



PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION MEMORANDUM

FROM: The Office of the City Manager **DATE:** October 5, 2017

SUBJECT: SUP 2017-07 Public hearing and consideration of a request from JDJR Engineers & Consultants, Inc. for a Special Use Permit for a “Hotel” at 9005 Grand Avenue, being 2.213 acres described as Tract 1H and a portion of Tract 1A, Landon C Walker Survey, Abstract 1652.

SUMMARY:

On behalf of Cromwell Hospitality, JDJR Engineers & Consultants is requesting a Special Use Permit for a hotel on 2.213 acres of property located at 9005 Grand Avenue. The developer proposes to construct a Marriott TownePlace Suites hotel on the property.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

The property under consideration is located between Parker Boulevard and Hawk Avenue, south of the NRH Centre and east of Walker Creek Elementary School. The developer proposes to construct a 112-room four-story hotel on the site, including associated on-street and off-street parking areas and amenities. A preliminary site plan package for the development—subject to final approval by the Development Review Committee and Town Center Design Review Board—is attached, and information about the property and request are described in detail below.

HomeTown Master Plan & Town Center Zoning

PRESENTER: Clayton Comstock, Planning Manager

The property has been zoned “TC” Town Center since the original inception of the HomeTown Master Plan and Town Center zoning district in 1998. The Town Center district is intended to establish development standards to promote a sustainable mixed use neighborhood that provides the opportunity for many uses typically found in a city's town center to develop in a cohesive community. This district is also divided into four subzones that provide for a gradation of development and use intensity. The “Neighborhood Center” and “Neighborhood Core” subzones allow for a true mix of uses, including residential and commercial uses in the same building.

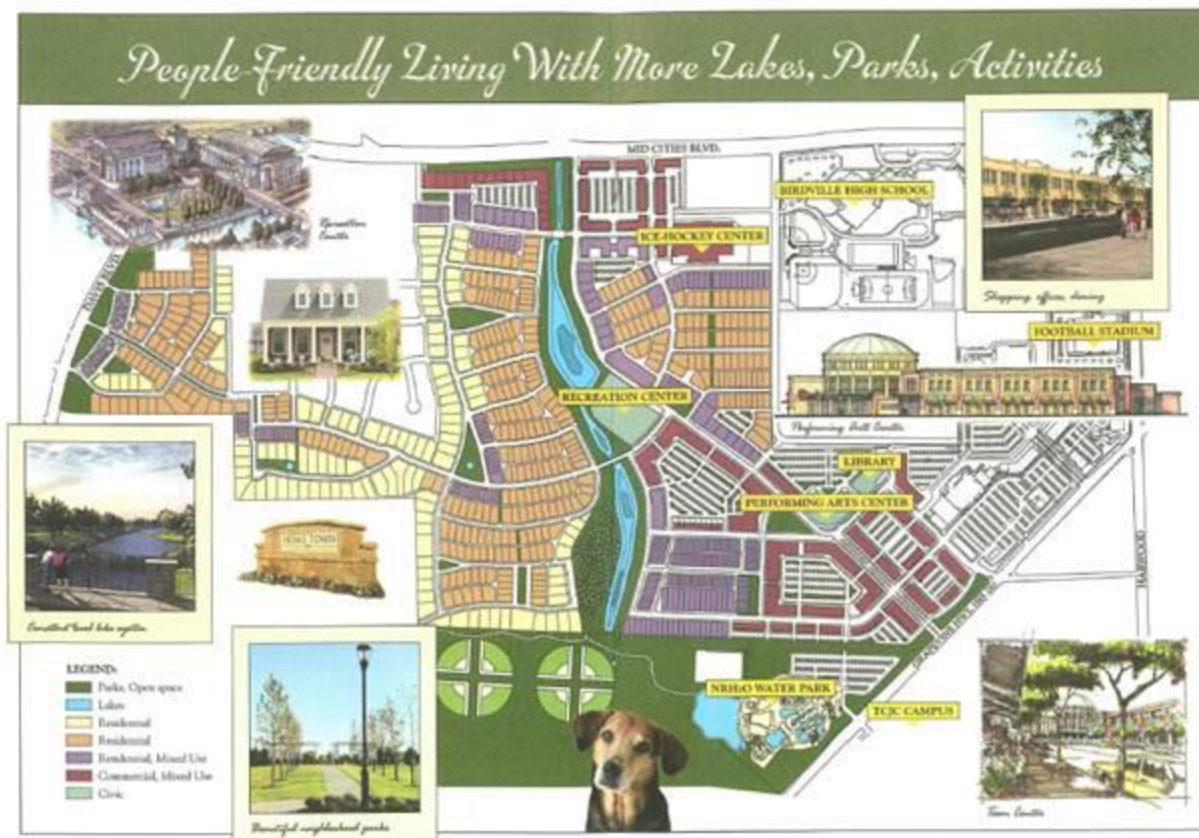
Because the concept is designed to integrate residential with commercial and civic uses, the Town Center district is more complex than the Conventional Suburban Design

