

CITY OF ST. HELENS PLANNING DEPARTMENT
STAFF REPORT
Zone Map Amendment ZA.1.25

DATE: April 28, 2025
TO: City Council
FROM: Jacob A. Graichen, AICP, City Planner

APPLICANT: City of St. Helens
OWNER: 1771 COLUMBIA BOULEVARD LLC

ZONING: Houlton Business District, HBD and General Commercial, GC
LOCATION: 1771 Columbia Boulevard; Lots 1-3 and 20-22, Block 145, St. Helens
PROPOSAL: Zone change to change portion of property zoned General Commercial, GC to Houlton Business District, HBD, making entire property HBD

SITE INFORMATION / BACKGROUND

The site is developed and was the site for PGE originally, but has had a variety of other uses since PGE left the site many years ago. The approximate northerly quarter of the subject property was zoned to **Houlton Business District, HBD** via Ordinance No. 3110 in 2009 (file ZA.3.08). This was a zone change initiated by the city for the greater Houlton area and included changing the entire subject property to HBD. So why was only one portion of the subject property changed?

C. 2008-2009 the property owner was considering multifamily development for the subject property and because the HBD zone at the time prohibited residential use on the ground level, the owner convinced the city to only change the northern quarter to HBD (i.e., the portion abutting Columbia Boulevard), with the remainder remaining General Commercial, GC. The zoning map has remained unchanged since.

There are two reasons why the city initiated this Zone Map Amendment in 2025:

First, in 2015, via Ordinance No. 3197 (file ZA.2.15) the prohibition of ground level residential use was removed and multidwelling units were added as a conditional use for the HBD zone. Thus, the reason for reducing the HBD zoned area for the subject property in 2009 has been fixed for about 10 years now. This Zone Map Amendment cleans up an odd outlier of zoning. In fact, at their April 2025 hearing, the Planning Commission noted that this looked like a spot zone, which city standards do not support. Thus, **regardless of the other reason (below), the Council should approve of this Zone Map Amendment.**

Second, the city has been exploring options for a new police station site for the last several years and the subject property has been a leading consideration for this. Police stations are possible in the HBD zone, but not the General Residential, GC zone. This is why the zoning of the subject property has been a topic of discussion and why this “zoning map clean up” is being initiated now, about 10 years after the zoning issue was fixed by being more flexible for residential use.

PUBLIC HEARING & NOTICE

Public hearing before the Planning Commission for *recommendation to the City Council*: April 8, 2025. Public hearing before the City Council: May 7, 2025.

Notice of this proposal was sent to the Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development on March 3, 2025 through their PAPA Online Submittal website.

Notice of this proposal was sent to surrounding property owners within 300 feet of the subject property(ies) on March 11, 2025 via first class mail. Notice was sent to agencies by mail or e-mail on the same date.

Notice was sent to the owner per ORS 227.186 on March 11, 2025.

Notice was published on March 21, 2025 in the Columbia County Spotlight newspaper.

AGENCY REFERRALS & COMMENTS

None.

APPLICABLE CRITERIA, ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

SHMC 17.20.120(1) – Standards for Legislative Decision

The recommendation by the commission and the decision by the council shall be based on consideration of the following factors:

- (a) The statewide planning goals and guidelines adopted under ORS Chapter 197;
- (b) Any federal or state statutes or guidelines found applicable;
- (c) The applicable comprehensive plan policies, procedures, appendices and maps; and
- (d) The applicable provisions of the implementing ordinances.
- (e) A proposed change to the St. Helens zoning district map that constitutes a spot zoning is prohibited. A proposed change to the St. Helens comprehensive plan map that facilitates a spot zoning is prohibited.

(a) Findings: This criterion requires analysis of the applicable statewide planning goals. The applicable goals in this case are: Goal 1, Goal 9 and Goal 10.

Statewide Planning Goal 1: Citizen Involvement.

Goal 1 requires the development of a citizen involvement program that is widespread, allows two-way communication, provides for citizen involvement through all planning phases, and is understandable, responsive, and funded.

Generally, Goal 1 is satisfied when a local government follows the public involvement procedures set out in the statutes and in its acknowledged comprehensive plan and land use regulations.

