



CITY OF NOVI CITY COUNCIL
JULY 10, 2023

SUBJECT: Consideration of Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment 18.296 in order to establish the new City West zoning district, along with associated ordinance changes to reference the new district, and to amend text related to the EXO District, to reflect an underlying zoning of CW - City West. Establishment of the City West District was recommended by the 2016 Novi Master Plan Update to create a vibrant, walkable mixed-use district in proximity to the Suburban Collection Showplace and Ascension Providence Hospital. **FIRST READING**

SUBMITTING DEPARTMENT: Community Development, Planning

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The City of Novi 2016 Master Plan Update included recommendations for redevelopment of three sites within the City that were considered vacant or under-utilized given their location, unique features, and size: 1) Pavilion Shore Village, near Walled Lake, which was rezoned to a new zoning classification in 2021; 2) the Anglin Property near Town Center, which is now incorporated into the Sakura Novi development; and 3) City West. City West is located north and south of Grand River Avenue, east of Beck Road and west of Taft Road. The Master Plan recommendation for this area was to create a vibrant, walkable, mixed-use arts and entertainment district that would support and enhance the nearby Suburban Collection Showplace and Ascension Providence Park.

Working with the Planning Commission's Implementation Committee, and the City Attorney's office, we have developed the City West Zoning Ordinance text to provide the standards under which properties in the new district will be developed, as well as a Design Guide that offers visual examples that the Master Plan and ordinance language are working together to accomplish. The Design Guide complements the ordinance language and will be made part of the ordinance by reference. It includes background information on the area, inspiration images from around Novi and other communities, and 3D models to visually show certain requirements or suggestions. The intent is that both documents would be used in conjunction to guide development within the district. Each 3D model shown in the Design Guide is conceptual only; actual projects would need to be designed by professional architects and engineers based on specific on-the-ground information not currently available to staff.

Over time, the City West ordinance text has evolved to incorporate elements from the Town Center districts, Gateway East and the Planned Development options. We also drew from examples of mixed-use districts in other communities, as well as best practices in planning guidelines.

As the current 2023 Master Plan update effort continues, Novi continues to grow, as evident from the 20% population growth from 2010-2020. At the recent community open houses, 74% of participants indicated the City West area should be “transformed” when given the definition “long-term and large-scale change in the appearance and function of an area with the intent for dramatic shift in use, design, and accessibility.” Another 21% indicated the area should “evolve,” while only 5% thought the area should be “maintained” in its current state.

The City West area provides an opportunity to expand the housing choices available for young professionals, empty nesters, and other residents who prioritize a more urban, walkable community, easy access to the highway and destinations within Novi, and entertainment opportunities. Grand River Avenue is a major corridor with greater road capacity than many areas of the city. SMART has recently released its proposed route expansion and has proposed extending bus service along the Grand River corridor through Novi and into Wixom. One of the proposed locations for a transit stop would be within the City West area, which makes it a logical location for additional density to be permitted.

The City West District includes a baseline level of development for principal permitted uses, which would be allowed at a similar intensity to what can currently develop in the I-1 District. Within 100 feet of a single-family residential district, non-residential buildings are not permitted, which is the same as in the I-1 District currently. At the baseline level of development, building height is limited to three (3) stories.

The ordinance includes an optional Mixed-Use Development Option (MDO), which permits a wider range of uses and higher intensity development to encourage the creation of a dynamic mix of compatible uses. While the MDO provides greater flexibility in parking and landscaping, as well as setbacks and building height to allow a more urban form of development, projects will still be subject to other applicable codes and regulations of the City, including Wetland and Watercourse protection, the Woodland Ordinance, Stormwater detention standards, façade, and landscape requirements, as well as lighting and noise ordinances. As an optional form of development under the state zoning enabling law, approvals of MDO projects are up to the discretion of City Council, and subject to the project meeting various criteria.

One of the project criteria to be evaluated for MDO projects is whether a proposed site design and layout minimizes negative impacts on existing natural features. Other criteria provide stipulations that surrounding landowners shall not be unreasonably burdened, and the proposed development is deemed to be compatible/harmonious with surrounding area.

