

Staff Report

CLUBHOUSE USE IN RESIDENTIAL HIGH DENSITY ZONE

September 10, 2013

BACKGROUND

At its August 27, 2013 meeting, the City Council referred a letter from Mr. Scott Renaud, on behalf of his client, Copper Beech, which requested that the City consider a zoning text amendment to allow a clubhouse in the Residential High Density Zone (See Attachment 1). Mr. Renaud noted that Copper Beech would like to develop a student housing development at 712 S. 16th Street and include a clubhouse on the property for use by the residents of the development. The clubhouse would contain such functions as a manager's office, exercise and recreation facilities, meeting rooms, and maintenance facilities. City Council directed staff to prepare a report providing background information on this subject.

At issue is the ambiguity of the Zoning Code in considering principal and accessory uses related to a clubhouse within the Residential High Density Zoning District. The Zoning Code does not directly list or define the use of a clubhouse, but instead the use relates to two use descriptions. The Zoning Code identifies in section 29.501(4) that "recreational activities" are an acceptable accessory use for permitted Household Living uses (single family, two family, attached, and apartment style dwellings). However, the zoning code does not define what is intended by the term "recreational activity."

In a separate section of the Zoning Code (29.201(168)), "recreational facility" is defined as follows:

"Recreational Facility" means any building, structure, portion thereof, land or water designed and used for exercise, relaxation or enjoyment. "Recreation Facility" shall include any athletic fields, baseball or softball diamonds, basketball courts, football fields, golf courses, golf driving ranges, gun clubs, gymnasiums, hunting or fishing preserves, ice hockey rinks, miniature golf courses, racquetball or squash courts, soccer pitches, swimming pools, tennis courts, or tracks."

This definition would fit the intent and functions of a clubhouse. However, "recreational facilities" are only listed as an accessory use under the Group Living use category which allows for such uses as assisted living facilities, boarding and rooming houses, and dormitories or fraternities and sororities. It is also considered a commercial use as an Entertainment, Restaurant, and Recreation Trade. Within the Residential High Density Zoning District, a limited amount of Entertainment, Restaurant, and Recreation uses are allowed as part of mixed-use residential building. As a commercial use, it is open to use by any person and not restricted to residents or members. A stand alone Recreational Facility is not a permitted use within Residential High Density zoning.

There are existing clubhouses in the city as accessory uses to residential developments. However, they were constructed either under the approval of an old PUD (Planned Unit Development), or as an F-PRD (Planned Residential District), which allows for recreational facilities as a permitted use for the residents of the district. One recently constructed Residential High Density Zoning clubhouse (and there may be others) was allowed to be constructed as a permitted Entertainment, Restaurant and Recreation Trade use within a mixed-use building because a residential use is located above the first floor. In the case of a mixed use development, the entertainment/recreation use is limited to an area of not more than 5,000 square feet. In the case of Copper Beech, however, the clubhouse is intended to be a stand-alone structure for residents' use and to not be integrated into a mixed-use building.

Currently, the Residential High Density Zone permits a wide range of residential household living uses that include two-family residences, attached units, apartment dwellings, family homes and dwelling houses. One consideration to be made is whether clubhouses should be permitted for all household living uses or be permitted specific to multiple family uses, such as attached (townhome) units and apartment style units. If deemed appropriate, the text amendment could specify the type of development appropriate for clubhouse and recreation type functions.

Staff Comments:

Staff believes there is merit in adding a Zoning Code amendment for clubhouses for residential developments to accommodate a desirable outdoor/indoor activity and amenity space for residential dwellings. In addition, such an amendment would provide an opportunity to clarify the definitions of "recreational activity" and "recreational facility." Staff could review the description of the uses, arrangement of the use table, and potentially any needed development standards. Staff would also note that, since there are existing clubhouses in other zoning districts, Council could direct staff to broaden the review of a clubhouse text amendment to consider provisions and standards for clubhouse/recreational facility use in other districts that allow multi-family dwellings. Whether Council determines that clubhouses are appropriate for all residential use types or only specific to multiple family uses within the Residential High Density Zone, the request and desire of Copper Beech for their development would be satisfied.

Should the Council wish consider clubhouses in the Residential High Density Zone as requested, a referral for a text amendment should be made. This would allow Copper Beech to submit an application for text amendment. Staff would then prepare a zoning text amendment for consideration by the Planning and Zoning Commission and then by the City Council.

Alternatively, Council could reject this text amendment request. Should that occur, Copper Beech could still design a mixed-use building that includes both living units and a clubhouse, or could pursue F-PRD zoning to have the use separately.

Attachment 1 Request Letter



Aspen Business Park | 414 South 17th Street, Suite 107 | Ames, Iowa 50010

August 22, 2013

Honorable Mayor and City Council
City of Ames
515 Clark Avenue
Ames, Iowa 50010

RE: Request to Allow a Clubhouse in a RH Zoned District
FOX Ref. No. 5094-12a.412

Dear Mayor and City Council:

On the behalf of Copper Beech are requesting the Council direct Staff to prepare a text amendment to allow the use of a clubhouse in Residential High Density zoning districts. Copper Beech is developing a student housing project at 712 S. 16th Street as shown on the attached site plan. While the housing portion of the site plan is nearing approval the proposed clubhouse cannot be approved as the clubhouse is not an allowed use in any residential zone. While clubhouses frequently exist in residential zones they are either incorporated into portion of a residential structure or were placed as part of a planned unit development (PUD) prior to the year 2000 or as an F-PRD (Planned Residential District) since 2000. Stand alone clubhouses are not a permitted use and are not defined in the City Code.

Clubhouses do not fit any other designation in the Ames Code. The closest definition is "community facilities" but this implies use for the general public while the clubhouse is sized to serve the residents of the development. In general the same uses will be found for clubhouses that are allowed under the current definition of community facilities.

Uses within the clubhouse include offices for the manager and employees of the facility, exercise and recreation facilities, meeting rooms, and maintenance facilities. The pool attached to the clubhouse is an allowed use in the RH zone, but is better served and managed by being attached to the clubhouse. At some locations mail facilities will also be incorporated into the facility - at this location there will be local mail kiosks for the residents.

We have attached the floor plan and architectural views of the proposed clubhouse for the Copper Beech development for your review. While these are not representative of all the possibilities of clubhouses that may be built, it does show the intent of Copper Beech for this development.

I will be at the Council meeting to answer any questions you have concerning this text amendment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Renaud', written over a horizontal line.

Scott Renaud, P.E.
Project Manager

cc: Eric Porter, CB at Ames, L.L.C. (Copper Beech)
Kelly Diekmann, Planning Director, City of Ames

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