The City's Development Code is consistent with State law with regard to notification requirements. Pursuant to SHMC 17.20.080, at least one public hearing before the Planning Commission and City Council is required. Legal notice in a newspaper of general circulation is required too. The city has met these requirements and notified DLCD of the proposal as required by State law.

Statewide Planning Goal 9: Economic Development.

This goal requires that cities and counties have enough land available to realize economic growth and development opportunities. Commercial and industrial development takes a variety of shapes and leads to economic activities that are vital to the health, welfare and prosperity of Oregon's citizens. To be ready for these opportunities, local governments perform Economic Opportunity Analyses based on a 20-year forecast of population and job growth.

This Goal is satisfied when it can be shown that the proposal will not negatively affect industrial or other employment land, as such lands are catalysts to economic development. One implementation tool the State has to demonstrate is the Economic Opportunities Analysis (EOA) pursuant to OAR 660-009-0015. The city has an EOA adopted in 2008 via Ordinance No. 3101, which identifies abundant industrial land and small shortage of commercial land.

The property already has a Comprehensive Plan designation of General Commercial, GC and both the General Commercial, GC zone and Houlton Business District zone, a zoning possible under this Comprehensive Plan designation. Commercial use is possible in either case. The proposal is neutral on its effect on employment lands.

Statewide Planning Goal 10: Housing.

Goal 10 requires buildable lands for residential use shall be inventoried and plans shall encourage the availability of adequate numbers of needed housing units at price ranges and rent levels which are commensurate with the financial capabilities of Oregon households and allow for flexibility of housing location, type and density.

This Goal must be addressed when residential lands or any land where needed housing is possible are potentially affected.

This Goal has a couple components: 1) **inventorying** of land for housing need, and 2) **demographic broad spectrum housing availability in both quantity and variety of type.**

Inventorying

St. Helens completed and adopted a Housing Needs Analysis (HNA) and Buildable Lands Inventory (BLI) in 2019 (Ordinance No. 3244). The results of the housing needs analysis indicates that the current St. Helens Urban Growth Boundary is sufficient to accommodate future housing needs, with a small deficiency (8 acres needed) of high-density land for multi-family development. Commercial/Mixed Use land can make up for the high-density land deficiency. Even though there are no guarantees Commercial/Mixed Use lands will be used for residential purposes, the following residential developments on commercial/mixed use lands since the inventorying effort of the HNA are noteworthy:

- St. Helens Place Apartments at 700 Matzen Street. Originally approved by Conditional Use Permit CUP.2.18 in 2018, this 204-unit multidwelling project was completed in 2020.

Zone: General Commercial.

Total acres used: 7.72 out of 7.72 ac.

- Broadleaf Arbor developed by the Northwest Oregon Housing Authority (NOHA) and Community Development Partners at 2250 Gable Road. Originally approved by Conditional Use Permit CUP.3.19, this 239-unit multidwelling project was completed earlier this year. The site has wetlands that are preserved so only a portion of the property is developed.

Zone: General Commercial, GC.

Total acres used: approx. 13.7 ac. out of 16.7 ac.

This proposal proposes changing the portion of the subject property zoned General Commercial, GC to Houlton Business District, HBD. Both zoning districts allow multifamily development as a conditional use. This proposal is neutral from an inventory standpoint.

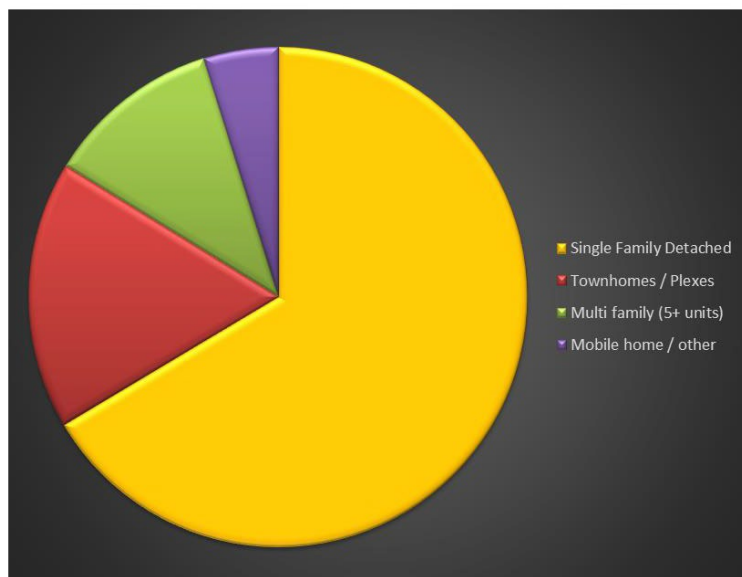
Demographic broad spectrum housing availability in both quantity and variety of type

