

**City of Renton Comprehensive Plan – Land Use Element  
Policies relevant to 2007-M-02: Rainier Avenue**

**Section VIII. RESIDENTIAL POLICIES**

Goal: Promote new development and neighborhoods in the City that:

- a) Contribute to a strong sense of community and neighborhood identity;
- b) Are walkable places where people can shop, play, and get to work without always having to drive;
- c) Are developed at densities sufficient to support public transportation and make efficient use of urban services and infrastructure;
- d) Offer a variety of housing types for a population diverse in age, income, and lifestyle;
- e) Are varied or unique in character;
- f) Support “grid” and “flexible grid” street and pathway patterns where appropriate;
- g) Are visually attractive, safe, and healthy environments in which to live;
- h) Offer connection to the community instead of isolation; and
- i) Provide a sense of home.

**RESIDENTIAL MEDIUM DENSITY LAND USE DESIGNATION**

**Purpose Statement:** The Residential Medium Density designation is intended to create the opportunity for neighborhoods that offer a variety of lot sizes, housing, and ownership options.

Residential Medium Density neighborhoods should include a variety of unit types designed to incorporate features from both single-family and multi-family developments, support cost-efficient housing, facilitate infill development, encourage use of transit service, and promote the efficient use of urban services and infrastructure.

**Objective LU-GG:** Designate land for Residential Medium Density (RMD) where access, topography and adjacent land uses create conditions appropriate for a variety of unit types designed to incorporate features from both single-family and multi-family developments, and to support cost-efficient housing, infill development, transit service, and the efficient use of urban services and infrastructure.

**Policy LU-157.** Residential Medium Density designated areas should be zoned for either Residential 10 dwelling units per net acre (R-10), Residential 14 dwelling units per net acre (R-14), or new zoning designations that allow housing in this density range.

**Policy LU-158.** Residential Medium Density neighborhoods may be considered for Residential 10 (R-10) zoning if they meet three of the following criteria:

- 1) The area already has a mix of small-scale multi-family units or has had long standing zoning for flats or other low-density multi-family use;
- 2) Development patterns conducive to medium-density development are established;
- 3) Vacant lots exist or parcels have redevelopment potential for medium-density infill development;
- 4) The project site is adjacent to major arterial(s) and public transit service is located within ¼ mile;
- 5) The site can be buffered from existing single-family residential neighborhoods having densities of eight (8) dwelling units or less; or
- 6) The site can be buffered from adjacent or abutting incompatible uses.

**Policy LU-159.** Areas may be considered for Residential 14 (R-14) zoning where the site meets the following criteria:

- 1) Adjacent to major arterial(s);
- 2) Adjacent to the Urban Center, Highlands Center Village, or Commercial Corridor designations;
- 3) Part of a designation totaling over 20 acres (acreage may be in separate ownership);
- 4) Site is buffered from single-family areas or other existing, potentially incompatible uses; and
- 5) Development within the density range and of similar unit type is achievable given environmental constraints.

**Policy LU-160.** Support projects that create neighborhoods with diverse housing types that achieve continuity through the organization of roads, sidewalks, blocks, setbacks, community gathering places, and amenity features.

**Policy LU-161.** Support residential development incorporating a hierarchy of streets. Street networks should connect through the development to existing streets, avoid “cul-de-sac” or dead end streets, and be arranged in a grid street pattern (or a flexible grid street system if there are environmental constraints).

**Policy LU-162.** Development densities in the Residential Medium Density designation area should range from seven (7) to eighteen (18) dwelling units per net acre, as specified by implementing zoning.

**Policy LU-163.** For attached or semi-attached development in the R-14 zoned portions of the Residential Medium Density designation, a bonus density of four (4) additional dwelling units per acre should be available, subject to Density Bonus Review and other applicable development conditions.

**Policy LU-164.** When a minimum density is applicable, the minimum development density in the Residential Medium Density designation should be four (4) dwelling units per net acre.

**Objective LU-HH:** Residential Medium Density designations should be areas where creative approaches to housing density can be implemented.

**Policy LU-165.** Provision of small lot, single-family detached unit types, townhouses, and multi-family structures compatible with a single-family character should be allowed and encouraged in the Residential Medium Density designation, provided that density standards can be met (see also the Housing Element for housing types).

