



Memorandum

DATE: March 7, 2007
TO: Planning Commission
FROM: Joseph W. Tovar
Director, Planning & Development Services
Glen Pickus *GP*
Planner II, Planning & Development Services
RE: Proposed South Aurora Triangle Subarea Plan and Development Code amendments

Introduction

On Jan. 22, 2007 the City Council authorized a proposal by Planning Director Tovar to prepare a Comprehensive Plan amendment and corresponding Development Code amendment for the South Aurora Triangle (SAT) District (see Attachment 1 for a map of the SAT District boundaries). The Director's proposal is in response to the City's current economic development strategy and existing Comprehensive Plan policies calling for higher residential densities along the Aurora Corridor. Also, with the first mile of the Aurora Corridor improvement project nearing completion, new development regulations in support of that investment are appropriate. Finally, new higher density mixed-use developments in Lake City and specific inquiries from developers and Aurora property owners suggest the market will support larger projects than have been previously seen in Shoreline.

The proposal is also a response to the Council's expressed interest in implementing innovative planning techniques to improve the quality and character of new development. The proposal was formally docketed by the Council on Feb. 26, 2007 along with two other proposed Comprehensive Plan amendments (a citizen-initiated Comprehensive Plan Amendment/rezone and the removal of references to Cottage Housing).

Proposal

The proposal has two parts. The first part is a Comprehensive Plan amendment to designate the South Aurora Triangle as a subarea and to create a plan for that subarea to set the policy framework for mixed use, form-based, development regulations for the SAT special district.

The second part is a Development Code amendment to create a new SAT zoning district and unique form-based development standards for that district.

Current Situation

Parcels in the SAT are currently zoned Regional Business (RB), R-48 or R-12. Generally, parcels fronting on Aurora Avenue N are RB, parcels west of Whitman Avenue N and south of N 149th Street are zoned R-48 and four parcels along N 145th Street are R-12. Attachment 1 shows the current SAT zoning.

There is no maximum density in the RB zone, but there is a maximum height of 65 feet. In the R-48 zone the maximum density is 48 dwelling units per acre and the maximum height is 40 feet, while in the R-12 zone the maximums are 12 dwelling units and 35 feet.

The current Shoreline Municipal Code (SMC) design standards are found in Subchapter 3 – Multifamily residential design standards (starting at SMC 20.50.120) and Subchapter 4 – Mixed use, commercial and nonresidential site design standards (starting at SMC 20.50.220). The standards are applied based on the proposed use of the development and not on the zoning designation. The design standards focus on reducing the apparent bulk of structures, screening service areas and creating pedestrian-friendly features but are general standards and not specific to any neighborhood.

Comprehensive Plan Amendment

A new Appendix 6 – South Aurora Triangle Subarea Plan, would constitute the entire Comprehensive Plan Amendment. Attachment 2, a draft of that subarea plan, is based on Director Tovar’s original proposal but modified in response to Council comments and staff discussion.

The subarea plan establishes as a policy the use of innovative regulations, specifically form-based, to achieve the plan objectives. Form-based regulations focus on building envelopes and how they are sited rather than on the uses within the buildings. The objective of form-based regulations is for new development to be supportive and complementary to the public spaces surrounding the development. In the SAT this means crafting regulations so new development will be pedestrian-friendly and supportive of the Aurora Corridor and Interurban Trail improvements. Well written form-based regulations will make incompatible uses either not feasible or will fully mitigate their impact on the surrounding area.

The subarea plan’s role is to establish policies – the community’s vision – for the SAT, which would then be implemented through the Development Code amendments. Clear and concise policies enable the drafting of effective development regulations. That is why the draft SAT subarea plan is brief (only 2 pages) and uses bullets to highlight the most significant policies. Development regulations will be written so it is possible to identify which policy a specific regulation is designed to implement.

Development Code Amendment

The Development Code Amendment is still being drafted by staff. However, the following basic components/concepts will likely be in the draft code presented to the Commission:

1. SMC Chapter 20.40 will be amended to create a new South Aurora Triangle zoning district.
2. The development regulations will be located in a new SMC Chapter 20.95 – South Aurora Triangle District.
3. The SAT district will be divided into three zones; SAT 1, SAT 2 and SAT 3 (see Attachment 3).
4. Permitted uses in the SAT will not be specified. Rather, there will be a short list of prohibited uses.
5. Development standards that will be required will provide connectivity between Aurora and the Interurban Trail, create pedestrian-friendly and transit-oriented projects, and

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incorporate human scale building design at street level use techniques such as articulation and stepping back upper levels to reduce the bulk of structures.

6. Building heights will be regulated by standards based on a combination of feet, stories and floor area ratios (FAR). There will be “base maximums” which can be exceeded through an incentive system but limited by “absolute maximums.” Development beyond the base maximums will be allowed only if certain uses (i.e. street level retail/food service, public restrooms, daycare, public recreation areas, affordable housing) or design features (i.e. “green” development, public art, plazas, underground parking, water features, significant landscape features) are included in the development proposal.
7. There will be no density limits and possibly no limits on building coverage or impervious area. The objectives of building coverage and impervious area limits can be achieved through FAR limits.
8. Parking and sign regulations may be customized for the SAT district.