(CSD) that other parts of the community follow. Conventional Suburban Design consists of simplified zoning concepts that segregate uses into districts (i.e. “R-2” Residential, “C-1” Commercial, “U” Institutional, etc.). By comparison, Town Center district creates an interrelationship between land uses through specialized development standards that tie the uses together through building and streetscape design.

The Town Center district also supports the following conventions:

- A neighborhood pattern limited in size by the walking distance from its edges to its center.
- A variety of housing, shops, workplaces, and civic buildings located in close proximity.

The original 1998 HomeTown Master Plan is shown below in the sales brochure format that was provided to those who bought homes in the first phases of HomeTown. This original plan consisted of a large amount of mixed-use commercial area on the east side of The Lakes. It also included plans for a Tarrant County College Performing Arts Center on the 4.5 acres between Parker Boulevard and Hawk Avenue southeast of Walker Creek Elementary School.



A few events have occurred over the years that resulted in some changes to the Master Plan:

- 1) About the same time HomeTown was approved, both Southlake Town Square and Northeast Mall were introducing new major retail areas to the Northeast Tarrant County market, thereby diminishing the immediate retail viability for the HomeTown development. The amount of commercial space originally planned soon became unachievable in the marketplace.
- 2) A 2011 lawsuit settlement predetermined the use of this 4.5 acres between Parker Boulevard and Hawk Avenue, as well as other “tracts” of the 93.3 acres east of The Lakes. This particular area—referred to as Tracts 6a & 6b—was limited by the 2011 revision to the Town Center District as follows:
“no residential units allowed, only public and commercial buildings allowed.”

Additionally, the settlement agreement also stated that,

“Tracts 6a & 6b shall not be used for park or open space and are subject to private architectural regulations and approvals. Open space and park uses are not appropriate civic uses for this property except as an accessory use to contiguous civic buildings which do not break the street wall or otherwise restrict urban commercial development.”

- 3) Tarrant County College (TCC) recently decided that if a performing arts center were to be built, it should be located on the College’s Northeast Campus to be closer and more convenient to the students on campus.
- 4) After the decision was made by TCC to move any future performing arts center on-campus, a non-scientific, informal online survey was conducted, requesting input on the use of the 4.5 acres. Below is the one-question survey:

There’s already so much to see and do in the heart of North Richland Hills. You can cool off at NRH2O Family Water Park, enjoy a hockey game at NYTEX Sports Center, discover something new at The Maker Spot in the NRH Library, improve your health and wellness at the NRH Centre, celebrate with friends at the Grand Hall, cheer on your favorite high school team at the Birdville Fine Arts & Athletics Complex, explore trails and greenspaces, appreciate public art and cultural events, frequent restaurants and shops, and much more. A future performing arts center at Tarrant County College Northeast will provide even more artistic, cultural, and educational opportunities. With so much already here, what else could there be?

The City of North Richland Hills wants your ideas regarding the future non-residential development of 4.3 acres across the street from the NRH Centre and NRH Library. What do you think will add to the services and amenities already available? The property, which is shaded in red below, is not being considered for residential, apartment, government or parkland uses.

What else would you like to see in this area?

Only fifty-seven responses were provided during the two-month period between March 24 and May 23, 2016. Even though the question explained that a park or open space use could not be considered, 37% of respondents stated this use would be preferred. Other uses included in the responses were food truck park, restaurant, entertainment, hotel, and school.

