

Staff Identified Changes to the Land Development Code

Preliminary review and prioritization of LDC items

May 14, 2021 – Mikayla Schmidt, City Planner

The following LDC items were identified by staff as desirable or needed changes. In late 2019-2020 workplan development, the Planning Commission requested staff work on some of the items, as time allowed, and bring them back to the Planning Commission for action. These items were considered relatively uncontroversial and did not require Planning Commission policy level discussion prior to considering the proposed changes.

- Table 2.3-1: Remove Required Minimum Unit Type column for the Neighborhood General 2 District

Table 2.3-1 defines the minimum percentage and types of dwelling units, depending on the number of lots being subdivided.

<i>Table 2.3-1: Mixture of Dwelling Unit Types</i>		
<i>Number of Lots in a Subdivision</i>	<i>Minimum Percentage of Lots Required to Accommodate Any Mixture of Two, Three, or Multi-Family Dwellings</i>	<i>Required Minimum Dwelling Unit Types</i>
<i>3-19 Lots</i>	<i>Not Applicable</i>	<i>2 unit types</i>
<i>20-49</i>	<i>15%</i>	<i>3 unit types</i>
<i>50-99 Lots</i>	<i>20%</i>	<i>4 unit types</i>
<i>100 or More Lots</i>	<i>25%</i>	<i>4 unit types</i>

This table garners further discussion because it offers real results in Northfields neighborhoods, but may make development less appealing to developers. The percentages and minimum unit types build in a variety of housing types, which long-term integrate neighborhoods and communities.

Keeping the minimum required dwelling type promotes the obvious – a mixture of dwelling types, which decreases segregation of neighborhoods by home type, increases housing options for people based on their lifestyle, needs and stage of life, and offers more opportunity for life-cycle housing. A potential trade-off of requiring a minimum number of unit types is that it could turn away some developers who only build one or

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two housing types as part of their business model.

Other options to consider (in addition to unit types), could be to include a variety of unit sizes and/or decreasing the required amount of unit types. Both of which offer more or different flexibility for the developer, while keeping the vision to create neighborhoods with a variety of housing types, which benefit Northfield in terms of sustainability, affordability, and range of unit types to assist in life-cycle housing.

- **2.6.1 Neighborhood Center Floating District/LDC 2.8.4 (Y) Neighborhood serving commercial:** Review and propose changes to regulations to make development of neighborhood commercial areas easier in the Neighborhood Center Floating District.

Below is the language giving the purpose and development standards for the Neighborhood Center Floating District.

2.6.1 Neighborhood Center Floating District (NC-F).

(A) Purpose.

(1) The NC-F district should generally apply in areas designated as "Neighborhood Central" and "Neighborhood General 1" on the framework map of the comprehensive plan.

(2) The purpose of the NC-F district is to promote and enhance the vitality of existing neighborhoods by providing for the opportunity to develop nonresidential or mixed-uses in existing neighborhoods where the principal building is designed to be consistent with the size, scale, and massing of the surrounding residential uses. Additionally, the uses should be of an intensity that will create minimal traffic and noise impacts on the surrounding neighborhood.

(B) Development Standards.

(1) All buildings shall be subject to the neighborhood compatibility standards of Section 3.4, Neighborhood Compatibility Standards.

(2) NC-F districts may only be considered on lots that are located at the intersection of two street types with a functional classification of collector and/or arterial pursuant to Section 5.2.3, Streets.

(C) Other Development Standards. *In addition to the standards established for the NC-F district, all development shall be subject to all other applicable standards in Article 3: Development Standards.*

Next, is the definition of Neighborhood-serving Commercial. This is currently not a Permitted Principal Use in the NC-F district. Allowing some further small scale commercial uses would allow for reuse and redevelopment of some intersections near to the downtown core.

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(Y) Neighborhood-serving Commercial.

Small scale commercial uses, including retail, personal services, or professional offices, that are not otherwise included as Permitted or Conditional Uses in the N2 district, that reflect the neighborhood character or the surrounding residential context with respect to form, scale, and massing. This definition does not include adult uses, auto service stations, drive through establishments, firearms dealers, and gasoline stations (fuel sales). A neighborhood-serving commercial use is intended to serve the residents of the local area and not be a destination site for the general community that would encourage motorized traffic. Commercial or retail uses intended to draw from a larger area, and/or having a substantial reliance on vehicle-based customer trips, are better located in commercial districts.

Staff recommends amending the Principal Permitted Use table to allow Neighborhood-serving Commercial as a permitted use.

- 2.6.2: Economic Development Floating Zoning District: Develop regulations for EDF district which was mapped but not completed when the City considered a large business park west of Northfield Hospital Development before development occurs

Developing options for zoning west of the Hospital and for the EDF are items previously identified that the Community Development Director has started work on and will resume as time allows.

- Table 3.2-1: Site development standards: Review the Building Area Ratio and recommend increased percentage or consider deleting the requirement.

Increasing the building area ratio (BAR) should be a prioritized item to amend. New homes, additions and garages are a frequent request in the community and it has been a problem on several occasions. Building area ratio for Northfield meets a couple of goals. It minimizes run-off from the building footprint and regulates the overall building size, so homes don't overpower a neighborhood and streetscape. Balancing this, while allowing the footprint to be increased creates more opportunities for single-level living to age in place, and/or build a comparable sized home on a smaller lot. Staff will need to perform more research to provide a recommendation of what percentage/ratio fits Northfield needs and review past variance request for BAR.

- 5.1.2(C): Prohibition Related to Building Permits: delete this section as unnecessary.

Not a high priority to amend, but should be incorporated with a "clean up" amendment

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when completed. The language is redundant, but does not create complications.

- 5.2(B)(12) Private streets: Consider whether private streets (other than alleys) should be allowed with qualifications

This will take some time to develop. Allowing private streets could be a benefit, but would need a more in depth review with Public Works. Pro's/con's of allowing them, and policies that would need to be in-place to ensure protecting public interest require research.

- 5.2.2(b): Remove section as unenforceable, and consider alternative strategies for distributing affordable housing, housing types across the community

Medium priority level. There may be growing interest in evaluating this policy for potential changes. Due to expected complexities, this item could require significant time and resources. There have been a few variance requests to allow more than 20% of lots on a block to allow deed restrictions or other covenants that are tied to the provision of affordable housing. Other strategies should be reviewed to distribute affordable housing. Keeping the mixed units types assists in this effort.

- 8.4.3 Development procedures: Vacating easements. Review and draft administrative process for vacating easements (currently requires adopting an ordinance)

Creating a better administrative process should be prioritized. Further review is needed to see if state statues allows for this process to be changed.

- 8.5.5 Amendments to PUDs: Draft regulations to permit major amendments to existing PUDs

This would add flexibility. Staff understands there was a proposal several years ago related to this, but it did not gain support. Pursuing this now, is not a high priority.

- 8.5.11: Minor subdivisions: Review and consider recommending administrative review of minor subdivisions and consolidations, rather than Council approval.

High priority to review if and how minor subdivisions can be approved administratively by a meets and bounds description. Staff anticipates this could be more time consuming to review and apply changes if applicable.

- Review and consider allowing multiple buildings on a single lot in commercial and

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residential zoning districts to allow for multiple configurations and types of ownership.

High priority to review how this can be addressed through research of other communities and planning resources.