

Zoning Change Application

3541, 3531 and 3525 Coon Rapids Blvd NW; Property ID # 17-31-24-12-0016 (115th Lane NW)

This application seeks to change the zoning classification of the above addresses from General Commercial, Office and Moderate Density Residential to High Density Residential. The majority of the site is currently the location of a vacant plant nursery. The 3541 address is the location of a realtor's office. Property 17-31-24-12-0016 is vacant. Most of the site is not being used for any commercial purposes and is considered blighted by city officials. This application seeks to illustrate how the properties in question would be better suited with a high density residential classification. As the attached map shows, the site is surrounded by mostly residential zoning with few commercial spaces to suggest significant interest in the property being used in such a way. The nearby strip mall at 3355 Coon Rapids Blvd NW is largely vacant, reiterating that the area is not currently of significant interest to commercial retail developers. Additionally, the City of Coon Rapids Future Land Use Map specifies the 3531 and 3525 addresses of the site in question as high density residential. For these reasons, we believe that the current zoning classification is no longer appropriate for the site.

- Current land use designation of property as per Coon Rapids Comprehensive Plan: High Density Residential (3531 & 3525); Office (3541); Moderate Density Residential (vacant lot facing 115th Lane NW)
- Current zoning classification of property: General commercial (3531 & 3525); Office (3541); Moderate Density Residential (vacant lot facing 115th Lane NW)
- Existing land use on subject property: Vacant, former plant nursery (3531 & 3525); realtor office (3541)
- Existing land use on properties within 350 feet: U-Haul Supercenter, vacuum cleaner retail, single family homes and townhomes

This rezoning request is consistent with the goals described in the City of Coon Rapids Comprehensive Plan for multiple reasons. However, this application also seeks to adjust the future land use designation of two of the four properties stated above. In the Future Land Use Map (Map L-5), two of the properties in question are classified as High Density Residential. The westernmost is designated Office while the northern property facing 115th Lane NW is moderate density residential. We thus seek to amend the comprehensive plan so that all four of the properties in question are designated as high density residential for future use.

We believe the language of the written chapters of the Comprehensive Plan support the desired amendment to the Plan’s future land use designation as well as rezoning. On page 2-12, with regards to Land Use, Goal #6 states that the city desires to “improve the appearance and function of Coon Rapids Blvd, ensuring that it gradually redevelops with a variety of housing types, supporting commercial uses and urban design amenities.” Three objectives of this goal are listed as 6-1: “To curb the spread of blighting characteristics along Coon Rapids Boulevard and eliminate underutilized land and obsolete land uses. Objective 6-2 states: “increase the number of housing units and bolster the market for neighborhood commercial development along Coon Rapids Boulevard.” We believe that a rezoning of the property to high density residential would work towards accomplishing these objectives. Currently the site is underutilized as a closed plant nursery and nearby large lots include a U-Haul Supercenter and a largely vacant strip mall. With a high density residential development, the market potential of this stretch of Coon Rapids Boulevard would be bolstered. The physical presence of a multi-family building would work to create more density and aesthetic quality along an otherwise bleak stretch of road. This also works to accomplish Goal 7 of chapter 2, which states that the city desires to “eliminate blighting influences throughout the City and encourage redevelopment of underutilized land” (p 2-13). This site is underutilized and the fact that it is vacant, in addition to the unwelcoming atmosphere of the adjacent U-Haul Supercenter, it is currently a blighting influence along Coon Rapids Boulevard.

Chapter 4 of the Comprehensive Plan discusses the City’s goals in terms of future housing development. In 2006, Maxfield Research Inc. conducted a market study for the city in relation to housing potential development between 2006 and 2020. An excerpt from their summary concludes that “the City of Coon Rapids is almost entirely built-out. With aging housing stock and the continued growth occurring in the North Metro Area, Coon Rapids is in a position to capture a portion of that growth through redevelopment that could provide housing products currently desired by the market; similar to what is being offered in the higher growth communities of Andover and Blaine” (p 4-14). Rezoning the site as high density residential would be in accordance with the findings of Maxfield’s research. Goals 1 and 2 of the housing chapter align with this as well. Goal 1 explains: “a high-quality living environment, the preservation of stable residential neighborhoods, and, where necessary, the upgrading of the existing housing stock in the City” (4-17) and Goal 2 explains the desire for “a variety of housing types and designs to allow all people a housing choice” (4-18). These excerpts from the City’s Comprehensive Plan support the notion that rezoning this property as High Density Residential would indeed work towards accomplishing the goals Coon Rapids has established for its future development.