The most recent Development Plan for the Town Center zoning district shown below demonstrates a continued placement of public or commercial buildings on the 4.5 acres between Parker Boulevard and Hawk Avenue. This plan is included in homebuilder marketing material available online at [HomeTown NRH](http://HomeTownNRH.com).



Zoning Change for Roof Height & Special Use Permit Required

A zoning change is required from “Town Center Neighborhood Center” to “Town Center Neighborhood Core” for the sole purpose of allowing a four-story building. The



“Neighborhood Center” subzone permits a maximum building height of 3 stories while the “Neighborhood Core” subzone permits a maximum of 4 stories. The proposed hotel building is 4 stories and 55 feet tall at its primary roof plane.

For reference, the height of some of the other buildings in the area—both existing and under construction—are provided below.

	Finished Floor Elevation	Building Height	Relative Total Height
Proposed Hotel	607 feet	55 feet	662 feet
Dolce Phase 3	612 feet	50 feet	662 feet
NRH Library	616 feet	38 feet	654 feet
NRH Centre	621 feet	24 feet	645 feet

In addition, a hotel use requires Special Use Permit approval by City Council in both the “Neighborhood Center” and “Neighborhood Core” subzones.

Hotel Market Research & Marriott’s TownePlace Suites Brand
PRESENTER: Craig Hulse, Director of Economic Development

Prior to applying for a zoning change, the hotel developer conducted its own market analysis, followed by a more extensive analysis as part of the Marriott branding process. The specific brand recommendation (TownePlace Suites) was a result of that market analysis because the target market and expected types of overnight stays for this brand fits the demographics of the area and amenities desired by the community. The developer will provide more detail regarding the market analysis in its presentation during the public hearing.

According to Marriott’s website, the TownePlace Suites by Marriott® brand is designed for business and vacation travelers who want to feel at home and stay productive. To appeal to these guests seeking authenticity, personality, and a seamless experience, the concept infuses local flavor into a quiet neighborhood setting, complete with the added comfort, service, and quality of an all-suite hotel. With over 300 locations, the hotels offer extraordinary value, including modern spacious suites with full kitchens.

Average nightly room rates will exceed \$100 per night with an expected occupancy rate of 85 percent. With regard to reservations at the hotel, 64% will be made through the Marriott Rewards network. Given the price point, this is not a hotel that caters to individuals or families in transition that seek places to stay for long periods of time. Breakfast is provided for guests, but the hotel does not have a bar and does not serve alcohol. The developer is local to the area and is currently finalizing construction on the new Hilton Garden Inn at the Hurst Conference Center.



Business travel and tourism is now one of the largest industries and one of the fastest growing economic sectors, and is seen as a main instrument for stimulating and sustaining a healthy economy. North Richland Hills is currently missing a local quality lodging option, which drives quality overnight market demand (businesses and tourists) to areas outside of the city. The Grand Hall at the NRH Centre hosts hundreds of events each year, including weddings, conferences, and other corporate events that bring out of town visitors who require an overnight stay. Without a quality lodging option, these visitors will choose to stay outside the City. In addition to lost lodging, the NRH Grand Hall is at a disadvantage when competing with other event facilities since it lacks an adjacent, convenient overnight component. NRH₂O Family Water Park hosts about 250,000 visitors each year. NYTEX hosts ice hockey and a number of sports tournaments that draw overnight stays. The Birdville Fine Arts and Athletic Center hosts large scale marching band competitions and other sporting events, and the businesses in the area including Health Markets, host business related travelers. Below is a listing of the economic impact of these facilities:

Facility	Annual Attendance Figures
NRH Centre	800,000 visits
NRH Grand Hall	25,000 attendees, 150 events
NYTEX Sports Centre	300,000 attendees
NRH Library	234,000 visits
NRH ₂ O Family Water Park	245,000 visits

The proposed hotel location is intended to enhance and sustain the experiences of these quality community amenities. A hotel at this location would also support and enhance area businesses creating greater marketability of existing retail and restaurant uses, and stimulating the location of additional business into the commercial centers in the Town Center district.

