



# COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

CITY COUNCIL of SALT LAKE CITY

**TO:** City Council Members

**FROM:** Nick Tarbet, Policy Analyst

**DATE:** October 6, 2020

**RE: Text Amendment: RMF-30 Low Density  
Multi-Family Residential Zoning District  
PLNPCM2019-00313**

## **PROJECT TIMELINE:**

Briefing: Sept 1, 2020

Set Date: Sept 1, 2020

Public Hearing 1: Oct 6, 2020

Public Hearing 2: Oct 20, 2020

Potential Action: TBD

## **WORK SESSION SUMMARY**

During the September 1 briefing, much of the Council discussion focused on how this petition could lead to needed increase in density and housing, but it could also lead to the demolition of existing housing stock that may be considered more naturally affordable than the units that would replace them.

Many Council Members expressed support for the proposed changes but were hesitant to move forward until the updates to the mitigation of residential housing loss ordinance are finalized. Housing and Neighborhood Development staff participated in the briefing and said it's likely they will need to hire a consultant to get that ordinance completed.

The Council decided to move forward with the public hearing to get feedback from the public on the proposed amendments.

The public hearings were set for October 6 and 20.

***The following information was provided for the September 1 work session. It is provided again for background purposes.***

## **ISSUE AT-A-GLANCE**

The Council will be briefed about a proposal that would make amendments to various sections of the Salt Lake City Code relating to the RMF-30 Low Density Multi-Family Residential Zoning District and corresponding sections of Salt Lake City's Zoning Ordinance.

The Planning Division determined current zoning standards in the RMF-30 do not allow for multi-family developments – three or more units – on an average size lot in the district; therefore, they recommended multiple amendments to allow for multi-family housing that would be compatible in size and scale with existing buildings in areas zoned RMF- 30.

Proposed amendments include:

1. Introducing design standards for all new development
2. Allowing the construction of new building types including sideways row houses, cottage developments, and tiny houses
3. Reducing minimum lot area requirements per unit
4. Removing lot width minimum requirements and adding a lot width maximum
5. Allowing more than one primary structure on a lot
6. Granting a density bonus for the retention of an existing structure
7. Introducing a lot width maximum to discourage land banking

The Planning Commission forwarded a positive recommendation to the Council.

## **SUMMARY OF AMENDMENTS**

A short outline of the proposed changes is provided below. Please see the Transmittal Letter (pages 5-6) and the Planning Commission staff report (pages 6-10) to see greater detail the proposed amendments.

### **1. Design Standards**

- Design standards for new construction are intended to utilize planning and architecture principles to shape and promote a walkable environment in specific zoning districts, foster place making as a community and economic development tool, protect property values and assist in maintaining the established character of the city.

### **2. New Building Forms in RMF-30**

- In addition to single-family homes, duplexes, triplexes, apartment buildings, etc., the City would like to encourage three specific housing types or forms in the RMF-30 zoning district that may allow for slightly higher unit counts, but are also compatible in mass and scale with existing development areas zoned RMF-30.
  - **Cottage Development** - consist of two or more detached dwelling units, where each unit appears to be a small single-family home, arranged around common green or open space.
  - **Side oriented row house** - entries of single-family attached units facing the side of a lot as opposed to the street are difficult to build in any zoning district because code currently does not allow lots without public street frontage.
  - **Tiny houses** - are limited by building code to 400 square feet maximum in area excluding lofted space.
    - A tiny home differs from a detached ADU as they are more limited in size and would not have to be owner occupied or associated with a single-family home.

### **3. Reduced Lot Area Requirements**

- Currently, the RMF- 30 zone permits one multi-family unit per every 3,000 square feet of land (*must have at least 3 units to have a multi-family building or 9,000 square feet of land*).

