

ITEM #: 46
DATE: 03-24-26
DEPT: P&H

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

**SUBJECT: ZONING TEXT AMENDMENT ESTABLISHING WEST UNIVERSITY
PEDESTRIAN ENHANCEMENT OVERLAY DISTRICT BETWEEN SHELDON
AND HYLAND, AND LINCOLN WAY AND OAKLAND**

BACKGROUND:

On [March 11, 2025](#), City Council authorized Hunziker Companies to apply for a text amendment to create a new overlay district with reduced parking, increased density, and updated design standards for medium- to high-density apartments west of campus.

The new overlay, once approved, may be applied properties between Sheldon and Hyland Avenues, between Lincoln Way and Oakland (see attached map of the eligibility area). **No zoning map change is part of this item, only the approval of the text amendment to create the standards.**

The Hunziker request stemmed from zoning changes desired to facilitate the redevelopment of the properties at 259 and 263 Hyland (see attached Location Map). The developer also believes that allowing greater density and reduced parking implements the Ames Plan 2040 vision for the area located adjacent to the ISU Campus.

Ames Plan 2040 designates the Hunziker properties at the corner of Oakland and Hyland, along with the surrounding area, as RN-4 “Walkable Urban Neighborhood.” The purpose of the Designation is to encourage higher density housing, mixed uses, walkability, and redevelopment that creates a high-quality built environment and sense of place (see attached Plan 2040 Excerpt and Map). A companion designation of Neighborhood Commercial – Mixed Use (NC-MU) also applies to properties along West Street in the middle of the RN-4 designated area.

Key considerations for creating a text amendment to further goals of the RN-4 are ensuring the built environment reinforces the walkability and pedestrian character of the area with street level design details, residential or commercial use at the ground level, high quality front yard or streetscape elements, and good sidewalk and pedestrian access.

TEXT AMENDMENT:

The proposed zoning standards are comparable to the general design requirements in terms of height, orientation, fenestration, and materials of the current zoning of the area (Residential High Density "RH" with the West University Impact Overlay "O-UIW"). However, the O-UIW overlay, created in 2006 as part of a broader assessment on University impacted neighborhoods, also included additional 25% parking requirement to mitigate concerns of overcrowding and development intensity. The proposed West University Pedestrian Enhancement District (O-WUPED) intentionally reduces parking and increases potential density of development compared to the current O-UIW while

trying to maintain compatible design requirements.

The proposed Ordinance is attached for Council's review. The attached addendum provides information about a parking survey and additional details regarding the proposed standards.

O-WUPED would supplant the existing O-UIW zoning for a site when it redevelops at the request of a property owner, rather than be a City initiated rezoning of the entire area. While the O-UIW will continue to be applied to the broader area, only a specified area along Sheldon and Hyland is eligible for the new zoning district option as it is written. Staff estimates that there are 36 properties and 16 net acres of land area eligible for the Overlay.

Existing properties would not be able to modify existing structures to take advantage of the reduced parking and density changes. It is only proposed for redevelopment that can facilitate the goals of the RN-4 designation.

Properties meeting the following criteria would be eligible to request a rezoning to O-WUPED (see attached eligibility map):

- Located within the RN-4 designation (the area within NC-MU may also be included, subject to review of commercial opportunities as mixed use).
- Zoned RH or proposed as RH with a rezoning application concurrent with the Overlay.
- Located between Sheldon Avenue and Hyland Avenues, north of Lincoln Way and south of Oakland.

O-WUPED has substantial differences in standards related to intensity of use compared to existing O-UIW:

- Density is increased by changing the standard to a maximum of bedrooms per acre rather than dwelling units per acre. This approach allows for more total units, but with smaller bedroom configurations than a dwelling unit per acre standard (See addendum for more information on this change).
- Parking is reduced beyond the O-UIW 25% extra standard to a lower standard than is applied to apartments in RH zoning districts. The rate for 1- and 2-bedroom units is proposed to be one space per unit rather than the typical minimum of one space per bedroom (See also the addendum for more parking background and comparisons of standards).
- Front setbacks may potentially be approved for a reduction from the standard of 25 feet to either 20 feet or 15 feet depending on the type of building. Walkup direct access "townhome" style units can benefit from the 15-foot front setback, while standard apartment buildings will likely conform to the minimum 25-foot setback requirement (See addendum for more information).

The proposed ordinance also includes new Design Standards and Principles to help guide site design and building architecture. The Design Standards and Principles also ensure development meets intent of RN-4 to create a walkable neighborhood and is compatible with the area. Standards are minimum mandatory requirements and the principles act as

guidelines to help shape the details of a project.