Building and Site Details

PRESENTER: Clayton Husband, Principal Planner

A complete site plan package for the proposed hotel is attached for reference, including a site plan, landscape plan, exterior building elevations and photometric (outdoor lighting) plan. The Development Review Committee has provided an initial set of review comments to the developer to revise specific elements of the plans in order to meet various fire, engineering, building, and zoning codes. The requested revisions, however, are not substantial enough to significantly change the placement of buildings or pavement, or alter the architectural theme of the building. Prior to applying for a building permit, the full site plan and architecture package would need to be approved by the Development Review Committee, the Town Center Architect, and the Town Center Design Review Board.

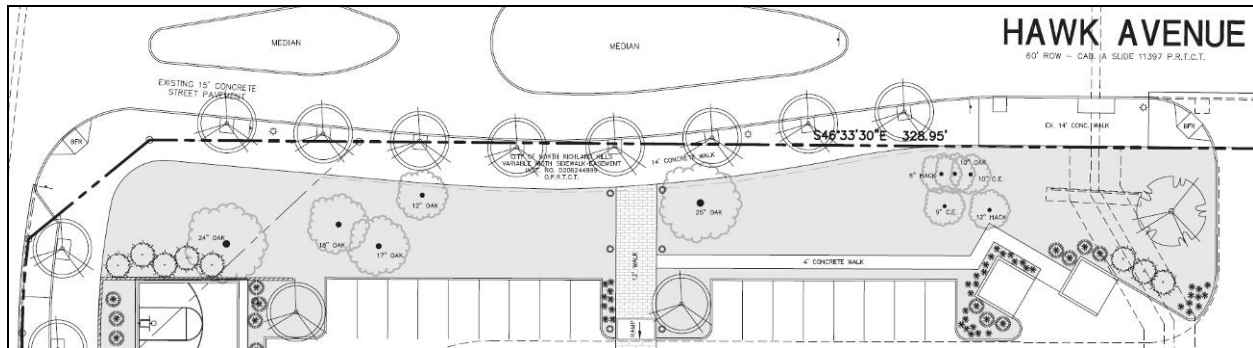
The proposed hotel is 73,382 square feet in size and includes 112 rooms. The building is four stories in height, with a primary roof height of 55 feet, projecting to a height of 66 feet at the building entries. Room windows face only Parker Boulevard and Hawk Avenue. Windows are not provided on the endcaps of the building that face Walker Creek Elementary School and Stormy Plaza. Consistent with Town Center district standards, the building would be sited within 10.5 feet of the Parker Boulevard sidewalk and 14 feet of the sidewalk on the west.



Proposed Parker Boulevard Building Elevation (Back of Building)

The proposed 2.2-acre site sits on the western half of the 4.5-acre parcel located between Parker Boulevard and Hawk Avenue for close proximity to the NRH Grand Hall. The south, west, and north sides of the 2.2-acre site would be improved with 14-foot wide sidewalks, street tree wells, and decorative street lights consistent with the Town Center district along Hawk Avenue, Parker Boulevard, and the unnamed street adjacent to the school. Twenty-one head-in public parking spaces would be provided along Parker Boulevard and ten parallel on-street public parking spaces would be provided along the unnamed street. To remain consistent with the rest of Hawk Avenue and to preserve large trees in that area, on-street parking is not proposed along Hawk Avenue. Eighty-five (85) spaces would be provided in an off-street parking lot, with the primary driveway access from Hawk Avenue aligned with the NRH Library parking lot. While the zoning code requires a minimum of 112 parking spaces for this development (1 space per hotel room), the applicant is proposing 116 parking spaces in total.

As mentioned, the applicant intends to preserve 10 existing large trees along Hawk Avenue within a preserved open space setback. These include five mature post oaks ranging in size from 12 to 25 caliper inches, and a cluster of five mature cedar elms and hackberry trees. A large internal parking lot landscape island is also intended to preserve a 36-inch cedar elm.



Area of Tree Preservation along Hawk Avenue

To facilitate a convenient and safe pedestrian connection from the hotel to the NRH Centre Grand Hall, a 12-foot wide sidewalk, enhanced with pavers and pedestrian lighting, would connect the front door of the hotel to Hawk Avenue. Mid-block crosswalk enhancements such as signage, striping, and ramps, are also planned to the existing median opening in Hawk Avenue to make it a pedestrian-only opening. This would provide a direct route to the NRH Centre.