This proposal supports this aspect of Goal 10 by increasing development options of the subject property. The General Commercial, GC zone allows some types of residential development and, generally, the Houlton Business District, HBD zone allows the types allowed in the GC zone and other residential use types not allowed in the GC zone such as detached single-family dwellings, duplexes and attached single-family dwellings. The quantity aspect is neutral, but the variety aspect is advanced.

However, it is also noteworthy that RV parks are possible in the GC zone, but not the HBD zone.

Land Need (net acres)	
Low Density*	240
Medium Density**	40
High Density	24
Manufactured Home Parks	5
Total	309
Buildable Land Inventory (net acres)	
Low Density	532
Medium Density	93
High Density	16
Manufactured Home Parks	45
Commercial/Mixed Use***	19
Total	705
UGB Land Surplus/Deficit (net acres)	
Low Density*	293
Medium Density**	53
High Density	(8)
Manufactured Home Parks	40
Commercial/Mixed Use	19
Total	397
Adequacy of UGB to meet housing need	adequate

* Includes detached units and mobile homes. ** Includes townhomes, plexes and group quarters.



Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2013-2017.

Upper Left: Table showing the city's 2019 HNA findings. St. Helens has adequate land across most categories. The high-density deficit of 8 acres can be addressed in the commercial/mixed use land surplus and there are development projects since the HNA adoption that have done so, exceeding 8 acres.

This proposal complies with the **inventorying** component of Goal 10.

* * *

Lower Left: This is Exhibit 5 from the city's HNA showing housing mix and tenancy for St. Helens between 2013 and 2017.

The proposal adds options for residential use as explained herein.

This proposal complies with the **broad spectrum housing availability** component of Goal 10.

(b) Findings: This criterion requires analysis of any applicable federal or state statutes or guidelines.

Nothing applicable.

(c) Findings: This criterion requires analysis of applicable comprehensive plan policies, procedures, appendices and maps.

The General Commercial Comprehensive Plan designation allows for mixed use type zones, the HBD is such a zone.

(d) Findings: This criterion requires analysis of the applicable provisions of the implementing ordinances.

Not applicable.

(e) Findings: This criterion is intended to prevent spot zoning. “Spot zoning” is defined by Chapter 17.16 SHMC as:

“Spot zoning” means rezoning of a lot or parcel of land to benefit an owner for a use incompatible with surrounding uses and not for the purpose or effect of furthering the comprehensive plan.

Omitting the change from the General Commercial, GC zone to the Houlton Business District zone of the property in 2009 could be considered a created spot zone. At their April 8, 2025 hearing, the Planning Commission recognized this “island” of General Commercial, GC as a spot zone. This proposal remedies that. **The Council should find that this proposal eliminates a spot zoning.**

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION

Based upon the facts and findings herein, staff and the Planning Commission (based on unanimous vote) recommend approval of this Zone Map Amendment. The Council should find that this proposal eliminates a spot zoning.

Attachment(s): Ordinance No. 3110, Attachment A (from 2009) with notes for this proposal
Zoning of subject property area map
Comprehensive Plan designations of the subject property area map
2007 Zoning Map Excerpt
Houlton Business District area existing uses (2009)
Subject property lots
July 15, 2009 City Council public hearing minutes (pgs 1-2)

City of St. Helens
ORD No. 3110
Attachment "A"

**ADOPTED
2009**

Area changed
from the GC to GR Comp Plan
designation and from the MU
to the R5 zoning district.