**Policy LU-166.** Very small-lot, single-family housing, such as cottages, zero-lot line detached, semi-detached, townhouses, and small scale multi-family units should be allowed in the Residential Medium Density designation in order to provide a wide range of housing types. Implementing code will be put in place within three years of the adoption of the 2004 Update.

**Policy LU-167.** A range and variety of lot sizes and building densities should be encouraged.

**Policy LU-168.** Residential developments should include public amenities that function as a gathering place within the development and should include features such as a public square, open space, park, civic or commercial uses in the R-14 zone. The central place should include amenities for passive recreation such as benches and fountains and be unified by a design motif or common theme.

**Policy LU-169.** Residential Medium Density site development plans having attached or semi-attached housing types should reflect the following criteria for projects:

- 1) Parking should be encouraged in the rear or side yards or under the structure;
- 2) Structures should be located on lots or arranged in a manner to appear like a platted development to ensure adequate light and air, and views (if any) are preserved between lots or structures;
- 3) Buildings should be massed in a manner that promotes a pedestrian scale with a small neighborhood feeling;
- 4) Each dwelling unit should have an identifiable entrance and front on streets rather than courtyards and parking lots;
- 5) Fences may be constructed if they contribute to an open, spacious feeling between units and structures; and

6) Streetscapes should include green, open space for each unit.

**Policy LU-170.** Residential Medium Density development should provide condominium or fee simple homeownership opportunities, as well as rental or lease options.

**Objective LU-II:** Residential Medium Density development should be urban in form and fit into existing residential neighborhoods if developed as infill projects.

**Policy LU-171.** Buildings should front the street rather than be organized around interior courtyards or parking areas.

**Policy LU-172.** Non-residential structures, such as community recreation buildings, that are part of the development, may have dimensions larger than residential structures, but should be compatible in design and dimensions with surrounding residential development.

**Policy LU-173.** Non-residential structures should be clustered and connected within the overall development through the organization of roads, blocks, yards, focal points, and amenity features to create a neighborhood.

**Policy LU-174.** Single-family detached building types in the Residential Medium Density designation should have maximum lot coverage by the primary structure of fifty (50) percent.

**Policy LU-175.** In the Residential Medium Density designation common open space equal to 1,200-square feet per unit and maintained by a homeowners' association, should be provided for each semi-attached or attached unit.

**Policy LU-176.** Support site plans that transition to and blend with existing development patterns using techniques such as lot size, depth and width, access points, building location setbacks, and landscaping. Sensitivity to unique features and differences among established neighborhoods should be reflected in site plan design. Interpret development standards to support ground-related orientation, coordinated structural design, and private yards or substantial common space areas.

**Policy LU-177.** A minimum of fifty (50) percent of a project in the Residential 14 zone should consist of the following primary residential types: traditional detached, zero lot line detached, or townhouses with individual yards that are scaled appropriately for each unit.

**Policy LU-178.** Longer townhouse buildings or other types of multi-family buildings, considered secondary residential types (see RMC 4-9-065), should be limited in size so that the mass and bulk of the building has a small scale multi-family character, rather than that of a large, garden-style apartment development.

**Policy LU-179.** In the Residential 14 zone, multi-unit townhouses that qualify as a primary residential type (see RMC 4-9-065) should be limited in size so that the mass and bulk is at a human scale.

**Policy LU-180.** Projects in a Residential 14 zone should have no more than fifty (50) percent of the units designed as secondary residential types, i.e. longer townhouse building clusters, or longer multi-family buildings of other types.

**Policy LU-181.** Mixed-use development in the form of civic, commercial development, or other non-residential structures, may be allowed in the central places of Residential Medium Density development projects within the Residential 14 zone, subject to compliance with criteria established through development regulations.

## **X. COMMERCIAL**

**Goal:** Support existing businesses and provide an energetic business environment for new commercial activity providing a range of service, office, commercial, and mixed use residential uses that enhance the City's employment and tax base along arterial boulevards and in designated development areas.

**Discussion:** There are three commercial designations:

- 1) Commercial Corridor;
- 2) Commercial/Office/Residential; and
- 3) Commercial Neighborhood.

These commercial areas range from intense retail corridors to major office parks to neighborhood scale business districts. Many commercial areas are located along arterials where the high volumes of daily traffic provide a substantial customer base.