The hotel would feature a patio area, pool with hot tub, and a sports court along the unnamed street frontage. Retaining walls, screening walls, and intense landscaping will help screen these uses from the street, and access to these hotel amenities would be by room keycard only. Other public infrastructure improvements, such as storm water and utilities, would also be made to the site to ready it for development. Constructing these improvements at that time would also lower the cost of developing the remaining two acres closer to Grand Avenue. An existing dead-end overhead utility pole entering the site from Hawk Avenue would also be removed.

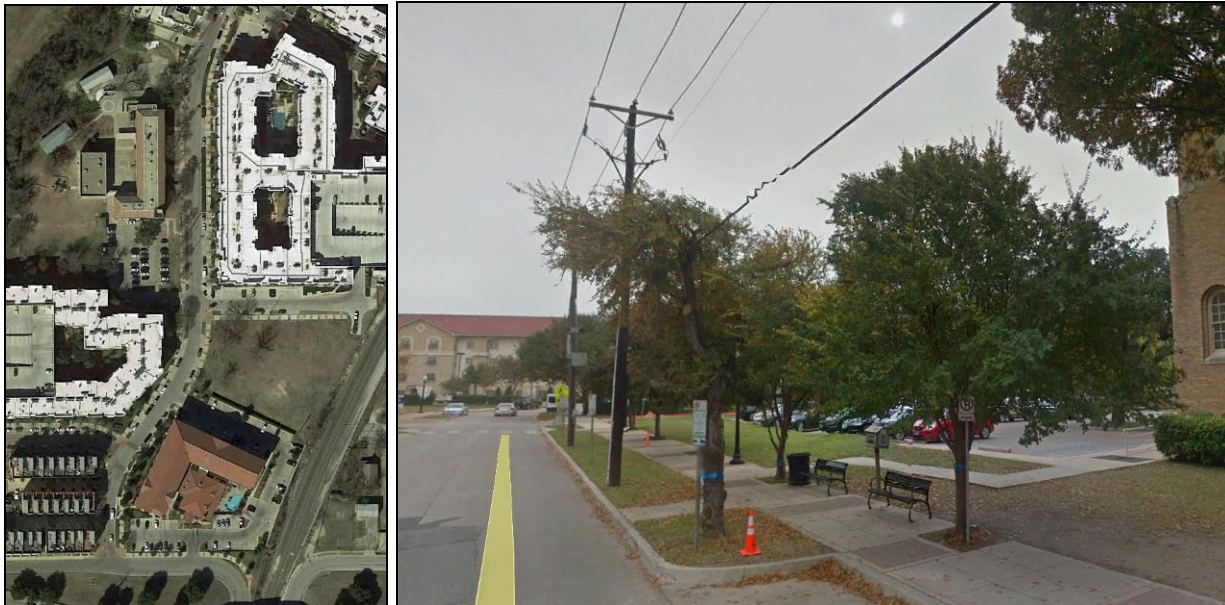
Neighborhood, school, and hotel adjacency examples
PRESENTER: Clayton Husband, Principal Planner

Historically, hotels have been located along major thoroughfares, as visibility was important in attracting guests. Because of new marketing strategies such as booking websites and reward membership programs, visibility along major thoroughfares is no longer a necessity to many major hotel brands. This allows them to seek sites in a quieter neighborhood setting for the enjoyment of their guests and convenience to the community. This approach can result in selected sites being near or adjacent to schools.

As the Development Review Committee reviewed this case, one local example was evaluated. While it is within close proximity to a major thoroughfare, Marriott's 4-story, 140-room TownePlace Suites hotel, located at 805 E. Belknap Street in Fort Worth, is located in a setting similar to the densities and neighborhood form of the Town Center district. Multi-family and townhome residential coexist with the hotel. Charles Nash Elementary School is also located within an equivalent proximity of the hotel as Walker Creek Elementary is to the proposed TownePlace Suites. Charles Nash Elementary is

200 feet from property line to property line, 400 feet from building to building, and 600 feet from door to door (walking distance) to the hotel. The school is an older school that, as late as 2005, had very little development around it. Development of the multifamily and townhomes have quickly integrated the school into a more cohesive neighborhood environment with a street network similar to the Town Center district. The hotel opened in 2010.

