



## PLANNING DIVISION STAFF REPORT

November 19, 2020

PREPARED FOR THE LANDMARKS ORDINANCE REVIEW COMMITTEE

**Legistar File ID #**            [56918](#), Draft Historic Preservation Ordinance, Parking Lot Issues  
Memo #6: Commercial & Mixed-Use Structures

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**Date Prepared:**            November 16, 2020

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### **Background**

At several LORC meetings, members of the public have voiced concern that the draft ordinance was written for residential structures and did not specifically address commercial and mixed use structures. The committee put the discussion of commercial and mixed-use structures on the Parking Lot Issues list to take a deeper look at the situation and consider possible alternatives.

### **Draft Preservation Ordinance**

The proposed draft ordinance includes standards that are intentionally applicable to a wide variety of building types, features, and materials found in our historic districts. When reviewing existing historic district standards, there are sometimes different standards for different Zoning classifications or uses. The Historic Preservation Ordinance does not regulate uses, but addresses new construction and the adaptive reuse of our cultural assets through standards applicable to the building form and exterior design standards. While a study of architectural history shows that there are typical forms for commercial and residential typologies, there is also often overlap between these two categories.

In looking at our current historic districts, there are a mix of building types and forms. For example, Williamson Street has a mix of residential forms and more traditional commercial forms. For some of these structures, the uses have changed over time, but the form the building is what was preserved. One of the informal tests for a preservation professional in evaluating a proposed adaptive reuse of a structure is to decide if the new use would require so many changes that it would damage the historic character of the structure. As a preservation ordinance, our new historic district standards should emphasize the appropriate treatments for our historic resources. While there are currently different standards for different zoning districts in Third Lake Ridge, the standards are not substantively different and yet the different building forms have largely survived. University Heights has the same new construction standards for all zones.

In looking at Illustrated Design Guidelines for historic districts elsewhere, it is helpful to both look at the specific language in those standards and also look at the pictures that illustrate compliance with the standards. Largely the language is consistent across different types of historic districts, but the visual element is what shows how different resources and contexts can be addressed.

### **Staff Recommendation**

Staff believes that the draft ordinance, in concert with the Zoning Ordinance, can effectively guide the appropriate maintenance, repair, alteration, additions to, and new construction of commercial and mixed use buildings. Staff suggest that the Committee look at the draft of the historic district standards and identify specific examples in which the proposed standards might not address adaptive reuse of existing structures for mixed-use or commercial uses or might allow for inappropriate modifications or new construction in our historic districts.