

BELLINGHAM PLANNING COMMISSION FINDINGS OF FACT, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

OCTOBER 8, 2009

SUMMARY

Following the public hearing and deliberation on the proposed Guide Meridian/Cordata neighborhood plan amendment and rezone of Area 17D, the Bellingham Planning Commission has determined that the proposed changes comply with, and will implement, the goals and policies of the Bellingham Comprehensive Plan.

I. FINDINGS OF FACT

1. Project or Proposal Description

The proposal includes of the Neighborhood Plan land use designation and zoning for a portion of Area 17D of the Guide Meridian/Cordata Neighborhood. The proposal would change the land use designation from Industrial to Residential/Commercial/Industrial and rezone approximately 35 acres of property within Area 17D from Industrial, Planned to Residential/Commercial/Industrial (live/work), Planned. The proposal also includes an amendment to the Cordata Business Park Planned Unit Development to include provisions specific to, but not limited to, design standards, permitted uses, and traffic mitigation. The site is located within the Cordata Business Park, generally west of Cordata Parkway, between Stuart and Horton Roads.

2. Background Information/Procedural History

1986 – Cordata Business Park Planned Unit Development (PUD) was approved by Whatcom County.

1992 and 1998 – The City annexed the Cordata Business Park in two stages, Stage I and II, under the agreements to fully vest the PUD.

2002 – The City took two separate actions on rezone requests in Cordata. The City approved a request to change the zoning from Industrial to Institutional for 50 acres know owned by Whatcom Community College. The City denied a rezone request for the subject site that requested a changed from Industrial to Residential.

July 6, 2009 - Applicant submits an application for a Comprehensive Plan Amendment and Rezone.

August 7, 2009 – The City issued a letter outlining the review process for the application.

October 8, 2009 – The Planning Commission held a public hearing on the proposal.

3. Public Comment

June 16, 2009 - Applicant holds a neighborhood meeting

June 23, 2009 – A pre-applicant conference is held.

July 3, 2009 – Applicant holds a planning workshop.

4. State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) Determination if applicable

A non-project SEPA determination of Non-Significance was issued by the City of Bellingham on September 21, 2009.

5. Consistency with the Bellingham Comprehensive Plan, and/or Review Criteria

Rezoning must be consistent with the factors and review criteria in BMC 20.19.030. Relevant comprehensive plan goals and policies and the review criteria were included in the Planning Commission's consideration of the proposed rezoning. The existing zoning classification is no longer suitable for the property. Conditions in the immediate vicinity and within the Cordata Business Park Planned Unit Development have changed sufficiently since the property was classified under the current zoning.

Neighborhood Plans must be consistent with and carry out the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan. In addition, neighborhood plan amendments must be consistent with the factors and review criteria in BMC 20.20.060. Specific criteria are as follows:

1. The proposed amendment bears a substantial relation to public, health, safety and welfare.

A mixed-use development with pedestrian orientation and designed in compliance with applicable municipal codes is related to the public health, safety and welfare of all Bellingham neighborhoods. The general welfare will be enhanced by having a property that creates employment, services the needs of the immediate community, addresses the infill needs of the City of Bellingham, and will create a civic center for the Cordata Neighborhood. The Planning Commission finds that the proposal is consistent with the criteria.

2. The proposed amendment is consistent with the Growth Management Act.

Providing redevelopment opportunities for mixed-use development along arterial corridors and utilizing existing utilities is critical to fulfilling the infill and sprawl reduction goals of the GMA. The change will result in a different type of urban land use at a similar intensity as the industrial uses previously allowed. The Planning Commission finds that the proposal is consistent with the criteria.

3. The proposed amendment is consistent with the County Wide Planning Policies.

The proposal is consistent with strategies of the countywide planning policies intended to promote growth within cities and to protect county rural lands. The Planning Commission finds that the proposal is consistent with the criteria.

4. The comprehensive plan will be internally consistent.

Goals and policies of the comprehensive plan emphasize pedestrian oriented mixed-use development, promoting the improvement in the quality of residential and commercial development by ensuring new construction meets high standards and directing growth to urban villages. The proposal is internally consistent with these priorities. The Planning Commission finds that the proposal is consistent with the criteria.

5. The proposed amendment will result in long-term benefits to the community as a whole and it is in the best interest of the community.

The proposal allows for appropriate mixed-use redevelopment in an area designated as an Urban Village. It implements the goals and policies of the comprehensive plan, which promotes development strategies resulting in long-term benefits to the community. It allows for commercial development to occur near to and compliment residential uses. The proposal satisfies both residential and commercial land use needs in an area already developed with utilities and streets. The proposal will provide land for employment opportunity. The loss of industrially zoned land will not adversely diminish the industrial land supply. It promotes infill development that will be developed in character with the remaining Cordata neighborhood. The Planning Commission finds that the proposal is consistent with the criteria.

Relevant Comprehensive Plan Goals and Policies and BMC review considerations were included in the Planning Commission's deliberation of the proposal and reflected in the staff report.

II. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the staff report, the submittal from the applicant and the information presented at the public hearing, the Planning Commission concludes:

1. The proposed amendment to the Guide Meridian/Cordata Neighborhood Plan is consistent with the goals and policies of the Bellingham Comprehensive Plan, the Countywide Planning Policies and the GMA.
2. Properly conditioned, the proposed rezone satisfies the review factors and criteria in BMC 20.20.060 C and D. and BMC 20.19.030.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions, the Bellingham Planning Commission recommends that the City Council approve the proposal to amend the Comprehensive Plan and Area 17F of the Guide Meridian/Cordata zoning table as described in the October 8, 2009 staff report.

ADOPTED this 8th day of October, 2009.

Thom Rant
Planning Commission Chairperson

ATTEST: Heather Steen
Recording Secretary

APPROVED AS TO FORM:
Alan A. Manning
City Attorney