Residential uses are permitted using the MDO option with a minimum setback of 2 feet per each foot of building height from single family residential districts. Within 100 feet of single family residential, building height is limited to 35 feet, which is the same height limit

as the single-family districts. Building heights for all uses are limited to 40 feet within 100 to 200 feet of a single-family residential district.

While the proposed ordinance standards allow for greater height along the north side of Grand River for MDO projects, staff believes that most projects will have 3-5 story buildings, with additional height potentially requested for mixed-use buildings, or for a signature office building or hotel. For buildings greater than 200 feet from single-family residential districts, they may be eligible for bonus height.

The proposed provisions for earning taller buildings involves meeting one or more criteria:

- Greater preservation/provision of open space (25% of site or more)
- Using sustainable building elements and design strategies (ex: LEED Best Practices)
- Allocation of units for Workforce Housing (at least 15%) or
- Lower-level parking or parking garage to limit impervious surfaces.

For developments on the north side of Grand River, the maximum height with any earned bonuses is limited to eight (8) stories (115 feet). Compared to current zoning, in the OST district north of Grand River buildings may be up to 115 feet in height if any portion of the building is located within 1,200 feet of the freeway, which is the approximate distance between the freeway right-of-way and the Grand River right-of-way. On the south side of Grand River Avenue, the maximum height is five (5) stories, including any bonus height.

The creation of the new district also requires some amendments to other parts of the Zoning Ordinance, especially for various Use Standards in Chapter 4, and for the sections related to the EXO Exposition Overlay District. As we are proposing to change the underlying zoning to City West, that requires changes also be made to the description and permitted uses of the EXO, and the required conditions, while still allowing the exposition facility to remain and expand, as needed.

PUBLIC FACILITIES

The Grand River Avenue corridor, running from downtown Detroit all the way to Lake Michigan on the west side of the state, bisects the City West area. In this area of the City, Grand River is an auto-centric five-lane major arterial with a speed limit of 50 miles per hour. Staff is pursuing funding to study alternatives for making this area safer for pedestrians and bicyclists to get between the north and south sides of the district as marked crossings are currently available only in three locations: the Grand River and Beck Road signal, the signal at the main entrance to the Suburban Showplace, and the Taft Road signal. The Design Guide provides samples of elevated pedestrian bridges and street-level crossing with a raised median as possible design options to consider; however, those are not the only alternatives. Traffic calming measures may also be recommended, such as reducing the speed limit through the district.

Development in this district is required to meet specific design standards to ensure future development is cohesive and walkable. Buildings are meant to front on internal street networks rather than Grand River to create a more pedestrian-friendly development than the thoroughfare can offer. Shared off-street parking facilities are encouraged. Development projects are required to provide public plazas and open spaces for gathering.

City West is meant to have sidewalks and pathways throughout the district, providing connections to the City's non-motorized network beyond the district. The recently expanded Ascension Providence campus trail network provides miles of non-motorized opportunities and connects to the ITC Trail. Bosco Fields Park is accessible via Beck Road less than 1 mile away. The planned project to expand Beck Road between 11 Mile and Grand River includes the completion of missing sidewalk segments on the east side of Beck Road. Taft Road already includes on-road bike lanes as well as an 8-foot pathway (except for a small segment near the intersection of Taft and 10 Mile where it drops to 5 feet) on the west side of the road from Grand River to south of 9 Mile. This facility connects the City West area to several Novi schools, as well as the library and Civic Center campus. Pathways along Grand River also provide a direct connection to the Town Center area within a 1–2-mile distance.

RESIDENTIAL AND MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS

Residential uses can be developed under the MDO, either as a stand-alone use or as part of a mixed-use project. The granting of a Mixed-Use Development Option application requires review and recommendation by the Planning Commission and approval of the City Council. The MDO process is similar to the approval process for the PD-1 and PD-2 Options, with City Council authorized to grant deviations to area, bulk, yard and dimensional requirements, as well as density, if found to be an enhancement in the public interest and to not be detrimental to the natural features and resources of the affected property and surrounding area or would enhance or preserve such natural features and resources.

