



Planning Commission

Building Heights in High Density Corridor Zones - Deliberation and Recommendation

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Title

Building Heights in High Density Corridor Zones - Deliberation and Recommendation

Staff Recommended Action

Move to recommend that City Council adopt attached code amendment as proposed by City staff.

Report

Issue:

Olympia's land use zoning regulations state that building heights in the 'HDC-1' and 'HDC-2' zones within 100 feet of low-density residential zones are limited to 35 feet, but also suggest that 'bonus' residential floor are available. City staff has proposed an amendment stating that such bonuses are not available within 100 feet of historic districts. On October 19 the Planning Commission held a public hearing regarding this proposal. The Commission is to make a recommendation to the City Council regarding this issue.

Staff Contact:

Todd Stamm, Principal Planner, Community Planning and Development Department, 360.753.8597

Presenter:

None; Commission discussion to be facilitated by the Chair

Background and Analysis:

The Olympia Development Code, also known as the zoning code, provides that in the four 'High Density Corridor' zones any new building within 100 feet of a residential zone with a maximum density of 14 units or less per acre shall not exceed 35 feet in height. The code also provides that buildings within 50 feet of higher density residential and mixed use zones shall be limited to the lesser of the height allowed in the adjacent zone or the maximum height of the High Density Corridor zone.

However, the code also states with respect to the 'HDC-1' and 'HDC-2' zones, "Provided that one additional story may be built for residential development only." Additional provisions related to this 'bonus floor' are set forth in Olympia Municipal Code 18.06.100.A.6. However, the code does not indicate whether this bonus floor is available in the areas where heights are restricted due to proximity to residential zones.

The version of the Olympia Comprehensive Plan adopted in December of 2014 includes Land Use and Urban Design policy 13.7, applicable to the areas zoned as HDC-1 and HDC-2. That policy reads, in part:

Designate different categories of corridors generally as follows:

- Areas nearest downtown along Harrison Avenue east of Division Street and the upper portions of the State Street/Fourth Avenue corridor to the intersection of Fourth Avenue and Pacific Avenue should blend travel modes with priority for pedestrian, bicycle and transit systems. These areas should provide for a mix of low-intensity professional offices, commercial uses and multifamily buildings forming a continuous and pedestrian-oriented edge along the arterial streets. *There will be a 35 feet height limit if any portion of the building is within 100' from a single-family residential zone, provided that the City may establish an additional height bonus for residential development except in areas adjacent to a designated historic district.* [Emphasis added.]

The Comprehensive Plan policy quoted above suggests that the bonus floor provision may be available in all portions of the HDC-1 and HDC-2 zones, except near a historic district. About two blocks of HDC-1 zoned property along the north side of State Avenue between Eastside and Tullis Streets fall into this 'near a historic district' category. (See attached map.) City staff proposes that the Development Code should be amended to clarify that the 'bonus' residential floor is NOT available within 100 feet of a designated historic district.

On October 19, the Commission held a public hearing regarding this proposal. Two parties commented at the hearing, and other have submitted written comments. Written comments submitted prior to close of the record on October 23 are attached.

The Commission may also wish to address:

- whether the 'bonus' residential floor is available within 100 feet of low-density residential zones, i.e., HDC 1 & 2 areas otherwise limited to 35 feet; and/or
- whether the 'bonus' residential is available in the areas within 50 feet of medium-density residential areas (as described above).

As set forth in the policy, the attached proposed code amendment, with the proposed new clause underlined, would specific that the bonus floor is not available near historic districts. If adopted, this amendment would only immediately apply to a few properties along State Avenue, but it would also be applicable to any similarly situated properties if other historic districts are created.

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

Residents in the vicinity of the Olympia Avenue historic district and the Bigelow neighborhood in general have expressed interest in this issue. Notice of the public hearing was advertised in the Olympian, mailed to representatives of neighborhood associations within 1000 feet of the HDC-1 properties bordering the Olympia Avenue Historic District, and mailed to property owners of and

within 300 feet of the HDC-1 zoned properties that would be directly affected.

Options:

The Commission may recommend:

1. That the City Council approve the amendment as proposed by City staff;
2. That the Council approve an amendment limiting height in other HDC-1 and HDC-2 locations as described.
3. That the development code be amended to clarify that a residential on bonus floor can be granted in areas otherwise limited to 35 feet; or
4. Any other alternative deemed appropriate by the Commission and consistent with the Olympia Comprehensive Plan.

Financial Impact:

No substantial impact to the City; impact to property owners would depend on future development prospects and interpretation of current development code.