

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Vince Papsidero, Director, Planning Department  
**FROM:** Don Elliott, FAICP, and Mary Roberts, Clarion Associates  
**DATE:** March 2, 2017  
**RE:** Clarion/CodaMetrics Review of Bridge Street District Regulations

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### Background

Clarion Associates and CodaMetrics (the “Clarion Team”) are under contract to update several portions of the Dublin Bridge Street (Zoning) District (“BSD” or “the BSD code”). The three phases of that work involve recommendations for (1) targeted updates to the BSD sign regulations, (2) targeted updates to the BSD historic core regulations, and (3) general updates to the remaining BSD regulations). All three phases (1) and (2) of work are underway. As part of Phase (3) work, in mid-February 2017 Clarion Associates delivered to Dublin a summary of comments and recommendations received from staff and stakeholders about the operation of the BSD district. This memorandum represents that second part of the Phase (3) – an independent review of the BSD regulations in light of staff and stakeholder comments and our experience drafting and revising land use regulations throughout the U.S. Our comments are organized in the order of the BSD zoning regulations themselves. This memorandum builds on the summary of staff and stakeholder comments, which were organized around the five main themes listed below:

- Building Design Standards – Lack Flexibility and Create Monotony
- Development Standards – Most Seem to Work/Some Inhibit Good Design
- Existing Buildings – Not All Standards Should Apply
- Review Process – Too Long and Too Much Detail
- Other comments

Two significant recommended changes are reflected in comments on several different sections of the BSD regulations:

1. **BSD Design Guideline Handbook.** We recommend that significant parts of the more detailed building and open space design regulations be removed from the BSD regulations and organized into a BSD Design Guideline Handbook, where they will function as guidelines for consideration by staff, ARB, and the Planning and Zoning Commission rather than as standards that require a waiver or adjustment as part of

the project review and approval process. This handbook should incorporate the recent BSD sign guidelines.

2. **Simplified Review and Approval Procedures.** We recommend a simplification of the current lengthy review and approval process that would:

(a) Eliminate the current pre-application review by the Planning and Zoning Commission (and sometimes City Council), so that applications would proceed much as they do in many other cities – from pre-application with staff, to an application reviewed by staff, to a review by Planning and Zoning Commission in cases where staff is not authorized to make a decision, and then to City Council in cases where Planning and Zoning Commission is not authorized to make a decision.

(b) Allow applicants to submit conceptual designs and applications without the detail necessary to show full compliance with the regulations, and to have those concepts reviewed informally by staff and/or the Planning and Zoning Commission, at the applicant's option.

### 153.57 -- General Purpose

**Recommendation:**

- No change -- The general purpose of BSD has not changed.

### 153.058 -- Bridge Street Corridor (BSC) Districts Scope and Intent

**Issue:** Vertical Mixed Use district is not being used, and its applicability is unclear.

**Recommendation:**

- Delete the Vertical Mixed Use District from the BSD.

**Issue:** Many provisions of the BSD do not apply well to investments in existing buildings – or at least their applicability to existing buildings is unclear. In particular, their applicability to reinvestment in economically important but currently auto-oriented retail centers has been problematic. This issue affects many areas of the BSD, but parking lot landscaping, tree preservation, lot and block, and sign regulations have produced specific challenges.

**Recommendation:**

- This section should be revised to include an Applicability section that clarifies whether, and when, and to what extent the BSD standards apply to investments in existing buildings, or the degree of investment in existing buildings that will trigger applicability of different BSD standards.

### 153.059 – Uses

**Issue:** The permitted use table is should be reviewed to identify any missing uses, such as specialty food production, industrial design, artisan industrial, local alcohol production,

and food trucks as a temporary use on private property. Broaden the commercial use definitions to address non-traditional uses.

**Recommendation:**

- Review permitted use table and address the listed items.

### 153.060 – Lots and Blocks

**Issue:** Existing lot and block standards assume redevelopment of an entire area, and they are impracticable to apply when only repurposing or partial redevelopment of existing buildings occurs. They also do not appear to reflect the economic cost of relocating existing major infrastructure lines beneath existing streets.

