

Docket Item #20
INITIATION OF TEXT AMENDMENT
#2004-0007-I

Planning Commission Meeting
May 4, 2004

CASE: INITIATION OF TEXT AMENDMENT #2004-0007-I
AMENDMENT TO THE CD-X ZONE

ISSUE: Consideration of initiation of a text amendment to the Zoning Ordinance to amend the permitted floor area ratio for buildings and structures in the CD-X zone, excluding those within the Old and Historic District.

STAFF: Department of Planning and Zoning

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission, pursuant to the attached motion, initiate a text amendment to the Zoning Ordinance, in order to change the CD-X permitted floor area ratio (FAR) for residential uses, finding that the consideration of such a text amendment is consistent with the public necessity, convenience, general welfare and good zoning practice.

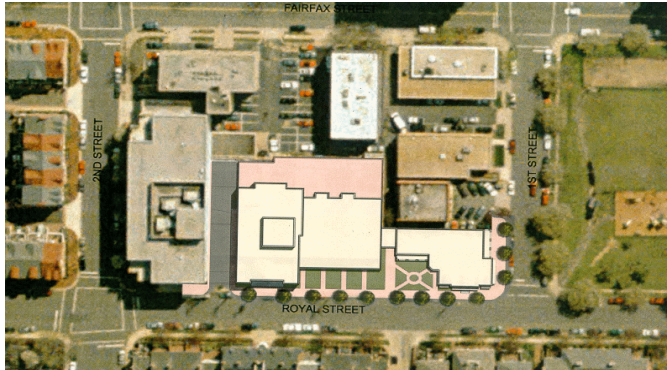
I. BACKGROUND:

The initiation of a text amendment for the CD-X zone was prompted by a proposal by the Holladay Corporation for property located at 1023 Royal Street. The proposal requested to construct approximately 50 residential condominium units, with heights from 40 to 50 feet and underground parking. In meetings with various adjoining civic associations and the Old Town North Urban Design Advisory Board, the idea of a text amendment and the proposed development plan have been positively received.



Front elevation of proposed development

Staff is requesting that the Commission initiate a zoning text amendment for the CD-X zone, which is located in the Old Town North portion of the City, to increase the maximum floor area ratio (FAR) for residential uses from 1.25 to 2.00 with a special use permit. The CD-X zone currently permits an FAR of 2.5 for non-residential uses with an SUP, but 1.25 for residential uses as shown in the chart below:



Site Plan View

	Residential	Non-Residential
Permitted	1.25	1.50
Permitted with Special Use Permit	1.25	2.50
With Proposed Text Amendment with Special Use Permit	2.00	NA

II. STAFF ANALYSIS:

The Master Plan encourages the promotion of residential uses as an extension of Old Town. Specifically, the Plan states: “expand and reinforce a sense of residential community, in particular by extending the residential scale and flavor of the historic district northward into as much of Old Town North as possible.” However, it became apparent during discussions regarding the proposed condominium plan that existing policy favors office and commercial uses over residential, since the CD-X zone enables office use considerably more FAR with a site plan and a special use permit. This is contrary to the intent of the Master Plan to encourage residential use. At the request of the applicant and the adjoining community, staff agreed to proceed with the formal initiation of a text amendment.

The proposed text amendment is an attempt to encourage residential use with a special use permit where appropriate within the context of the adjoining neighborhoods and the Master Plan. The FAR requested for residential would still be 0.5 FAR less than the FAR allowed for office use with an SUP.



All CDX Zones in Alexandria
Historic District Boundaries

One concern raised by a text amendment is that it would affect all CD-X zones within the City. The CD-X zone is located within three areas of Old Town North. Two of the zones are located adjacent to the George Washington Parkway, and within the Historic District. Staff does not support increased FAR for any of the CD-X properties adjacent to the Parkway or within the Historic District. If these properties are eliminated, the text amendment would apply to two areas, both within Old Town North. Therefore, the text amendment would apply to a discrete area of the City, where the potential impacts can be thoroughly analyzed.

As part of the text amendment criteria, there would be minimum requirements and standards to be eligible to apply for a special use permit to increase floor area ratio from 1.25 to 2.0. It is anticipated that the standards would likely include such items as the following:

- Maximum building(s) heights up to 50 ft., with requirements for variation in heights of buildings;
- Parking must be located underground;
- A specified portion of affordable housing is required;

- Undergrounding of above grade utilities;
- Streetscape improvements;
- Useable and consolidated ground level open space;
- Enhanced building design – architectural quality;
- Use of green/sustainable building technologies;
- Minimum lot size requirement to be eligible for a special use permit; and
- Properties within the Historic District or adjacent to the George Washington Parkway would not be eligible for increased floor area.

These ideas will need to be refined and augmented once the text amendment is analyzed in detail which will include extensive discussions with the property owners, community and the Planning Commission. This initiation does not attempt to resolve all of the issues raised by the proposed text amendment, but is rather authorization by the Commission to allow staff to work with the community to evaluate and analyze a text amendment, with a subsequent staff report and application for review by the Commission.

III. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Commission initiate a text amendment to amend Article IV, Section 600 of the Zoning Ordinance, to evaluate the residential floor area ratio (FAR) within the CD-X zone, because consideration of the changes are consistent with public necessity, convenience, general welfare and good zoning practice.

INITIATION MOTION

Whereas the Alexandria Planning Commission may initiate the amendment of the Alexandria Zoning Ordinance whenever it determines that public necessity, convenience, general welfare or good zoning practice requires an amendment; and,

Whereas the legislation in the initiation of the Text Amendment 2004-0007 represents good zoning practice that is important to the public necessity and convenience and the general welfare,

Section 4-600 of the Zoning Ordinance as currently written creates a condition where non-residential uses are encouraged rather than an appropriate balance of uses consistent with the intent of the CD-X zone to provide an urban mix of uses.

Whereas changes to Section 4-600 can make residential development more efficient and help create that balance.

Now, therefore, I move that the Alexandria Planning Commission find that the public necessity, convenience, general welfare or good zoning practice requires consideration of a revision to Article 4-600 in the Zoning Ordinance; and,

I further move that the Alexandria Planning Commission initiate such text amendment.