

Staff Report

**REQUEST TO INITIATE A ZONING TEXT AMENDMENT TO ALLOW MIXED USE
RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE HUB ACTIVITY AREA OF THE IOWA
STATE RESEARCH PARK.**

February 27, 2024

BACKGROUND:

The Iowa State University Research Park (ISURP) sent a letter to Council requesting that the residential use of household living for apartments be added to the types of allowed uses within the Research Park (RI) Innovation District Zoning District. **The intent is to facilitate mixed use development of housing above commercial within the current Hub area along Collaboration Way. This request is separate from the Ames Plan 2040 Land Use Amendment request for stand-alone residential for properties located at 3200 and 3300 University Boulevard. City Council, at its February 13 meeting, referred this item to a future agenda for discussion.**

The current zoning for the Research Park is the industrial base zone of RI, which does not allow for residential uses of apartments for household living. The RI zoning district was established in 2015 to support expansion of the Research Park. It was distinguished from typical industrial zoning districts by focusing on R&D, Office, and supportive commercial uses that are supported with design elements creating a people centered collaborative environment, accentuated by a Hub Area and the central natural area of the Tedesco Environmental Learning Corridor. The Master Plan for the area was prepared by and proposed by ISURP and adopted with the RI rezoning (see attached).

In addition to approving a Master Plan and new zoning for the Third Phase of the Research Park, the City partnered in the construction of infrastructure to serve the southern expansion. Notably, part of the funding for this area included use of state RISE Grant funds that are exclusively intended for support of industrial uses. Staff has had conversations with Iowa DOT staff about adding residential to the area and how it complies with the RISE Grant Agreement for monitoring compliance. **On February 13, City Council approved a revised compliance agreement with DOT that focuses on job creation, not the land use mix of the area. This means residential uses are no longer an issue related to the RISE Grant.**

The stated purposes of the Research Park Innovation Zoning District are:

- a) Allow for mixing of use and interaction of people to foster a collaborative environment
- b) Create a node of activity around the Hub of the district
- c) Design development to promote the new innovation district by integrating multi-modal transportation facilities, intensification of land use, and a wide range of office and research uses
- d) Promote a high level of architectural and site design features that signify the commitment to innovation and investment through architecture with visual interest and unique identity, site design incorporating stewardship of natural resources, district layout and development supporting the pedestrian environment, and green building techniques demonstrating the commitment to sustainability.

What is unique to the RI base zone is the use of a Master Plan. The primary purpose of the Master Plan is to identify a Hub Activity Area with modified regulations and uses, establish open space areas, and identify the industrial employment areas. The Hub Area has unique uses allowances and additional design requirements compared to remainder of the ISURP. Adding residential mixed use will need to be consistent with the intent and purpose of the RI zoning district.

When the City established zoning in 2015, residential was left out of the use table to see how development occurred in the area and in part due to City's use of Tax Increment Financing and RISE Grant limitations. Additionally, Ames Plan 2040 indicates that allowing residential within Employment areas is generally not compatible for both the residents and the industrial business operations.

OPTIONS:

The Research Park staff believes a live, work, play environment within the Hub Area supports their interests at this time. They maintain that building more commercial with mixed use above is beneficial to the purpose of the District. The Research Park staff further believes that in this case having residential can be compatible because as the property owner/developer, they can address the issue through their future marketing and siting of industrial businesses in the area. While this may be true, City staff believes the downside to allowing residential within the Research Park and within the core area may be a more limited range of potential industrial users for the area because they would not want to be abutting residential uses that could affect their business operations. The developer believes they can still deliver commercial space in the Hub as originally intended along with adding housing, so that there is no loss of commercial opportunities.

Option 1-Initiate a Text Amendment for the Hub Area Only

This option allows the ISURP to proceed with applying for a zoning text amendment to allow for mixed use development within the RI zoning district for the Hub Area only. As a narrowly defined text amendment, this project would be treated as a development project and not require work plan prioritization. Staff would review the design objectives for the Hub as currently written with ISURP's mixed use development concepts to ensure the commercial use is appropriately sized and located on the parcels. The details of design and requirements for adding housing to RI would be incorporated into the review of the zoning text amendment. Approval of a mixed-use development would likely require a Major Site Development Plan rather than an administrative staff approval of a Minor Site Development Plan.

Option 2-Decline the Request

City Council would decline the request if they had concerns about land use compatibility for this area or concerns about use of industrial/commercial land for residential uses.

STAFF COMMENTS:

Staff believes that at this time giving consideration for mixed-use (apartments above commercial uses on the first floor) in the Hub Area has merit for consideration as defined within Option 1. If the City Council chooses to initiate this text amendment, Staff will need to discuss in more detail issues regarding residential development and design with the applicant.

ATTACHMENT(S):

ISURP Site and Master Plan.pdf