



Memorandum

DATE: June 11, 2009

TO: Shoreline Planning Commission

FROM: Joseph W. Tovar, FAICP, Director P&DS
Steven M. Cohn, Senior Planner

SUBJECT: Scoping of Regional Business Zone Permanent Regulations

On May 12, 2008, the City Council adopted Ordinance 505, which placed interim regulations on residential development in Regional Business zones throughout Shoreline and limited residential density to a maximum of 110 dwellings/acre. The interim regulations have been extended twice pending completion and adoption of the Vision Statement and Framework Goals. The most recent extension was adopted April 6, 2009. It will expire on November 12, 2009.

Prior to staff bringing the Commission its proposal for permanent regulations for the Regional Business zoning, we want to present some of our current thinking on this matter. We look forward to a dialogue with the Commissioners to hear your perspective on our thoughts and the ideas you think should be considered as part of the RB discussion.

The purpose of tonight's discussion is to

1. Discuss the context for the RB discussion and staff's initial thoughts on the scope/approach to refining the RB zone.
2. Define additional questions/comments/ concepts that the Commission would like to study.

Context of the RB Discussion

1. There is a citywide RB moratorium which limits residential density to 110 du/acre except in the Midvale Demonstration Area which can go to 150 du/acre as a tradeoff for providing specific amenities. The moratorium will expire in mid-November. The Council directed the Planning Commission to develop permanent RB regulations for their consideration to adopt before the moratorium expires.
2. The moratorium doesn't impact height or control development potential for retail or office uses. The current height limit is 65 feet.

Agenda Item 7.a

3. Design transition standards apply to all RB and CB zones. These standards provide more stringent rules regarding setbacks and stepbacks as compared to the previous regulations about setbacks.
4. There is a proposed CPA on the docket that would limit residential development in RB zones to 48 du/acre
5. There has been a lot of confusion created by the fact that the term “Regional Business” and its abbreviation “RB” is used both as a Comprehensive Plan designation and as a zone on the map and text of the development code. In addition, the term “regional” implies that uses are limited to those with a regional market (which is incorrect) while the term “business” implies that the exclusive use in this district is commercial as opposed to residential (also incorrect).

What are staff’s preliminary thoughts on the scope?

Staff has identified six concepts to keep in mind while considering the scope of the RB zoning code amendment:

1. The Council has already twice extended the interim regulations.
2. Regional Business zoning is not limited to the Aurora Corridor.
3. The council has provided some direction to the process
4. Permanent regulations, though intended to provide a degree of certainty to Shoreline’s residents and potential developers, are not written in stone.
5. To eliminate the confusion between identical terms in the plan and code, it may be wise to simply re-name the zoning designation to something else.
6. Discussion of the regulations should include a conversation about whether a density limit of 48 dus/acre is appropriate in an RB zone, either as a base density or as a maximum. This option is one that the Council placed on the Comprehensive Plan Amendment docket and deserves consideration along with other options.

Elaborating on the five concepts

The Council has already twice extended the interim regulations.

It is unlikely that they will want to do so again. To allow the Council enough time to consider and adopt new permanent regulations by mid-November, staff suggests that the Commission to develop a recommendation by early October.

Staff recommends that the Commission strive to develop permanent regulations that are straightforward to understand and apply, and aim to develop regulations built around existing code language rather than developing a brand new code (such as the Ridgecrest Planned Area code.)

Regional Business zoning is not limited to the Aurora Corridor.

Agenda Item 7.a

Though the bulk of it is located on or near the Aurora, there are existing pockets of RB zoning in Ballinger and near Lake City Way. The Comprehensive Plan would permit RB zoning on sites that are currently designated CB or RB

Staff cautions the Commission not to focus on specific sites or proposals when developing the regulations. They need to be applicable citywide.

The council has provided some direction to the process in adopting the Vision and Framework Goals and the Midvale Demonstration Area. (Attachments 1 and 2)

The Vision and Framework Goals (excerpted in Attachment 1) call for a mixture of higher and lower intensity uses. They also call for vibrant mixed use residential areas. The Midvale Demonstration Area (Ord. 546 and 549) is an exception to the interim regulations that would allow additional density, but requires design review and public amenities.