### **COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR LAND USE DESIGNATION**

**Purpose Statement:** The Commercial Corridor district is characterized by concentrated, pre-existing commercial activity, primarily in a linear urban form, that provides necessary goods and services for daily living, accessible to near-by neighborhoods, serving a sub-regional market and accommodating large volumes of traffic.

It is the intention of City objectives and policies that Commercial Corridor areas evolve from "strip commercial" linear business districts to business areas characterized by enhanced site planning incorporating efficient parking lot design, coordinated access, amenities, and boulevard treatment. Commercial Corridor areas may include designated districts including concentrations of specialized uses such as the Auto Mall, or features

such as transit stops and a combination of businesses creating a focal point of pedestrian activity and visual interest.

Commercial Corridor areas are characterized by medium intensity levels of activity. It is anticipated, however, that intensity levels in these areas will increase over time as development of vacant space occurs, increased land value makes redevelopment feasible, and land is used more efficiently. In these districts, provision of pedestrian amenities is encouraged, as are opportunities to link adjacent uses and neighborhoods.

**Objective LU-DDD:** The Commercial Corridor land use designation should include:

- 1) Established commercial and office areas;
- 2) Developments located on large parcels of land;
- 3) Projects that may be highly visible from principal arterials;
- 4) Uses dependent upon or benefiting from high-volume traffic;
- 5) Uses that provide significant employment; and
- 6) Businesses that provide necessary or desirable goods and services to the larger community.

**Policy LU-333.** The Commercial Corridor Land Use designation should be mapped in areas with the following characteristics:

- 1) Located on, and having access to, streets classified as principal arterials;
- 2) High traffic volumes; or
- 3) Land use pattern characterized by strip commercial development, shopping centers, or office parks.

**Policy LU-334.** The Commercial Corridor designation should be implemented through Commercial Arterial, Commercial Office, or Light Industrial zoning.

**Policy LU-335.** Increased demand for commercial uses should be accommodated primarily through redevelopment and intensification of existing business area designations rather than expansion of those areas.

**Objective LU-EEE:** Create opportunities for development and re-development of land in portions of the Commercial Corridor designation for general business and service uses. These include a wide range of restaurant, small-scale to big-box retail, offices, auto dealers, light industrial, and residential uses.

**Policy LU-336.** Portions of the Commercial Corridor designation appropriate for a wide range of uses catering to low and medium intensity office, service, and retail uses should be mapped with Commercial Arterial zoning.

**Policy LU-337.** Areas that should be considered for Commercial Arterial zoning should meet the following criteria:

- 1) The corridor is served by transit or has transit within one-quarter mile;
- 2) A historical strip commercial urban development pattern predominates;
- 3) Large, surface parking lots exist;
- 4) Primary development on the site is located at rear portions of the property with parking in front of the buildings;
- 5) Parcel size and configuration typically is defined by a larger parcel fronting the arterial street with multiple buildings and businesses; and
- 6) The corridor exhibits long block lengths and/or an incomplete grid street network.

**Policy LU-338.** Commercial Arterial zoned areas should include an opportunity for residential uses and office as part of mixed-use development.

**Objective LU-FFF:** Create opportunities for intensive office uses in portions of Commercial Corridor designations including a wide range of business, financial, and professional services supported by service and commercial/retail activities.

**Policy LU-339.** Areas of the City identified for intensive office use may be mapped with Commercial Office implementing zoning when site is developed, historically used for office, or the site meets the following criteria:

- 1) Site is located contiguous to an existing or planned transit route;
- 2) Large parcel size;
- 3) High visibility; and
- 4) Opportunities for views.

**Policy LU-340.** Small-scale medical uses associated with major institutions should be located in the portions of Commercial Corridor designated areas with Commercial Office zoning, in the Urban Center, or in the Employment Area – Valley.

**Policy LU-341.** Retirement centers that have a medical facility as a component of the services offered should be located in areas of the Commercial Corridor that have Commercial Office zoning.

**Policy LU-342.** Medium and high intensity office should be encouraged as the primary use in Commercial Office zoned areas.

**Policy LU-343.** Retail and services should support the primary office use in areas identified for Commercial Office zoning, and should be located on the ground floor of office and parking structures.

**Policy LU-344.** In the Commercial Office zone, high-rise office development should be limited to ten (10) stories. Fifteen (15) stories may be obtained through a height bonus system.

