



DEVELOPMENT SERVICES GROUP

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TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Evan Maxim, Planning Manager

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RE: ZTR16-004 - Residential Development Standards – Approach and Recommendation Process

Summary

The following memorandum is intended to summarize the general approach to the review, analysis and discussion, and eventual recommendation of proposed amendments to the Residential Development Standards. The memorandum also describes the recommended policy based approach to review and making recommendations on the proposed amendments. The review of the proposed amendments will occur over the course of approximately 12 to 15 Planning Commission meetings and will cover a number of different areas of focus.

Recommendation Making Process

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission use a policy based review approach to define issues and determine the most effective course of action when evaluating specific amendments to the development regulations. Staff has developed an evaluation form that will aid the Planning Commission in your evaluation of the most effective regulatory tool to achieve the identified policy goals, as well as provide information that may be valuable for the SEPA checklist required for the proposed amendments. The evaluation form identifies the proposed regulatory change, the deficiency in the current regulations that the proposed change is intended to address, the expected effect of the change and any positive or negative consequences identified as a result of the change.

In reviewing the evaluation forms for each proposed regulatory change, the Planning Commission may identify alternative approaches to policy implementation that will improve the positive effects of the change, or diminish negative effects. Staff can provide additional evaluation forms to evaluate alternatives, at the direction of the Planning Commission.

Ultimately, the Planning Commission should evaluate all of the effects of a proposed regulatory change, and any other relevant policy inputs, including public comment, in forming the recommendation to the City Council.

Approach

To aid in the review of the proposed amendments, the City has split the scope of work and areas of focus into approximately 5 groups of related subject matter or “buckets” (e.g. the building design, site design, tree retention and replacement, subdivision, and process).

First Review: Each group will be introduced at a Planning Commission meeting for initial review along with several questions intended to set the general parameters of the amendment.

For example, in the case of building design, staff will prepare material that describes the current relevant regulations (e.g. height limits, gross floor area limits, etc) and the resulting effect of each regulation on a new single family house. The Planning Commission will then evaluate the following types of questions:

- Do the regulations as a group, result in a house that meets the desired design most of the time?
- If the regulations are unlikely to result in the desired design, the City using the correct regulatory approach (i.e. “impervious surface limits” versus “required landscaping area”)?
- If the regulations are unlikely to result in the desired design and the City is using the correct regulatory approach, should the methodology or specific numerical standard be adjusted (i.e. should the allowed building height be 30 feet or 15 feet? Or should “gross floor area” include or exclude basements?).

This exercise is intended to allow the Planning Commission and staff to develop the scope of the proposed amendments, for further review. In evaluating these questions, the Planning Commission will be informed by the Comprehensive Plan, information provided by the City staff, and public input.

Second Review: Following the initial review of each group of related subject matter, staff will bring back evaluation forms and draft regulatory language for the Planning Commission to further evaluate. In the case of complex regulations, it may be necessary to evaluate several options before identifying the proposed amendment that best addresses the current regulatory deficiency. Material for the second round of reviews will be based upon the Planning Commission’s evaluation during the first review, and will be supplemented with public comment and information that the City believes will aid in the review process.

For example, in the case of building design, staff will prepare an evaluation form and material evaluating a regulation that modifies the allowed size of a new house (or addition) relative to the size of the underlying lot. One possible approach may be to limit the floor area relative to the size of the lot (i.e. “floor area ratio”), while an alternative approach may require that a specific percentage of the lot be covered by landscaping (i.e. “yard area minimums”). The Planning Commission will evaluate the following types of questions:

- Does either of the amendments achieve the desired design effect?
- Does one of the amendments achieve the desired effect better than the other (with fewer negative effects)?
- Are the negative effects (e.g. unintended consequences) associated with the proposed amendment minimized?

For simple amendments, it may be possible to skip this intermediate step, but it is anticipated that a follow up review will be required for most amendments. Again, in evaluating the proposed amendments, the Planning Commission will be informed by public comment and technical information provided by staff.

Final Review: Once the Planning Commission has completed its review of each group of regulations, staff will compile the final documents into a single draft regulation, which will be accompanied by the evaluation forms. The final review is intended to look at the cumulative effect of the proposed amendments and to encourage a holistic review prior to a recommendation to the Council.