New
Houlton
Business
District
Zoning-Area

COLUMBIA

RIVER

HIGHWAY

COLUMBIA

20TH ST

19TH ST

18TH ST

17TH ST

BLVD

16TH ST

15TH ST

14TH ST

13TH ST

12TH ST

WILLAMETE STREET

ST. HELENS

STREET

COWLITZ STREET



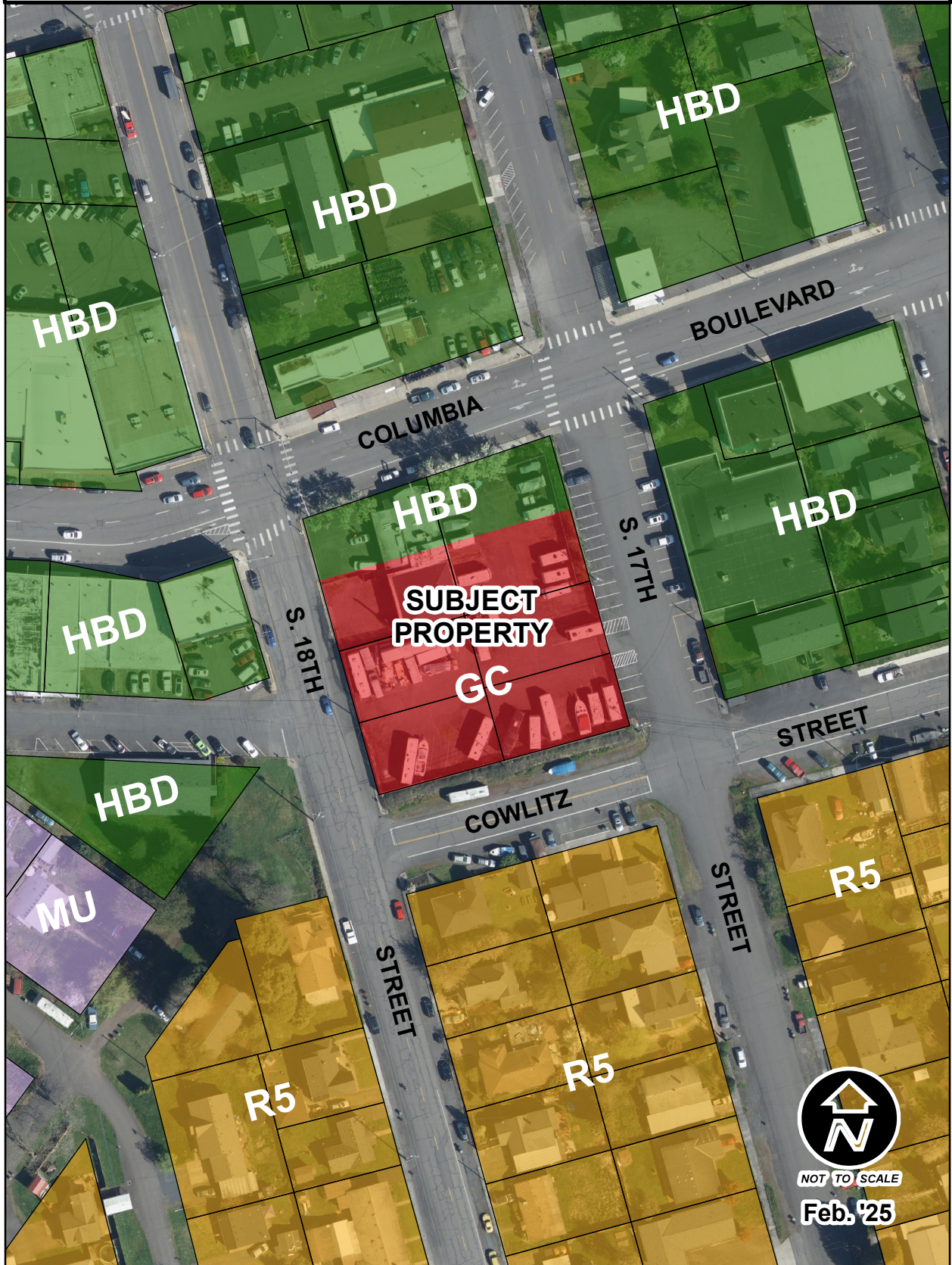
**ZA.1.25
SUBJECT**

PROPERTY



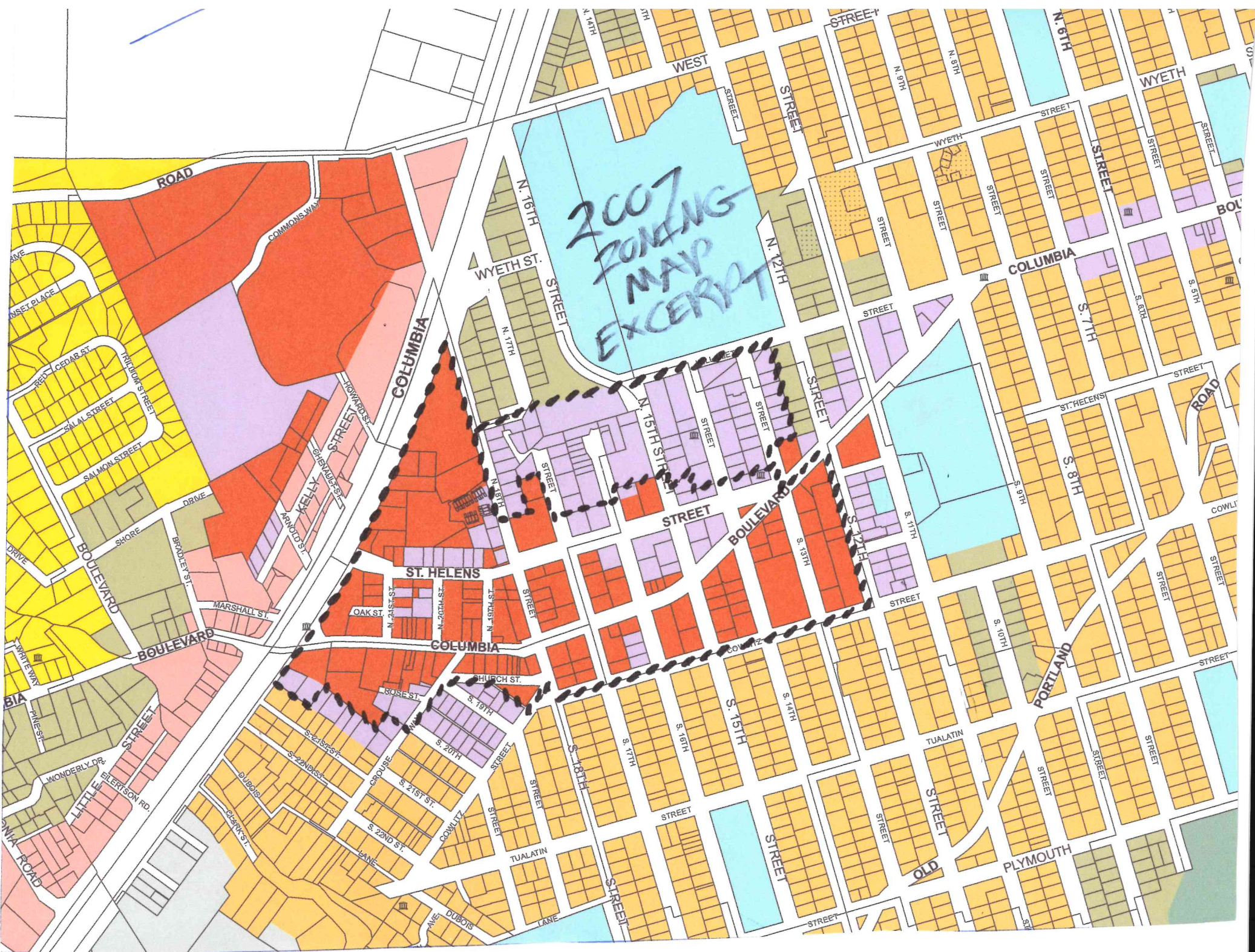
