



MEMO

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TO: Ames City Council and Mayor

FROM: Kelly Diekmann, Planning and Housing Director

DATE: April 13, 2021

SUBJECT: Request by adjacent property owner to rezone properties between Grand Avenue and Grove Avenue from Residential High Density to Residential Medium Density

Background:

At its February 2, 2021 meeting, City Council referred to staff a request from Robert Long at 3124 Grove Avenue requesting the City rezone the west side of Grove Avenue, bounded by Northwood Drive, Grand Avenue and Duff Avenue from Residential High Density (RH) to Residential Medium Density (RM). (***See Attachment A – Location Map & Attachment C – Letter Requesting Rezoning***).

Mr. Long expressed concerns of potential commercial mixed-use development on the east side of Grand Avenue along Grove Avenue given the recent development plans for 3206 Grand Avenue (formerly Mary Kay’s Flowers & Garden Café) and a previous Land Use Policy Plan and Rezoning request for 3125 and 3115 Grove Avenue for a Sherwin-Williams store.

This area of Grove Avenue, approximately 3.2 acres, is currently zoned Residential High Density (RH). RH zoning does allow for mixed-use development. Mixed-use development in RH allows for office and commercial uses if residential is built above the first floor.

The LUPP does not have a designation for commercial expansion in this area or a policy to consider new “strip commercial” development patterns along arterial roads (Grand Avenue). However, this does not prevent the commercial development that is allowed by right under the Zoning Ordinance. Any potential commercial development could not be accessed from Grand Avenue as it is an arterial street and a US Highway, meaning access would be from Grove Avenue as a residential street.

Staff’s initial assessment indicates that rezoning of these properties would not create nonconformity of uses or in density. These eight parcels are developed as single-family, duplex and multi-family, all uses permitted with RM zoning. No mixed-use commercial would be permitted, though.

A change in zoning to RM would likely require an amendment to the LUPP (**See Attachment B – LUPP Excerpt**). City Council would need to determine if the amendment would warrant a Minor or Major amendment process. The change from high-density to medium density could likely be done as a Minor Amendment to the LUPP given the size of the area and conformity of existing uses and densities.

The subject block has a “Redirection” area designation within the most recent Draft Land Use Map for Ames Plan 2040. Redirection is intended to signify that some change is expected in this area and warrants further study. The intent was to review residential options and configurations for the properties along this block at some point in the future. RM zoning may fit the intent of the Redirection designation.

Options:

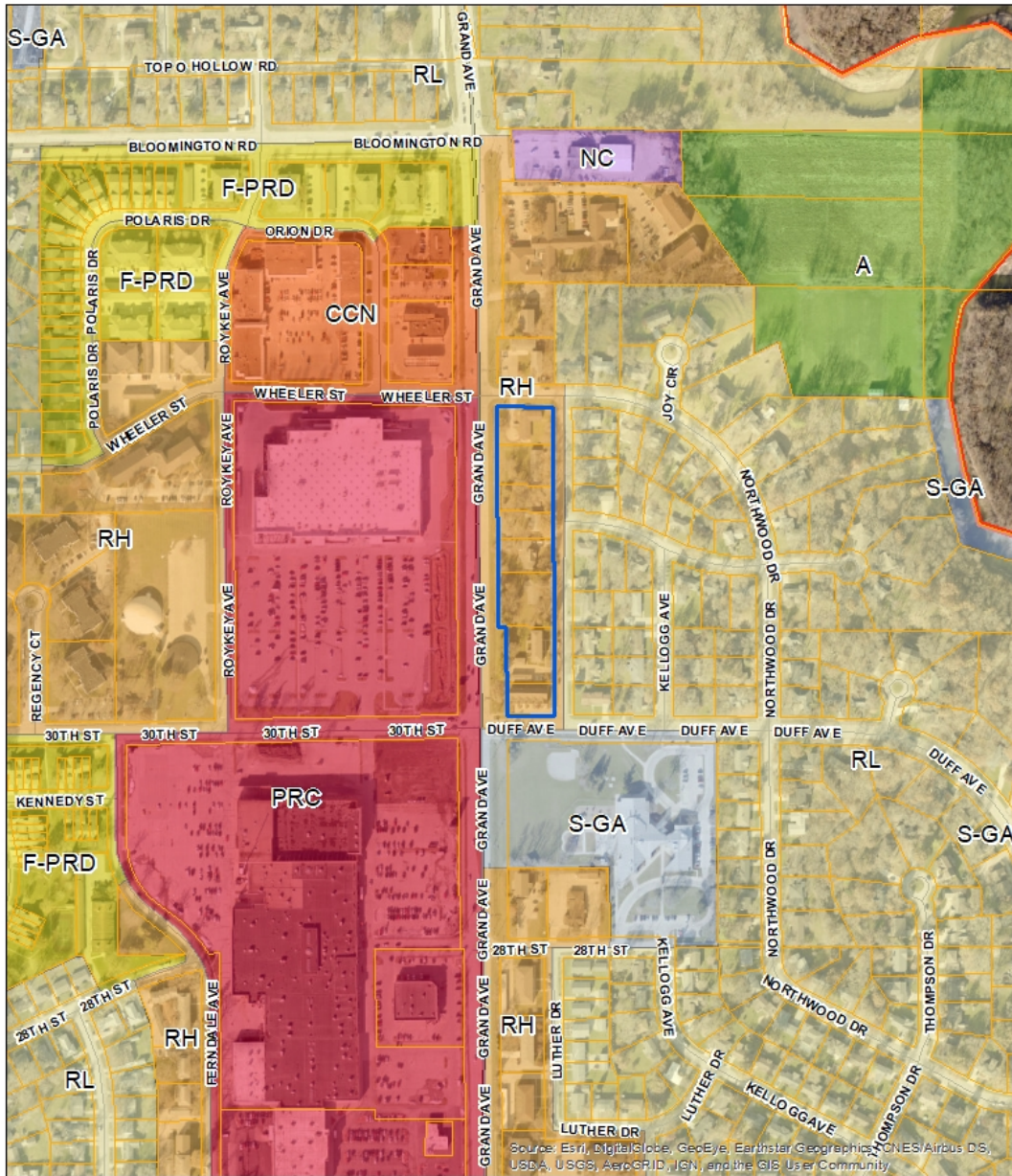
The applicant requests the City of Ames take a proactive approach to rezone these properties along Grove Avenue to Residential Medium Density (RM) to prevent commercial development. The author of the letter, Mr. Long, lives across Grove Avenue to the east from the properties in question. It is unknown if he has spoken with any of the property owners that would be directly affected by a rezoning.

Option 1: The City Council can choose to retain the existing zoning of Residential High Density. City Council would have the opportunity to approve a Site Plan if over 5,000 square feet of office or commercial are proposed or if an application for Rezoning to commercial were to be submitted. If a mixed-use development plan is submitted with less than 5,000 square feet of office or commercial the Zoning Ordinance allows staff approval and it would not come before the City Council for review. Retaining the current zoning designation corresponds to the current land use patterns, but it allows for potentially more intense uses if properties are redeveloped.

Option 2: The City Council can initiate an amendment process and rezoning of these properties to Residential Medium Density. It is rare for the City to initiate a rezoning without an application from a property owner, however, in this instance the City Council may deem it appropriate in order to prevent potential encroachment of commercial development into a single-family neighborhood. Prior to rezoning the LUPP would need to be amended to change the area designation from RH to RM. This step could also be seen as preservation of opportunity per the “Redirection” designation of the draft Ames Plan 2040 Land Use Map.