- Considering about half of existing lots in the RMF-30 zone fall between 3,000 and 6,000 square feet, these lots couldn't accommodate anything more than a single-family home
- The 3,000 square foot requirement for multi-family units (14 units per acre) is proposed to be reduced to 2,000 square feet (21 units per acre)
  - The Central Community Master Plan, where the majority of the RMF-30 properties are located, calls for 10-20 units per acre in areas that have been designated as Low Medium Density Residential, which represents the RMF-30 district.
  - The Sugar House Master Plan designates RMF- 30 areas as Medium Density Residential, which calls for 8-20 units per acre

**4. Removal of Required Lot Width**

- Minimum lot widths would be removed.
- The current ordinance requires lots be a certain width for different land uses.
  - Multi-Family Residential (RMF) zoning districts are required to be at least 80-100 feet wide to accommodate a new multi-family use (3 or more housing units).
  - These requirements do not reflect the established lot width patterns in the RMF-30 district with an average lot width is 58 feet and where more than half of existing lots are less than 50 feet wide.

**5. Allow more Than One Principal Structure on a Lot**

- Allow multiple buildings on a lot to encourage more efficient and creative developments, provided that the additional structures meet all other zoning/city department standards.

**6. Unit Bonus for the Maintenance of Existing Structures**

- A unit bonus is being proposed when housing is retained to encourage maintaining existing housing that may be considered more affordable.
  - One bonus unit will be granted for the retention of a single-family home or duplex
  - Two bonus units will be granted for the retention of multi-family buildings (3 or more units).

**7. Lot Width Maximum**

- A lot width maximum is proposed that would limit the widths of new lots to 110 feet wide or less in order to minimize of collection of multiple parcels or “land banking” to accommodate large developments.

**POLICY QUESTIONS:**

Many of these amendments have been highlighted in previous discussions as ways to removing barriers to adding housing of different types in the City, with an overall policy goal of increasing affordability in the City. However, there are also concerns about removal of existing or historic structures, which may provide naturally affordable housing currently.

1. There have been community concerns expressed that the amendment will incentivize more demolition of existing buildings.
  - Proposed changes #6- Unit Bonus for the Maintenance of Existing Structures and #7-Lot Width Maximum, were designed to address these concerns of demolition of existing housing stock.

***The Council may wish to ask the administration to further expound on these changes and how they may or may not mitigate the potential demolition of existing buildings.***

2. Concerns have been expressed that this text amendment could result in the loss of older housing stock that provides affordable rental housing in the City, and that the City does not know how much housing could be eliminated.

***The Council may wish to ask the administration if more information is needed to determine if this text amendment may result in the loss of many “affordable units.”***

***If the Council is interested in incentivizing the preservation of these older units, the Council may wish to ask if there are other options that may be available to do so.***

***Are there other changes that can/should be considered to help incentivize owners of contributory structures to redevelop/improve existing housing?***

3. Some concerns about loss of affordable units could potentially be addressed by making changes to the mitigation of residential housing loss ordinance (18.97.020). The administration is currently reviewing that ordinance for potential updates.