NOT TO SCALE

ZA.1.25 ZONING



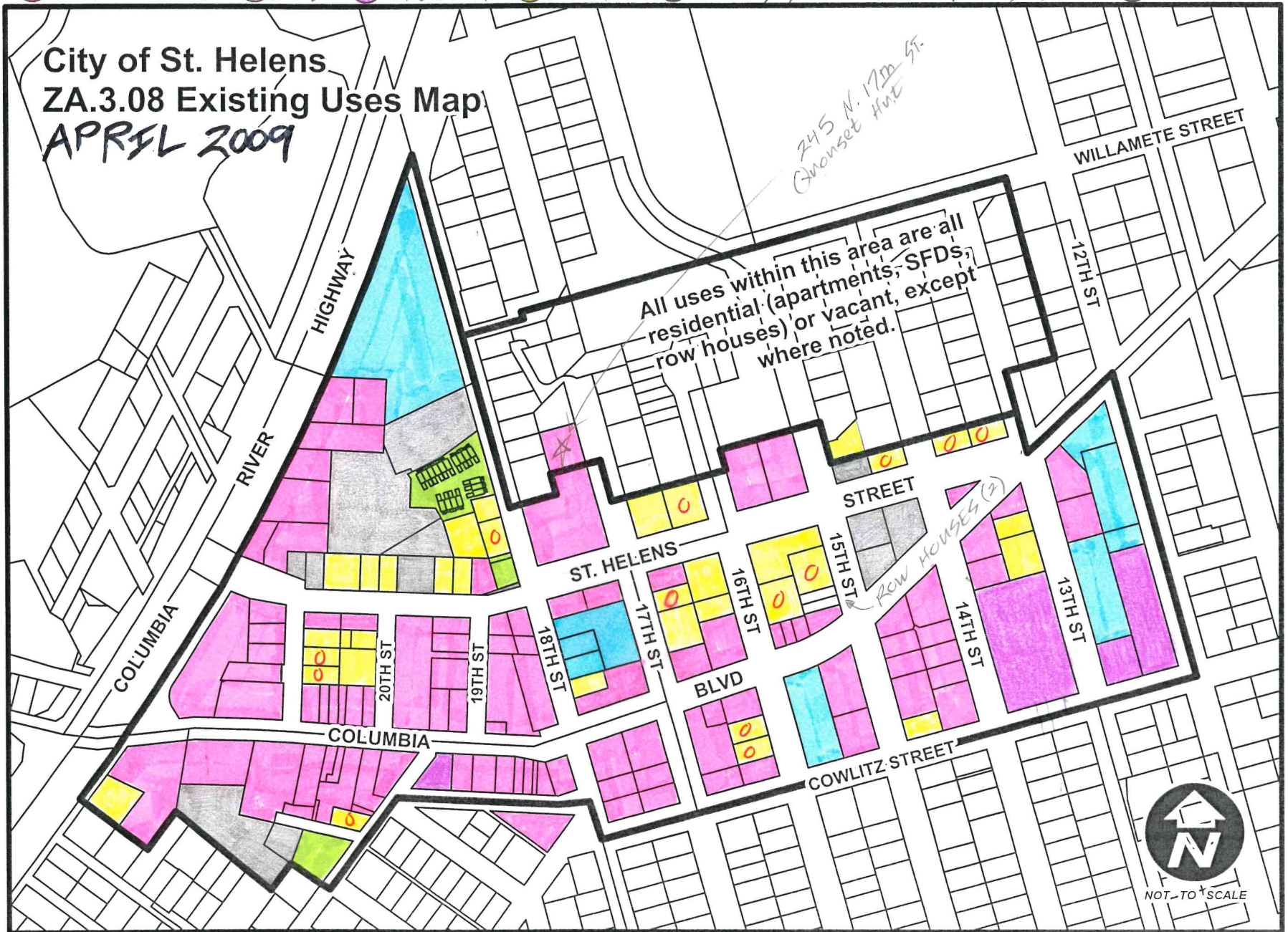
ZA.1.25 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN DESIGNATION