City staff spoke with tenured staff at both the hotel and elementary school in Fort Worth. No issues have occurred in the seven years of operation of the hotel. They reported that a positive relationship exists where the two sites have a reciprocal parking arrangement. The concerns expressed by school staff were more about the added traffic from the residential neighborhood growing around them and less about the hotel.



Example proximity of a school to TownePlace Suites. Left: aerial view of the neighborhood. Right: street view showing school (right foreground) and hotel (left background). This distance is equivalent to the proposed NRH hotel.

Understanding the public input received thus far is primarily related to school adjacency, staff is working to prepare other examples for the public hearing.

Traffic Analysis

PRESENTER: Caroline Waggoner, City Engineer

The site has driveway access to both Hawk Avenue and Parker Boulevard, with the hotel being addressed on and facing Hawk Avenue. Trips to the hotel would likely utilize Hawk Avenue from Mid-Cities Boulevard or Parker Boulevard from Boulevard 26.

The issues expressed with the street network in the area today revolve around the drop-off and pick-up times for Walker Creek Elementary School. For a period of 20-30



minutes in the morning and afternoon, Bridge Street and Hawk Avenue north and west of this site experience higher volumes of vehicles and pedestrians. This is typical of elementary schools in our region, and generally speaking is a result of school parents entering from outside the neighborhood mixing with typical neighborhood morning traffic. While the peak morning traffic for a hotel occurs near the same time as school peak traffic, hotel traffic would likely be kept to Hawk Avenue and Parker Boulevard further east of the school and not interfere with the primary drop off / pick up routes at the school.

A full traffic study was performed when the Town Center district was originally created. That study included over 300,000 square feet of new commercial uses along Parker Boulevard, Walker Boulevard and Grand Avenue. Far less commercial has developed to date, and it is unlikely to reach the traffic projections originally forecasted. As such, the street network as designed can sustain the traffic generated by this proposal.

It is important to note that a hotel use generates less daily and peak hour traffic than other non-residential uses such as retail, restaurant, entertainment, professional and medical office, etc. A more detailed analysis, including trip generation comparisons to other possible uses on this property, will be presented during the public hearing.

Public Input

Following posting of the public hearing signs on the subject property, the Planning & Zoning Department has received a number of inquiries and correspondence regarding the proposal. Primary concerns expressed thus far include:

- Increased traffic in the area
- Adjacency of a hotel to a school
- Desire for the property to remain undisturbed or developed as a park
- Suggestions to relocate the proposed hotel elsewhere

All correspondence received to date can be seen on the attachment "Public Input."

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: This area is designated on the Comprehensive Land Use Plan as "Town Center." This designation relates to the Town Center zoning district, which establishes development standards to promote a sustainable, high quality, mixed-use development. Each subzone provides a gradient of development and use intensity. The components of each subzone – buildings, streets, and public spaces – are scaled to create and sustain an integrated living environment.

CURRENT ZONING: The property is currently zoned "Neighborhood Center" within the TC Town Center district. Commercial uses allowed by right under the current zoning include the following: general office uses, retail and service uses (retail shops, department store, bank, bakery, furniture store, grocery store, pharmacy, restaurants).



PROPOSED ZONING: The applicant is requesting a special use permit for a hotel. A companion case is also requesting a subzone change to “Neighborhood Core” to address the proposed height of the building. The “Neighborhood Core” subzone allows similar uses by right as the current zoning, and also requires a Special Use Permit for a hotel use.

SURROUNDING ZONING | LAND USE:

North: TC Town Center and U Institutional | Public / Semi-Public and Town Center Civic
West: TC Town Center | Public / Semi-Public (Town Center Civic)
South: TC Town Center | Town Center (Neighborhood Center)
East: TC Town Center | Town Center (Neighborhood Core)

PLAT STATUS: The property is currently unplatted. A plat would be required to be submitted for consideration by City Council prior to building permits being issued.

CITY COUNCIL: The City Council will consider this request at the October 23, 2017, meeting following a recommendation by the Planning and Zoning Commission.

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve SUP 2017-07.