A full list of the Design Principles and Standards is included in the attached ordinance. Select standards of note include:

- Design Standard for maximum building height of 45 feet (Matches current O-UIW)
- Design Standard for Clay brick as 60% of front facades (O-UIW has primary brick material requirement for whole building) and Design Principles for high quality, visually interesting building materials
- Design Principles and Standards for variations in building relief and height to break up massing (None within O-UIW)
- Design Principle to prioritize ground level units and Design Standard for use of glazing (None within O-UIW)
- Design Standards for windows and doors subdividing not less than 40% of a street facing façade to prevent “dead space” facing pedestrian areas (Matches current O-UIW)
- Design Standard for a minimum of one pedestrian entrance per primary façade and requiring architectural elements (coverings, stoops) defining entrances (Similar to O-UIW)
- Design Standard requiring principal buildings to be oriented towards the street and built to front setback (Similar to O-UIW)
- Design Standards and Principles relating to parking design to not dominate the street level design of a building, shielding of parking, and limitations on driveways (None within O-UIW)
- Design Principles describing general character of area and preferences for traditional building exterior design with a differentiated base, middle, top for three and four story buildings. Also allows townhome and contemporary design approaches that emphasize vertical elements and specific elements of architectural interest (None with O-UIW other than covered front entrance requirement)

PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION:

The applicant initially applied for a text amendment focused on the issues of density and parking. Staff crafted an overall text amendment that included the applicant's interests and added the design standards and principles discussed above. The Planning and Zoning Commission was presented an initial draft ordinance that included the establishment requirements and development standards described above, along with draft design principles.

The Commission's discussion mainly focused on the proposed parking reductions. The Commission also received one public comment asking for the changes to be more broadly applied.

One Commissioner felt that the parking rates for units with three or more bedrooms could be

further reduced. Another felt based on staff's parking survey, which found that there is an average usage in the O-UIW of one space per bedroom, the reductions went too far. Staff noted that the intent is to incent smaller apartment units rather than larger student suite-type apartments and one of the best ways to manage that is through parking rates. Each proposal under O-WUPED requires City Council approval. If City Council found that parking was an issue, it could deny a project.

The Commission received a public comment letter (see attached) asking for the text amendment to be broadened to apply to Campus Avenue, as well as additions and remodeling of existing buildings. Staff responded that existing properties would not be able to take advantage of the reduced parking and density changes as they would be required to also come into compliance with design standards expected of new development.

Additionally, at the time of initiating the text amendment, Council determined that the focus of the amendment would be only on the Sheldon and Hyland area and that a broader neighborhood sub-area plan would be the subject of future implementation studies. The text amendment is just one of the multiple Ames Plan 2040 land use changes that are to be contemplated for the area based upon Redirection Area designations to the west of Hyland and Urban Corridor designations along Lincoln Way.

PUBLIC NOTICE:

A proposed Zoning Ordinance text amendment does not require any specific mailed public notice since it is not proposed to be applied to a specific property at this time. However, staff provided mailed notice to property owners within 400 feet of the intended establishment area before the P&Z meeting. Staff fielded a handful of calls from owners or property managers in the area with only one written comment referenced above in the P&Z discussion.

Staff also has the item listed under the Development Projects list on the Planning Division website. Notice of the City Council hearing has been published for March 24.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Approve first reading of an ordinance creating a new West University Pedestrian Enhancement District (O-WUPED) as shown in the attached ordinance.
2. Approve the first reading reading of an ordinance creating a new West University Pedestrian Enhancement District (O-WUPED) with modified language as directed by the City Council.
3. Do not approve the proposed text amendment.
4. Request additional information from staff or the applicant.

CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Staff believes that any impacts from the flexibility afforded in parking, setback, and density standards will be balanced by the proposed performance enhancements to the current zoning requirements. Specifically, the height limitation ensures development with more units will not be perceived as more intense. The setback reduction lends to the pedestrian environment and goals of RN-4 for redevelopment of the area, while design standards ensure a high-quality built environment.

Ideally, as student housing, fewer resident parking spaces are needed on a development site due to lower car ownership. Students also have the option of parking remotely on campus. Staff reached out to ISU staff and confirmed that while students who live in residence halls are given priority for on-campus parking, off-campus residents are also eligible.

While redevelopment is the goal of the Overlay, given the small area O-WUPED will apply to, it will likely be limited. In staff's survey of the area, of the 36 eligible properties, ten appear to be candidates for redevelopment based on age, condition, and status as rooming houses or conversions of single-family homes into multiple units (see attached map of properties with redevelopment potential). This is approximately 3 acres out of 16 net acres of land in the area. Other sites may also redevelop, but the likelihood is less based upon the age and condition of existing buildings.

Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council adopt Alternative No. 1, as described above.

ATTACHMENT(S):

[DRAFT Ordinance ZTA Overlay Zone O-WUPED.pdf](#)

[ADDENDUM.pdf](#)

[Location Map - Eligibility Area.pdf](#)

[Location Map - 259 and 263 Hyland.pdf](#)

[Ames Plan 2040 Future Land Use Map.pdf](#)

[Ames Plan 2040 Excerpts.pdf](#)

[Zoning Map.pdf](#)

[Redevelopment Potential Map.pdf](#)

[Public Comment Letter](#)