

Proposed Rezoning of Property Located at 3621 and 3623 SE Hawthorne

The current zone of this site is CS. The proposed new zone is CM1. The Public Notice I received indicated that this proposal to revise zoning was “developed by City planners based on feedback from a project advisory committee.” I was told by City staff that this committee was actually split specifically regarding the height restriction that’s proposed and that there was not a clear majority supporting that particular restriction. The existing building at 3621 and 3623 SE Hawthorne and property are quite small and the potential for redevelopment under the current zone is reasonable. This is a single-story building 1,980 square feet in size and the lot consists of 3,330 square feet. The proposed new zoning substantially reduces the value and redevelopment potential of the site. The significant adverse impacts of the new zone include but are not limited to the following:

Current Zone-CS

Allows up to 4 stories

Retail Sales and Service-Limited

Vehicle Repair-Allowed

Wholesale Sales-Allowed

Height-45’ (Update allows bonus of 5 stories)

New Zone-CM1

Limits height to 3 stories

Retail Sales and Service-Allowed

Vehicle Repair-Not Allowed

Wholesale Sales-Not Allowed

Height-35’ Max., No Bonus Options

My understanding from staff is that neighbors object to 5 story buildings. If this is the case, then redefine how the height is measured and limit the height to 4 stories. It is not necessary to limit the height of a small section of Hawthorne to 3 stories to create a “main street”. If 5 stories adversely impact nearby neighbors, then why would the City propose up to a maximum of 5 stories (e.g. if affordable housing is proposed another story is allowed)? The designation of a maximum of 3 stories between SE 35th and 38th along Hawthorne appears to be capricious and arbitrary. The City is proposing to take away our right to redevelop up to a 4 story building. There doesn’t appear to be historic buildings in the area or a uniqueness to the existing development. There are a number of 4 story buildings in the area.

How does the appearance of up to 5 stories and then down to 3 stories for 3-4 blocks and then back up to 5 stories create a main street effect? Old Town zoning allows much higher than 5 stories and I believe no height limit for a short section and yet it has a main street feel to it. I would say that Hawthorne already has the main street feel with the current zoning. The existing development includes a variety of heights and includes buildings that are 4 stories in height.

Forcing the “core” area blocks to be dwarfed by up to 5 story buildings will result in less light and more shadows for those buildings. In addition, the much taller buildings will look down on our development resulting in a lack of privacy and a “fish bowl” effect. Allowing a combination of 4 to 5 stories results in less adverse impacts and provides more equity.

Some of the other criteria staff cited to define the “core” area include predominantly pre-war buildings- (many were built after the war, ours was built in 1956), buildings are built next to the sidewalk (most of the buildings are built next to the sidewalk now), and the buildings have a 0’ setback (most have 0’ setbacks now).

City staff indicated that there would be an opportunity to potentially receive a zone change from CM1 to CM2 (CM2 allows up to 4 stories) but this is misleading as it is very costly to apply for a zone change and obviously there is no guarantee of approval.

I urge the Planning and Sustainability Commission to allow buildings up to 4 stories in height in the CM1 district.

I appreciate your consideration regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

Lori Meuser
11426 SW Oak Creek Drive
Portland, OR 97219

503 293-6999

Meuser.lori@gmail.com