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CITY PLANNING

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Jason Winston, Chair, Community Development/Human Services Committee
FROM: Keyetta M. Holmes, AICP, Director, Office of Zoning and Development *KMH*
SUBJECT: **24-O-1066/CDP-23-0026 for 500 Park Drive NE (portion), 530 Worcester Avenue NE, 501 Amsterdam Avenue NE, 538 Orme Circle NE (portion)**
DATE: June 5, 2024

PROPOSAL:

An ordinance to amend the land use element of the 2021 Atlanta Comprehensive Development Plan (CDP) so as to redesignate property located at **500 Park Drive NE (portion) and 530 Worcester Avenue NE** from the Transportation Communications and Utilities (TCU) land use designation, and **501 Amsterdam Avenue NE** from the Mixed Use High Density (MU-HD), Low Density Commercial (LDC), Open Space (OS) and Medium Density Residential (MDR) land use designations, and **538 Orme Circle NE (rear)** from the Single Family Residential (SFR) land use designation to the Mixed Use Medium Density (MU-MD) land use designation. This land use amendment will facilitate the rezoning of the parcel per Z-23-063 from C-1/BL (Community Business District/BeltLine Overlay) and R-4/BL (Single Family Residential/BeltLine Overlay) to PD-MU/BL (Planned Development Mixed Use/BeltLine Overlay) zoning district to allow for the construction of a mixed use development consisting of 840 multifamily units, 240,000 square feet of nonresidential.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

- **Property location:** The subject property is located at the western terminus of Amsterdam Avenue (500 Amsterdam Avenue) and is bound by the Atlanta BeltLine and Piedmont Park to the west and Evelyn Street to the north. The property is in Land Lots 54 and 55 of the 17th District of Fulton County, Georgia in the Morningside/Lenox Park, and Virginia Highland neighborhoods of NPU F, in Council District 6.
- **Property size and physical features:** The subject property is approximately 10.91 acres (475,239.6 square feet) of area. It is currently developed as the Amsterdam Walk shopping center. Vehicular access is provided via Amsterdam Avenue. There is an increase in topography along the east and south of the proposed site, as well as a significant incline to the west along the Atlanta BeltLine. The subject property is planted with some trees, but mainly consists of retail/former warehouse buildings and surface parking lots.

- **Current/past use of property:** The property is currently developed as a retail and entertainment complex known as Amsterdam Walk. The structures previously served as warehousing for multiple tenants. Staff is unaware of any previous uses on the site.
- **Surrounding zoning/land uses:** The subject properties are surrounded by several future land use designations and uses including Single Family Residential (SFR), Low Density Commercial (LDR), Open Space (OS), and Transportation/Communications/ Utilities (TCU). The parcels to the south are designated as Single Family Residential (SFR) and zoned R-4/BL (Single Family Residential/BeltLine Overlay) and are developed with single family residential uses. To the east, the adjoining Highland Park residential development is designated as Low Density Commercial (LDC) future land use and zoned C-1/BL (Community Business District/BeltLine Overlay). The property to the north of the proposed site is designated as Open Space (OS), zoned R-4/BL (Single Family Residential/ BeltLine Overlay) and is currently developed to serve as access and facilities to Piedmont Park. The parcel to the west has an Open Space land use designation, zoned R-4/BL (Single Family Residential/ BeltLine Overlay) and is currently developed with Piedmont Park.
- **Transportation system:** Amsterdam Avenue is classified as a local street by the City of Atlanta Department of Transportation. Nearby Monroe Drive is classified as a collector street. Sidewalks extend from Monroe Drive to the existing development along Amsterdam Avenue. West of the site, the Atlanta BeltLine provides pedestrian and cyclist connectivity to the subject property as well as plans for future light rail transit. MARTA provides bus service along Monroe Drive via bus route #809 with connection to the King-Memorial and Lindbergh Transit stations.

CONCLUSIONS:

- **Compatibility with surrounding land uses:** The proposed land use amendment does not encroach upon or conflict with the surrounding predominant Single Family Residential (SFR) land uses of Lenox/Morningside and Virginia Highland Neighborhoods. The proposed amendment is complementary to the land uses located to the west: Open Space (OS) in Piedmont Park and Transportation/Communications/Utilities along the Atlanta BeltLine. The proposed Mixed Use Medium-Density (MU-MD) land use designation adjacent to the Atlanta BeltLine and Piedmont Park will allow for greater housing choice than currently exists in the area, greater density in proximity to future transit, and additional pedestrian and greenspace access for the existing neighborhood as well.
- **Effect on adjacent property and character of neighborhood:** The proposed Mixed Use Medium-Density (MU-MD) land use designation will provide multiple benefits to the surrounding neighborhood. The proposed land use in this location will advance the redevelopment of the existing strip retail and provide an opportunity for “live-work” development with minimal impact to the surrounding single family neighborhood. The proposed amendment will also facilitate improved pedestrian access to the Atlanta BeltLine/greenspace for existing and future residents. It is consistent with the CDP Policy: CW 10 “Provide diverse and more affordable housing choices that are accessible by all people”.

