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Response to Concerns Regarding Rezoning of APN 05803006

The Lodi Community Development Department has received several comments expressing concerns regarding the rezoning/General Plan map amendment of Assessor's Parcel Number (APN) 05803006 on Lower Sacramento Road from Medium Density Residential to High Density Residential. We appreciate the community's engagement and would like to provide clarification on the reasons behind the rezoning, the public process that occurred, and the broader legal and planning framework guiding this action.

The rezoning of APN 05803006 is a necessary and legally required step to comply with State housing law and support the City's adopted General Plan Housing Element. The site was identified in 2023 for rezoning during the extensive outreach and public meetings on the Housing Element. While a prior development application for the site has been withdrawn, the rezoning must still move forward to preserve the City's compliance with State law.

We understand that change can raise concerns, and we are committed to continuing open communication with residents. Future project proposals for this site will still be subject to site-specific review and public input through the City's regular planning processes.

High Density Residential designations are most suitably located along major arterial corridors and adjacent to public amenities such as parks, schools, and transit routes—locations where existing infrastructure and transportation networks can support greater population densities without straining resources.

The site property is located along Lower Sacramento Road, a major north-south arterial that provides convenient access to commercial centers, employment opportunities, and public transportation. The property is also adjacent to DeBenedetti Park, a sizable public open space offering walking trails, sports fields, and family-friendly recreational amenities. This proximity to both a transportation corridor and parkland aligns with best practices in urban planning, which emphasize walkability, reduced vehicle miles traveled (VMT), and equitable access to open space.

For additional information, you can contact the Lodi Planning Division at (209) 333-6711 or PlanningDivision@lodi.gov

Additional Details

1. Housing Element and State-Mandated Rezoning

The rezoning of this parcel is part of the City's legally mandated efforts to comply with California housing law. Specifically, APN 05803006 is one of thirteen sites included in the City of Lodi's Adopted Housing Element Sites Inventory, identified to meet our Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA). Under State law, once a Housing Element is adopted, the City is required to rezone identified sites within a specified timeframe. Failure to do so can result in serious consequences, including:

- Restrictions on issuing demolition and certain development permits
- Requirements for additional rezoning
- Decertification of the Housing Element by the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD)
- Potential enforcement action from the State Attorney General

The Housing Element was adopted by the City Council on March 20, 2024, and certified by HCD on April 11, 2024. Starting in the Spring/Summer of 2023, the public process leading up to adoption included:

- Five public workshops with City Council -- including one on September 12, 2023, and the Planning Commission -- including one on September 13, 2023, both of which specifically presented a list of the thirteen rezone sites, and a visual map of the Housing Element sites
- Newspaper and social media notices and flyers
- A dedicated public outreach website (www.planlodi.com)
- An email list with approximately 300 subscribers
- Outreach events at farmers' markets
- One-on-one interviews
- Multiple public hearings
- Surveys

This comprehensive outreach effort, which far exceeded State requirements, was recognized by the Sacramento Valley Section of the American Planning Association (APA) with an award for excellence in public engagement. The rezoning of this site was discussed publicly during several presentations and meetings, and was clearly listed as a Housing Element rezone site.

2. Previous Project Proposal on the Site

In 2023, a private developer submitted a proposal for a 48-unit market-rate project on the same parcel. The project proposed a density of 28 units per acre, which exceeds the maximum of 20 units per acre allowed in the Medium Density zone, but is within the High Density Residential zoning category (which allows up to 35 units per acre). Because the developer wished to proceed before the City could rezone all Housing Element sites together, they paid the necessary fees for a standalone General Plan Amendment, Zoning Map Amendment, and CEQA review (Mitigated Negative Declaration). The application was reviewed by all relevant departments and was approved by the Planning Commission on January 10, 2024, for the rezoning/General Plan map component only—not the project design itself, which would have required future Site Plan Architectural Committee (SPARC) review.

Due to additional public concerns, the City Council requested the developer hold an informational meeting to provide more clarity to neighbors. However, that meeting was postponed when the developer traveled abroad and later withdrew from the project due to delays. *The project is no longer active.*

3. Consistency with Surrounding Land Use and Planned Developments

While this particular parcel was not part of an existing Planned Development, its designation as High Density Residential is consistent with the adjacent Planned Developments:

- Van Ruiten Ranch to the north includes a designation of 15–35 DU/acre for HDR uses and specifically maps higher densities along Lower Sacramento Road.

- Gateway North, also nearby, designates High Density Residential along Lower Sacramento Road, creating a consistent pattern of higher-intensity housing fronting major corridors.

This approach aligns with sound planning principles that place higher-density housing along higher-traffic corridors and public amenities (e.g., parks), while buffering lower-density neighborhoods.

4. Maintaining a Compliant Sites Inventory ("No Net Loss" Law)

California's "No Net Loss" law requires jurisdictions to maintain enough suitable sites at appropriate densities to meet RHNA goals for all income levels. If a site is rezoned to a lower density or developed at lower-than-planned density, the City must either replace it with a new site or prove its inventory is still adequate. Rezoning the site to High Density is essential to maintaining Lodi's RHNA compliance and avoiding further mandates or penalties.

In sum, the proposed zoning change supports the City's obligation under State housing law while also reinforcing established urban design principles that promote smart, sustainable growth.

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