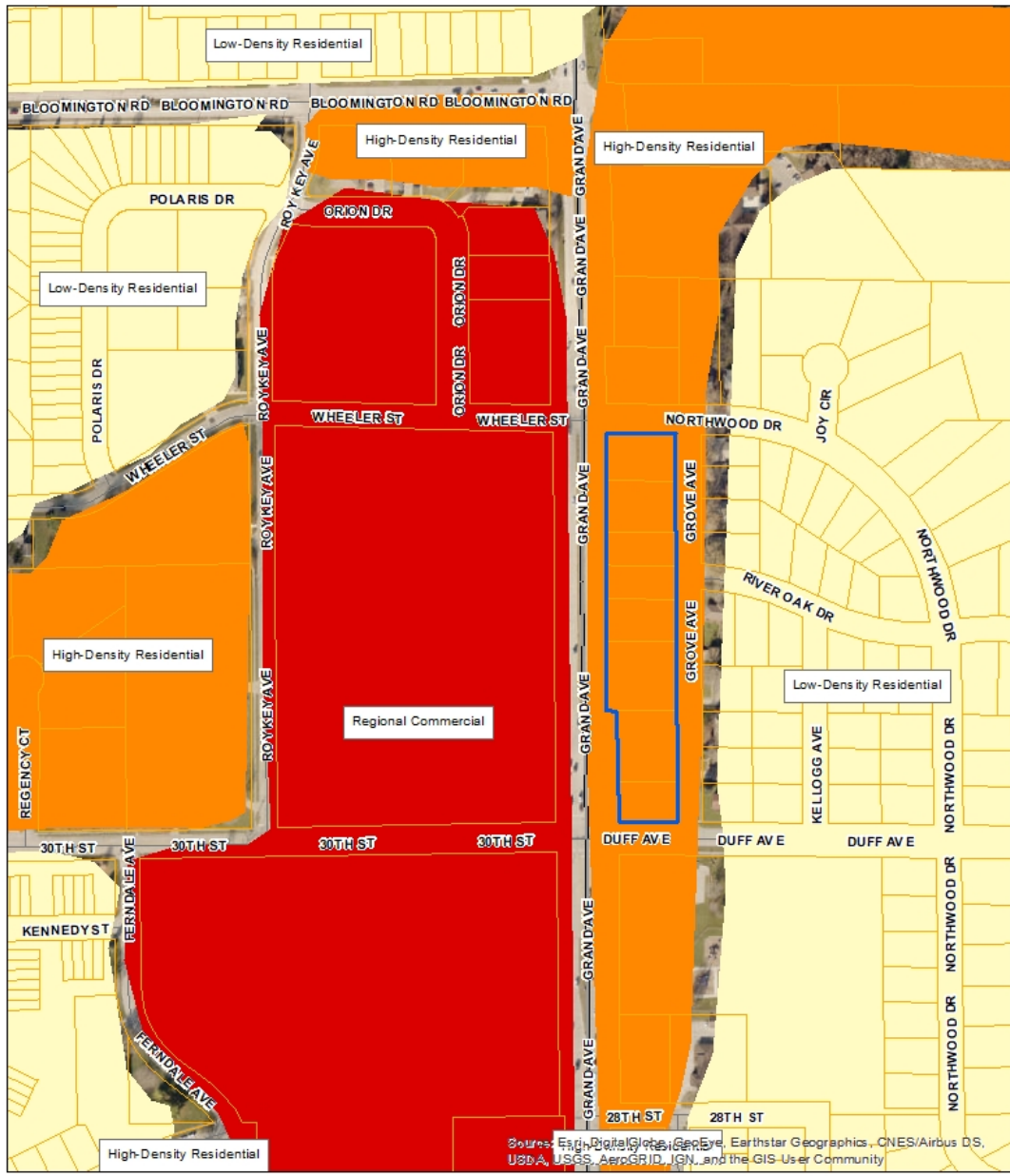
Staff Comment:

Staff has not had any contact with property owners within the subject area and has not reached out to them regarding this request. If Council were to proceed with Option 2 it would be appropriate to first contact owners in the area to understand their interests.



Area requested for rezoning consideration to RM

Attachment B – LUPP Map



Area requested for rezoning consideration to RM

Attachment C – Rezoning Request Letter

Honorable Mayor and Council members,

Please accept this as a request to bring to discussion the re-zoning of the

West side of Grove Ave.

from High Density Residential to Medium Density Residential.

While I bring this request to you as a homeowner alone, I believe that I would have the backing of the Northwood/Overland Heights Neighborhood Association. This is based on a near unanimous decision not to be in favor of the Sherwin Williams zoning Node request that came before you many months back. We were pleased with the outcome of that issue. Staff testimony during that Council meeting described the west side of Grove Ave. as more fitting of a Medium Density designation due to its location across from Low Density single family homes. When asked about this mis-zoning, staffs reply was that it was probably a matter of existing development to the north on Grand (east side) and convenience at the time the map was drawn up. Staff also implied the desire to keep commercial development to the west side of Grand Ave. and not to the east.

I bring this to you at this time out of concern. Due to Covid19, Mary Kay's shop and café is gone. The property has been sold to a developer who has stated that it will be developed as a mixed-use site. The High Density designation allows for that.

Leaving the West side of Grove Ave. zoned High Density leaves it open to mixed-use development. This, I believe, would have a negative impact on my own home as well as the neighborhood.

Thank you for your time and for looking onto this matter.

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