

Re: Development Standards Adjustment

Site Location: 501 North Wahsatch Avenue, Colorado Springs, CO 80903

Zoning: R-4: Multi-Family Low

Request: The current parcel contains two single-family homes and a former laundromat on .2249 acres. We propose to convert the vacated laundromat to a single-family residence.

Code Section: Seeking a waiver of residential density on the site UDC Table 7.4.2-A. R-4 zoning allows Residential Density (maximum): 8 du/ac.

Justification: The Unified Development Code (UDC) states under 7.2.206 R-4: Multi-Family Low, that the zone district accommodates attached and detached single-family, two-family, and small multi-family dwelling structures. Its development is intended to be adjacent to collector or arterial streets, in transition areas at the edges of low-density neighborhoods, and in areas adjacent to R-Flex, Mixed-Use, or PDZ districts where similar densities or intensities of development are permitted.

Currently the parcel contains two single-family homes and a former laundromat on .2249 acres. This amounts to a current residential density of two homes on .2249 acres equaling 8.89 du/ac. Our proposed conversion of the vacated laundromat to a single-family residence would increase the density to 13.33 du/ac (three homes on .2249 acres.) No new building is being constructed on the site. The calculated increase in density (du/ac) is due to the conversion of the former laundromat into a residence.

The lot's density with two existing homes and a vacant former laundromat exceeds the R-4 density of 8 du/ac, as the historic makeup of the neighborhood's overall density came well before a development code.

The former laundromat, which we seek to convert into a single-family home, was built in 1904. The single-family residences sharing the lot were constructed in 1917. Owing to this historical era, predating the common use of motorized vehicles, homes were built near each other. The community was dimensioned at "walking scale", or, at best, horse and carriage scale.

As time progressed, and electric washers and dryers were more easily afforded by homeowners in the area, fewer patrons visited the laundromat. Even small ranch and bungalow homes have sufficient space for stackable washer and dryer units. The laundromat was no longer profitable, and became available for sale.

Compensating Benefit: As the R-4 designation allows, under its uses, a single-family detached dwelling is a permitted use and the designation of this zoning is primarily a residential category.

Its previous use as a commercial laundromat does not conform to the current zoning on this site. The home would seem to be a preferred use of the building, complimenting the neighborhood of like-vintage, small residences. There will be a diminished amount of both, noise and light to the neighborhood, following conversion from a commercial use to residential. Although a small step, the addition of an affordable home within the City seems a goal with great appeal.

The interior of the building will be converted into a more traditional residential layout. The exterior of the building with its historic façade will remain as it is except for painting it grey rather than the existing white color. Exterior enhancement at ground level will be the provision of additional landscaping around the frontages of Wahsatch Avenue and East St. Vrain Street to comply with current City landscaping standards. Large shade trees at the southeast of the site will be preserved.

With the conversion of the site from commercial to residential, park and school fees will be required at the time of building permit. This provides a contribution to open space and educational needs, not contributed under the previous commercial designation.

Recommendation: The applicant recommends the conversion of the former laundromat into a single-family residence. We believe that this is consistent with the surrounding residential neighborhood use. While the R-4 zoning maximum is exceeded, the benefits of having an occupied building providing much needed housing in the area would seem to provide an acceptable request for a development standards adjustment.

Regarding the four approval criteria:

1. The alternative design achieves the intent of the subject standard to the same or better degree than the standard for which a waiver is requested; Per the zoning code, the R-4 zone district accommodates attached and detached single-family, two-family, and small multi-family dwelling structures. Land uses are primarily residential as indicated in Table 7.3.2-A of the UDC Base and NNA-O District Use Table. Development is intended to be adjacent to collector or arterial streets, in transition areas at the edges of low-density neighborhoods, and in areas adjacent to R-Flex, Mixed-Use, or PDZ districts where similar densities or intensities of development are permitted. The addition of a single-family home meets the subject standard of approximate density, adhering to the R-4 zoning designation for residential use.
2. When considered together with compensating benefits, the alternative design advances the goals and policies of this UDC to the same or better degree as the standard for which a waiver is requested; The alternative design meets the goals and policies of the UDC,

with a slight increase in residential density with the addition of a single-family residence.

3. The alternative design imposes no greater impacts on adjacent properties than would occur through compliance with the specific requirements of this UDC; The single-family residence proposed is more compliant than the previous use of the property, a commercial laundromat. A laundromat is not allowable within R-4 zoning. The neighborhood, including adjacent structures, is strictly a residential use area.