Staff concludes that the Council direction provides flexibility to the Commission to consider that some areas of RB could allow more intensity or density than other RB areas.

Permanent regulations, though intended to provide a degree of certainty to Shoreline's residents and potential developers, are not written in stone. We foresee that the Town Center Subarea Plan will modify the RB regulations in some form (The initial discussion with the Planning Commission on Town Center will occur at your July 9 meeting.) It is possible that different regulations might also be considered for other areas, such as the Sears site.

This conclusion, together with the relatively short time frame, leads staff to reiterate its objective to keep this set of regulation relatively simple. Future subarea or Planned Area processes will provide time to develop more geographically specific regulations, taking into account specific topography etc.

Discussion of the regulations should include a conversation about whether a density limit of 48 du/acre is appropriate in an RB zone, either as a base density or as a maximum. This option is one that the Council placed on the Comprehensive Plan Amendment docket and deserves consideration along with other options.

Because the Council has directed that an RB limit of 48 du/acre to be studied as part of the 2009 CPA docket, the Commission should add this as an option.

Current direction of staff recommendation.

Staff continues to believe that a form-based code is a valid objective and that the RB zone in the Aurora Corridor is a reasonable place for that to occur. Currently,

Agenda Item 7.a

staff is considering development of a proposal that would reduce the allowable density/intensity on smaller or narrower sites and allowing more density/intensity on larger sites. This would be accomplished by limiting building height on smaller sites and allowing greater height on larger sites.

Staff would expect that the effect of this proposal is to concentrate larger development onto a few geographic areas on Aurora—probably portions of the Town Center, Sears and Aurora Village sites. Other parts of Aurora would have development, but it would be on a smaller scale.

For sites with access to Aurora, staff is mulling over whether to place a limit on allowable density, allowing the height limit and parcel size to control it. For sites that don't have direct access to Aurora (including sites on Ballinger and other parts of the City), staff would definitely consider a density limit.

In addition, staff is mulling over the question of developing a new zoning category that doesn't permit retail uses. This zone might be appropriate on sites that are located between an intense RB zone and a single-family zone.

Next Steps

Staff will discuss these ideas with you in greater detail at the June 18 meeting. We are looking for your reactions as well as your ideas about other concepts to consider.

If you have questions or comments prior to the meeting, please discuss them with Steve Cohn at 206-801-2511 or email him at scohn@shorelinewa.gov.

Attachments

1. Excerpts from the Vision Statement/Framework Goals
2. Excerpts from Ord. 549 (Midvale Demonstration Project)

ATTACHMENT 1

Excerpts from the Vision Statement

Aurora Avenue is Shoreline's grand boulevard. It is a thriving corridor, with a variety of shops, businesses, eateries and entertainment, and includes clusters of some mid-rise buildings, well-designed and planned to transition to adjacent residential neighborhoods gracefully. Shoreline is recognized as a business-friendly city. Most services are available within the city, and there are many small businesses along Aurora, as well as larger employers that attract workers from throughout the region. Here and elsewhere, many Shoreline residents are able to find family-wage jobs within the City.

Housing in many of the mixed-use buildings along the boulevard is occupied by singles, couples, families, and seniors. Structures have been designed in ways that transition both visually and physically to reinforce the character of adjacent residential neighborhoods.

The improvements put in place in the early decades of the 21st century have made Aurora an attractive and energetic district that serves both local residents and people from nearby Seattle, as well as other communities in King and Snohomish counties. As a major transportation corridor, there is frequent regional rapid transit throughout the day and evening. Sidewalks provide easy access for walking to transit stops, businesses, and connections to adjacent neighborhoods.

Aurora has become a green boulevard, with mature trees and landscaping, public plazas, and green spaces. These spaces serve as gathering places for neighborhood and citywide events throughout the year. It has state-of-the-art stormwater treatment and other sustainable features along its entire length.

As you walk down Aurora you experience a colorful mix of bustling hubs – with well-designed buildings, shops and offices – big and small – inviting restaurants, and people enjoying their balconies and patios. The boulevard is anchored by the vibrant Town Center, which is focused between 175th and 185th Street. This district is characterized by compact, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly development highlighted by the Shoreline City Hall, the Shoreline Historical Museum, Shorewood High School, and other civic facilities. The interurban park provides open space, recreational opportunities, and serves as the city's living room for major festivals and celebrations.

