SOUTH WILLAMETTE SPECIAL AREA ZONE: CODE CONCEPTS

Several important code concepts related to the development of the South Willamette Special Area Zone (S/SW) are described below. Each concept is numbered in a black bar, followed by two sections of text explaining the ***Issue and Intent*** and ***Proposed Code Revisions*** (at the concept level).

1. Replace existing zoning in the South Willamette district with a special area zone

Issue and Intent

Following a model used in the Walnut Station and Downtown Riverfront districts, a special area zone allows for the use of form-based regulations that better support the desired scale and form of future development in the district while providing greater flexibility in development options. A special area zone enables the most direct and legible translation of the vision set forth in the South Willamette Concept Plan (SWCP) into a regulatory framework. New code features can also be pioneered within a special area zone without affecting other areas of town governed by traditional zones.

Other jurisdictions within Oregon, notably Portland, have used a similar format to distinguish areas of the community where mixed use redevelopment is envisioned within a healthy, walkable neighborhood. This relates to the Eugene community's broader goals for a highly livable and balanced approach to accommodating growth in core areas over the next 20 years.

Proposed Code Revisions

The proposed South Willamette Special Area Zone (S-SW) replaces existing zones within the boundaries proposed by the South Willamette Concept Plan.

2. Include key elements and code structure used in the Downtown Riverfront Special Area Zone (S-DR) as a basis for the new S-SW code.

Issue and Intent

Given the current structure of the Eugene Chapter 9 Code, including a complex set of cross references developed over many years and aimed at reducing duplication, a completely new format such as that used by the City of Salem would not be feasible to implement without a larger project to restructure Eugene's code. The S-DR format was carefully integrated into the existing code while providing important elements of form-based guidance, clarity, and flexibility for development. The proposed S-SW code should also be recognizable to applicants who are already familiar with provisions of the current code. This structure enables the proposed S-SW code to introduce and test new code mechanisms (described below) while still retaining consistency and connection with other Chapter 9 provisions.

Proposed Code Revisions

The overall structure of the proposed zone is based on code developed for the Downtown Riverfront Special Area Zone (S-DR). A permitted use list, general standards, and street standards applying to the entire district are followed by a series of subdistricts with additional standards. Maps and diagrams are used frequently to add clarity.

The proposed S-SW code introduces several *subdistricts* to differentiate desired building types and characteristics. Subdistricts include Mixed Use (MU), Apartments/Condos (AC), and Single Family Options (SFO). Three special subdistrict overlays are also included: the MU Active Retail (MU-AR) overlay subdistrict requires retail uses facing certain street frontages on the ground floor; the AC Row House Character (AC-RH) overlay subdistrict requires multiple entries to multi-family housing facing the street, and; the SFO Row House overlay subdistrict (SFO-RH) allows row houses as an outright use in addition to other SFO building types.

3. Allow for under-represented single family attached and detached development types.

Issue and Intent

Research and public engagement gathered to inform the Envision Eugene recommendations revealed changing trends in demographics and housing preferences. In particular, singles, couples, and retirees are seeking smaller housing options such as row houses, condominiums, cluster cottages and others. These housing types are not widely available in Eugene in part due to onerous, costly and/or uncertain regulations. In addition, appropriate sites for smaller housing types can be difficult to locate due to compatibility issues and general opposition. For example, the existing R 1.5 zone has been largely unused and unsuccessful in creating opportunities for new row houses city wide. The Envision Eugene recommendations call for modifying regulations to create more opportunities for these housing types in appropriate locations, and that these locations should be identified in collaboration with the community through area planning. The SWCP, as a pilot of area planning, identified several appropriate locations in the South Willamette District.

Proposed Code Revisions

The proposed code introduces the *Single Family Options (SFO) Subdistrict* to enable diverse single family housing types within the district in appropriate locations as an “as of right” use, i.e. with a building permit. This represents much reduced process, cost and uncertainty versus the current code. At the same time, the proposed code provides for much higher design standards and clarity. Special code sections are proposed for each allowable building type, including row houses, courtyard homes, cottage clusters, and single-family detached homes, along with a set of standards specific to that type. The proposed type-specific standards address the needs and important design considerations of each type in a clear and objective way. The current R 1.5 zone, and all other existing zones, will be removed from the S-SW area. Row houses will only be permitted where identified within the SFO Row House overlay subdistrict, generally as a transition from higher-intensity uses to low-density residential uses.

4. Provide greater clarity and regulation in support of important design principles while allowing reasonable for flexibility for individual developments.

Issue and Intent

Envision Eugene and the SWCP call for greater residential and commercial density while enhancing the South Willamette area as a healthy, walkable, and economically vital district. In order to achieve these outcomes, new development in the district will need to be as attractive and functional as possible, and match well with the community's best outcomes. While Oregon law does not provide a way to regulate good design into being, new clear and objective standards can be developed that establish a baseline to improve upon poor designs without impeding or overly prescribing good designs. This approach raises expectations for new development and provides greater confidence to the community. At the same time, these expectations should be coupled with a degree of built-in flexibility to allow designers to pursue different styles and adapt to the needs of different sites and development goals.

Proposed Code Revisions

New design standards are proposed for buildings within the district. In addition to general design standards that apply throughout the district, a special set of standards are proposed for buildings within each subdistrict, or for each building type within the SFO Subdistrict. Many proposed standards include a menu of clear and objective options to provide flexibility while also establishing a minimum threshold for acceptable design. For example, a developer may choose two features from a list of four options to define main entrances to mixed use buildings.

