

STAFF REPORT

Case Number: 14-ZA-01
Request: Text amendment to Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance regarding R-6 district
Address: City wide
Petitioner: City of Farmers Branch

Summary of Issues:

The proposed text amendment seeks to align the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance's, Area Regulations for the "One-Family Residence District – 6" (R-6) with current real estate market and homebuilding trends. Although the R-6 zoning district allows for the smallest residential lots within the city, it is the largest single-family residential zoning district in the city. There are approximately 3,842 parcels in the city that are zoned R-6 (almost half of the city's single family inventory). In order to stimulate redevelopment in our older neighborhoods it is necessary to revise the CZO to accommodate larger, modern homes on these small R-6 lots. Today's new homebuyers require "more house on less lot" than the initial homebuyers in the 1960's. Today new homes include such improvements as entertainment rooms, larger closets and storage areas, three-car garages, and covered outdoor patios. In order to provide room for these new home elements, the City needs to increase the size of building envelope by reducing setbacks and allowing a higher lot coverage ratio.

In addition, City staff has researched other cities in the DFW area, including Frisco, McKinney and Plano, and found that each of the cities has some type of "patio home" or "zero lot" zoning district which allows builders to maximize the lot area and to provide better variety of housing products to today's home buyers. Although not addressed in this amendment, City Staff may recommend the establishment of a new single family residential zoning district that allows a "zero lot line" home product in the near future.

Farmers Dell:

Last year, the City purchased 10 residential lots in the Farmers Dell subdivision, located along Harrisburg Circle and Holbrook Drive, south of Valley View Lane. All of these lots are located in a R-6 zoning district. Many of these homes were in bad condition and excellent candidates for new redevelopment of an existing lot. The goal was to promote its Neighborhood Revitalization initiative and invest in areas in the City that needed redevelopment. The City razed the existing structures from these lots and began searching for a established homebuilder interested in developing a group of new homes in this area.

The nationally recognized homebuilder, K Hovnanian Homes, purchased all 10 of these lots from the City. Their plan was to build new single family detached homes on the lots. During their marketing efforts for their Mustang Crossing neighborhood project west of City Hall, K Hovnanian discovered that there was a healthy market for moderately priced traditional single family detached homes in the central area of Farmers Branch. Purchasing these 10 lots in

Farmers Dell allowed them the opportunity to develop a new home product in Farmers Branch. They proposed to build approximately 3,000 square foot homes of these small R-6 lots, all containing approximately 6,600 square feet. Unfortunately many of these new home designs did not "fit" on these lots using the existing setback and lot coverage requirements in the R-6 zoning district. (See Exhibit 2 and 3)

The quickest remedy for the problem is for the City to revise the R-6 zoning development standards. City Staff also believed removing some of these existing development standards within the R-6 zoning district would encourage other new homeowners to purchase existing in-fill residential lots and develop their home products within the City.

The Proposed Amendments to the R-6 Zoning District:

Side Yard Setback

Currently the required side yard setback is 10% of the width of the lot, with a maximum of not more than 8 feet. For example, a typical 70' wide lot requires a 7' side setbacks on both sides. City Staff is proposing a minor adjustment setting the maximum side setback requirement at 6 feet. This subtle amendment will significantly improve the flexibility of house placement on these small residential lots.

Rear Yard Setback

Currently the required rear setback for R-6 lots is 15 feet. City Staff is proposing reducing the rear yard setback to 10 feet.

Lot Coverage Ratio

The maximum lot coverage for an R-6 lot is currently 40%. For example, a typical R-6 lot containing 6,600 square feet can only allow a ground floor footprint of 2,640 square feet. This footprint calculation includes the garage (typically at least 484 sf) and a covered patio (typically at least 150 sf). If you subtract both of these popular items from the gross square footage, that only leaves approximately 2,000 square feet for living space. Most homebuyers are demanding at least 2,300 square feet of living space. Therefore, the City Staff is proposing to increase the lot coverage ratio for the R-6 zoning district to 50%.

This minor increase in lot coverage allows for approximately 25% more buildable area.

By making these 3 minor adjustments to the R-6 zoning district, today's homebuilders will be able to rebuild more effectively on these great in-fill residential lots scattered throughout the City. (See Exhibit 1)

Comprehensive Plan:

The 2012 Central Area Plan categorized the City's residential area into three neighborhood revitalization strategies; preservation, conservation and rehabilitation. The Plan also divided the central area into 20 districts in order to allow for more specific neighborhood strategies. The recommendations for the Branch Crossing neighborhood and more specifically the Farmers Dell subdivision (Harrisburg Circle and Holbrook Drive area) was to support rehabilitation. A special

emphasis for demolition/rebuild incentives to aid neighborhood transformation was also recommended. This text amendment is in line with the goals and recommendations of the Central Area Plan.