**Recommendations:**

- Address this issue in the new Applicability section of Section 153.058 by clarifying what level of reinvestment or redevelopment triggers the lot and block standards.

**Issue:** Block sizes and lengths depicted in the current BSD do not allow flexibility to accommodate unique buildings or site designs.

**Recommendation:**

- These standards should stay in the code, but should be revisited to address changes that may be needed for unique buildings or site designs where the current standards have been too restrictive.

### 153.61 – Street Types

**Issue:** The public street standards are very expensive. Private streets are required to be designed to public street standards. There needs to be more latitude in the design of both private and public streets.

**Recommendation:**

- No changes to this section – these street design issues need to involve discussions with the City’s engineering staff, and are beyond the scope of this BSD Update
- However, the applicability of the BSD street type standards should be clarified in the new Applicability portion of Section 153.058.

### 153.062 – Building Types

**Issue:** Throughout the comments the building type standards were described as being too inflexible, specifically related to transparency requirements and number of entrances. Additionally, some comments referred to the design of the different buildings as being too similar and monotonous.

**Recommendations:**

- Revisit the need for the building types provided, while building in flexibility to allow for a wider range of designs within those types. Typically, the difference between a

loft-style building and an office building is the floor to floor heights. By allowing flexibility in one building type to allow a range of floor to floor heights, a developer can build either building within the same typical form.

- Standards for the inclusion of parking garages into building envelopes, or the lining of parking garage exterior facades with other uses, should be revisited for each building type in light of potentially high cost of these requirements. As an alternative, the BSD should address the definition of and standards for accessory parking structures (as distinguished from primary use parking structures).
- Revise the ground story requirements to require storefront levels of glass only along street frontages where a shopping street is required. For all office and residential buildings, require the same minimum levels of glass between stories (typically between 12% and 20%). With a lower level, more flexibility of design can occur. Discuss blank façade requirements on street facades or principal street facades with staff.
- Ground story elevation should be more flexible, especially for stoop entrances to meet ADA requirements. Typically, the important differentiation is between shopfronts and non-shopfronts (offices, residential uses on the ground story), where shopfronts should be at sidewalk level and other uses *may* be, but are not required to be, elevated above.
- Façade requirements should be stringent on street facades, but be more flexible for facades that are not visible from the street. For example, blank façade requirements should be relaxed in the rear and interior sides of buildings to allow service areas on those facades.
- Building frontage standards should be revised to clarify how they apply when multiple buildings (which could be of different building types) are located on a single property.
- Building entryway requirements should be removed from the BSD and placed in the Design Guideline Handbook. Guidelines can offer different methods to define the entrances, can allow additional flexibility, and can address the issues raised by sloping sites that may make entrances impractical or unusable.
- Building material requirements should also be removed from the BSD (except in the Historic District) and placed in the Design Guideline Handbook. The Handbook should allow a mix of allowable building materials. Among other things, they should reflect the fact that the Ohio building code regulates the use of masonry above a certain height on certain types of buildings.

**Issue:** Building heights appear to be too consistent throughout the BSD. Some streets may warrant additional allowable height. The tower requirements, which were meant to provide some variation in height, need to be relaxed to allow easier use for roof access.

**Recommendations:** Revise the building height and tower requirements per staff recommendation.

- In order to allow more variety, building heights could be mapped separately by street or some allowances for taller heights could be allowed by streets.
- Typically tower requirements are set based upon a maximum of 30 feet in width or 30 percent of the building width, whichever is lower. A 30 foot width should be able to comfortably provide roof access.

**Issue:** Mechanical equipment requirements may be too stringent. Parapet roof type requirements for screening are not reasonable.

**Recommendations:**

Some screening requirements are found in roof types and others in the design standards.

- Move roof types and mechanical screening standards to the Design Guideline Handbook – but don’t confuse them.
- Address roof types, especially the parapet roof, to remove screening requirements. The purpose of roof types is to cap the building. Addressing mechanicals screening should be handled separately for each roof type.
- Provide more specific guidance in the Design Guideline Handbook for addressing mechanical and utility elements on building facades with different solutions based upon feasibility.

**Other Design Standards**

**Issue:** Design standards may be too stringent and flexibility should be built into items such as balconies, materials, roof types.