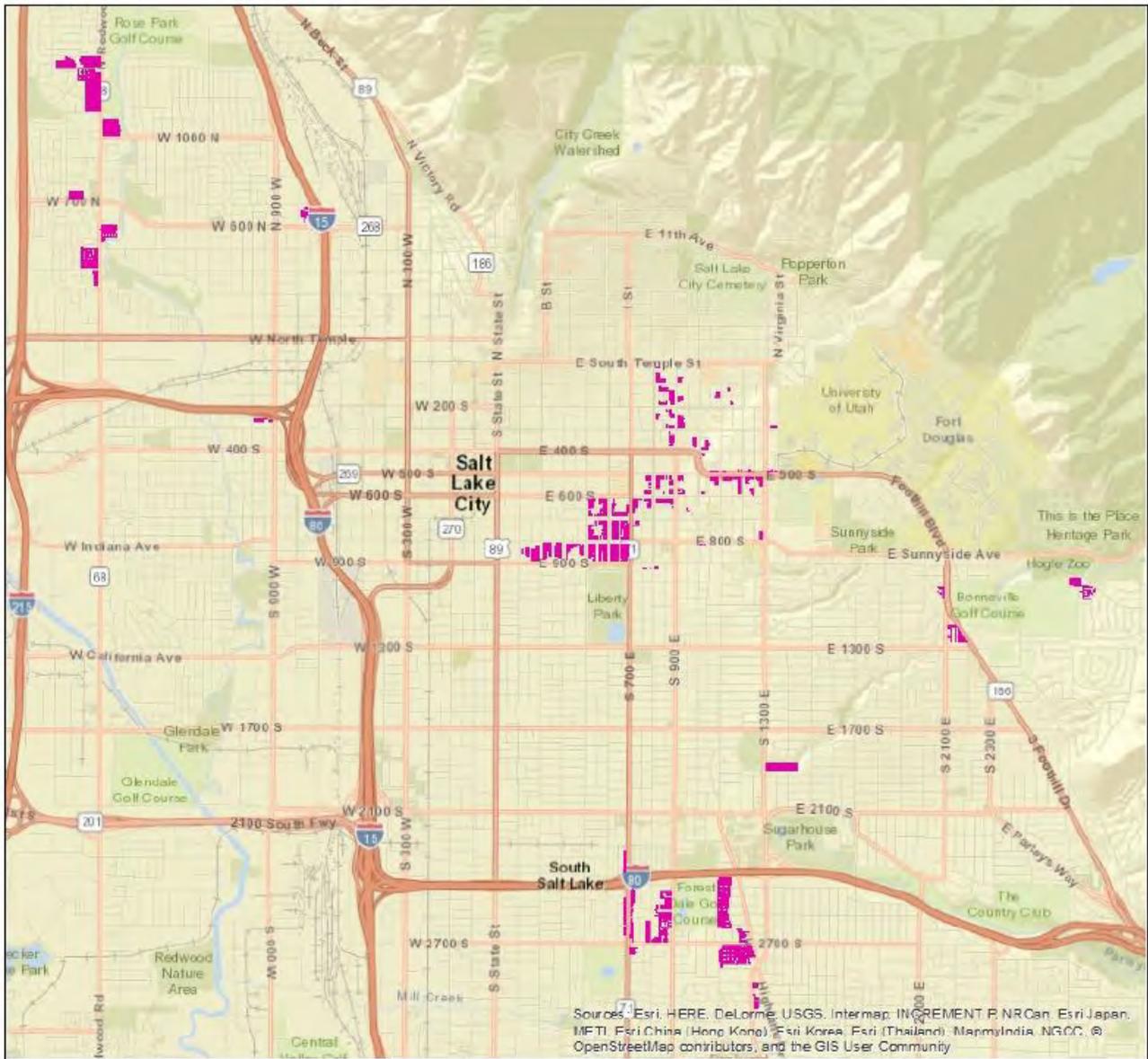
***The Council may wish to ask the administration for an update on the drafting of potential changes to that ordinance.***

4. According to the planning commission staff report, a goal of this text amendment is to “solidify changes to this (RMF 30) multi-family district first and apply similar changes to the rest of the multi-family districts in the near future.”

***The Council may wish to ask the administration which other multi-family zoning districts will be reviewed for potential changes.***

