

M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: September 2, 2015

TO: Kevin Poole, Planning Commission Chair
Members of the Renton Planning Commission

FROM: Angie Mathias, Senior Planner

SUBJECT: **CA Zone Density**

ISSUE

The City currently has a moratorium on new residential development in the Commercial Arterial (CA) zone, except for the City Center Community Planning Area. The moratorium is in place primarily due to concern that the maximum density of 60 dwelling units per acre that is allowed in the zone is placing too much burden on infrastructure.

DISCUSSION

The City has a range density and intensity in its mixed-use zones. They range from the Commercial Neighborhood (CN) zone which allows 4 units per structure to the Commercial Office (CO) zone which allows up to 250 dwelling units per acre. The areas where the City has allowed high density mixed use zones can be summarized as follows:

Zone	Maximum Density	Maximum Height	Location
Urban Center (UC)	150 du/acre	10 stories	Proximity of the Landing, Boeing plant, and Southport area
Center Downtown (CD)	150 du/acre	95 feet	Downtown
Center Village (CV)	80 du/acre	60 feet	Sunset Community Revitalization area
Commercial Office (CO)	250 du/acre	250 feet	Valley area primarily, but residential is only allowed within ¼ mile of significant public transportation
Commercial Office Residential (COR)	75 du/acre	125 feet	Proximity of Quendall Terminals on Lake Washington and the Stoneway site along the Cedar River
Commercial Arterial (CA)	60 du/acre	60 feet	In all areas of the City, primarily on arterial streets

The CA zone is the only zone that is implemented throughout the City. All other high density mixed use zones are fairly narrowly focused and often were created or revised specifically for that area. For

example the Center Village zone was created for the Sunset area and is intended to incentivize redevelopment in that community. In fact, generally, high density is used in order to incentivize change and as found in Title IV or Renton Municipal Code, *“the purpose of the Commercial Arterial Zone (CA) is to evolve from “strip commercial” linear business districts to business areas characterized by enhanced site planning and pedestrian orientation, incorporating efficient parking lot design, coordinated access, amenities and boulevard treatment with greater densities. The CA Zone provides for a wide variety of retail sales, services, and other commercial activities along high-volume traffic corridors”.*

The CA zone, however, has not always allowed high density throughout the zone. Prior to 2008, the City allowed 60 dwelling units per acre in the Rainier Avenue, Sunset Boulevard, Puget Drive, and NE 4th Business District Overlays, if projects were mixed use. If a parcel was located more than 150 feet from the arterial, in these areas, it could develop stand-alone residential at a maximum of 20 dwelling units per acre. The projects that occurred with the criterion of being located 150 feet from the arterial, did not result in quality mixed-use projects that the comprehensive plan intended for the zone. So, the City removed the provisions allowing for stand-alone residential. Additionally, in 2008, the City eliminated the Business District Overlays and put the entire CA zone in Urban Design District D. The requirements of the design district were applied to all new development; both mixed use, as well as commercial. The goal was to streamline development standards to make them more user and administration friendly and to allow more intense development in commercial areas where the City wants to encourage more pedestrian oriented and higher density mixed use development. The projects that have occurred since then have generally been of character intended. Notably, commercial development has been more pedestrian oriented and higher quality design. For example, the new CVS store in the Benson area.

