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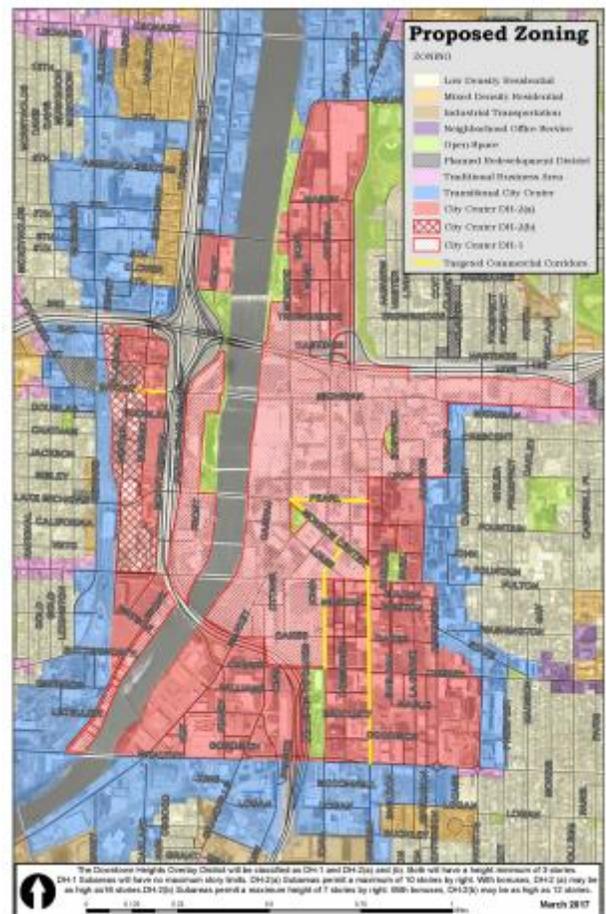
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Neighborhood input results in Zoning Map change

GRAND RAPIDS, MICH – After meeting with Westside residents and business leaders, First Ward Commissioners and City officials are responding by crafting modifications they believe better align with neighborhood interests. The proposed changes also create a framework that allows for development with positive community outcomes.

"We value greatly the perspectives of those living in, working in and improving our neighborhoods and business districts," said First Ward City Commissioner Jon O'Connor. "In order to make sure this is a plan that works for everyone, it was important that we took the extra time to allow for additional community input and feedback regarding potential zoning changes."

In February, the Grand Rapids City Commission considered several changes to its zoning laws. Residents voiced concerns about a proposed extension of an overlay district west of the Grand River nearly to Seward Avenue– which would have allowed for buildings up to 10 stories tall by right in that area. City Commissioners pledged to go back to the drawing board and meet with neighbors to provide additional details on the proposed zoning changes. In addition to the First Ward Commissioners' meeting at the West Grand Neighborhood Association, Second Ward Commissioners also met with their Monroe North constituents to seek input on how the changes could impact their area.



Taking feedback gained from these community meetings, Commissioners and City officials created a new set of proposed amendments that now create three zones which transition from East to West, allowing maximum number of stories by right from 10 stories, to 7, to 5 as they approach the neighborhood creating a natural stepdown.

City leaders believe that this change supports two important goals of the community: providing a better transition between downtown and the neighborhood, and facilitating development of affordable housing.

“The amended zoning map includes a height overlay district for the Westside that allows for new development on surface lots while respecting the neighborhood and character of the Westside by stepping down in height as you move West toward Seward,” said First Ward Commissioner Dave Shaffer.

"In the new Westside transitional area, height will be limited to just seven stories by right," added O'Connor. "If a developer wishes to build a taller project, a height of 10 to 12 stories would only be achieved with an affordable housing bonus component."

As stated by Commissioner O'Connor, the revised map for downtown Grand Rapids addresses resident concerns by reducing height limits on the near west side from 10 stories to seven stories by right in a new zone district. It divides the Downtown Height (DH) overlay district into two zones. The DH-2 (a) zone allows buildings up to 10 stories in height by right, with an additional six bonus stories. The DH-2 (b) zone allows buildings up to seven stories in height by right, with an additional five bonus stories, which can only be fully attained by providing affordable housing.

On Tuesday, March 28, the City Commission will consider the new zoning map and other key Zoning Ordinance amendments including: modifications to the sign ordinance regulations; revisions to align with aspects of the GR Forward plan regarding the Grand River Overlay District; provisions for the Downtown Height Overlay District and targeted corridors; and, a variety of housekeeping changes intended to make the ordinance easier to read and use.

The proposed Zoning Ordinance text and map amendments are available at the City's website at <http://tinyurl.com/GRZOamendments> or examined in person at the Planning Department, 3rd Floor, 1120 Monroe Avenue NW, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503. The Planning Department may be contacted at (616) 456-4100 or planning@grcity.us.

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