

Justification for the Zoning Map Amendment and Its Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan

The primary justification for the Zoning Map Amendment is related to the need to provide housing that is affordable and close by for the 1,000 + employees working at the recently constructed Sarasota Memorial Hospital-Venice Regional Campus. The campus first opened in 2021, and is already expanding. Sarasota Memorial is the largest employer in Sarasota County and the new hospital boasts over 110 private rooms and with the ongoing construction of 68 more rooms in 2024, will have more than 178 rooms. In addition, the nearby industrial/business parks at Laurel Road and Knights Trail Road have more than 80 commercial establishments with nearly 3,000 employees. PGT Industries, the largest manufacturing employer in Sarasota County, is located within one mile of the site. Just to the south at the I-75 and Jacaranda Boulevard interchange are also thousands of employment opportunities including the latest 120,000 Sq. Ft. Amazon warehouse facility employing hundreds of skilled and unskilled employees. The jobs from Amazon are not only from the warehouse itself but spin off businesses that service the Amazon facility. Another major driver contributing to the need for multifamily housing in the area, is the recent opening of Honore Avenue linking up with Pinebrook Boulevard. This major collector serves to help significantly improve the traffic circulation in the area and will help support the three recently approved hotels in the northwest quadrant of Laurel Road and Honore Avenue.

Another important element to consider is the subject parcel is located approximately 700 feet east of the Joint Planning and Interlocal Service Boundary Agreement (JPA/ILSBA) for Planning Area No. 6. Previously adopted by the City. This agreement specifically called for those properties west of the subject parcel (The Sofia) to be allowed a maximum of 13 dwelling units per acre, consistent with the RMF-3 zoning district, which is what the Applicant is proposing. Based upon all of the new employment growth as mentioned above, there are a number of health-related rehabilitation and doctor facilities within easy walking distance of the subject parcel along Curry Lane where existing sidewalks exist. It only makes logical planning sense to locate housing opportunities close to employment opportunities to facilitate the ability for employees to walk, ride, carpool or vanpool to their places of employment. This serves to avoid hundreds if not thousands of additional vehicle trips that would otherwise serve to congest the nearby roadway network.

With respect to public facilities and services, there is adequate water and sewer available along Curry Lane; the area roadway network is able to accommodate the proposed development; and the site is within walking distance for families with children to walk to the Laurel Middle School.

The Applicant is submitting a Preliminary Site Plan in the concurrent rezoning from RMF-1 to RMF-3 with proffered stipulations designed to achieve compatibility consistent with the surrounding area. The Applicant has held a formal and informal workshop with residents of the Waterford Golf and Country Club and residents seem generally pleased with the extra efforts the Applicant has taken to ensure compatibility through landscape measures and height restrictions.