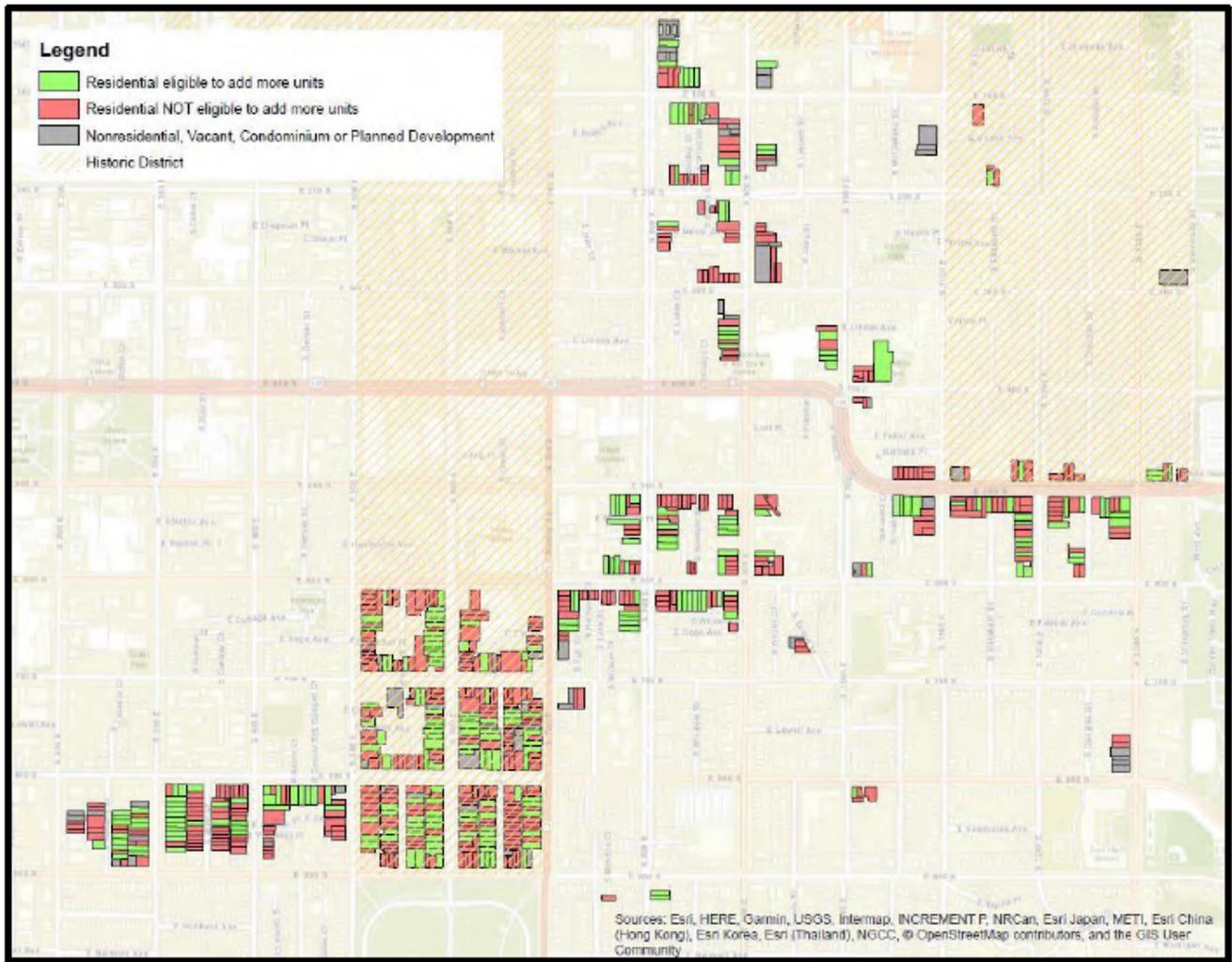
Attachment B of the planning commission staff report includes a variety of maps that help depict which areas of the city will be impacted by the proposed changes.

