

To: City of Richfield - Planning Commissioner Jobs,
City of Richfield - Planning Commission Members,
City of Richfield - Staff supporting Planning Commission
City Council Members

From: JoAnn Blanchard
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Date: June 22, 2010

In preparation for the June 28th Planning Commission meeting, I am writing to ask for your review and consideration of factors involved in the planned rezoning from Single-Family to Medium Density zoning of the 66th to 70th Streets/Xerxes to Washburn blocks ("affected blocks"). I believe the factors below provide ample criteria for retaining single-family zoning for the affected blocks.

Factors:

- 1) Richfield's Comprehensive Plan ("The Plan") voices goals of improving Richfield Neighborhoods through better property maintenance and improved walkability.

Consideration:

These are already defining characteristics of the affected blocks which have long been a good example of the type of neighborhood that Richfield wants to expand upon.

- Residents walk to Cub Foods, Target, the Southdale Library, Edina & Richfield restaurants and shops, Richfield parks, Centennial Lakes, workplaces such as Fairview Hospital, among others.
- Properties are well-maintained and many have been updated and/or remodeled as part of the Richfield Rediscovered Program.

- 2) The Plan also speaks to the character of Richfield and the entry points into Richfield that serve as a first impression of Richfield and its character.

Consideration:

The affected blocks include two major entry points from the western border of Edina into the Richfield residential community: 69th Street and 70th Street. These are not major entry points from the standpoint of commerce or major road ways. But they are major entry points from the standpoint of being a vista into the residential character of Richfield.

- Potential homeowners see the character of Richfield in the first couple of blocks after leaving Edina.
- These two blocks are quiet, well-kept, welcoming, and beautifully shaded under a canopy of mature trees.
- The Plan describes this type of neighborhood as what it wants to be characterized by. This is already available in the affected blocks which are in a prime location to make an impression as people drive into Richfield from Edina shopping areas and to attract future Richfield home owners.

- Very few Richfield entry points besides these two speak to the heart of Richfield's residential character.

3) The Plan speaks to the need for "move up" housing via housing improvements.

Consideration:

The affected blocks are more appropriate for "move up" housing than medium-density housing given the location, the existence of many newer and newly remodeled homes, the proximity to the Southdale Library, the Galleria, Jefferson and Adams Hill parks, among many other attributes.

4) At the May Richfield Planning Commission meeting, it was stated that the recommendation to rezone the affected blocks was, in part, to provide a transition from the adjacent Edina properties to the residential areas of Richfield.

Consideration:

- The above stated recommendation was as a result of intent by a developer to build a 12 story multi-use complex on the York/Xerxes/69th St. block by seeking a variance from the 4 story zoning of that Edina area.
- The variance on the 4 story zoning was rejected by the Edina Planning Commission after a public hearing in which Richfield residents spoke out against the intended development, its impact on neighboring Richfield homes, and the misuse of zoning variances for a request three times the height of the zoned allowance. The Richfield Mayor also spoke on behalf of the Richfield residents.
- Since then, a 4 story building has been developed in that location, rather than the proposed 12 story development. The 4 story development has been very tastefully landscaped and situated.
- The adjacent blocks between Richfield residential homes and Edina's commercial east end along the affected blocks already serve as a lovely transition between commercial and residential areas including: 1) manicured green lawns and mature trees that separate Kids' Hair from homes on Xerxes Ave. near 70th St. 2) manicured green lawns, mature trees, and a beautifully landscaped berm that separates Key Cadillac and Cub Foods from homes on Xerxes Ave. between 69th & 67th St. 3) Edina single-family homes on the west side of Xerxes facing Richfield single-family homes on the east side of Xerxes between 67th & 66th St.
- There is no need for introduction of another transitional area given the zoning being enforced for this Edina area and the transitional elements in existence along those streets.
- Current zoning along Edina's eastern border is being retained within their long-term comprehensive plan.

5) The Plan had identified in the Housing: Implementation section three areas that would be subject to "significant redevelopment" including, Lakes at Lyndale, along I-494, and along adjacent Cedar Ave.

Consideration:

- The Plan did not specifically call out areas that would be subject to rezoning, which would have alerted residents to changes directly affecting them.

- The only indication was an approximately 3” x 5” map of Richfield in which the affected blocks were color coded with a legend depicting them as medium density on a year 2030 plan.
 - Communication in the future should alert residents through a direct personal mailing, rather than a mass mailing, of any intent to consider changes affecting their property and requesting their attendance and input during discussion on that specific topic.
 - Had targeted, specific communication been made concerning zoning changes, residents would have had the opportunity to provide these factors early in the planning process and ensure retention of single-family zoning for this area in The Plan.
- 6) The Plan also states in the Housing: Implementation section that the “realities of the marketplace may prevent the targets from being reached” in terms of the target numbers for increased density. This was also stated in the May Planning Commission meeting along with additional comments that leaving the affected blocks as Single-Family zoned areas would not cause the planned density number(s) to fall below the targeted number(s) to meet the Metropolitan Council’s mandates for continued funding.
- Consideration:
- The Plan recognizes that these are target numbers that may or may not be realized depending on marketplace realities.
 - However, targeted density numbers will remain in accordance with Metropolitan Council mandates without rezoning these affected blocks, which will, in turn, ensure continued funding.

In summary, I respectfully ask your thoughtful consideration of these factors. This is an area that is an important residential entry point for Richfield, it currently transitions beautifully from commercial Edina to residential Richfield, it manifests the character Richfield continues to aspire to, and its retention as a single-family zoned area will not jeopardize the targeted density numbers and resulting funding from the Metropolitan Council.

On behalf of myself, my family, and the many Richfield residents of the affected blocks (ref. 1), I ask for your vote to reject the rezoning of the affected blocks and to take action to change Richfield’s Comprehensive Plan to retain single-family zoning for the affected blocks.

Respectfully,

JoAnn L. Blanchard

Ref. 1: Email from William Blanchard dated 6/22 containing residents’ petition in favor

of retaining single-family zoning for the affected blocks.