



TO: Honorable Mayor & Members of the
Fort Lauderdale City Commission

FROM: Lee Feldman, ICMA-CM, City Manager

DATE: October 1, 2013

TITLE: First Reading of Ordinance – Land Use Plan Amendment – Case 2T13 to
increase dwelling units in the Downtown Regional Activity Center and
Resolution authorizing its concurrent transmittal

Recommendation

It is recommended that the City Commission approve on first reading an ordinance amending the Future Land Use Element of the City of Fort Lauderdale Comprehensive Plan to increase the residential density within the Downtown Regional Activity Center (RAC) from 11,060 dwelling units to 16,060 dwelling units and a resolution authorizing the concurrent transmittal of the Fort Lauderdale Land Use Plan Amendment with the Broward County Land Use Plan Amendment.

Background

The Downtown RAC is a land use category intended to encourage development and redevelopment in the City's Downtown urban center, which is an area of regional significance. The City's Downtown Master Plan envisions the Downtown RAC as a truly livable urban center with diverse, healthy residential neighborhoods and an urban fabric consisting of pedestrian-friendly streets, great public spaces and high-quality buildings. A key component to carrying out this vision and creating a truly-connected environment is the expansion of multi-modal transportation options including mass transit.

As per the City of Fort Lauderdale 2008 Comprehensive Plan, the Downtown RAC has a maximum allowable density of 11,060 dwelling units. As the economy continues to improve, the City has experienced an influx of new residential and mixed-use development projects in the Downtown RAC. These projects have nearly exhausted the supply of dwelling units in the downtown, with about 391 market rate units and 426 affordable housing units currently remaining for allocation for new development.

The proposed amendment is part of a larger effort to increase the supply of dwelling units in the Downtown RAC in order to help the downtown accommodate the anticipated residential density as outlined in the Downtown Master Plan. In Phase 1, the Unified Land Development Regulations (ULDR) were amended to create a process to utilize the remaining +/- 3,500 existing flexibility units that are currently available in Flex Zones 49 and 54 for use in the Downtown RAC. In the current phase, a land use plan amendment (LUPA) is proposed to the City of Fort Lauderdale and Broward County Comprehensive Plans in order to increase the number of allowable dwelling units in the Downtown RAC by 5,000 dwelling units, which would bring the total allowable number of dwelling units in the Downtown RAC to 16,060. (See Exhibit 1 for the proposed City and County Comprehensive Plan text changes.)

The proposed land use plan amendment furthers the Goals, Policies and Objectives of the City of Fort Lauderdale Comprehensive Plan, Downtown Master Plan, and Broward County Comprehensive Plan. The proposed amendment aligns with Objectives 1.16 and 1.32 of the City's Comprehensive Plan, which encourage mixed-use development and growth in the Downtown RAC in order to support transit use and discourage urban sprawl. The amendment furthers the City's policy of encouraging high density development in the Downtown RAC (Comprehensive Plan Policy 1.14.1) and improving the pedestrian environment (Policy 1.14.4). The proposed amendment is also consistent with Objective 1.15 of the Comprehensive Plan, which strives to protect adjacent established neighborhoods against incompatible uses.

Toward these ends, the amendment will ensure that dwelling units remain available for new residential development projects in the Downtown RAC so that it can continue to thrive and evolve as a vibrant, mixed-use urban center with a walkable pattern of streets and a sufficient population to support future mass transit initiatives, such as Tri-Rail Coastal Service commuter rail (located on the FEC rail line) and Wave Streetcar. By increasing the number of allowable units in the Downtown RAC, the proposed amendment will help guide future residential growth to the Downtown in a responsible manner, utilizing the Downtown RAC's existing and planned infrastructure, while preserving surrounding residential neighborhoods. New development will be guided by the Downtown Master Plan design guidelines and Character Areas, which limit height and density and provide transitional zones between the Downtown RAC and adjacent established neighborhoods to protect against incompatible uses.

In addition to satisfying the above criteria, the proposed land use amendment furthers the following principles of the Downtown Master Plan:

Principle 1: Capture a greater share of regional redevelopment;

- Principle 2: Increase residential opportunities Downtown, while supporting amenities;
- Principle 3: Strengthen areas of varied neighborhood character and distinct identity;
- Principle 4: Focus most intense development in a compact core;
- Principle 5: Surround the core with strong, walkable, mixed-income neighborhoods;
- Principle 6: Create extroverted, pedestrian friendly buildings; and
- Principle 11: Provide alternatives to the car, including walking, transit and cycling.

As shown in the LUPA report (Exhibit 1), which was prepared by the Department of Sustainable Development with assistance from the Downtown Development Authority, adequate facilities and services, including potable water, sanitary sewer and solid waste, are in place to support the proposed increase in residential dwelling units. Development within the area will be required to meet the drainage standards of the City, Broward County Department of Planning and Environmental Protection, and the South Florida Water Management District.

Based on existing school enrollment, excess capacity is available at every public school except for Fort Lauderdale High School. However, it is anticipated that existing available capacity at Stranahan High School can sufficiently accommodate the additional school children under the proposed amendment.

Preliminary traffic and transit impact analysis indicates that planned mass transit improvements, including the FEC commuter rail and Wave Streetcar, will help to mitigate potential impacts, while benefitting from the increased ridership from the additional population. In addition, traffic will be mitigated by City efforts to enhance multi-modal transportation, such as its Connectivity Map initiative, which will help transform City streets into "Complete Streets" that accommodate pedestrians, cyclists, transit and automobiles. Staff is also drafting Transit Oriented Development (TOD) guidelines, which will provide further guidance on transit supportive land uses and parking strategies near future transit stations in Downtown Fort Lauderdale.

The Planning and Zoning Board (PZB) recommended approval of the amendment by a vote of 7-0 on July 17, 2013. The PZB staff report, which includes the proposed City and County Comprehensive Plan text changes and LUPA report, is attached as Exhibit 1. The PZB meeting record is attached as Exhibit 2, respectively. Department of Sustainable Development staff also presented the proposed amendment to the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) on March 14, 2013. The DDA board members

unanimously supported the project. In addition staff has also reached out to the Council of Fort Lauderdale Civic Associations to advise of the effort.

The City Commission shall hold a public hearing to consider the proposed land use plan amendment and the record and recommendations forwarded by the Department of Sustainable Development and the PZB. The City Commission shall hear public comments when determining whether the proposed amendment meet the Goals, Policies and Objectives of the City's Comprehensive Plan and intent of the Downtown Master Plan.

Resource Impact

There is no fiscal impact associated with this action.

Attachments

Exhibit 1 - Staff Report from the July 17, 2013 PZB Meeting

Exhibit 2 - Minutes from the July 17, 2013 PZB Meeting

Exhibit 3 – Ordinance

Exhibit 4 – Resolution

Prepared by: Todd Okolichany, AICP, Principal Planner

Department Director: Greg Brewton, Sustainable Development