**Policy LU-345.** Height bonuses of five (5) stories may be allowed for office buildings in designated areas of the Commercial Office zone, under appropriate

conditions, where sites provide additional public benefits such as plazas, parks, exceptional landscaping, and/or public art.

**Objective LU-GGG:** Guide redevelopment of land in the Commercial Corridor designation with Commercial Arterial zoning, from the existing strip commercial forms into more concentrated forms, in which structures and parking evolve from the existing suburban form, to more efficient urban configurations with cohesive site planning.

**Policy LU-346.** Support the redevelopment of commercial business districts located along principal arterials in the City.

**Policy LU-347.** Implement development standards that encourage lively, attractive, medium to high-density commercial areas.

**Policy LU-348.** Encourage consolidation of individual parcels to maximize flexibility of site design and reduce access points.

**Policy LU-349.** Support development plans incorporating the following features:

- 1) Shared access points and fewer curb cuts;
- 2) Internal circulation among adjacent parcels;
- 3) Shared parking facilities;
- 4) Allowance for future transition to structured parking facilities;
- 5) Centralized signage;
- 6) Unified development concepts; and
- 7) Landscaping and streetscape that softens visual impacts.

**Policy LU-350.** New development in Commercial Corridor designated areas should be encouraged to implement uniform site standards, including:

- 1) Minimum lot depth of 200 feet;
- 2) Maximum height of ten (10) stories within office zoned designations;
- 3) Parking preferably at the rear of the building, or on the side as a second choice;
- 4) Setbacks that would allow incorporating a landscape buffer;
- 5) Front setback without frontage street or driveway between building and sidewalk; and
- 6) Common signage and lighting system.

**Policy LU-351.** Identify and map activity nodes located along principal arterials that are the foundation of the Corridors, and guide the development or redevelopment of these nodes as activity areas for the larger corridors so that they enhance their function.

**Policy LU-352.** Development within defined activity nodes should be subject to additional design guidelines as delineated in the development standards.

**Policy LU-353.** Structures at Commercial Corridor intersections should not be set back from the street and sidewalk so as to allow vehicular circulation or parking to be located between the sidewalk and the building.

**Policy LU-354.** Commercial Corridor intersections frequented by pedestrians, due to the nature of nearby uses or transit stops, should feature sidewalk pavement increased to form pedestrian corners and include pedestrian amenities, signage, and special design treatment that would make them identifiable as activity areas for the larger corridor.

**Policy LU-355.** Parking at designated intersections should be in back of structures and not located between structures and the sidewalk or street.

**Policy LU-356.** Structures in Commercial Corridor areas that front sidewalks abutting the principal arterial or are located at activity nodes should be eligible for a height bonus and therefore may exceed the maximum allowable height in the district.

**Policy LU-357.** Public amenity features (e.g. plazas, recreation areas) should be encouraged as part of new development or redevelopment.

**Policy LU-358.** Parking areas should be landscaped (including street trees, buffers, berms), especially along roadways, to reduce visual impacts.

**Objective LU-HHH:** Support methods of increasing accessibility to Commercial Corridor areas for both automobile and transit to support the land use objectives of the district.

**Policy LU-359.** Support routing of the citywide transit system to Commercial Corridor areas to provide greater access.

**Policy LU-360.** Encourage development proponents to work with the City Transportation Division, King County METRO, and Sound Transit in order to site transit stops within the Commercial Corridor areas.

**Policy LU-361.** Public transportation transit stops located in Commercial Corridor areas should be safe, clean, comfortable, and attractive.

**Objective LU-III:** Ensure quality development in Commercial Office zones.

**Policy LU-362.** Office sites and structures should be designed (e.g. signage; building height, bulk and setback; landscaping; parking) to mitigate adverse impacts on adjacent land uses.

**Policy LU-363.** Parking provided on-site, in parking structures, and either buffered from adjacent uses or incorporated into pedestrian-oriented street design, is preferred.

**Policy LU-364.** In areas developed with high intensity office uses, circulation within the site should be primarily pedestrian-oriented.

**Policy LU-365.** In areas developed with high intensity office uses, vehicular access to the site should be from the primary street with the access points minimized and designed to ease entrance and exit.

**Policy LU-366.** Public amenity features (e.g. parks, plazas, recreation areas) should be encouraged (i.e. through incentives or similar means) as part of every high-intensity office development.

