

# City of Auburn, Maine

*"Maine's City of Opportunity"*

## Office of Planning & Permitting

### Planning Board Report

To: Auburn Planning Board

From: Eric J. Cousens, Director of Planning and Permitting

Re: Zoning map amendment in the Spring Street area to make the Central Business II District Zoning Boundaries consistent with the Traditional Downtown Business (DTB) District boundaries identified in the Future Land Use Map from the Comprehensive Plan Auburn Tomorrow. The zoning change includes the properties located at 178 Court St. (240-264), 184 Court St. (240-265), 62 Spring St. (240-257), 71 Spring St. (240-263), 88 Spring St. (240-258), 95 Spring St. (240-262), 75 Pleasant St. (240-253) and 83 Pleasant St. (240-252).

Date: April 1, 2014

#### I. PROPOSAL

The comprehensive Plan recommends that the Spring Street area zoning be changed from General Business Zoning, a highway and vehicle oriented zoning district, to Central Business II (CBII), a more traditional downtown business district to allow for a development pattern that is consistent with the historic downtown. Currently, the General Business designation requires setbacks of 25 feet at the front and sides of a parcel and 35 feet at the rear of the lot. Residential density is restricted to a very low suburban density, for example, a four unit building would currently require a 16,000 square foot lot. The proposed CBII District would reduce setback requirements, allow for increased residential density and mixed use structures. The current zoning designation is inconsistent with the existing development patterns and the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan.

In the surrounding downtown area a majority of our traditional downtown is located within the CB district. The Central Business district is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan DTB designation and allows for higher density of residential uses, use of shared and public parking for new development and reduced building setbacks. The comprehensive plan recommends that we not only allow buildings to be located close to the street to be consistent with existing development patterns in this area, but suggests that we require it. At this time, staff recommends that we adjust the zoning boundaries to include the Spring Street area which will allow for development to conform to existing development patterns. A more in depth process, with extensive public outreach and participation that considers changing the name and some of the standards of the CB district will follow this summer. This change is a step towards consistency with the plan. Below is the excerpt for the Comprehensive plan describing the Traditional Downtown Business District.

## **Traditional Downtown Business District (DTB)**

**Objective** – Maintain the character and overall development pattern of the historic downtown area while allowing for the creative use, reuse and redevelopment of property within the district (see Figures 2.3 and 2.4).

**Allowed Uses** – The following general types of uses should be allowed within the Traditional Downtown Business District:

- small to moderate size retail uses
- personal and business services
- restaurants and cafes
- office uses including business and professional offices
- hotel, motels, inns, and bed & breakfast establishments
- fully enclosed light manufacturing
- community services and facilities
- recreational facilities
- a wide range of residential uses including housing on the upper floors of mixed-use buildings and senior housing

**Development Standards** – The development standards in the Traditional Downtown Business District should require that alterations to existing buildings and new buildings maintain the established pattern of development, including the placement of the building on the lot. Where there is an established pattern with respect to the front setback of buildings, a new or altered building should be required to conform to the established pattern. Any area between the front of the building and the street should be required to be used for pedestrian purposes, including outdoor spaces; vehicle use should be prohibited. Parking should be required to be located at the side or rear of the building, but the minimum parking requirement should be reduced, and new or redeveloped properties should be allowed to count the use of shared or public parking to meet the standard.

Residential development and redevelopment should be allowed at a maximum density of 18-24 units per acre, with a provision that small units or units for the elderly be treated as a fraction of a unit based on the size of the unit or the number of bedrooms in the unit. The reuse/reconfiguration of the space within existing buildings for residential purposes should be allowed without consideration of the density/lot size requirements, provided that the building will be renovated, be compatible with the neighborhood, and meet the City's requirements for residential units including the provision of appropriate parking and green space. Buildings with both residential and nonresidential uses should be allowed to consider shared parking to meet their parking requirements.

Below is a list of the parcels affected by the proposed change. All of the developed parcels are nonconforming with respect to one or more dimensional standard including minimum lot size, residential density and setback requirements of the General Business zone and would become conforming , or at least more conforming, with the proposed map amendment.

Location	Owner Name	Owner City	State	Land Use
178 COURT ST	FIRST STATES INVESTORS 5200 LL	FORT WORTH	TX	Pers/Prof Service
71 SPRING ST	HERITAGE COURT INC	LEWISTON	ME	Multi-Family (43)
95 SPRING ST	ANALYTICAL SERVICES INC	PORTLAND	ME	Retail Food

184 COURT ST	FIRST STATES INVESTORS 5200 LL	FORT WORTH	TX	Commercial Parking/ATM
75 PLEASANT ST	VERRILL BERYL RAE	AUBURN	ME	Multi-Family (8)
83 PLEASANT ST	83 REALTY LLC	AUBURN	ME	Office
88 SPRING ST	ANALYTICAL SERVICES INC	PORTLAND	ME	Commercial Parking
62 SPRING ST	LYNCH BROTHERS INC	AUBURN	ME	Mixed Use

It should be noted that property and development value in this neighborhood is higher than average for the City and increased development that would be allowed pursuant to the change would help increase that value further. Services can easily be provided efficiently to the urban core of the City and development here should be encouraged as the Comprehensive Plan recommends. Above is a chart showing average existing development value per acre including assessed building value for the affected properties. These are current assessed values and as noted above, the change would allow for more intensive and pedestrian friendly development that would likely increase values over time as we have seen in the existing Central Business District.

Location	Total Value	Total Acres	Avg Value Per Acre
178 COURT ST	952000	0.54	\$ 1,762,963
71 SPRING ST	1962300	0.5	\$ 3,924,600
95 SPRING ST	2996800	3.47	\$ 863,631
184 COURT ST	114900	0.33	\$ 348,182
75 PLEASANT ST	233600	0.15	\$ 1,557,333
83 PLEASANT ST	444300	0.42	\$ 1,057,857
88 SPRING ST	120700	0.41	\$ 294,390
62 SPRING ST	495100	0.81	\$ 611,235

## II. PLANNING FINDINGS / CONSIDERATIONS:

Staff evaluated the proposed rezoning and suggests the following findings:

- A. The City’s Future Land Use Map shows the area as “Traditional Downtown Business District”. The Central Business District II zoning designation is consistent with the future land use map DTB district and existing zoning along Court Street.
- B. The proposed amendment to the zoning map is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

## III. RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Planning Board forward a favorable recommendation to the City Council on the proposed zoning map amendment from General Business Zoning District to Central Business District for properties located at 178 Court St. (240-264), 184 Court St. (240-265), 62 Spring St. (240-257), 71 Spring St. (240-263), 88 Spring St. (240-258), 95 Spring St. (240-262), 75 Pleasant St. (240-253) and 83 Pleasant St. (240-252), based on the above findings.

Eric Cousens  
 Director of Planning and Permitting