**Recommendations:**

- Move design guidance for entryways, balconies, window treatments, horizontal and vertical articulation, walkability standards, four-sided design requirements, and parking garage design standards to a new Design Guideline Handbook. These should be flexible guidelines that could be negotiated and fine-tuned during the approvals process.
- Window treatment guidelines should allow a wide variety of window treatments to respond to new technologies. However, flush windows should not be permitted (or at least not on the two lowest floors), and window trim materials and design should remain important factors in building design.
- Four-sided design requirements should be revisited and made more flexible for low-visibility facades. This will require revisions to the building type standards as well as removal of some standards to the Design Guideline Handbook.
- Balcony dimensional standards should be more flexible and might be included in a broader “private open space” standard, but should not count towards the minimum required amounts of public open space. If private open space is desired, that should be a separate requirement for certain building types. For example, a requirement that a certain percentage of units have a minimum of 35 square feet of private open

space, accessible from the unit or a garden plot located with X feet of the unit, could be included. This private space would be in addition to overall open space.

### 153.063 – Neighborhood Standards

**Issue:** The intended character of the four neighborhoods seems similar and should be differentiated.

**Recommendations:**

- Review and clarify the intended character statements. As an alternative, the city should consider turning the neighborhood standards into overlay districts that only include standards that supplement the base BSD district.

**Issue:** The neighborhood standards do not need to include separate sign regulations; the standard sign regulations (when corrected as noted in Section 153.065) should apply.

**Recommendations:**

- Delete sign regulations from neighborhood standards

### 153.064 – Open Space Types

**Issue:** Open space requirements are too high, are based on suburban-type open space per unit metrics, and are difficult to calculate. Additionally, open space sizes do not include a middle range of opportunities between the defined pocket plaza (up 1,200 square feet) and a pocket park (0.10 acre to 0.50 acre).

**Recommendations:**

- Two categories of open space types were contemplated with the original code: one meant to provide spaces along the streetscape for respite and gathering and another meant to provide small park-like spaces. The “small park-like” spaces have a range of sizes, typically smaller and more intimately scaled than a 5 acre park (though a 5 acre or larger park would count towards the requirement). Addressing these two categories of open space types in the code in different locations would clarify the intent and potentially provide a reasonable number of small parks throughout the BSD.
- Within the BSD, revise and lower the amount of open space, and base the standards on parcel size instead of a minimum amount of space per unit.
- Within the BSD, require that required non-private open spaces be publicly accessible to the greatest extent permitted by law.
- Civic space types should be moved to the Design Guideline Handbook, made more flexible, and should allow compliance at a wider range of open space size than the current standards.
- The BSD should be revised to clarify that balconies do not count towards required open space.

## 153.065 – Site Development Standards

**Issue:** Automobile parking space maximums may discourage development or redevelopment of some uses (particularly retail uses). The maximum parking allowed for some larger uses should be reviewed and exceptions to the maximums considered for specific uses in return for public benefits such as car charging facilities, van/car pool spaces, or pervious pavers).

**Recommendation:**

- No change to this Section. Limiting maximum automobile parking for large format uses is a key component of BSD, and exceptions can be approved through the city's variance process.

**Issue:** Bicycle parking requirements may be too high given the current development character of the area.

**Recommendation:**

- Do not lower the bicycle parking standards. However, since bicycle sharing services are becoming more common, the BSD should clarify when nearby available bike parking facilities can be counted towards these standards or whether hosting a bike sharing facility should satisfy the standards.

**Issue:** The parking lot landscaping standards are too high and too difficult to calculate, and there is no credit for maintaining mature, healthy landscaping.

**Recommendations:**

- Revisit and lower the landscaping standards.
- Encourage existing trees to be retained by counting them in the calculations for meeting landscaping requirements.
- Building foundation landscaping requirements should be removed or made more flexible.

**Issue:** BSD sign standards have had unintended consequences (i.e. more urban signs permitted in currently auto-oriented centers) when applied to reinvestment/repurposing projects that do not involve construction of new primary structures. Among other issues, they fail to adequately address the distance of the building from the street, the size of the building, and the size of the tenant space.