Process

A 60-day notice of intent to adopt a Comprehensive Plan amendment has already been forwarded to the State Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED). When the first draft of the development code amendments is completed, CTED will be sent a 60-day notice of intent to adopt development regulations. At that time a public notice of proposed Comprehensive Plan and Development Code Amendments will be published and mailed to owners of parcels inside and within 500 feet of the SAT district.

A SEPA threshold determination (likely to be a determination of nonsignificance) will be made and noticed in April. The Planning Commission’s open record public hearing on the amendments will be at least 15 days after the SEPA determination, probably in May. Staff’s goal is to have the amendments, with the Commission’s recommendation, presented to the City Council in June.

Recommendation

No action is required at this time. However, staff is seeking input from the Commission, which can broadly be described as:

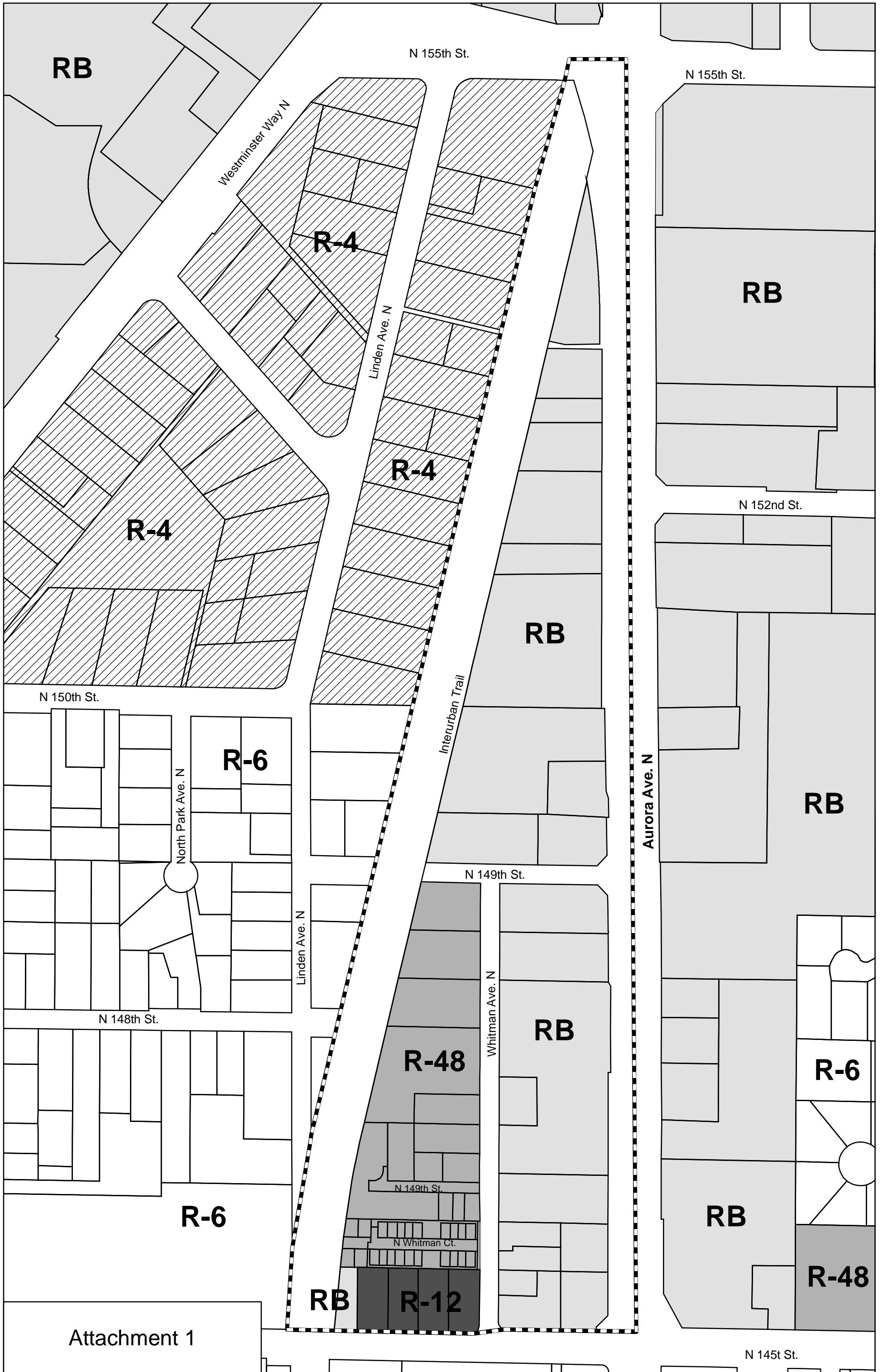
- Policies and code components which the Commission believes staff should consider including in its proposals but are not mentioned above or in the draft Comprehensive Plan Amendment; and
- Policies and code components that have been mentioned which the Commission believes should be removed from consideration.