● COMMERCIAL
 ● SFD
 ● CHURCH
 ● APPTS
 ● GOV'T/PUBLIC/INSTITUTIONAL
 ● VACANT

City of St. Helens
ZA.3.08 Existing Uses Map
APRIL 2009

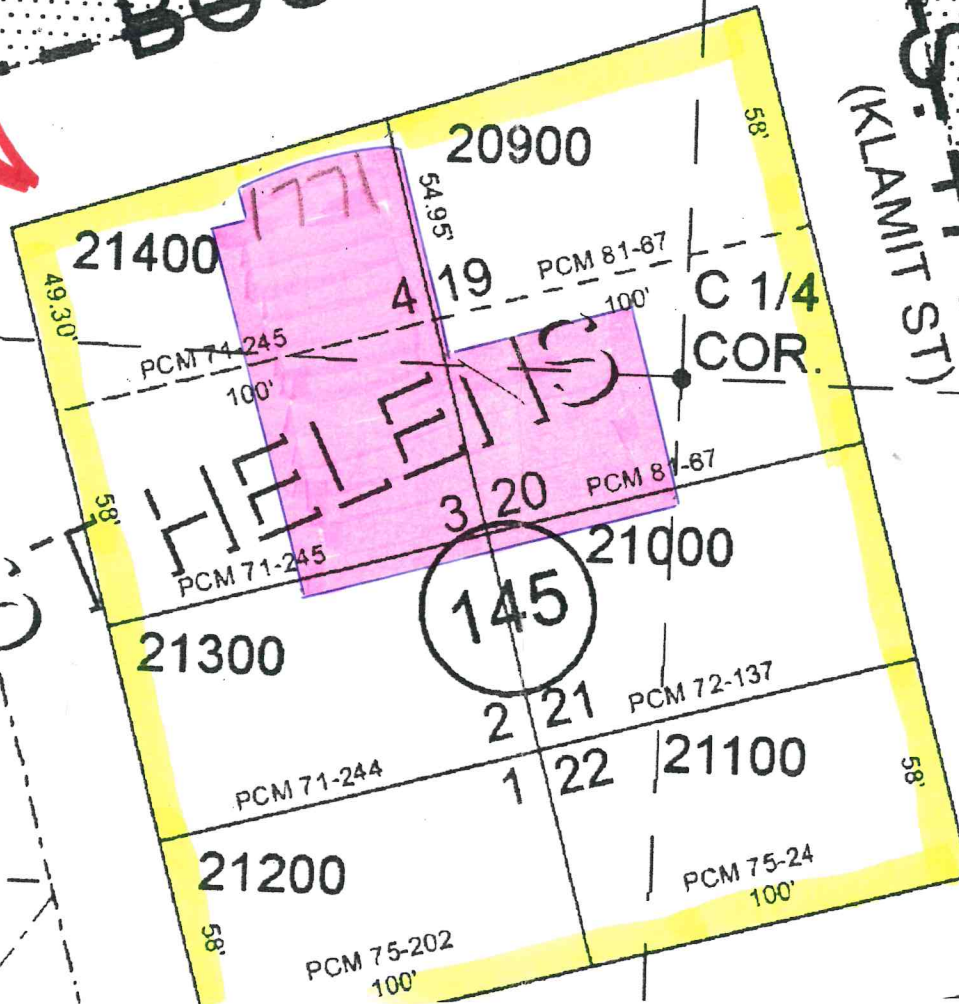


○ = APPEAR TO BE OWNER OCCUPIED BASED ON ASSESSOR RECORDS (for detached SFDs only)

BOULEVARD

S. 47TH STREET
(KLAMIT ST)

SEE MAP 40104AC



A.M. KNIGHTON D.C.
D.V. 16/57
#39
00 399
60.7'
100
103.3'
200
94.6'
238.6'
52.2'
25'
27.6'
8'
REET
S18°06'30"E
52.9'
32'

**City of St. Helens
CITY COUNCIL**

FILE COPY

Public Hearing Minutes

July 15, 2009

Members Present: Randy Peterson, Mayor
Keith Locke, Council President
Phil Barlow, Councilor
Doug Morten, Councilor
Patrick Martyn, Councilor

Staff Present: Chad Olsen, City Administrator
Dale Goodman, Public Works Director
Skip Baker, Community Development Director
Steve Salle', Police Chief
John Walter, Library Director
Jacob Graichen, Assistant Planner
Kathy Payne, City Recorder

Others Present:	Wayne Weigandt	Jeff Benham	Raymond Bell
	April Bamburg	Donna Coblantz	Mike Cooke



PUBLIC HEARING

Amendment to Community Development Code & Comprehensive Plan to Create a New Zone – the Houlton Business District

At 7:00 p.m., Mayor Peterson opened the public hearing.