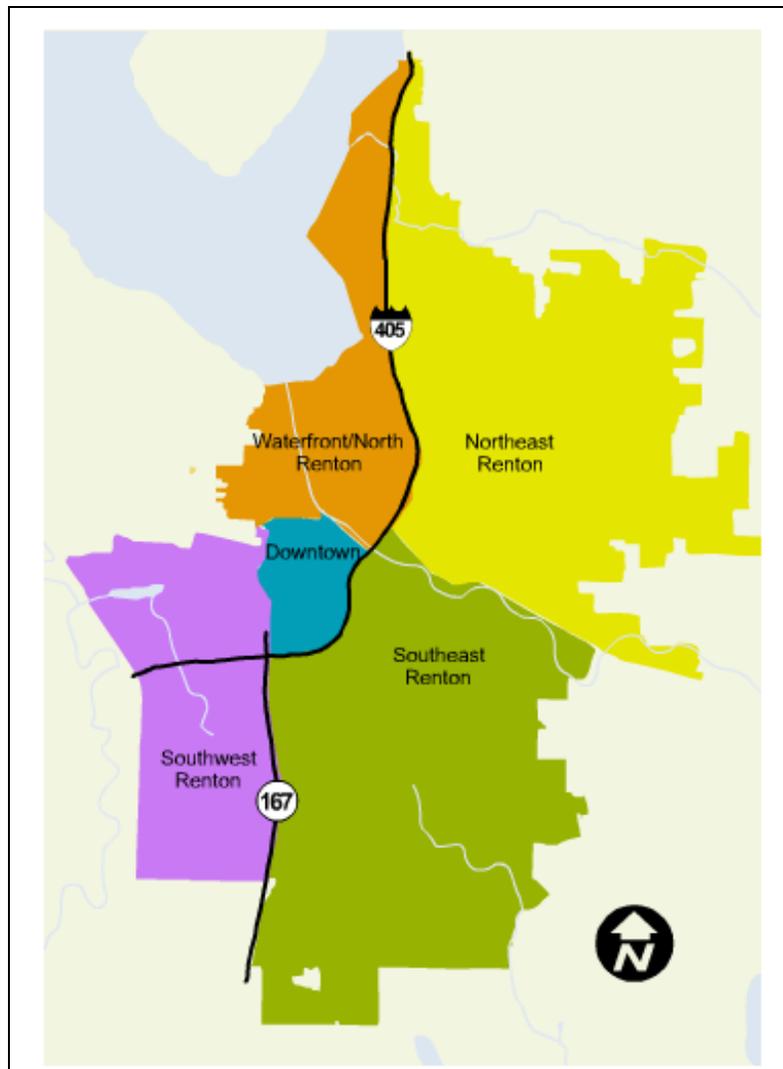
In removing the Business District Overlays and allowing mixed use residential throughout the CA zone, there was no change in the Sunset Boulevard, Puget Drive, or NE 4th areas. The potential to develop with 60 dwelling units per acre was not made available to any additional properties. In the Rainier Avenue area there were many parcels where high density mixed use was made possible. The Rainier Avenue Overlay generally covered the area from Airport Way at the north to the railroad crossing at the south. So, none of the CA zoned properties on Grady Way would have previously been able to develop with 60 dwelling units per acre. Additionally, removal of the Overlays made mixed use high density development available to CA zoned parcels in the Cedar River, Kennydale, Talbot, and Benson Hill Community Planning Areas.

With the adoption of a moratorium on new residential in the CA zone, except in City Center, the City is reconsidering where in the CA zone to allow high density development and at what scale. (There is no residential development allowed in the CA zone in the Valley either, but this is longstanding prohibition, not a result of the moratorium.) The moratorium enables the City to review by specific areas where it seeks to utilize high density to incentivize both mixed-use development and the evolution of strip commercial development. The City needs to strike a balance between incentivizing redevelopment and creating additional burden on areas that are already burdened. This staff proposal seeks to identify a targeted approach to where the City wishes to continue to incentivize redevelopment with allowing high density residential and where it is deemed that high density residential would serve to be more detrimental than straight commercial development.

In reviewing the City’s Six-Year Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP), staff has identified a number of planned improvements that will work to improve conditions on arterials that also have CA zoned properties on them or in close proximity. As shown on Attachment A, there are projects located throughout the City. Both Sunset Boulevard and NE 4th are identified as being locations where improvements related to public transit are particularly important due to growth in both residential and commercial. Additionally, improvements oriented to bicycles and pedestrians are planned on Sunset

Boulevard and NE 4th. There are many projects planned in the City Center area that seek to improve vehicular traffic flows and conditions for both bicyclists and pedestrians. The area also has planned improvements related to public transit. Planned improvements in the Benson area seek to improve pedestrian safety with sidewalks and bike lanes. Although it is planned to be improved to 3 lanes, the third lane is a turn lane which will help facilitate improved traffic flow behind left turning vehicles, it does not provide an actual lane of travel. There are no planned improvements related to transit. In the Talbot area, there is a planned expansion of Carr Road from 4 to 5 lanes with bicycle lanes, but not pedestrian improvements. There are no transit related improvements in the Talbot area. There are no TIP planned improvements in the Kennydale or Cedar River area that impact CA zoned properties in the area or increase capacity for transit, vehicles, bicycles, or pedestrians.

Staff also reviewed data available on the City's website related to the number of dwelling units by structure type which is broken down as shown on the map below.



