

MEMORANDUM



TO: VICTOR CARDENAS, CITY MANAGER
FROM: LINDSAY BELL, AICP, SENIOR PLANNER
THROUGH: BARBARA MCBETH, AICP, CITY PLANNER
SUBJECT: DRAFT CITY WEST ORDINANCE - REVISIONS
DATE: AUGUST 17, 2023

Mayor and Council –

An update on Staff's efforts as it pertains to City West. We plan to bring this back to City Council for the 1st Reading on August 28th.

- Victor

Since the City Council's first look at the City West Ordinance on July 10, staff has taken the feedback received into account and made changes to the proposed text. This memo will summarize the issues that were identified, and explain the changes made or offer further explanation. In the draft Text Amendment attached, the changes to City West since the last version are shown in blue strikethrough/underline. Corresponding changes will also be made in the Design Guide.

Approvals

The ordinance provides two separate procedures for review and approval depending on whether the proposed development consists of a single-use project (referred to as baseline level projects) or, alternatively, if the proposed development is a mixed-use development or a residential project (referred to as Mixed-Use Development Option or MDO). Each approval process is described separately, and as detailed below, the MDO applications are subject to a greater level of discretion by the City Council, similar to the level of discretion currently allowed in the Planned Development Options, Residential Unit Development (RUD), or Planned Rezoning Overlay (PRO) sections of the ordinance.

The baseline level of development is limited to single-use projects consisting of one of the Principal Permitted Uses on page 3 of the text, and only up to 0.275 Floor Area Ratio (FAR) is allowed. Baseline level projects are reviewed and approved by the Planning Commission. Any multiple-family residential project, or multi-use projects, would need to seek approval under the Mixed-Use Development Option. The granting of a MDO application requires review and recommendation by the Planning Commission and approval of the City Council. This means that the City Council will be involved in any larger-scale projects (or any involving residential use, or multiple uses) proposed for the City West district and will have broad discretion in deciding what gets approved. MDO eligibility criteria are described on page 11, and general approval standards to be demonstrated by the applicant are stated on pages 11-12. The impacts the Planning Commission shall consider in making its recommendation to City Council are listed on page 18. The City Council's criteria to impose conditions and approve deviations are included on pages 18-19.

Building Height

While the proposed building heights on the north side of Grand River were supported by the City Council, the proposed maximum height of 5 stories on the south side was a concern. In the revised draft attached to this memo the text now reflects a maximum height of 2 stories

south of Grand River under the baseline option. For MDO projects, the height limit is increased to 3 stories, or up to 4 stories if bonus height conditions are met. City Council would need to approve the increase. Adjacent to single-family residential, additional restrictions would control building heights, with a maximum of 35 feet permitted within 200 feet of single-family districts, and a maximum of 45 feet between 200-300 feet of such districts. Within 300 feet of such districts buildings are not eligible for bonus height approval.

Setbacks from Single Family Residential

The City Council expressed concern with the building setbacks potential to negatively impact adjacent single-family neighborhoods. In the revised draft, all buildings, regardless of use, would be required to have a minimum setback of 100 feet from single family residential districts. Under the current I-1 Light Industrial district, the minimum building setback from single family residential is 100 feet. In the revised draft, the parking setback has also been increased from 50 to 75 feet and would be required to be screened with a 5-foot wall or landscaped berm.

Buffers and Berms

Under the required conditions for City West, item K (page 9) states all sites must comply with Article 5, Site Standards for all applicable requirements, unless more specific standards are specified for City West. Article 5 includes the review standards for the following: off-street parking requirements, off-street parking layout and standards, off-street loading and unloading, landscape standards: obscuring earth berms and walls, right of way buffers, and interior and exterior landscape plantings, exterior lighting, corner clearance, road design, façade standards, and bicycle parking.

In particular, the landscaping section related to residential uses adjacent to non-residential has been attached to this packet to show what existing standards would be applied to projects in City West when they are adjacent to a residential use. New multifamily and commercial buildings require a berm or wall of 6-8 feet in height. This section of the ordinance is very comprehensive in terms of placement, design, and waiver standards, and has been used successfully throughout the city. It would be unnecessary to repeat the information in Article 5 of the ordinance, as it is referenced by section number in the draft City West ordinance.

Hotel Use

At the July 10th meeting, the City Council indicated that hotels would not be an appropriate use on the south side of Grand River. The updated draft states on page 3 that hotels would be permitted only north of Grand River.

Protection of Natural Features

Throughout the City West text, staff has attempted to make clear that protecting the existing natural features (woodland and wetlands) should be a priority for both developers and decision-makers for projects in the district. While the Woodlands Protection Ordinance and the Wetlands and Watercourse Protection Ordinance will apply to any proposed

projects in this district just as they do to every other site in the city, additional language has been included to show a strong commitment to preservation in the City West District. Please see the highlighted text throughout the proposed text that mentions of natural feature protections in the intent, design guides, and approval criteria.

Pedestrian Orientation, Sidewalks and Open Space

The sections on pages 8 and 9 related to the topics have been revised and reorganized to provide more clarity and direction for such features to be coordinated between developments to create a system of connectivity within and between projects in the district. Usable open space requirements are also more fully described, including encouraging active recreation facilities for children.

Grand River Corridor

If the City West District is adopted and the property rezoned, staff would begin working more closely with the Road Commission for Oakland County to discuss what changes might be necessary to this section of the corridor. We would propose possible changes to the speed limit, road crossing opportunities, design alternatives and accommodating the planned bus route stops.

Current Master Plan Update

The current Master Plan Update is still on-going. However, the proposed Future Land Use map that has been reviewed by the Steering Committee at multiple meetings designates the City West area for "General Mixed-Use." Draft documents describe the purpose of this land use category: "The GMX land use category provides the highest flexibility of the categories. It recognizes that certain properties will be developed based on prevailing market trends utilizing a site-specific master plan to guide development, reserving certain portions of the subject property for different land use typologies." The General Mixed-Use designation would not be contrary to the proposed City West ordinance.

Rezoning

Based on the City Council's feedback, when the rezoning request returns to City Council for consideration, the suggested motion for rezoning will exclude the portions of property currently zoned B-3 at the southeast corner of Beck Road and Grand River. If in the future the owner decides to pursue development more consistent with the City West district, they could request a rezoning of that area separately. The area will remain shown in the Design Guide Maps, as well as the Future Land Use map, to be included in City West, as it is Staff's opinion that the area would add to the creation of a cohesive district.