**Recommendations:**

- Incorporate the pending revisions to BSD sign regulations (which address applicability to reinvestment/repurposing projects) into the new Applicability portion of Section 153.058.
- Consider revisions to BSD sign regulations that take into account the distance of the building from the street and the size of the tenant space.

**Issue:** The sign standards for LED signs result in very small signs for small tenants, but generally work well in that context. However, the size allowances for spaces for larger tenants are too small and don't work well for properties that are far from the street.

**Recommendations:**

- No change to the LED sign regulations. This should probably be a citywide discussion for sign regulations in general. In light of the revised Applicability standards (essentially applying existing sign standards in BSD until a new primary building is constructed), substantive revisions to BSD standards to accommodate existing buildings would undermine the intent of the BSD.

**Issue:** Too many ground signs are allowed and the allowed number and types of wall sign standards are too small for buildings that are far from the street.

**Recommendations:**

- No change to the wall and ground sign regulations. In light of the revised Applicability standards (essentially applying existing sign standards in BSD until a new primary building is constructed), substantive revisions to BSD standards to accommodate existing buildings would undermine the intent of the BSD.

### 153.066 – Review and Approval Procedures and Criteria

**Issue:** The pre-application and application review process is too rigid, too long and has too many steps. A 1-2 months lead time is required for preparation of staff reports, and no changes to the documents are allowed within one month of the hearing. This results in many requests for waivers for time extensions.

**Recommendations:**

- Removing many of the more detailed building type and site development standards from the BSD and locating them in the Design Guideline Handbook will significantly simplify the “checklist” of standards to be met by each application and the time required to prepare staff reports.
- The role of ART in different types of applications should be reviewed in light of revised roles for the Planning Commission; current requirement for ART involvement in almost all applications lengthens application review times.
- Dublin staff should evaluate whether there are other administrative changes that could be made to reduce timeframes for development review and revise the timeframes accordingly.
- Although the removal of many detailed building standards to the Design Guideline Handbook may allow more projects to be approved administratively, the BSD should allow the Director to “kick up” an administrative decision for a public hearing by the Planning and Zoning Commission if the Director believes it will have material or unanticipated impacts on the surrounding area.

**Issue:** The level of design and documentation effort required prior to submitting a formal application is too detailed. Waivers must be identified during the pre-submittal phase, which requires a detailed project and site plan in order to identify all waivers required. Reviews by the ART, Planning Commission, and City Council often result in conflicting feedback.

**Recommendations:**

- Removing many of the more detailed building type and site development standards from the BSD and locating them in the Design Guideline Handbook will (1) reduce the time and expense of preparing application documents, (2) reduce the need to identify and document waivers to many standards before applications are submitted, (3) also allow ART and the Planning Commission to tailor specific design elements to the type, context, and location of the building, and (4) reduce the frequency of conflicting feedback.
- The BSD should make clear that “substantial” compliance is required, not complete compliance with each standard.

**Issue:** There is no opportunity for review of a conceptual/preliminary plan before doing detailed design.

**Recommendations:**

- The Planning and Zoning Commission review should be a two-step process: (1) An informal discussion based on concept drawings that do not include final design details; and (2) A formal review and decision based on compliance with BSD standards and informed by BSD guidelines.
- During the second step, the Planning and Zoning Commission’s role would be to confirm that the application complies with the BSD standards, and to discuss compliance with the BSD Design Guideline Handbook -- and negotiate or condition approvals on any changes to items discussed in the Handbook necessary to better meet the intent of the BSD.
- At the applicant’s option, the second step (formal review) of the Planning and Zoning Commission process could be divided into (2a) a preliminary review and (2b) a review of final design documents. In the case of large and complex projects, the Planning Director should be able to require a two-step formal review process.

**Issue:** The line between major and minor amendments is unclear, and two few amendments are processed administratively as minor amendments.

**Recommendations:**

- Review the BSD to clearly define the difference between minor and major amendments and consider whether additional types of modifications should be categorized as minor. However changes to design guidelines elements required by the Planning and Zoning Commission should not be permitted to be modified administratively.

We look forward to your comments on these recommendations, and are happy to discuss any additional changes you feel are necessary in light of staff or stakeholder comments received.