

MEMORANDUM

TO: Pullman Planning Commission

FROM: Pete Dickinson, Planning Director
Heidi Sowell, Assistant City Planner

FOR: Meeting of September 28, 2005

SUBJECT: Zone Change Application No. Z-05-2

DATE: September 21, 2005

Staff Report No. 05-21

BACKGROUND DATA

Applicant: Schweitzer Engineering Laboratories, Inc.

Property Location: North terminus of NE Eastgate Boulevard on College Hill
(See Attachment A, Location and Zoning Map).

Property Size: 10.2 acres.

Applicant's Request: Amend the zoning classification of the subject property from I2 Heavy Industrial District and IRP Industrial Research Park to R2 Low Density Multi-Family Residential and revise the Comprehensive Plan Land Use Plan Map from Industrial to Low Density Residential (See Attachment B, Application Z-05-2; and Attachment C, Applicant's Proposed Findings of Fact); the applicant has indicated that it is requesting this action in order to make provisions for single-family dwellings in proximity to an established industrial and commercial district and allow more of a diversity of residential options in this part of the city than is currently available.

Applicable Zoning
District Descriptions:

I2 district: provides for manufacturing uses, warehousing establishments, wholesale businesses, offices, and limited retail and service uses.

IRP district: provides for research and development institutions and light industrial uses in a campus-like setting where outward impacts normally associated with industry are minimized.

R2 district: provides for single-family dwellings, duplexes, manufactured homes, townhouses, and apartments developed to a maximum density of 15 dwelling units per net acre.

Property Features:

Current Land Use: Farmland.

Utilities: Utilities are available through Eastgate Boulevard, and there is a storm drain facility proposed on the property.

Topography: slopes moderately uphill from south to north.

Adjacent Zoning
and Land Use:

North: I2 district; farmland.

South: IRP district; Washington State University Research and Technology Park.

East: R4 district; farmland.

West: I2 district; farmland.

Access:

Eastgate Boulevard; Eastgate Boulevard is classified as a local access street on the Comprehensive Plan Arterial Street Plan Map.

Environmental
Review:

Environmental Checklist submitted 6/27/05 (See Attachment D); Determination of Nonsignificance issued 8/29/05 (See Attachment E).

Hearing
Notification:

Notice of Public Hearing mailed 9/16/05; Notice of Public Hearing published 9/17/05; Notice of Public Hearing posted 9/16/05.

Comments of Affected
Departments/Agencies:

Notification of the applicant's request was distributed to affected governmental entities. These entities, and their response to the notification, are presented below.

- a. **Pullman Public Services Department:** Is in support of the zone change; the zone change to residential would

- benefit protection of the “Magpie Forest”.
- b. **Pullman Fire Department:** Noted safety concerns with locating a residential zone adjacent to a heavy industrial zone because dangerous materials, addressed in the fire code, are located in the industrial zones to keep residential zones safe; stated that tank farms with bulk processing or storage of flammable liquids, gasses and hazardous materials are allowed in industrial zones and in the case of emergencies, evacuation distances can be anywhere from ¼ mile to 1 mile in distance with little time to evacuate.
 - c. **Pullman Police Department:** Stated it had no concerns with the zone change.
 - d. **Pullman Public Works Department:** Noted concern with the loss of industrially zoned area and the tax base that it would be providing; stated that there is a limited amount of industrially zoned property and replacing such an area would be difficult due to the access and utility requirements.
 - e. **Pullman Protective Inspections Division:** *No response.*
 - f. **Pullman School District:** *No response.*

PERTINENT PLANNING PROVISIONS

There are a number of provisions contained within the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code that relate to zone change and Comprehensive Plan map amendment proposals. These provisions, which are available for review at the city’s web site (www.pullman-wa.gov) are referenced below.

Comprehensive Plan Goals LU1, LU3, LU4, LU6, H2, and H3 and their respective policies
Zoning Code Sections 17.01.050, 17.75.010, 17.75.040, 17.85.010, 17.85.030, 17.85.040,
17.110.030, 17.110.040, 17.115.020

STAFF ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATION

Planning staff is generally in favor of granting the requested zone change. This proposal, in staff’s view, would promote the public health, safety, and welfare, and would be a benefit to the residents of the city.