The following table summarizes the number of housing units that are multi-family units. It does not include units in duplexes, tri-plexes, and four-plexes. In italics are the Community Planning Areas that

correlate with the areas identified on the map on the previous page. The data is derived from the American Community Survey conducted by the Census Bureau. The most recent estimate is from data compiled in 2011. So, the data does not reflect some recent projects, such as 162 units at Fieldbrook Commons and 117 units at Altitude both in Benson, and 237 units at the Reserve @ Renton in City Center. However, the trends demonstrated are the same in 2011 as today. Although the size in land area of the areas are not comparable, it is clear that the Southeast (Benson and Talbot) and the Northeast (Highlands, East Plateau, and Kennydale) have the most units in multi-family, with Benson having the most.

	Number of Multi-Family Units
Southwest (Valley)	1,054
Downtown (portion of City Center)	904
Northeast (Highlands, East Plateau, & Cedar River)	4,113
Waterfront North (Kennydale and portion of City Center)	1,732
Southeast (Benson and Talbot)	5,048
Total	12,851

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

This proposal is intended to strike a balance between where the City seeks to incentivize redevelopment with high density and where just straight commercial development would be more beneficial to the community. Staff proposes allowing residential development in the CA zone by Community Planning Area and as follows:

	Proposed Maximum Density in the CA Zone
City Center	60 du/acre
Highlands	60 du/acre
East Plateau	30 du/acre
Kennydale	30 du/acre
Cedar River	None
Benson	None
Talbot	None
Valley	None

City Center and the Highlands

City Center and the Highlands have significant transportation investments planned. City Center is where the City is targeting growth. Although the Highlands area has the second largest number of multi-family housing units, the near term planned transportation improvements include making the Sunset Boulevard and NE 4th corridors more focused on bus travel, as well as bicycles. Such improvements are strongly correlated to high density housing. Both City Center and the Highlands Community Planning Areas are recommended to be allowed 60 dwelling units per acre.

East Plateau and Kenndale

The East Plateau has a small area of CA zoned parcels, however it is located at the periphery of the commercial area of the City; it is not near a central area. Kenndale has more CA zoned parcels, but is also not near a central area. Additionally, Kenndale has no near term planned transportation improvements that would address significant transportation impacts associated with high density. East Plateau and Kenndale Community Planning Areas are recommended to be allowed 30 dwelling units per acre in the CA zone.

Cedar River

The Cedar River area already has significant multi-family development and especially given the environmental significance of the river and associated lands, it is not appropriate for the CA zone to allow density in this area.

Benson and Talbot

The Benson and Talbot areas have the greatest number of existing multi-family units in the City. The near term planned transportation improvements are not suited to accommodate high density on the arterial corridors. Although adding bicycle lanes could be advantageous to potential commuters, there is not a significant percentage of the population that commutes by bicycle. Some riders may opt to begin commuting by bicycle when bicycle lanes are provided. The highest percentage of bicycle commuters the U.S. is 6.1% in Portland, Oregon; in Seattle it is 3.4%. Given the high number of existing multi-family units and no transportation improvements planned that help facilitate high density development, staff recommends not allowing any dwellings in the CA zone in Benson and Talbot. For these areas, it would be a greater burden to accommodate high density mixed use than the incentive high density offers for potential redevelopment of commercial properties. There is still potential for redevelopment of commercial properties in these areas, with mixed use commercial-office and infill of parcels that are not fully utilized. In Benson and Talbot, the CA zone is better utilized to provide new jobs not new housing. There are still many areas in both communities that can accommodate new multi-family dwellings in the Residential Multi-Family zone, at 20 dwelling units per acre.

