May 20, 2020

TO: Salt Lake City Planning Commission

FROM: Judi Short, First Vice Chair and Land Use Chair

 Sugar House Community Council

RE: 2960 Richmond Street Rezone

Community Development Corporation of Utah, is requesting a Zoning Map Amendment for the parcels at 2960, 2964, and 2970 Richmond Street, from R-1/7000 Single Family Residential, to RMU-45 Residential Mixed Use.  This would allow for approximately 60 mixed income housing units. The applicant argues that much of the surrounding development is moving towards higher density and this project is compatible with that growth and would help reach the housing goals of Salt Lake City.  With all the new apartments in Sugar House, less than 100 are considered affordable.  This would definitely help with that.

It would also help with Salt Lake City’s housing goals to prioritize the development of new affordable housing with an emphasis on households earning 40% AMI and below. (**Housing Plan: Growing Salt Lake 2017**). For the 1000 plus housing units we have built in Sugar House in the last decade, fewer than 100 are what would be considered affordable. This just makes the housing situation worse. This area is in a high opportunity area. Generally, we oppose rezoning parcels from low density residential to multifamily housing because that seems in opposition to the Sugar House Master Plan (SHMP). At the same time, this forwards part of the implementation of the SHMP, which calls for building affordable housing.

This parcel has been underutilized for many years, and this area has many things going for it.  This is on the edge of Sugar House, but still walkable or bikeable to the SHBD, or at the same time to the soon to come Millcreek City Center.  We have asked the transportation staff to consider this particular area when it looks at transportation issues along Highland Drive from SHBD to Millcreek.  I have asked Lynn Jacobs in Transportation to consider transit for Richmond as part of the study he is working on with Millcreek to facilitate transit between the two cities. People who work in Sugar House who make lower salaries ought to be able to live in our community, as we do. If we don't ever provide affordable housing, that will not happen.

I’ve included the many comments from the community that we have received regarding this rezone. They are not happy. This building is much larger than they expected, with smaller setbacks overlooking their back yards. There is not enough parking. This is a neighborhood of single-family single-story homes, with no sidewalks and very narrow streets. It is the kind of street where if cars are parked on both sides, only one car can go down the middle. They know that not enough parking will be provided, and they also know there isn’t any parking to be had in the neighborhood. There is some bus service on Richmond. If you take your life in your hands, you can get to a rapid transit bus on Highland Drive. The Salt Lake City parking ordinance does our neighborhoods a disservice by keeping allowed parking low, without a robust transit system to back it up. In the core of the city people may be able to do without a vehicle, but it is much more difficult in the outlying areas of Salt Lake City and Sugar House.

We are not happy with the choice we are asked to make. We desperately need affordable housing, and yet we hate to put it in the middle of a nice residential district. At the same time, affordable land is just not easily available to use for this type of housing. We did support the Salt Lake City RDA funding for this project, and realize that funding is a good part of what will make this project happen. An ordinary loan will be too expensive.

Mike Akerlow has promised me that he will work with the neighbors and the community council to come up with a building that will serve all our needs. It might be that the building will have to be smaller, or have fewer units, to make that happen. As one example, we have suggested they forego the swimming pool and put more parking in that space. I’d like to suggest that if he cannot commit to do that, a rezone should not be granted.

Attachments

 Comments, Flyer