

Race and Equity Pocket Questions

Title and purpose of this initiative:

Request to Set Legislative Public Hearing Relating to Cafes and Residential Density in Certain Zoning Districts. The purpose of this agenda item is to request the Town Council consider setting a public hearing on revised text amendments to the Land Use Ordinance relating to residential density and restaurant uses.

Department: Planning

What are the racial and equity impacts?

Lack of representation on elected and appointed boards (advisory boards also provide comments for public hearings) can reduce participation, especially by those who do not learn about these types of processes and/or are unable to participate in meetings. Decisions might be made without considering these points of view.

Who is or will experience community burden?

Shift workers and people who have limited time, transportation choices and/or children may have difficulty finding the time to learn about a proposal, attending meetings, understanding how and when to provide input, and to whom. It takes time to learn the development process and to obtain a comfort level to participate. Language may also provide a barrier for some residents.

Who is or will experience community benefit?

The public hearing process requires that these types of legislative decisions occur in a public form and that the community can comment before a decision is made. Beneficiaries include those who are able/available to and do participate in these ways and those who support or see no negative effects from the changes.

What are the root causes of inequity?

Structural racism in government decisions, particularly those relating to land use, as well as residents' personal experiences with government, can further alienate those that may find it difficult to attend meetings—like working individuals and families—and contribute to a reticence by historically marginalized people to speak in a public setting. Disparate access to quality education, which in turn affects economic outcomes, as well as historical barriers to government for community members of color can lead to undue burden.

What might be the unintended consequences of this action or strategy?

Changes to land use regulations can affect land values and quality of life experiences for surrounding property owners and occupants in ways that can be beneficial and, albeit for some, less desirable. The request for this particular text amendment would, if approved, allow for additional residential density in the Office Zoning District and restaurant uses that do not require a commercial kitchen, uses which may provide additional housing opportunities for some residents and additional business opportunities for local entrepreneurs.

The public hearing process is intended to provide a way for developers and community members to learn about a proposal and provide input in a public setting. Even with published notice and social media releases, some people may not learn of a proposed amendment to the Land Use Ordinance in time to provide input and/or feel that they understand the project and/or approval process enough to fully

participate. The Planning Department has completed the analysis for a REAL lens for the amendment process. Once the final departmental review is complete, the staff core team and Racial Equity Commission will review and provide recommendations.

How is your department planning to mitigate any burdens, inequities, and unintended consequences?

Suggestions outlined in the REAL lens assessment involves options for better public engagement moving forward. Of note, this would involve efforts to go beyond what is required by state statute and the Land Use Ordinance