4. The alternative design provides compensating benefits that are reasonably related to the proposed waiver and would not otherwise be required by this UDC or State law. Compensating benefits may include one or a combination of the following:

a. Benefits to the general public:

- 1) Parks, trails, or other similar public or cultural facilities; Directly of benefit is the reduction of motor vehicle traffic in the area. Whereas the original use of a laundromat accounted for higher car and truck use over a large span of hours, with multiple parties using the facilities, a single family will cause a reduction in the amount of traffic in this residential neighborhood. This will lead to a reduction in noise, vehicle emissions and light pollution (both from vehicles and from the façade fronting on Wahsatch Avenue.)
- 2) Public landscape buffers or beautification areas; There will be landscaping added to the site. In addition to the preservation of existing trees on-site. The two large trees are a 20" diameter at breast height (dbh) ash tree and a 22" dbh ash tree. They are located on the south side of the property along East St. Vrain Street. Three (3) English Oaks will be planted along East St. Vrain Street between the curb and sidewalk. Additionally, four (4) English Oaks are to be planted on the property's east side, adjacent to Wahsatch Avenue.
- 3) Public art; With the focus of the property redesign on the existing residential building's interior, no public artwork is proposed.
- 4) Permanent conservation of natural areas or lands; As mentioned, two large, existing shade trees (ash trees) will be preserved, maintaining a shaded sidewalk and thoroughfare along East St. Vrain Street.
- 5) Increased building setbacks; As the building is historic, and no changes will be made materially to its exterior, and no demolition is intended. The building dates back to 1917, and during this early era, setbacks were in much closer proximity to the street. Reference is made to this design motif in *Design Guidelines for the North Weber/Wahsatch Historic District* prepared for the City of Colorado Springs. In section 2.5 under History, Post-Victorian Historic Construction. It's stated that with the advent of the automobile and increased outdoor entertaining, emphasis shifted from the "grand entrance" front yard of the Victorian era to the back yard of the twentieth century home. Our property reflects the design of the surrounding residences' smaller front

yards and setbacks, though its original use was for commercial purposes. Additionally, the document states that the setback alignments, roofline characteristics and porch alignments should be maintained.

- 6) Decreased building height; As mentioned, no structural, exterior work will be made to this historic building, thus its original height will be maintained.
- 7) Other benefits as agreed upon by the Planning Commission. A primary benefit is the addition of much needed housing in this area. The laundromat had seen diminished activity prior to its closure, likely due to more of the surrounding residences purchasing their own washers and dryers. It seemed a prudent use in this residential area was the addition of a single household.

b. Benefits the users, customers, or residents of the proposed development:

- 1) Green space or public open space, trails, or other similar recreational amenities; The new residence will be in a bicycle and pedestrian friendly neighborhood, with tree-lined streets and easy access to restaurants and other retail establishments. The residence will be an eight minute walk from Acacia Park downtown, a twenty minute walk from Boulder Park and ten minutes from Monument Valley Park. Each provides its own experience in terms of size and activities offered.
- 2) Upgrades in architectural design; All upgrades to the building are in the interior and will have no impact on the building's historic façade. The renovation in the interior space transforms it from a retail laundromat into a single family home, with appliances and spaces more suited to that use.
- 3) Increased landscaping; Additional landscaping has been added around the building's perimeter. Seven English Oaks are proposed to be planted in the setbacks. Four (4) will be planted adjacent to Wahsatch Avenue and three (3) will be planted along East St. Vrain Street. Additionally, two large ash trees of twenty inches d.b.h. or greater are being preserved along East St. Vrain Street.
- 4) Increased buffering; Beyond the required landscape planting along the perimeter, no work or renovation is added externally around the building. A photometric plan has been submitted to the City to ensure that there is no increase in light directed off-site.
- 5) Permanent conservation of natural areas or lands; In this urban environment, there are no natural areas or lands on-site.
- 6) Secure bicycle facilities, where appropriate; The owner's bicycles will be kept inside their residence, an exterior rack is unnecessary.
- 7) Other benefits as agreed upon by the Planning Commission or City Council.

The property at 501 North Wahsatch Avenue falls within the North Weber/Wahsatch Historic District. In November of 1988, the Colorado Springs City Council adopted an ordinance establishing a historic preservation program comprised of three elements: a local historic buildings designation system; a historic preservation overlay zone; and a Historic Preservation

Board. The design guidelines are policy statements which are intended to inform property owners and public entities of the historic characteristics suitable for preservation and describes the methods appropriate to preserve them. The guidelines are intended to guide physical changes within the historic district so that these changes are visually compatible with the significant features of surrounding buildings and the entire historic neighborhood.

Within the Inventory and Analysis section of the guidelines, our property falls within the residential category of the district character classification. Vehicle parking is designated within the property and assigned to residents, thus reducing on-street parking. During high demand times, the previous property use, as a laundromat, required on-street parking to accommodate patrons. Pedestrian movement along the property is provided by an existing sidewalk. The gap in street trees mentioned in the document will be addressed by our landscape site plan which adds seven trees around the property.

Other than painting the façade, no alterations are made to the building. In accordance with the *Design Guidelines for the North Weber/Wahsatch Historic District* prepared for the City of Colorado Springs, 4.3.d. *Corner Properties*, it's recognized that the four structures on the intersection corner become very important properties in defining the character of the block and establishing an image of the entire district. Additionally, residents and people who frequently pass through the district, often use these corner buildings as navigational aids when driving and when describing the location to others. Consistent with the guidelines, the structure does not exceed 2 ½ to 3 stories, thus not obstructing existing view corridors. In keeping with the architectural guidelines, both sides will be maintained, unaltered, in their existing form. Per 4.4.k, the color of the façade is modest, with a limited palette and the contrasting color accentuates the architectural details of the building.