

Community Planning and Economic Development -- Planning Division Report

Zoning Code Text Amendments B4N Downtown Neighborhood District

Date: June 13, 2011

Initiator of Amendment: Council Member Goodman

Date of Introduction at City Council: September 24, 2010

Wards: 5, 7

Neighborhood Organizations: Citizens for a Loring Park Community, Downtown Minneapolis Neighborhood Association, Elliot Park Neighborhood Inc, North Loop Neighborhood Association.

Planning Staff and Phone: Beth Elliott, Principal City Planner, 612-673-2442, Joe Bernard, Senior City Planner, 612-673-2422, and Hilary Dvorak, Senior City Planner, 612-673-2639

Intent of the Ordinance: To establish the B4N Downtown Neighborhood District.

Appropriate Section(s) of the Zoning Code:

Chapter 521, Zoning Districts and Maps

Chapter 541, Off-Street Parking and Loading

Chapter 543, On-Premise Signs

Chapter 549, Downtown Districts

Chapter 551, Overlay Districts

Background:

The B4N Downtown Neighborhood District is being established to provide an environment that promotes the development of higher density neighborhoods surrounding the Downtown office core with a variety of goods and services to support Downtown living.

The proposed zoning district was developed in order to implement bulk and use recommendations from the *North Loop Small Area Plan* but is intended to be applicable within all of Downtown. Introduction of the B4N District recognizes the unique character of Downtown neighborhoods as compared to residential locations outside of Downtown; they have a stronger mix of uses working harmoniously together and they can accommodate more development height based on existing character and abundance of transit options.

Public Process:

Drafting of the B4N Downtown Neighborhood District is part of a rezoning study in Downtown. Staff met regularly for feedback on the proposed district with the Downtown Neighborhood Group, an informal monthly meeting of representatives from each neighborhood. Staff presented the text amendment to each neighborhood association individually during April 2011, for input, and a community meeting was held to present the amendment to the general public May 4, 2011. This meeting was advertised by mailing flyers to over 4,500 property owners and taxpayers who are in affected areas of the rezoning study.

Purpose for the Amendment:

What is the reason for the amendment?

What problem is the Amendment designed to solve?

What public purpose will be served by the amendment?

What problems might the amendment create?

The purpose for the amendment is to create a new Downtown zoning district that will better align with adopted policies for Downtown neighborhoods surrounding the office core. The B4N district as proposed will provide an appropriate transition of heights and uses from the Downtown office core into the surrounding neighborhoods. Current zoning districts either require unnecessary setbacks in a Downtown environment, are limited in their uses, allow uses that are not neighborhood oriented, or do not adequately represent opportunities for height while still applying a limitation.

As with all zoning districts, the B4N will be used as a tool in City-initiated rezoning studies and in rezoning applications proposed by developers during the land use application approval process. In order to fulfill the purpose of the new district and create a useful tool, City staff considered:

- Uses: Allows for existing mix of uses in Downtown neighborhoods, including light industrial. Uses not consistent with neighborhood living such as nightclubs and sexually-oriented uses will not be allowed.
- Height and bulk: The district would include a height limitation but no maximum Floor Area Ratio. Both provisions would be unique within the Downtown Districts. Building height will be limited to ten stories with the ability to apply for a Conditional Use Permit for additional height similar to other zoning districts with height limitations. The bulk of buildings will be regulated through a minimum Floor Area Ratio of two.
- Parking: No minimum parking standards for all uses (similar to other Downtown zoning districts).

Timeliness:

Is the amendment timely?

Is the amendment consistent with practices in surrounding areas?

Are there consequences in denying this amendment?

The creation of a new zoning district appropriate for Downtown neighborhoods is overdue. Over the last ten years, City staff and developers alike have promoted development that exemplified a bulk and height

called for in policies and supported by stakeholders but that was challenging with our existing toolkit of district options. In an environment such as Downtown, City policies promote development that is complementary to the office core without competing with it. The tallest buildings and most intense uses should be in the core and zoning should provide a transition into the surrounding residential areas. The B4N will also prohibit uses not compatible with residential areas such as gun shops, pawn shops, night clubs, and sexually-oriented uses.

