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Memo

To: Members of Dublin City Planning and Zoning Commission
From: Jennifer M. Rauch, AICP, Director of Planning
Sarah Tresouthick Holt, AICP, ASLA, Senior Planner
Date: October 7, 2021
Re: Guidance on General Residential Development Standards

Summary

The Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council have expressed interest in creating more creative and sustainable residential neighborhoods in Dublin. There have been additional comments and concerns expressed about setbacks and lot coverage, along with an overall desire to create more meaningful open spaces and amenities. The topic of residential design patterns have been discussed over the course of several meetings in 2020 and 2021, but given the Commission's workload this topic had been deferred. Planning staff has provided background information, history and next steps to address the topic knowing the scope of this investigation needs to be comprehensive. Planning has outlined a phased approach to tackle this project with solutions that will address the variety of concerns, from the most specific architectural details to the overall layout of an entire neighborhood. A work plan is outlined below.

Background

The topic of residential development standards was initially referred to the Planning and Zoning Commission by City Council on June 22, 2020 following concerns related to the approval of two residential developments at that time, Hamlet on Jerome and Oak Park. The Planning and Zoning Commission was introduced to the topic at their August 20, 2020 meeting and subsequently discussed it on October 1, 2020. The Commission's discussion centered on defining a holistic intent for future residential developments for quality housing projects that are timeless, provide a sense of community, and maintain the character of Dublin. The members want to refrain from being so prescriptive as to limit development and design opportunities. The Commission discussed the opportunity to understand the community's needs and wants for housing, as well as understand what other communities are seeing with regard to residential development. They expressed an intent in retaining the City's existing Code standards for typical, lower density suburban developments with exemptions for pocket of developments of higher density that could be considered if the quality of life attributes are provided.

Since these initial discussions, the Commission and City Council have had further discussions as a result of additional residential projects such as the Dublin Gateway, the Overlook at Tartan Ridge and Ayrshire. These projects have continued to raise the topics of lot coverage, building coverage, setbacks, building materials, open space amenities and connectivity. The topic of residential development standards and recent variance applications at the Board of Zoning

Appeals were also discussed as part of the joint meeting between the Boards, Commission and Council on December 14, 2020. Staff sees all of these concerns, including appearance standards, as one large project with multiple facets and potential solutions.

Current Code Analysis

There are a number of existing Zoning Code regulations and design standards that apply to residential developments. Staff has summarized how each applies below for the Commission's reference.

Residential Appearance Standards (Code Section 153.190)

- Applies to single-, two-, and three-family dwelling units.
- Applies to all residential districts, including PUDs where a PUD is silent on the topic. New PUDs are required to comply with these as minimum requirements.
- These are the only design standards that apply to properties with standard district zoning, which account for 21% of land (3,414 acres out of 16,019 total acres), and of that 7.5% is undeveloped.
- Regulations outline materials, foundation exposure, four-sided architecture, and minimum required design elements.
- Garage door placement and size are discussed in detail.
- Vinyl-clad homes have additional requirements: shutters, mantels, gingerbread, masonry water table/plinth, and/or gable vent.

Lot and Yard Space Requirements (Code Section 153.071)

- Apply within all districts, including PUDs. Requirements may vary with PUDs depending on the desired character of the neighborhood.
- Open yards are required, except for fencing, per code; some encroachments are permitted.
- Maximum lot coverage in R-12 (Urban Residential District) is 70%; maximum lot coverage for all other residential districts is 45%.
- Defines maximum lot coverage includes all hard surfaces beyond structures (driveways, pedestrian areas, patios, etc.).
- When a PUD is silent, buildings and hard surfaces have a maximum coverage of 45%.

Planned Unit Development (Code Section 153.055)

- Allow greater design review and site response than required in standard zoning districts through creative design and proper relationships between buildings and the land.
- General development criteria include: percentages of lot coverage and building setbacks; sizes of yards and other spaces; arrangement of developed areas relative to open spaces; transitional areas; and bulk and height of buildings.
- Open space is specifically described, in order to: create large, usable areas; preserve the natural environment; connect to other natural/open areas.
- Pedestrian, bike, and vehicular circulation is described in detail, including requirements to preserve natural features and minimize cut and fill requirements.
- Recent standard language in PUDs has stated that these projects shall comply with the Residential Appearance Standards, unless altered by the City. The intent of the Residential Appearance Standards is to provide a minimum standard, and in PUDs the expectation is an increased design character.