**RMF-30 Zoning Districts Citywide**  
*Planning Commission Staff Report, Attachment B - Map 1*

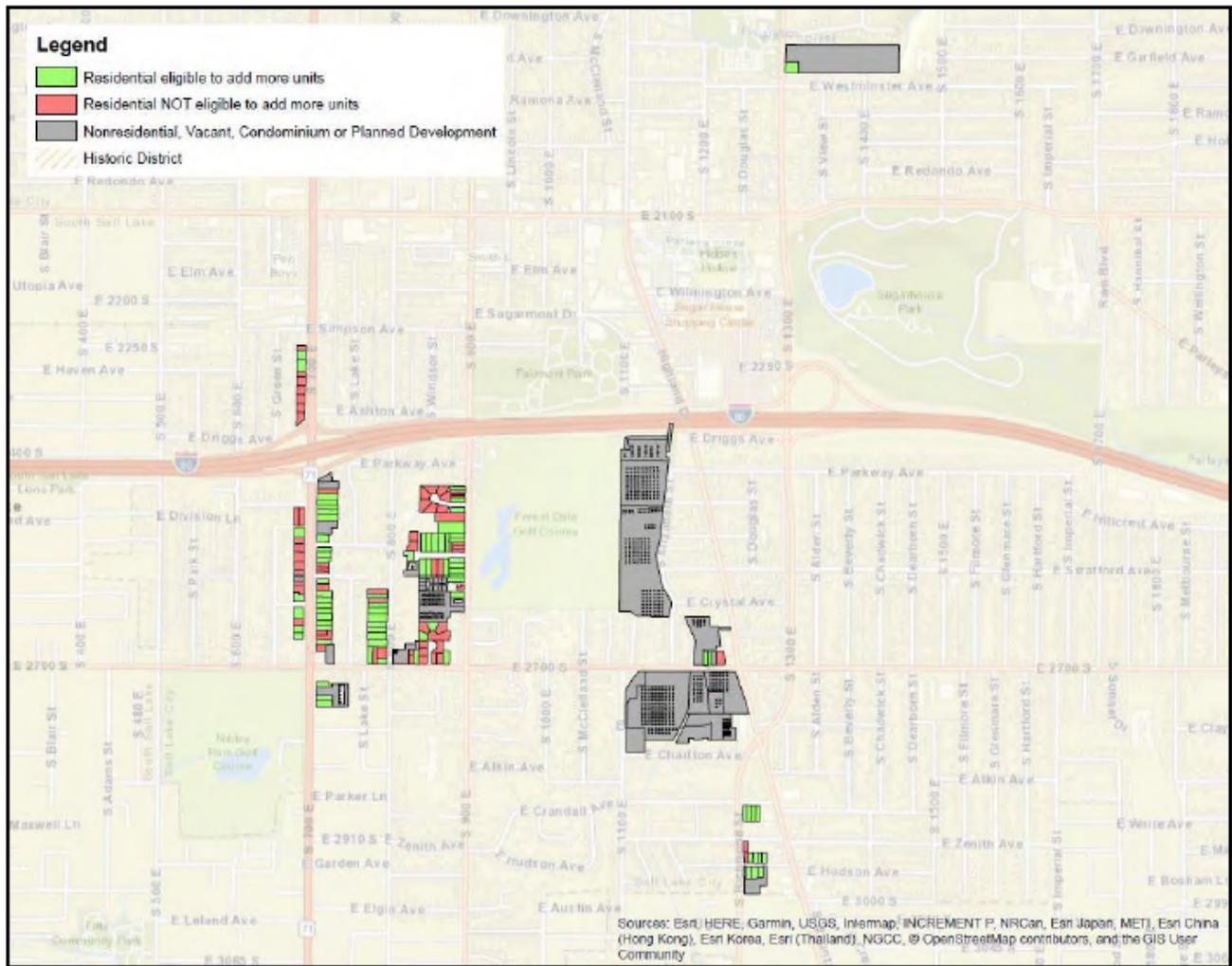


Planning staff did an analysis of the existing RMF-30 zoned priorities to see which of those would be eligible to have more units added if the proposed changes are adopted.

**Central City / East Central Neighborhoods**  
*Planning Commission Staff Report, Attachment B - Map 5*



**Sugar House Neighborhood**  
*Planning Commission Staff Report, Attachment B - Map 5*



## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The purpose of this project is to review the zoning standards within the RMF-30 Low Density Multi-

Family Residential District and propose amendments in an effort to remove zoning barriers to housing development as recommended within Growing SLC: A Five-Year Housing Plan (2018-2022).