The City West area south of Grand River Avenue is adjacent to areas designated for multi-family and single-family residential. This portion of the district is intended to provide a gradual transition to the surrounding uses, with buildings between two (2) to five (5) stories tall. Within 100 feet of existing single family residential areas to the south, non-residential uses are not permitted, and residential buildings are limited to 35 feet in height to ensure a proper transition and prevent undue impact on the existing neighbors. The height limit for buildings in the adjacent districts is also 35 feet. The 100-foot setback for non-residential uses is consistent with current I-1 District requirements, to ensure that no new hardship is created on landowners, and adjacent residents are afforded very similar protections that exist today.

Residential buildings are required to be set back a minimum 2 feet for each foot of building height. If the maximum building height of 35 feet is proposed, that structure would require a minimum 70-foot setback from the single-family district. By way of comparison with existing multiple family zoning districts in Novi, in the RM-1 and RM-2 Districts, the minimum side and rear yard setbacks are 75 feet. The existing Central Park Estates buildings adjacent to the district are setback about 70 feet from the property line. The City West district also requires a 50-foot setback for any parking areas adjacent to single family zoning districts, as well as the installation of a wall or landscaped berm to provide screening. The landscape ordinance requirement for a 6 to 8 foot screening wall or berm would also apply where adjacent to single family districts.

ORDINANCE FEEDBACK

Staff has engaged with property owners and relevant stakeholders through mail notifications, in-person meetings with developers, tenants, and landowners of all 54 parcels subject to the rezoning, and by providing a feedback form on the City website. All the responses from landowners within the district have showed positive support for the amendment to the Ordinance. Some property owners were concerned over how the change would affect a current use that would become nonconforming, but that concern was eased after explaining how nonconforming uses or structures would be permitted to continue, and even expand in a limited capacity. Some current nonconforming uses would become more conforming under the proposed standards, such as restaurant uses in the I-1 district.

Staff also met with representatives from the Asbury Park Homeowners Association, who shared their concerns about noise, visibility, drainage, and property values. Issues of traffic and school impacts were also raised. Staff discussed the existing City regulations related to stormwater management, wetlands, and woodland protection ordinance, which all projects would be subject to, and how the new ordinance was designed to minimize impacts to the existing neighborhoods through use and height restrictions, setbacks, and buffer requirements.

Although some adjustments were made to the draft text amendment based on the feedback received, other items were left as standards that could be determined on a case-by-case basis in the MDO process -- this is where some conditions or deviations can be up to Planning Commission and City Council's discretion to allow some flexibility to accommodate site-specific circumstances if it makes sense within the context of the development, neighboring uses, and the overall intent of the district.

Since early April, staff has continued to work on the draft ordinance to make improvements. We included new landscaping standards within the MDO to recognize that the more compact development style would need more urban-style landscaping. The height limits have been clarified throughout, and buildings within 200 feet of single-family residential districts are now proposed to be limited to 40 feet and will not be eligible for bonus height increases. Staff has added a requirement that applicants include a contextual plan sheet with general layout and uses within 300 feet of their property lines to illustrate a proposed project in context with its surroundings. Planning Commission will need to consider Special Land Use standards, along with other items, in making its recommendation to City Council when MDO projects are considered.

Parking requirements for residential uses, based on number of bedrooms, have been included, which are consistent with the requirements in the Town Center district. Sidewalk requirements were also expanded on. An item was added to the approval standards to require applicants to demonstrate that the proposed layout of the site is designed to minimize the negative impact on existing natural features, including woodland and wetland areas.

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION

On May 10, 2023, the Planning Commission held a public hearing on the proposed text amendment and recommended approval to the City Council. The minutes from that meeting are included in the packet.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Approval of Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment 18.296 in order to establish the new City West zoning district, along with associated ordinance changes to reference the new district, and to amend text related to the EXO District, to reflect an underlying zoning of CW - City West. Establishment of the City West District was recommended by the 2016 Novi Master Plan Update to create a vibrant, walkable mixed-use district in proximity to the Suburban Collection Showplace and Ascension Providence Hospital. **FIRST READING**