With that input, staff will complete the draft amendments and bring them back to the Commission for its consideration and recommendation, after an open-record public hearing, to the City Council.

ATTACHMENTS

1. South Aurora Triangle Subarea Location and Current Zoning map
2. Appendix 6 – South Aurora Triangle Subarea Plan (draft)
3. South Aurora Triangle District proposed zones map

South Aurora Triangle Subarea Current Zoning



Appendix 6

South Aurora Triangle Subarea Plan

Figure LU-1 is the Comprehensive Plan Land Use Designations map for the City. It shows a broken line delineating the three sides of the South Aurora Triangle Subarea – Aurora Avenue North on the east, N 145th Street on the south, and the Interurban Trail on the northwest. The land use designation for this subarea plan is “SAT” which is an acronym for “South Aurora Triangle”.

The City’s objectives for the South Aurora Triangle are to:

- stimulate economic development;
- create a high quality built environment
- maximize the benefit of the City’s investment in the Aurora Corridor and Interurban Trail capital improvement projects.

To achieve these objectives, the City should prepare innovative development regulations that focus on the form and character of new development in the South Aurora Triangle and less on the specific uses or unit count within the buildings themselves. Such regulations should allow for flexibility and variety in the form and height of buildings, while clearly articulating and illustrating standards for site and architectural design. These regulations should promote:

- private construction of public amenities
- lively retail frontage in a walkable, livable and transit-oriented neighborhood environment with “eyes on the street”
- human scale architectural building design
- broad categories of retail, restaurant and office uses permitted outright
- taller structures and high density development
- connectivity between the Aurora Corridor and Interurban Trail
- creation of a distinctive city entryway at N 145th Street
- future accommodation of transferred development right programs

The SAT Comprehensive Plan designation will provide predictability for – and compatibility with – areas surrounding the South Aurora Triangle. It will also provide for high density residential development on Aurora Avenue N, a land use currently absent on this significant City corridor.

The purpose of the SAT Comprehensive Plan designation is to create a tool to implement a number of previously existing comprehensive plan land use policies by applying them with specificity to a distinct geographic subarea of the City. Previously established Comprehensive Plan land use policies specific to the Aurora Corridor include:

- LU25: Pursue opportunities to improve the City’s image by creating a sense of place on the Aurora Corridor for doing business and attracting retail activity.
- LU29: Create opportunities to stimulate development of a “showcase” example and template for future development.
- LU30: Encourage a mix of residential and commercial development in close proximity to create retail synergy and activity.

LU31: Protect adjacent single-family neighborhoods from traffic, noise, crime, and glare impacts of the Corridor through design standards and other development criteria.

LU34: The Interurban Trail should provide cross-town access, enhance the Corridor, connect to other trails, walkways, and sidewalks, accommodate and consider other public facilities and civic improvements, and buffer private property.

LU36: Provide opportunities and amenities for higher density residential communities to form within or adjacent to the Aurora Corridor in harmony with the surrounding neighborhoods.

The South Aurora Triangle area provides an opportunity to realize many of these comprehensive plan policies, particularly in view of several unique circumstances. First, it abuts commercial land uses on two sides and is separated from low density residential uses on the third side by the southern segment of the Interurban Trail as well as a significant mass of mature trees parallel to the trail. Second, the majority of these lands abut the completed first mile of the Aurora Corridor capital improvement project, which is a significant investment of public funds providing major pedestrian, vehicular, transit, landscaping and utility amenities to properties in this area. Third, the recently improved Interurban Trail bridges link the South Aurora Triangle with the rest of the bicycle and pedestrian trail system north of N 155th Street. Taken together, these circumstances make the South Aurora Triangle an ideal location to encourage significant private investments in retail, restaurant, office, and residential uses, as well as mixes of these uses.

The subarea should be divided into distinct designations on the Comprehensive Plan Land Use Designations map. New corresponding development regulations are appropriate in order to meet the subarea objectives while protecting existing land uses. The subarea designations are:

- **SAT 1:** The area north of N 149th Street where a majority of parcels front both Aurora Avenue N and the Interurban Trail. The tallest buildings and highest residential densities in the City would be appropriate here with amenities supporting Aurora-Trail connections, storefront retail and public transit. Specific building envelope regulations will mitigate the impact of the large structures as well as provide for high value public amenities
- **SAT 2:** The area bounded by N 149th Street on the north; Aurora Avenue N. on the east; N 145th Street on the south and Whitman Avenue N. on the west. Within this area is a major entryway into the City. Taller buildings and higher residential densities would be appropriate here with amenities supporting creating a distinctive City entryway, storefront retail and public transit.
- **SAT 3:** The area bounded by N 149th Street on the north; Whitman Avenue N. on the east; N 145th Street on the south; and the Interurban Trail on the west where recent development has been entirely multifamily. Development would be largely higher density multifamily and commercial uses complementary to multifamily uses. Public amenities would support Interurban Trail use.

South Aurora Triangle Subarea Proposed Zones

Proposed Zones

 SAT-1

 SAT-2

 SAT-3



1 inch equals 180 feet