For some time, staff recognized many of the zoning standards within the city's four multi-family residential (RMF) zoning districts can be quite restrictive and limit creative housing development, which is why these amendments are being proposed starting the lowest density RMF-30 district. (*Planning Commission Staff Report, Page 2*)

Planning staff noted a goal of this text amendment is to “solidify changes to this multi-family district first and apply similar changes to the rest of the multi-family districts in the near future.” (*Planning Commission Staff Report, Page 2*)

### **Key Issues**

The planning commission staff report outlines the key issues. A brief summary of those issues is provided below. Please see pages 11-15 of the Planning Commission staff report for full analysis.

#### **1. Compliance with Citywide Master Plans**

- **Growing SLC** - Planning staff noted some of the objectives from Growing SLC support the proposed text amendments:
  - 1.1.1 Develop flexible zoning tools and regulations, with a focus along significant transportation routes
  - 1.1.2 Develop in-fill ordinances that promote a diverse housing stock, increase housing options, create redevelopment opportunities, and allow additional units within existing structures, while minimizing neighborhood impacts.
  - 1.2.1 Create an expedited processing system to increase City access for those developers constructing new affordable units.
  - 1.3.1 Lead in the development of new affordable housing types, as well as construction methods that incorporate innovative solutions to issues of form, function, and maintenance.
- **Plan Salt Lake** - Planning staff noted some of the guiding principles from Plan Salt Lake support the proposed text amendments:
  - Guiding Principle 1/Neighborhoods that provide a safe environment, opportunity for social interaction, and services needed for the wellbeing of the community therein.
  - Guiding Principle 2/Growth: Growing responsibly, while providing people with choices about where they live, how they live, and how they get around.
  - Guiding Principle 3/Housing: Access to a wide variety of housing types for all income levels throughout the city, providing the basic human need for safety and responding to changing demographics.
- **Salt Lake City Council's 20 Guiding Principles of Housing Development** - Planning staff noted the following guiding principles support the proposed text amendments:
  - Principal 6 – Create a net increase in affordable housing units while: i. Avoiding displacement of existing affordable housing to the extent possible, and ii. Retaining and expanding the diversity of AMI and innovative housing types.
  - Principal 8 – Create a spectrum of housing options for people of all backgrounds and incomes.
  - Principal 16 – Identify tools to increase and diversify the total housing supply including housing types that the private market does not sufficiently provide such as family housing in the downtown area, innovative housing types, missing middle housing and middle- to low-income apartments.

## 2. Community Concerns

- **Demolition of existing housing**
  - With any proposal that allows more housing density in an area, there tends to be concern that existing historic and/or affordable housing will be demolished to make way for larger more expensive housing developments.
  - A balance needs to be struck between allowing more housing on adequately sized lots and promoting the preservation of existing structures, which is what this proposal aims to achieve.
    - #6- Unit Bonus for the Maintenance of Existing Structures and #7-Lot Width Maximum, were designed to address these concerns of demolition of existing housing stock.
  
- **Affordable Housing Development**
  - By reducing required lot size per unit, units themselves might also be smaller and, in turn, more affordable.
    - The three housing types that are being promoted with this amendment including cottage developments, row houses and tiny houses also tend to have smaller footprints.
  - These amendments are aimed at facilitating new multi-family housing in general. A greater supply of market rate housing may free up the number of affordable or mid-priced units for those who truly qualify for them.
  
- **Preservation of Allen Park**
  - Multiple concerns have been raised regarding the preservation of Allen Park, which is a large 5-acre parcel located across from Westminster College at approximately 1700 South and 1300 East and zoned RMF-30
  - The City recently purchased Allen Park and has indicated the intent is to maintain it as a natural open space. *Please see the City website for more info: [www.slc.gov/parks/allenpark/](http://www.slc.gov/parks/allenpark/)*
  
- **Parking Requirements**
  - Parking will not be updated as a part of this zoning text amendment; however, the parking chapter is being updated at this time per a different text amendment. Staff will work together closely to see how parking can be best accommodated within the city's RMF districts.