



**Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations Rewrite  
City of Mount Rainier – ACOZ/M-U-TC/NCO Discussion  
September 12, 2016**

The purpose of this meeting was to discuss concerns and remedies for Clarion Associates' proposal to eliminate the Mixed Use – Town Center (M-U-TC) Zone in the new Zoning Ordinance, and concerns pertaining to the proposed Architectural Conservation Overlay Zone (ACOZ) and its potential replacement Neighborhood Conservation Overlay (NCO) Zone.

**General Feedback on Zoning Related Activities in Mount Rainier**

- Would like to know more about current status of the ACOZ project/overall status. The city sent a letter that reflected the position on M-U-TC.
- One of the things about the M-U-TC plan for Mount Rainier is that “it is a well-thought out, award winning plan.” If scrapping the plan, they deserve something that will protect them in an equivalent way. One of the goals of that development plan is to help clarify uncertainty by giving developers a simplified, more certain process in exchange for more certainty in the process.
- The urban context does not apply to Mount Rainier because it is “urban in a suburban form.”
- The M-U-TC plan prescribes certainty. The detailed site plan (DSP) process is not certain at all, and can go on forever. The only reason my company built something in the city is because they had the book and it allowed them to circumvent the DSP process. The DSP is the biggest problem with development in this County.
- General agreement that, for the County, the zoning rewrite is a good thing and needs to happen, but [the County] also needs to work on local concerns and issues, especially the elected officials of Mount Rainier.

**Community and Municipal Input on Development Applications**

- One thing the committee struggles with is where do they draw the line with interpretation? There have been a lot of things on a smaller scale that they have approved because they felt they could not reject it. The speaker does acknowledge that the County wants to be considered open for business, and thinks that there are numerous examples where the developers try to snow them as a committee and slip things through.
- Speaker is very concerned that the County is not going to look after the community as well as the city has been advocating for itself. Very clear in the “Streetsense project” that the County was going to



greenlight everything the applicant was going to propose, when viewed in opposition to what the committee had seen approved in the book (the M-U-TC development plan).

- Absence of any sort of designation of Mount Rainier for anything (regarding Plan 2035 policy area designations) seems really troubling. What was the thinking behind the lack of designation of the Town Center and a General Plan center?
- Some like the personal control the committee members and community have. To say that community involvement is not a good thing is something the community would take issue with. Speaker is intrigued with the pre-application neighborhood meeting. What sort of teeth does it have?
- Community meetings—the fundamental aspect is that communities do not understand what is involved in the development process, so many things get thrown out that have nothing to do with the development process. The local committee has members with enough expertise to be able to ask the nuts and bolts questions that are of importance.
- Speaker understands the importance of the Zoning Rewrite, but is concerned that the County is going to come up with the standards and the community-based standards will be lost. Speaker would like notification in the early stage of development.

### **Development and Design Standards**

- The most common standards the M-U-TC committee needs to impose on unwilling applicants deal with awning materials and 12-inch lettering on signs. The most important standards are massing and contextual sensitivity. The “Streetsense building” was a seven-story proposal that would have overwhelmed the street, the residential fabric, and all of this was addressed through the M-U-TC book. The M-U-TC development plan laid out good planning and design principles for planning out good community space. The development plan gave them the backing they felt they needed. This project has not worked out, but it will not be the last project like this.

### **Development areas/patterns in Mount Rainier**

- Mount Rainier has three distinct development patterns. How would these distinctions be incorporated?

*Planning Staff:* The best tool to achieve what the city is looking for is a historic district—instead of just looking at the sticks or the individual developments, have historic property tax credits, state credits, and other incentives that could help.



- Speaker understands why the historic district is so attractive for the residential area, it never would have happened [in Mount Rainier] because Mount Rainier is not a snapshot in time that we are trying to preserve. Something that is important is to preserve the creativity and flexibility to evolve.

*Planning Staff:* Historic districts allow changes, it is not a freezing in time situation. It looks to compatibility—scale, massing, etc.

- There is a desire to have Rhode Island Avenue and 34<sup>th</sup> Street be designated Main Streets.
- Are there any zones that sound like they may appeal to the community?

#### **Neighborhood Compatibility Standards**

- Concern about how Neighborhood Compatibility Standards would impact outdoor dining. Uncertain if these standards will work for all of US 1. Difficult to apply new zoning to historic contexts.
- Can we use the development plan for the base of the commercial/mixed-use NCO Zone?