

Westly, Austin

From: Scott Rohlf <rohlf.scott@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, August 15, 2024 7:40 PM
To: PLANNING COMMISSION
Subject: Public Comment Regarding Citywide Zoning Code Update

Dear Planning Commission Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comment via email as I could not attend in person tonight. I would like to provide the following comments:

1) The proposed zoning change amendments appear to affect only pre-existing residential multifamily areas. These areas are already high-density by definition of multifamily, as opposed to the significant area of the city devoted to single-family housing. Single-family housing has been well-established to be an inefficient use of space, especially for cities that have developed fully within their jurisdictional boundaries. It would seem, that if trying to achieve state-mandated housing criteria is what you're after, then rezoning single-family residential (R-1) to multifamily residential would result in far greater housing opportunities. As you said in the meeting, today was not about rezoning single-family areas. It absolutely should be.

2) The current proposal to increase density in already high-density housing zones will result in greater impacts to those already living in these higher density zones. Residents of these zones already feel the high impact of traffic, busy crowded streets, and inundated street parking. As drivers are more distracted than ever, and driving faster than ever, these are recipes for the very incident of a three-car collision that happened recently at 42nd and Clares. These inundated streets with larger than ever vehicles are impacting sight lines changing streets that were once safe to drive and now dangerous. The current proposal will only amplify the issues residents of these zones face, rather than distributing that impact across less affected areas. Your general plan amendments should be addressing your street design as well; not doing this is a recipe for vehicular incidents, injuries, and potentially the loss of life.

3) Locating high-density housing along the transportation corridors and near commercial areas is wonderful in theory and will placate reviewers of any proposal. In practice, I don't know anyone who lives in Capitola and works in Capitola. Here, residents commute, as is on display during our hours-long rush hour. Locating along Metro lines is not sufficient. Metro is severely underserving the population of the area and does not have an impact lessening congestion. An order of magnitude increase in the bus fleet, or more, would be needed to impact the traffic situation, and that is not happening. Locating housing along mass transit will not affect car dependency without a transportation solution, like commuter rail, that is removed from the traffic itself.

3) Should the proposal to increase the density of the pre-existing high-density...
-Why not build higher and not increase the area of the parcel covered? Open space is crucial to well-being as we all have discovered during the pandemic. Open spaces also allow for meeting spaces and areas to congregate, which is very important as high-density housing stock is often small without enough space to utilize for a gathering. Open spaces allow for landscaping and opportunities for natural beauty and the ability to support native species. Please continue to support open spaces.

-Please require in your design review process mandatory electric vehicle charging for all units. As stated before, this proposal will not reduce car/other vehicle dependency. A consistent challenge in multifamily housing, where external improvements are regulated by zealous HOA committees, is the ability to install electric vehicle charging. For this reason, multifamily units are often left behind by electric charging programs. Given the required direction of vehicle development in the years to come, you have the opportunity to address this challenge.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to comment and I would like to commend the staff for widespread noticing.

In the future, please endeavor to add slides to the materials provided ahead of the public meeting. The slides were very informative but I am now hastily drafting this email (I apologize for any grammatical issues) before the public comment window ends.

Thank you,

--

Scott Rohlf