The primary consequence of denying this amendment is that the City will continue to receive development proposals in the Downtown neighborhoods that do not further the City's adopted policies. Instead, developers will be required to seek additional applications in order to comply with City policies.

Comprehensive Plan:

How will this amendment implement the Comprehensive Plan?

The following general land use policies of the *Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth* apply:

Policy 1.1: Establish land use regulations to achieve the highest possible development standards, enhance the environment, protect public health, support a vital mix of land uses, and promote flexible approaches to carry out the comprehensive plan.

1.1.5 Ensure that land use regulations continue to promote development that is compatible with nearby properties, neighborhood character, and natural features; minimizes pedestrian and vehicular conflict; promotes street life and activity; reinforces public spaces; and visually enhances development.

1.1.7 Invest in targeted place-making strategies to build upon and enhance existing community assets and encourage private sector development.

Policy 1.2: Ensure appropriate transitions between uses with different size, scale, and intensity.

1.2.1 Promote quality design in new development, as well as building orientation, scale, massing, buffering, and setbacks that are appropriate with the context of the surrounding area.

Policy 1.13: Support high density development near transit stations in ways that encourage transit use and contribute to interesting and vibrant places.

1.13.5 Concentrate highest densities and mixed use development adjacent to the transit station and along connecting corridors served by bus.

Policy 1.15: Support development of Growth Centers as locations for concentration of jobs and housing, and supporting services.

1.15.1 Support development of Growth Centers through planning efforts to guide decisions and prioritize investments in these areas.

1.15.2 Support the intensification of jobs in Growth Centers through employment-generating

development.

1.15.3 Encourage the development of high- to very high-density housing within Growth Centers.

1.15.4 Promote the integration of major public and private institutional campuses located in Growth Centers, including health care and educational services, with the function and character of surrounding areas.

The following policies from the *Downtown East/North Loop Master Plan* apply:

- Promote downtown living by forging Complete Communities that include a mixture of transit stations, commercial office, retail, housing, and parks/plazas.
- All land uses within one-quarter mile of new and potential rail transit stations in Downtown Minneapolis to incorporate either high- or medium density mixed-use development in order to capitalize on the benefits of creating vibrant transit nodes that can become the heart of both new and revitalized Downtown neighborhoods.
- Medium-density mixed-use development (generally 5 – 14 floors) should be considered the norm for new construction and rehabilitation projects in the Project Area. This recommendation is made specifically because medium-density, mixed-use projects have already become the norm in most parts of the Project Area, particularly the Warehouse District.

The following policies from the *North Loop Small Area Plan* apply:

- Conduct a rezoning study to best match the regulations with the policy. New zoning districts should be considered as a possible way to create consistency between policies found in this document and regulations in the Zoning Ordinance.
- Promote an overall increase in neighborhood housing density that includes a continuum of housing choices.
- Increase development intensity consistent with the character of a Downtown neighborhood.

Recommendation of the Community Planning and Economic Development--Planning Division:

The Community Planning and Economic Development Planning Division recommends that the City Planning Commission and City Council adopt the above findings and **approve** the zoning code text amendment, amending chapters 521, 541, 543, 549, and 551.

Attachments:

1. Ordinance amending Chapter 521, Zoning Districts and Maps, to add the B4N Downtown Neighborhood District to the list of zoning districts.
2. Ordinance amending Chapter 541, Off-Street Parking and Loading, to add the B4N district to Table 541-2 Specific Off-Street Parking Requirements - Downtown Districts and Table 541-5 Location of Off-Site Parking.
3. Ordinance amending Chapter 543, On-Premise Signs, to add the B4N district to Table 543-3 Specific Standards for Signs in the Downtown Districts.
4. Ordinance amending Chapter 549, Downtown Districts, to incorporate the B4N district throughout the chapter.
5. Ordinance amending Chapter 551, Overlay Districts, to clarify language related to off-street parking requirements.