy LU-335. *Increased demand for commercial uses should be accommodated primarily through redevelopment and intensification of existing business area designations rather than expansion of those areas.*

Objective LU-EEE: *Create opportunities for development and re-development of land in portions of the Commercial Corridor designation for general business and service uses. These include a wide range of restaurant, small-scale to big-box retail, offices, auto dealers, light industrial, and residential uses.*

Policy LU-336. Portions of the Commercial Corridor designation appropriate for a wide range of uses catering to low and medium intensity office, service, and retail uses should be mapped with Commercial Arterial zoning.

Objective LU-FFF: *Create opportunities for intensive office uses in portions of Commercial Corridor designations including a wide range of business, financial, and professional services supported by service and commercial/retail activities.*

Policy LU-339. *Areas of the City identified for intensive office use may be mapped with Commercial Office implementing zoning when site is developed, historically used for office, or the site meets the following criteria:*

- 1) *Site is located contiguous to an existing or planned transit route;*
- 2) *Large parcel size;*
- 3) *High visibility; and*
- 4) *Opportunities for views.*

Adopted Residential Medium Density Land Use Designation Text

Purpose Statement: *The Residential Medium Density designation is intended to create the opportunity for neighborhoods that offer a variety of lot sizes, housing, and ownership options.*

Residential Medium Density neighborhoods should include a variety of unit types designed to incorporate features from both single-family and multi-family developments, support cost-efficient housing, facilitate infill development, encourage use of transit service, and promote the efficient use of urban services and infrastructure.

Objective LU-GG: *Designate land for Residential Medium Density (RMD) where access, topography and adjacent land uses create conditions appropriate for a variety of unit types designed to incorporate features from both single-family and multi-family developments, and to support cost-efficient housing, infill development, transit service, and the efficient use of urban services and infrastructure.*

Policy LU-157. *Residential Medium Density designated areas should be zoned for either Residential 10 dwelling units per net acre (R-10), Residential 14 dwelling units per net acre (R-14), or new zoning designations that allow housing in this density range.*

Policy LU-158. *Residential Medium Density neighborhoods may be considered for Residential 10 (R-10) zoning if they meet three of the following criteria:*

- 1) The area already has a mix of small-scale multi-family units or has had long standing zoning for flats or other low-density multi-family use;*
- 2) Development patterns conducive to medium-density development are established;*
- 3) Vacant lots exist or parcels have redevelopment potential for medium-density infill development;*
- 4) The project site is adjacent to major arterial(s) and public transit service is located within ¼ mile;*
- 5) The site can be buffered from existing single-family residential neighborhoods having densities of eight (8) dwelling units or less; or*
- 6) The site can be buffered from adjacent or abutting incompatible uses.*