The majority of the site is designated with an I2 zone district; there is a small peninsula (approximately 0.6 acres) with an IRP zoning designation located along the southern property line of the proposed site. The current zoning would not allow for residential development. The

applicant is requesting this zone change in order to make provisions for single-family dwellings in proximity to an established industrial and commercial district and allow more of a diversity of residential options in this part of the city than is currently available. The zone change was also requested as the first phase of a greater plan for a mixed-use area (See Attachment F, Concept Master Plan). It should be noted that this is a conceptual plan provided by the applicant and review of this zone change does not dictate any approvals for the concept master plan.

The subject property is located on College Hill just north of the Washington State University (WSU) Research Park and is in close proximity to WSU. Currently, there is a limited amount of R2-zoned land available for development on College Hill. A majority of the zoning districts on College Hill are medium and high density districts that are developed with multi-family housing. Planning staff believes this zone change offers an opportunity for new low density housing on College Hill in the vicinity of the WSU campus and WSU and Port of Whitman County industrial parks.

Several concerns are typically raised with a possible residential development located near industrial zoned districts. Industrial uses are often not compatible with residential uses. In this case, though, staff believes that the topography of the subject property allows for a natural separation from the adjacent industrial zoning districts to the north and south. Any future industrial developments bordering the site would be buffered from the proposed residential zone in accordance with pertinent zoning code provisions. Also, the property to the east is an existing residential zone, so the land use transition there would be smoother. Overall, the subject property appears to be suitable for the residential uses allowed under the proposed zoning district. In addition, the proposal is not expected to have a significant adverse effect on community facilities and services.

The loss of industrially zoned area and the tax base and employment it would be providing is an issue of concern for the city. As suggested by the public works department in the "Comments of Affected Departments/ Agencies" section of this report, there is a limited amount of industrially zoned property in Pullman and replacing such an area would be difficult due to the access and utility requirements. Planning staff shares these concerns. However, in planning staff's view, the apparent demand for a limited amount of low density residential development to complement the nearby business uses outweighs the loss of industrially zoned land in this instance.

The property south of the Port of Whitman County Industrial Park (of which the subject tract is a part) is in a state of transition. In 2001, WSU sold this land to the applicant. The applicant has marketed the property for business development since that time, but no one has purchased the land for that purpose. The applicant now sees a real need to provide housing in close proximity to the industrial park workplaces. From planning staff's perspective, these conditions constitute a change in circumstances that warrant a rezone of the subject property to R2.

In summary, planning staff believes that rezoning the subject property to an R2 zoning designation would be consistent with the pertinent objectives of the Comprehensive Plan and zoning code. In planning staff's view, this Comprehensive Plan map amendment and zone change request should be

approved.

FINDINGS OF FACT AND CONCLUSIONS

Planning staff has prepared Findings of Fact and Conclusions regarding this case. These findings and conclusions are incorporated in draft Resolution No. PC-2005-15 for the Comprehensive Plan map amendment (See Attachment G) and draft Resolution No. PC-2005-16 for the zone change proposal (See Attachment H).

ACTION REQUESTED

- A. Take testimony on the proposed Comprehensive Plan map amendment and proposed zone change request.
- B. Adopt, by motion, Findings of Fact.
- C. Adopt, by motion, Conclusions.
- D. Recommend, by motion, to the City Council that the proposed Comprehensive Plan map amendment be approved, denied, or modified.
- E. Recommend, by motion, to the City Council that the proposed zone change request be approved, denied, or modified.

ATTACHMENTS

- “A” Location and Zoning Map
- “B” Zone Change Application
- “C” Applicant's Proposed Findings of Fact
- “D” Environmental Checklist
- “E” Determination of Nonsignificance
- “F” Concept Master Plan
- “G” Draft Resolution No. PC-2005-15
- “H” Draft Resolution No. PC-2005-16