**Policy LU-367.** In areas developed with high intensity office uses, site and building design should be transit-, people-, and pedestrian-oriented. Ground floor uses and design should be pedestrian-oriented.

**Objective LU-JJJ:** Where Commercial Corridor areas intersect other land use designations, recognition of a transition and/or buffer between uses should be incorporated into redevelopment plans.

**Policy LU-368.** Consideration of the scale and building style of near-by residential neighborhoods should be included in development proposals.

**Policy LU-369.** Development should be designed to consider potential adverse impacts on adjacent, less intensive uses, e.g. lighting, landscaping, and setbacks should all be considered during site design.

**Policy LU-370.** Landscape buffers, additional setbacks, reduced height, and screening devices such as berms and fencing should be employed to reduce impacts (e.g. visual, noise, odor, light) on adjacent, less intensive uses.

### **Rainier Avenue Corridor**

**Discussion:** The Rainier Avenue Corridor is one of the most commercially viable areas of the City. Redevelopment of infrastructure and businesses in the Rainier Corridor would present the opportunity to strengthen the transition between the Corridor, a major transportation route through the west part of the City, and the Urban Center. Changes of this nature could increase the economic vitality of Renton's Downtown.

**Objective LU-RRR:** A special commercial area should be designated along Rainier Avenue. The purpose of this area would be to enhance the commercial environment to increase revenue of local businesses and the City's tax base.

**Policy LU-393.** Within the Rainier Avenue Corridor, the "Business District" should be bounded by properties directly north of S. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street on the north and the Houser railroad trestle on the south where it abuts the Auto Mall District.

**Policy LU-394.** The policies of the Commercial Corridor designation and the Rainier Avenue Corridor Business District should be implemented by Commercial Arterial (CA) zoning.

**Policy LU-395.** Uses in the Rainier Avenue Corridor should be primarily retail-oriented, and may have an emphasis on providing goods on a high-volume, vehicle-accessed basis, but should also provide high-quality and specialty goods.

**Objective LU-SSS:** Due to the nature of the retail core business in the Rainier Avenue Corridor, vehicular access and egress safety should be a primary consideration.

**Policy LU-396.** In the Rainier Avenue Corridor access points to businesses fronting the principal arterial should be consolidated if at all possible and curb cuts reduced wherever feasible.

**Policy LU-397.** Business signs in the Rainier Avenue Corridor should be uniform in size, content, and location to reduce visual clutter. Monument signs are the preferred type.

**Policy LU-398.** New billboard signs should be disallowed in the Rainier Avenue Corridor Business District due to the large scale of the signs in relation to the scale of the district. Existing signs should be well maintained so that visual impact is reduced.

**Objective LU-TTT:** The Rainier Avenue Corridor Business District should be enhanced to improve efficiency, safety and attractiveness to both potential shoppers and pedestrians using the public transportation system.

**Policy LU-399.** In the Rainier Avenue Corridor Business District, due to significant pedestrian use of the intersections of Rainier Avenue and Sunset Boulevard/South Third Street, Rainier Avenue and South Third Place, and Rainier Avenue and South Fourth Street, sidewalk widths at these locations should be increased to create pedestrian corners whenever redevelopment occurs. Pavement should be increased for added pedestrian safety.

**Policy LU-400.** On corners having high-volume pedestrian traffic, the paved sidewalk area should be increased in size. This may require a larger building setback at the corners of buildings when building facades abut the sidewalk.

**Policy LU-401.** Pedestrian corners should include urban street furniture such as benches, an information kiosk, and a trash receptacle.

**Policy LU-402.** Rainier Avenue should be improved with landscaped median and additional street trees to improve safety and appearance.

**Policy LU-403.** Property owners and business owners should be encouraged to provide awnings or other weather protection on facades of buildings fronting sidewalks.

**Objective LU-UUU:** The Rainier Avenue Corridor Business District is one of the busiest arterials in the City and is located as a gateway to the City from both the south and north. The design, function, and configuration of the District should reflect its status as a key gateway.

**Policy LU-404.** The Rainier Avenue Corridor should feature gateway elements to the extent made possible by redevelopment.

**Policy LU-405.** Signage in the Rainier Avenue Corridor Business District should include high quality City directional signs to the Urban Center, City Hall, IKEA Performing Arts Center, Piazza Park, City parking garage, library, museum, and other prominent public destinations.