5. Include provisions that establish reasonable transitions between higher-density development types and adjacent, low-density single family residential areas

Issue and Intent

The term *transition* is used in two ways, first to describe the relationship between one development and an adjacent, existing development, and second to describe the overall gradation of development intensity across an area of several blocks. Along with the community's goal of accommodating commercial and multifamily needs in existing core commercial areas and along key transit corridors, there is expected to be an increase in higher-intensity redevelopment in these areas, for example larger buildings, higher residential densities, and the associated increase in activity. If this strategy is to succeed, these new developments need to relate well to surrounding areas. The intent of transitions is to establish clear expectations, and allow some flexibility, for how this is addressed.

Proposed Code Revisions

Allow for areas of transitional development types between uses of varying intensity. The S-SW code introduces several areas of transitional development between larger mixed use and multifamily subdistricts and single family subdistricts and zones. These types include row houses and multifamily housing with special requirements for pedestrian scale at the street. This provides both a physical transition related to the scale of adjacent development as well as moderating the intensity of associated activity and use.

Require larger developments located adjacent to areas designated for low-density residential uses to mitigate impacts along shared property lines through special design solutions. Proposed code revisions will require larger setbacks, height limitations, and a menu of other options such as screening, strategic location of parking and open space as a buffer, the location of balconies, and building articulation.

6. Establish adequate standards for the streetside realm.

Issue and Intent

A safe, attractive and memorable pedestrian experience is fundamental to promoting the livability and business vitality envisioned for the district. Current street standards do not require the amenities or configuration of space needed to achieve this goal. Standards are intended to enable a gradual transformation of the street-side realm over time and to promote a consistent, recognizable character throughout the district.

Proposed Code Revisions

Proposed revisions establish street typologies and design standards within the district. Proposed street design standards set forth dimensions, key elements, and material types within the streetside realm.

7. Enable flexibility and code-based incentives.

Issue and Intent

The Envision Eugene recommendations emphasize the need for more code flexibility in promoting redevelopment in core commercial areas and along key transit corridors, as well as incentives to secure additional public benefits through the development process. This recommendation reflects the well-documented financial challenges facing most types of redevelopment in Eugene. Action is needed to reduce barriers to redevelopment. At the same time, areas identified for redevelopment need to be highly livable locations, requiring more amenities, diversity, and higher quality in the public realm. The intent is to address flexibility directly in some cases, and in others to address both needs through certain code-based "give/get" strategies related to important qualities envisioned for district such as open space and parking options.

Proposed Code Revisions

The proposed code allows a small degree of height flexibility as of right, excluding setback and transition areas, to encourage building diversity and flexibility for project-specific challenges. Proposed building setbacks are flexible within a limited range to encourage a diversity of spaces and forms along building facades. Proposed parking requirements are somewhat reduced from existing code, and also provide a menu of options for addressing parking needs that reflect current best practices and a district-wide framework for parking management.

The proposed code includes height bonuses for providing additional public and semi-public open space, excluding setback and transition areas. Additional height and/or the building area where additional height is

allowed increases as the size of the open space increases. Open spaces are required to publicly accessible, intended and designed for public or semi-public use, and to be located adjacent to a public street or open space.

8. Provide a voluntary alternative to higher standards

Issue and Intent

In addition to the need for flexibility and additional design standards described above, the Envision Eugene recommendations call for an alternative design review process to allow broader design freedom as well as discretion in applying design standards. The intent is to provide an *elective process* that developers can choose *instead* of the clear and objective code standards and building permit review process which would otherwise be required. Current design review references a small set of fairly broad guidelines in the Adjustment Review code section as well as limited policy language, for example that used by the Downtown Riverfront Special Area Zone (S-DR). Existing guidelines are not adequate or tailored to support the vision for the South Willamette District and provide for a consistent review process; a revised set of clear and specific guidelines are needed.

Proposed Code Revisions

OPTION 'A' – UNDER CONSIDERATION: The proposed S-SW code could include enabling language to allow an elective design review process. The current code section governing design review could be revised to establish a *menu of design guidelines* to serve as alternative criteria for the design review approval process. A special code section in the S-SW zone could specify which guidelines would be "activated" to replace which S-SW code standards through the elective process. This is similar to how the S-DR zone works except the S-SW proposal would have a broader menu of clear guidelines to choose from. These guidelines, if located independently as a "menu" within the code, could be selectively referenced by other zones, including special area zones and overlay zones, at any time in the future. Modifications to the guidelines, as needed over time, could be accomplished in one location, however there may be less opportunity to tailor guidelines to specific locations.

OPTION 'B': Establish a set of design guidelines *specific to the S-SW district* and applicable only to that district. The guidelines would be located in a single set within the S-SW code with notation of which guidelines replace which standards. Other zones offering design review as an alternative process would need to establish a separate, and perhaps redundant, set of guidelines. Any future revisions would need to be made to multiple code sections for consistency.

OPTION 'C': Similar to Option 'B' except that guidelines would be located within the code immediately following or preceding each standard that is replaced. This carries the same considerations as Option 'B'. In addition, under this option some design guidelines may need to be stated redundantly within the S-SW code. Any future revisions would need to be made in additional locations.