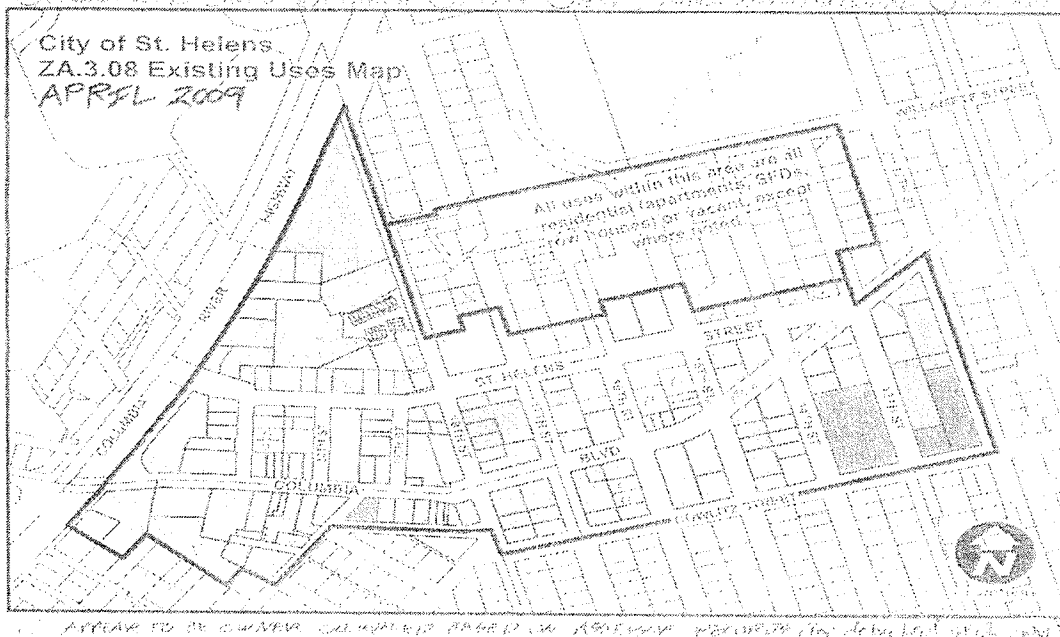
Ex-Parte Contact/Conflict of Interest - None.

Staff Report

Assistant City Planner Jacob Graichen presented the staff report dated July 8, 2009. First, the City of St. Helens is proposing creation of a new zone – the Houlton Business District – to better accommodate the Houlton (uptown) area. Second, the City proposes both a Comprehensive Plan change from General Commercial to General Residential and Zone Change from Mixed Use to R5 of the area generally north of St. Helens Street and south of the Willamette Street right of way.

The Planning Commission held a public hearing on February 10, 2009. The City Council held a public hearing on April 15, 2009, and asked to postpone deliberations to July 15, 2009.

Graichen showed maps of the subject areas, including the property owned by Wayne Weigandt.



Testimony in Favor – None spoke in favor.

Testimony in Opposition

➔ ♦Wayne Weigandt. He spoke a couple of months ago regarding the zone change. He is concerned about some uses not being allowed in this new zone. He would like to see the City consider a boundary change from the proposed drawing. He would like some of his lots to be taken out of the proposed district. He would like to see the two lots that front Columbia Blvd. to be included but the six others to stay what they are currently zoned, General Commercial. If it was all changed to the Houlton Business District, he would not be able to build apartments on the first floor. He would be happy with it being rezoned but wants to be able to build apartments, the same as he can now, under General Commercial. Parking would be onsite. He proposes to keep Lots 4 and 19 within the HBD boundary and Lots 1, 2, 3, 20, 21, and 22 to be left as GC. This would leave frontage on Columbia Blvd. for continuity.

Mayor Peterson clarified that GC does not allow single family dwellings. Baker confirmed.

♦Raymond Bell. He is currently behind on this zone change issue because he just recently acquired a piece of property in the proposed boundary area. The only notice he received is the notice on June 12th. His property is on 12th Street. He is not in favor of this but he knows the City is very far along in this process. He bought the property for the house, which is single family residential. Then they got the vacant lot. They want to build townhomes on the vacant lot. With this zone change, they would not be able to do that. He would like there to be an extension on this decision. They are already half way through the design stage on this property. They are in the process of appraisals and financing. He is very surprised. He understands the reason behind the Houlton Business District. However, with economics, people are coming here to live because it's cheaper not because more businesses are locating here. He doesn't believe the City is doing anything to help bring business to this town; no promoting; no fee reductions. He would like his property/project to be grandfathered in. He's not asking for anything that doesn't compete in this area. He's pleading for an extension. He needs