Framework Goals

Shoreline is committed to being a sustainable city in all respects.

- FG 1: Continue to support exceptional schools and opportunities for lifelong learning.
- FG 2: Provide high quality public services, utilities, and infrastructure that accommodate anticipated levels of growth, protect public health and safety, and enhance the quality of life.
- FG 3: Support the provision of human services to meet community needs.
- FG 4: Provide a variety of gathering places, parks, and recreational opportunities for all ages and expand them to be consistent with population changes.
- FG 5: Encourage an emphasis on arts, culture and history throughout the community.
- FG 6: Make decisions that value Shoreline's social, economic, and cultural diversity.
- FG 7: Conserve and protect our environment and natural resources, and encourage restoration, environmental education and stewardship.
- FG 8: Apply innovative and environmentally sensitive development practices.
- FG 9: Promote quality building, functionality, and walkability through good design and development that is compatible with the surrounding area.
- FG 10: Respect neighborhood character and engage the community in decisions that affect them.
- FG 11: Make timely and transparent decisions that respect community input.
- FG 12: Support diverse and affordable housing choices that provide for Shoreline's population growth, including options accessible for the aging and/or developmentally disabled.
- FG 13: Encourage a variety of transportation options that provide better connectivity within Shoreline and throughout the region.
- FG 14: Designate specific areas for high density development, especially along major transportation corridors.

Item 7.a - Attachment 1

- FG 15: Create a business friendly environment that supports small and local businesses, attracts large businesses to serve the community and expand our jobs and tax base, and encourages innovation and creative partnerships.
- FG 16: Encourage local neighborhood retail and services distributed throughout the city.
- FG 17: Strengthen partnerships with schools, non-governmental organizations, volunteers, public agencies and the business community.
- FG 18: Encourage Master Planning at Fircrest School that protects residents and encourages energy and design innovation for sustainable future development.

ATTACHMENT 2

ORDINANCE NO. 549 (Excerpt)

Section 2. Interim Regulation Amended. The interim regulation for the Regional Business Zone (RB) and Section 2 of Ordinance No. 505 are amended to read as follows:

Moratorium and Interim Regulation Adopted.

- A. Except for properties included under subsection B, A moratorium is adopted upon the filing of any application for residential development within the Regional Business (RB) zoning district of the City, which exceeds 110 dwelling units per acre, unless a neighborhood plan, subarea plan or special district overlay plan authorizing a higher density has been approved.
- B. For property zoned Regional Business (RB) that abuts Midvale Ave.N. between N 175th and N. 185th Streets, a moratorium is adopted upon the filing of any application for residential development which does not:
1. Limit the maximum building height within 100 feet of the property line between RB and R-8 and R-12 zoned properties to 45', and limit the maximum building height between 100-200 feet of the property line to 55' ~~Limit building height at least 200 feet from property lines to 45', abutting all residential districts except R-48;~~ and
 2. At a minimum, meet "3-star" construction standards plus independent verification under King County Built Green standards as amended, or equivalent standard approved by the director; and
 3. Include electric vehicle plug-in facilities in parking areas; and
 4. Make a provision for the developer holding a neighborhood meeting with city staff in attendance to identify traffic impacts coming from building occupants and discuss appropriate mitigation measures. Meetings will be advertised by mailings to property owners and occupants within 500 feet of the property; and
 5. Demonstrate compliance with design standards of SMC 20.91.050 with the following modification, unless a design departure approval is obtained under SMC 20.91.040. The modification is: development will provide contiguous commercial space covering at least 2/3 of street frontage (not including

Item 7.a - Attachment 2

openings into buildings) or an equivalent contiguous space on the 1st floor with an entrance onto Midvale; and

6. Limit housing unit density to a maximum 150 du/acre.
7. All buildings and required parking shall be located on the RB-zoned property and not off-site.

C. No land use development proposal or application may be filed or accepted which proposes a development that does not comply with this section.