

**BRIEFING PAPER**  
**City of Spokane**  
**City Council Ad Hoc Committee**  
**Setting the 2019 Annual Comprehensive Plan Amendment Work**  
**Program**  
**January 2019**

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**Subject**

During deliberations on November 19, 2018, the City Council directed staff bring forth a proposal to amend Policy LU 1.8 General Commercial in the City's Comprehensive Plan, Land Use Chapter. This policy was significantly amended in 2003 (ORD C33287) to add references to specific situations and traffic count numbers and is at times unclear.

The policy needed interpretation by the Plan Commission in two instances in the 2017/2018 amendment review. Council Member Mumm is the sponsor of this proposed amendment. Staff recommend that if this item is added to the Comprehensive Plan Annual Amendment Work Program for 2019, the Plan Commission establish a process, potentially a working group, for the drafting the changes to the text of policy LU 1.8.

**Background**

In Chapter 3, Land Use, policies exist which describe the land use plan map categories. Under *Goal LU1 Citywide Land Use*, there are policies describing several commercial land use plan map designations, these include: General Commercial, Neighborhood Mini-Center, Neighborhood Retail, and Office. These policy descriptions provide guidance when a change to the Land Use Plan Map is contemplated.

*Policy LU 1.8 General Commercial* describes the General Commercial land use category and also states some instances in which this category can be expanded while recognizing that the City's adopted focused growth strategy encourages and should incentivize growth toward the centers. Similar policies exist for other commercial land use categories, such as "Office" or "Neighborhood Retail".

Historic, pre-Centers & Corridors adoption, land use patterns of commercial are recognized under the General Commercial Land Use category. The zoning categories of Community Business (CB) Zone and General Commercial (GC) zone are applied to this land use plan map category. Additionally, some Centers & Corridors (CC) zoning is applied over this land use category where "center's land use planning" has not occurred. When the City adopted the Centers & Corridors focused growth concept, new areas designated for commercial expansion were designated as "centers", not "general commercial".

**Impact**

This policy is important because it gives the Plan Commission and staff direction on when the Land Use Plan Map can be amended to the “General Commercial” Land Use Plan Map designation. Clarifying the policy will be useful when there is interest in pursuing a land use plan map change.

This policy is often called upon to allow adjustments to the land use plan map to areas with historic commercial development pattern history, but areas that are not “centers”. This policy allow for reinvestment and redevelopment through appropriate adjustments to the land use plan map.

This policy should be understood in the framework of the adopted “Centers and Corridors” Focused Growth planning and continue to emphasize those areas for development. Amendment to the Centers & Corridors strategy is most appropriately addressed during a “periodic update” as established by RCW 36.70A.040.

**Action**

Staff recommend that if this item is added to the Comprehensive Plan Annual Amendment Work Program for 2019, the Plan Commission establish a process, potentially a working group, for the drafting the changes to the text of policy LU 1.8.

## Policy LU 1.8 in current version (2018) of Comprehensive Plan, Land Use Chapter 3

### LU 1.8 General Commercial Uses

*Contain General Commercial areas within the boundaries occupied by existing business designations and within the boundaries of designated Centers and Corridors.*

**Discussion:** General Commercial areas provide locations for a wide range of commercial uses. Typical development in these areas includes freestanding business sites and larger grouped businesses (shopping centers). Commercial uses that are auto-oriented and include outdoor sales and warehousing are also allowed in this designation. Land designated for General Commercial use is usually located at the intersection of or in strips along principal arterial streets. In many areas such as along Northwest Boulevard, this designation is located near residential neighborhoods.

To address conflicts that may occur in these areas, zoning categories should be implemented that limit the range of uses, and site development standards should be adopted to minimize detrimental impacts on the residential area. Existing commercial strips should be contained within their current boundaries with no further extension along arterial streets allowed.

Recognizing existing investments by both the City of Spokane and private parties, and given deference to existing land use patterns, an exception to the containment policy may be allowed by means of a comprehensive plan amendment to expand an existing commercial designation, (Neighborhood Retail, Neighborhood Mini-Center, or General Commercial) at the intersection of two principal arterial streets or onto properties which are not designated for residential use at a signalized intersection of at least one principal arterial street which as of September 2, 2003, has traffic at volumes greater than 20,000 vehicular trips a day. Expansion of the commercial designation under this exception shall be limited to property immediately adjacent to the arterial street and the subject intersection and may not extend more than 250 feet from the center of the intersection unless a single lot, immediately adjacent to the subject intersection and in existence at the time this comprehensive plan was initially adopted, extends beyond 250 feet from the center of the intersection. In this case the commercial designation may extend the length of that lot but in no event should it extend farther than 500 feet or have an area greater than three acres.

If a commercial designation (Neighborhood Retail, Neighborhood Mini-Center, or General Commercial) exists at the intersection of two principal arterials, a zone change to allow the commercial use to be extended to the next street that runs parallel to the principal arterial street may be allowed. If there is not a street that runs parallel to the principal arterial, the maximum depth of commercial development extending from the arterial street shall not exceed 250 feet.

Areas designated General Commercial within Centers and Corridors are encouraged to be developed in accordance with the policies for Centers and Corridors. Through a neighborhood planning process for the Center, these General Commercial areas will be designated in a land use category that is appropriate in the context of a Center and to meet the needs of the neighborhood.

Residential uses are permitted in these areas. Residences may be in the form of single-family homes on individual lots, upper-floor apartments above business establishments, or other higher density residential uses.

(end)