Conservation Design (Resolution 27-04)

- Stresses creative site planning, design flexibility to assure quality of life and retention of business.
- Applies to PUDs, based on guidance from the Community Plan, specifically relating to buffers along stream corridors and the creation of a rural edge along the western city boundary.
- City recommends cluster residential development adjacent to the new metro park (now Glacier Ridge North and South) on the western edge.
- Acknowledges that previous residential subdivisions have similar layouts and appearances and desires to avoid repetition.
- At least 50% open space is required for new development adjacent to river corridors, metro parks, or at the outskirts of the city.
- Requires "clustering of available density onto smaller, grouped, individual building areas". 75% of houses should be adjacent to open space, dwelling units are clustered, detention/retention basins are part of common open space, open space shall meet specific aspect ratios.
- Requires submittal of a "conservation design layout" with concept plans.

This information provides the Commission with a starting point from which to provide further direction for residential development. Additionally, the specific tasks and homework below will build upon that direction to inform our future residential design standards.

Work Plan

Staff has identified a number of tasks to help breakdown the discussion and make progress on the residential design standard topic. The proposed work plan includes tasks initiated by staff, and, importantly, tasks completed by the Commission to provide detailed direction to staff moving forward.

Staff Tasks

Planning staff has begun working on gathering information and background on potential solutions and discussion topics related to residential development standards. Planning staff has contacted Building Standards to identify any new materials that ought to be included with a Residential Appearance Standards update (i.e. extruded foam architectural details), which can add greatly to a structure's character. Staff also requested feedback on currently permitted materials that are not performing as expected (i.e. general discussions about removing vinyl as an approved material in all applications). Additionally, staff recommends a discussion with the Building Industry Association to understand the perspective of local residential developers. The results of these findings will be added to the results of the Planning and Zoning Commission tasks and included in the proposed deliverables.

Planning and Zoning Commission Tasks

Staff anticipates continued active discussion with the Commission on this topic. In order to help facilitate the discussion, staff requests the Commission review the following discussion items as part of a future conversation. Staff will schedule time to meet with the Commissioners to understand their reactions and thoughts.

- a) Different housing types have different lot coverages, setbacks, and overall appearances. What housing types should be studied further (i.e. patio homes vs. large lot houses) to understand and learn about the standard definitions and practices specific to these types?
- b) What types of background and information would be helpful to understand the current housing types, development trends, and/or customer desires in the state/nationally? Note that this will be part of the upcoming Dublin Housing Study, ETA TBD.
- c) Are there specific lot coverages, setbacks, and overall appearances that we want to hold fast, regardless of housing type? The maximum percentage of lot or building coverage in Historic Dublin might be a model to examine.
- d) What other topics/areas of concern should be discussed?

In addition to understanding the Commissioner's input on the questions above, staff requests the Commission provide examples (local/national/ international) of what is preferred or not, with an explanation of why. This information will be used to help the Commission and staff discern areas of agreements and areas of divergence. Specific instructions on this exercise and meetings with staff will be forthcoming.

Following the collection of this information, staff will be hosting a workshop with the Commission and provide an opportunity to conduct a visual preference survey. This will allow staff and Commission to review the material together and discuss how to move forward.

Potential Solutions and Deliverables

Based on the outcome of staff's research and the Commission's input on the above topics and homework, Staff's will outline a series of solutions that address the outcomes. These could include:

- Consider updates to Residential Appearance Standards or General Development Standards.
- Consider creation of a policy document/resolution to provide greater guidance for overall residential development.
- Consider an update or repeal of the Conservation Design Resolution.
- Consider any additional identifies tools (resolutions, guidelines, policies) that will meet the goals and intents identified by the Commission.

Request

Staff requests the Planning and Zoning Commission affirm the recommended approach.