

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and City Council

FROM: James P. McKnight, Planning Consultant

SUBJECT: Staff Comments for Palm Bay Suites and Residences Change of Land Use/Zoning (CP23-00020)

DATE: April 24, 2024

During the March 6, 2024 Planning & Zoning Board Meeting, Staff comments were offered in regard to the Factors of Analysis that had been submitted as required by the City of Palm Bay. While most of the comments from City Staff were positive, there were some positions taken by the city that require further clarification. Each will be addressed in the balance of the submittal. They are as follows:

- Item D discusses whether the proposed amendment will have a favorable or adverse effect on the ability of people to find adequate housing reasonably accessible to their places of employment. While the Staff Report focused on the 2045 Carrying Capacity Analysis, it failed to really address the question at hand. The Carrying, or Holding Capacity, is an analysis and not an objective, policy or goal of the Comprehensive Plan. This analysis fails to address land use adjustments that occur over time, and more importantly to actually answer the question that has been answered by the Applicant. This location does promote adequate housing accessible to an area that is an employment center for the City, with significant employers such as L3Harris and Renesas.
- It should also be noted that the Neighborhood Center designation is established for Mixed Use, and in this case a Moderate Density Residential area that actually promotes housing policies of the City. This proposal does actually further the goal of the Housing Element to “expand the City’s supply of housing units”. It does not matter how many vacant acres of residential future land use exist if they are not being developed to meet the need.
- Item E discusses whether the proposed amendment will promote or adversely impact the public health, safety, welfare, or aesthetics of the region or the city. These parcels of land have been neglected for many years as it has been a location for homeless camps, drug deals, and other illegal activities that even led to fires on the property. The wetlands were also intruded on by activities of vehicles entering them. Palm Bay Development Group, upon acquisition, worked with the City authorities and the adjacent neighborhood to remove these illegal activities. As to providing “standard neighborhood commercial”, it should be noted that the restaurant and conference center will provide access to the neighborhood as well as the new residents to the area, and the business community in

the region. Therefore, the uses proposed under the Neighborhood Center Future Land Use designation do serve the community nearby and within the property to be developed.

- Item F addresses whether the requested amendment is consistent with all elements of the Comprehensive Plan and established levels of service. While this will certainly promote policies of the Housing Element and create less traffic than commercial, it provides a significant benefit by adding open space through protection of wetlands. Also, if developed entirely as commercial, it would be fragmented and would jeopardize the wetlands while the residential is designed to enhance the wetlands on the property and create a walkable community. Only on the commercial parcel is there an infringement into the wetlands in order to meet the parking requirements for the Hotel, Conference Center, Restaurant and Lounge. These uses will benefit the region as well as the community in that vicinity.
- The Industry Cluster referred to as the Renesas Business Corridor in the Staff Report was not included on the map in the Economic Development Strategic Plan as it relates to the proposed amendment to the Future Land Use Map. These four parcels adjacent to a significant residential development (Palm Bay Colony Mobile Homes) do not offer “economies of scale” to any commercial or industrial user due to the fragmented development potential, as greater than 25% of the total land area are identified wetlands. The Neighborhood Center FLU and PUD Zoning offer the best transition between existing residential to the west and the industrial and other uses to the south and north.
- Staff comments do not address any of the other elements of the Comprehensive Plan, particularly Housing, Conservation, Transportation, Recreation, Infrastructure, or Private Property Rights. The project as proposed will lower traffic counts (less than commercial), provides recreation and open space, protects wetlands, provides buffering to conflicting uses, and is located where utilities are in place and does not promote sprawl. This Amendment is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan which anticipates appropriate changes from time to time.
- Item G addresses the buffering and Neighborhood Center is actually the ideal transition in an area that has a mix of uses and a parcel already cut out of the total (Dollar General) along Robert J. Conlan Blvd. None of the current uses are high intensity and the proposed use is moderate density consistent with the residential density to the west. In addition, the wetlands provide additional buffers, particularly on the hotel site.
- Item H fails to recognize the uses provided to the neighborhood including a restaurant, lounge, recreation, fitness center, walk paths, and the out parcel existing that provides neighborhood retail. The transitional buffer from “high intensity land use” - but not high intensity actual uses - is created by Robert J. Conlan Blvd. to the east and the buffer to the Renesas property to the south.

- Item I provided no land use inequity comments as to Policy 1.2A (FLUE) and contains no comments relative to vacant commercial or employment services in the City.
- Staff comments noted several key components of the Proposed Land Use for this property as follows:
 - Preservation of Wetlands (Conservation)
 - Improvement of overall aesthetics
 - Housing for underserved populations
 - Pedestrian Friendly (walkability)
 - Proximity to transit
 - Market rate housing with units set aside for first responders
 - Compatibility along a major collector road

These comments offer rationale that this request for Neighborhood Center (NC) land use and PUD Zoning are consistent with the adopted Comprehensive Plan of the City of Palm Bay.