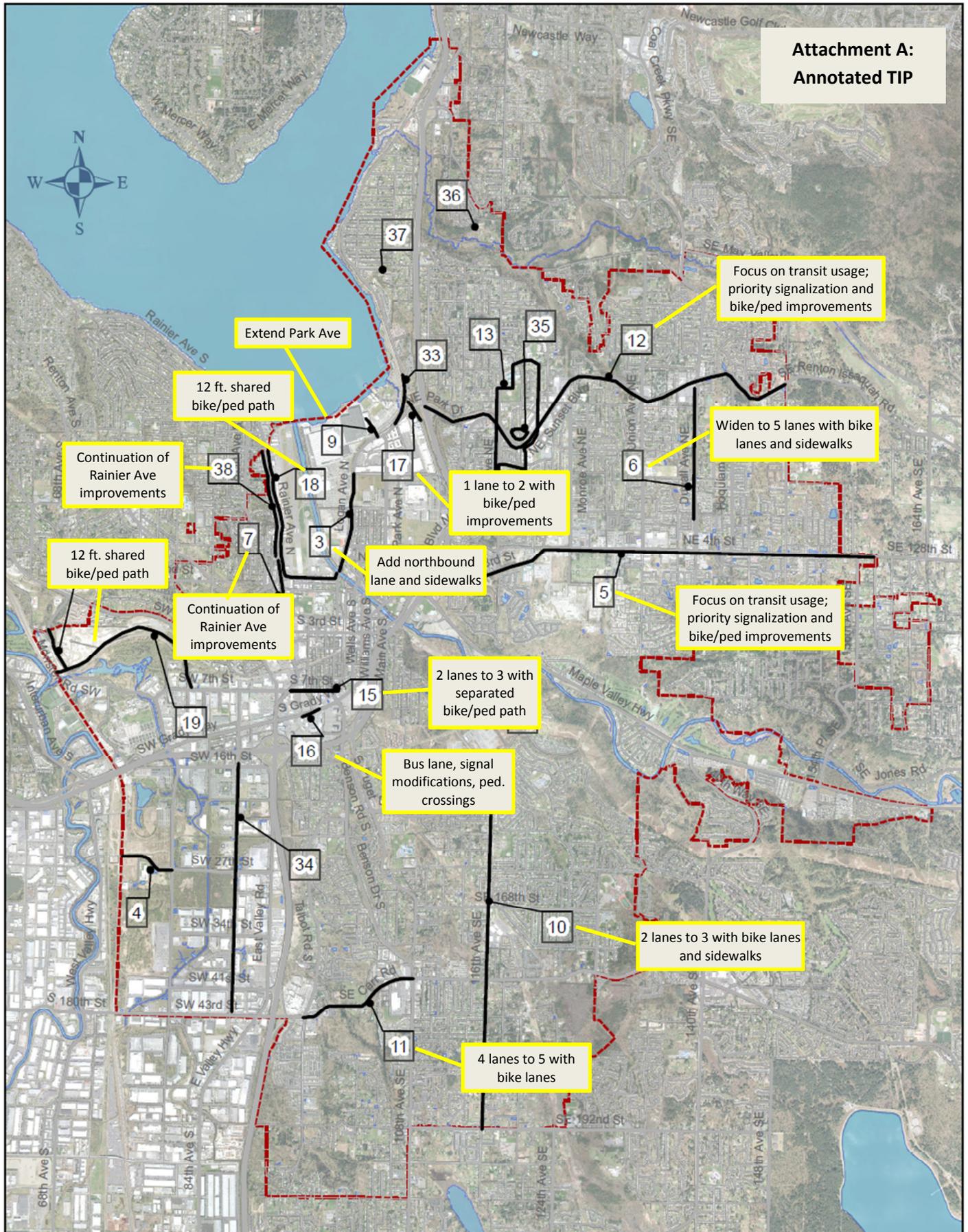
Valley

Previous to the moratorium the Valley did not allow residential in the CA zone. Staff does not recommend changing this.

On the next page is a table indicating the estimated amount of land area of vacant and redevelopable land in the CA zone that is in each Community Planning Area. Also, is the estimated number of dwelling units that could be anticipated to be developed in the CA zone with the maximum 60 dwelling units per acre. With the staff proposal, it is estimated that the Benson Community would lose capacity for 413 new dwelling units. The number shown for Kenndale is 177, however the staff recommendation is to allow a maximum 30 dwelling units per acre, so it is likely that there would be a loss of approximately half that capacity or 88 fewer potential new dwelling units.

	Acres of Vacant CA Land	Acres of Redevelopable CA Land	Potential Number of Units if 60 du/acre Allowed
City Center	1.5	6.52	243
Highlands	4.9	7.36	371
East Plateau	0	0	0
Kennydale	4.52	1.33	177
Cedar River	0	0	0
Benson	1.76	13.6	413
Talbot	0	0	0
Valley	n/a	n/a	n/a

**Attachment A:
Annotated TIP**



City of Renton - 2016-2021 TIP