- **Suitability of proposed land use:** The proposed Mixed Use Medium-Density (MU-MD) land use designation is suitable for the proposed site adjacent to the Atlanta BeltLine. The proposed land use is also compatible with the *Atlanta Comprehensive Development Plan (CDP)* Character Area of Intown Corridor due to its location on the Atlanta BeltLine. In addition, the Mixed Use Medium-Density (MU-MD) land use is consistent with recommendations included in the Morningside Lenox Park Master Plan, Virginia Highland Master Plan Update, and the BeltLine Subarea 6 Master Plan. The BeltLine Subarea 6 Master Plan calls for “pocket development” at Amsterdam Avenue and recommends increased density in the area to support a future transit station.
- **Consistency with City’s land use policies:** The *Atlanta Comprehensive Development Plan (CDP)* Character Area for this location is Intown Corridor, which identifies Mixed Use Medium-Density (MU-MD) as a preferred future land use. A large portion of the site is currently designated as Mixed Use High-Density. The proposed decrease in density to Mixed Use Medium-Density is more in keeping with policies to limit impact on surrounding single family residential development. The proposed Mixed Use Medium Density land use is consistent with the CDP land use policies to:
 - CW 3 Promote a balance of uses, particularly between jobs and housing, and between retail and housing.
 - CW 4 Encourage mixed use along corridors and centers and provide height and density transitions to adjacent residential areas.
 - CW 10 Provide diverse and more affordable housing choices that are accessible by all people.
 - CW 16 Provide for recreation, retreat, and health, in dense areas by encouraging permanent and temporary outdoor parks, plazas, courtyards, and other private and public open spaces that are safe, well-designed, environmentally sensitive, and activated.
 - OS 1 Provide opportunities and greater access to active and passive recreation.
 - IC/RC 1 Elevate the distinct character of each Corridor while encouraging density, growth, revitalization, and vibrancy.
 - IC/RC 4 Manage the levels of densities along the Corridors so the densest development happens near major intersections, centers, or transit stations.
 - IC/RC 13 Support public transit and alternative transportation options.
- **Consistency with Adopted Small Area and Neighborhood Plans:** The subject properties are abutting two neighborhoods: Morningside Lenox Park and Virginia Highlands. Both neighborhood plans prioritize the preservation of existing single-family housing while promoting new residential and commercial development, along the Atlanta BeltLine. The 2018 Morningside Lenox Park Master Plan envisions “The emergence of a broader offering of housing options in and around the neighborhood will strengthen the social connection to the neighborhood by ensuring that various stages of life will be able to find a home in the community”. The Morningside Lenox Park Master Plan also specifically recommends Mixed Residential Commercial for this site with specific requirements including a “Transition height and density so that it is lower where adjacent to single-family residences and higher along the Piedmont Park edges of the properties”.

The 2019 Virginia Highland Master Plan Update references the area’s historic precedent of denser, smaller, and more affordable housing. The plan states that the neighborhood “supports the adoption of the Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance by the City of Atlanta which will ensure a minimum level of new affordable housing inventory as part of future multifamily residential developed along the BeltLine”. This plan also supports development along the BeltLine that is transit and trails oriented and matches the context of the neighborhood/area. The Virginia Highland Master Plan Update also identifies the

portion of the BeltLine south of Amsterdam Avenue as particularly sensitive to development due to the abutting rear yards of the historic single-family neighborhood.

The subject properties are included in the BeltLine Subarea 6 Master Plan which calls for “pocket development” at Amsterdam Avenue and recommends increased density in the area to support a future transit station. The plan describes the vision for the Amsterdam Walk site as follows:

“Amsterdam Walk, like Ansley Mall, remains a successful retail and entertainment development. However, in the long term, it provides an excellent opportunity to capitalize on its adjacency to the BeltLine. The future land use plan for this area is 1-4 story mixed use buildings along the southern and western edge, 5-9 story buildings at the interior of the development and lower density residential buildings along the northern and eastern edges as it transitions back into the existing neighborhood”.

- **Consistency with Atlanta City Design:** The *Atlanta City Design* articulates Atlanta’s vision organized according to its five core values of Equity, Progress, Ambition, Access, and Nature. It focuses future growth into already-developed areas called Growth Areas, which are further categorized as Core, Corridors, and Clusters. Outside the Growth Areas are the Conservation Areas, which include Urban Neighborhoods, Suburban Neighborhoods, Rural Neighborhoods, and Production Areas. Conservation Areas are the natural parts of the city that are less suited for growth and that should be protected from radical change.

According to the Atlanta City Design map, these parcels on **500 Park Drive NE (portion), 530 Worcester Avenue NE, 501 Amsterdam Avenue NE, and 538 Orme Circle NE (portion)** are located within a Growth Area: Corridors. Corridors are described as follows:

“These are the connecting tissues of the city; the major streets that flow out of the core in every direction. They stitch Old and New Atlanta together and most of them are commercially developed. Streets like Hollowell, Peachtree and Jonesboro wind along the contours of the city while streets like Metropolitan, Memorial and Northside slice straight lines across hills and valleys. In either case, we find commercial sites, civic buildings, and anchor institutions along the way. With better design, these corridors can become main streets for every community, accommodating a reasonable amount of growth that will spur commercial vitality and a vibrant public life out beyond the core of the city.”

NPU Policies: The proposed Mixed Use Medium-Density (MU-MD) land use designation is compatible with NPU F policies to:

- F-2 Discourage further strip development. Encourage consolidation and redevelopment of existing strip retail centers to be compatible with adjacent neighborhoods using neighborhood commercial zoning principles.
- F-4 Promote individual mobility and provide improved and safer conditions and facilities for pedestrians and cyclists.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: APPROVAL OF THE AMENDMENT FROM THE TRANSPORTATION COMMUNICATION AND UTILITIES, MEDIUM DENSITY RESIDENTIAL, MIXED USE HIGH-DENSITY, LOW DENSITY COMMERCIAL, OPEN SPACE, AND SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL TO THE MEDIUM-DENSITY MIXED USE (HDR) LAND USE DESIGNATION.