The future redevelopment of Coon Rapids Boulevard’s right of way will be impactful upon the use of the subject properties. As it currently exists, the property can be accessed from both eastbound and westbound directions. However, redevelopment plans include removal of the existing road and replacing it to include a central median island spanning the entire length of the site. This will create a “right in, right out” condition wherein the property will only be directly accessible to westbound traffic on Coon Rapids Boulevard. This limited access further decreases the desirability of the site for retail commercial development. This in addition to the previously stated limitations strengthens the case for rezoning the site to high density residential so that it can achieve a higher usage potential.

If our requests to amend Map L-5’s future land use designations as well as rezone the properties as high density residential are granted, we would propose a 98 unit market rate multifamily housing development. In reference to the attached schematic site plan, the wing of the building fronting Coon Rapids Boulevard would be 5 stories tall, while the rear wing facing adjacent single family properties would be 4 stories. The first floor of that rear wing would feature at grade covered parking and the entire building footprint would have 1 level of below grade parking. We also propose 23 stalls of on grade exterior parking by the building’s entrance on the west side. These calculated parking figures exceed the required minimum as established by Coon Rapids standards for high density residential.

In our schematic proposal, our goals towards treatment of the site are twofold: we desire to create more density along Coon Rapids Boulevard while also respecting the adjacent single family homes. We accomplish this by respecting the 50’ building setbacks facing all residential properties. In addition, our site plan features a large open space in the area between the two wings of the building. We propose creating a buffer between this development and adjacent homes with trees and vegetation. We believe the attached site plan accomplishes our goals of creating a much needed street front presence along Coon Rapids Boulevard while also respecting the existing neighborhood fabric to the rear of the site.

The attached unit matrix and layout establishes how this multifamily building will begin to work. We propose a mix of studios, 1 bedroom, 2 bedroom and 3 bedroom units. The majority of units will either be 1 bedroom or 2 bedrooms. As we advance the project, a market study will be conducted to identify if and how the unit ratios should be adjusted. Main access to the building will occur at the main entrance located at the western edge by the surface parking lot. This parking lot will serve as visitor parking for the building. Ramp access to the below grade parking level is also located at the rear of the surface lot. Secondary access to the site is provided by a driveway connecting to 115th Lane NW. This driveway provides

access to only the covered at grade parking. A storm water retention pond is also located along this driveway to deal with the site’s storm water run-off. Pedestrian pathways are provided across the site to connect all of the entrances as well as outdoor amenity space.

This stretch of Coon Rapids Boulevard is in transition. New investments in buildings and landscaping are going to reimagine the corridor. The attached elevation seeks to create an aesthetically significant location along this stretch. With other nearby properties classified as future high density residential in the comprehensive plan, we believe a new aesthetic is beginning to establish a refreshed identity for this part of Coon Rapids. We propose a material palette that is both contemporary and dignified. Slate grey brick and corrugated steel paneling are accented by areas of the warmer cedar cladding. It is important to create a dynamic and balanced façade with the way in which the materials accents each other. Between the front of the building and Coon Rapids Boulevard, we are proposing a vegetative buffer that softens the edge of the large thoroughfare and works to create a more walkable environment. These types of conditions all work together to accomplish the goals established by the city in removing blighted, underutilized land and refreshing it with a development that both residents of the building and residents of the city can take pride in.

A final consideration of our proposal for this site is that we require a variance for the setbacks bordering Coon Rapids Boulevard and the adjacent commercial zoning where U-Haul is located. The current setback requirement is 50 feet, but we would request a variance to change that to 25 feet. This utilizes the site most efficiently in terms of unit count, density, and access. As stated above, this proposal follows the setbacks for adjacent single family homes: the variance request only pertains to Coon Rapids Boulevard and the adjacent commercial space. A denser and more walkable Coon Rapids Boulevard will create a new identity that can work with other future developments to redefine and refresh this stretch of road.