



Memo

Office of the Planning Division

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To: Planning and Zoning Commission

From: Jennifer M. Rauch, AICP, Director of Planning
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Date: December 8, 2022

Re: Neighborhood Design Guidelines Update

Summary

City Council and the Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) have discussed the opportunity for more creative and sustainable residential neighborhoods in Dublin relative to community character, open spaces, amenities, setbacks, and lot coverage. Recent residential developments reviewed by PZC and Council have raised concerns about the overall design character and development standards, and they have asked staff to address these concerns in a more comprehensive way. Planning staff conducted a series of Work Sessions with City Council and PZC to gather information on key areas of concern. Based on that input, staff and our consultant have created design guidelines that support the Code's PUD intent language and encourage the desired outcomes. The draft guidelines were shared with the Community Development Committee (CDC) on September 28, 2022, and the Committee Members provided feedback to staff. A status update was provided to CDC on November 28, 2022, and the Committee confirmed the project direction and how the comments were addressed. The following memo updates PZC on how staff has incorporated all comments and answers final questions prior to their anticipated recommendation in January of 2023.

Background

The topic of residential development standards was initially referred to PZC by Council on June 22, 2020 following concerns related to the Hamlet on Jerome and Oak Park developments. PZC was introduced to the topic on August 20, 2020 and subsequently discussed it on October 1, 2020. The Commission's discussion centered on defining a holistic intent for future residential developments to be timeless, provide a sense of community, and maintain the desired character of Dublin. Other goals included:

1. Avoid being so prescriptive as to limit development and design opportunities;
2. Understand the community's needs and wants for housing, as well as what other communities are experiencing with residential development; and
3. Retain existing Code standards for lower density development with exemptions for higher density where quality of life attributes are provided.

Since these initial discussions, PZC and Council have had further discussions resulting from the Dublin Gateway, Overlook at Tartan Ridge, Ayrshire, and Hyland Glen projects. Both groups have raised additional topics of lot coverage, building coverage, setbacks, building materials, open space amenities and connectivity. Numerous 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.

As part of their work plan for 2021, PZC identified this topic as a target item for the latter part of the year. Staff outlined a comprehensive project work plan at the November 4, 2021 PZC meeting and provided an overview of the existing regulations that govern general residential development. The Commission supported the proposed plan, provided additional feedback, and recommended that the proposed solution should focus on residential PUD projects only, given the limited amount of standard zoning acreage remaining for residential development.

Per the work plan, a series of workshops were held in January 2022 for PZC members and incoming/outgoing Council representatives. Staff requested PZC review a series of discussion topics for feedback: different housing types and details for further study; information about housing types, trends and consumer needs to inform the conversation; and specific dimensional standards. Members were also asked to provide positive and negative examples of residential developments (local/national/international) for discussion. A summary of the feedback was provided, along with recommended solutions, and each were confirmed by the group.

A City Council Work Session was held on April 18, 2022 to share the results and preliminary recommendations from the PZC discussions. Council Members provided input on the preliminary design standards which are organized from the broad, foundational framework of the overall neighborhood, to the street network and streetscape design, then to specific details of individual lots. The design guidelines were further refined and expanded based on their feedback.

More recently, Council raised questions regarding stormwater basins and whether they should be counted toward required open space in residential projects. Concerns were raised that the size of the basins are a significant portion of open space within these neighborhoods, leaving limited usable open space for residents. The topic was referred to CDC and discussed on September 28, and November 28, 2022, with final discussion items outlined below. In November, CDC agreed that the project was ready for PZC consideration and discussion in December. Staff intends to bring the project back to the Commission for a formal recommendation in January, with Council adoption anticipated shortly thereafter.

Neighborhood Design Guidelines

The draft *Neighborhood Design Guidelines* provides a series of design solutions for evaluation of future residential PUD projects to ensure the City's desired design goals are met. The Guidelines are organized into a hierarchy of three levels from the broad macro public realm of open spaces and preservation areas, to the micro level public realm of streetscapes as outdoor rooms, to the private realm of individual lots and the functions of various areas within the lots and lot types.

Public Realm, Macro Level

The macro level of the public realm is the organization of neighborhoods around a designed framework of public open space, including both the preservation of existing natural features and the thoughtful creation of new open spaces as neighborhood amenities and focal points. The Guidelines reference the applicability of conservation design within PUDs and offer an alternative for projects of any size and location in the new Open Space Framework requirement.

Public Realm Micro Level

The micro public realm focuses on the design character of neighborhood streetscapes as high-quality public and semi-private spaces. The Guidelines reference the applicability of the

Residential Appearance Code as the minimum, emphasize that PUD expectations are higher based on Code intent language, and provide aspirational ideas and images appropriate for PUDs.

Private Realm

The private realm addresses the need to ensure adequate private space within each lot, independent of lot size. Included are requirements for setbacks, AC locations, yards, and buildable areas. Multiple-lot exhibits would be required as part of a Concept Plan application to better understand development patterns within a typical block of a proposal.

September and November CDC Comments and Responses

In September, CDC requested that staff address the following items. For clarity, these are presented below with responses in italics.

1. Identify the problem needing a solution, or in other words identify "Dublin's greatest exposures". *The Commission and Council have identified the elements of greatest concern as community character, open spaces, amenities, setbacks, and lot coverage. Staff has used those elements to create the draft Guidelines and outline the expectations for residential PUDs to be truly special, distinctive developments that meet the PUD Code intent: foster the creation of higher, more creative design standards that are specific to a site, support distinctiveness, and allow a variety of land uses. PUDs have previously relied heavily on the Residential Appearance Standards and Subdivision Requirements, which are the minimum standards meant for standard zoning only, thus not achieving the desired results. The draft Guidelines address the overall design character and the individual development standards that should be incorporated within proposed neighborhoods. This will assist staff, Board and Commission members, and the development community in creating neighborhoods that meet desired outcomes.*
2. Require that retention/detention areas cannot be included in meeting Open Space Requirements. *This recommendation will require a Code update to Section 152.086 within the Subdivision Regulations. The request will be provided to PZC for their review and recommendation along with the Guideline review, which will then be forwarded to City Council for final determination.*
3. Provide information on the amount of residential area left to develop as well as areas where Conservation Design would be appropriate. *Staff has mapped the undeveloped properties that are either currently zoned for residential or are identified in the Community Plan's Future Land Use Map for residential use. There are few properties and relatively little acreage left that fall under this category. The Open Space Framework outlined in the Guidelines uses many of the principals of conservation design and applies them to sites of any size, including infill development. With the upcoming Community Plan Update and the ongoing Housing Study, staff anticipates additional direction about how and where the City might want to specifically apply conservation design as part of these discussions.*
4. Require garage screening and limit the number of front-loaded garages permitted within a development. *This topic is not addressed in the Code for standard zoning, yet the Guidelines for PUDs does address it. The Public Realm Micro Level speaks to garage orientation, location, and screening, as well as how and where garages should be placed on the façade and/or lot. Additionally, ideas on how garages might be integrated into*

accessory dwelling units or parking courts are provided to spark the creativity expected by the PUD intent language.

5. Increase street tree requirements. *Code Section 153.134 establishes the minimum street tree requirements for standard zoning. The Guidelines discuss potential options including: tree placement on both sides of a sidewalk and tree size/placement customized to lot width and setbacks. The feedback provided by CDC in September is incorporated in this section.*
6. Require specific locations for HVAC on lots. *This topic is not currently regulated in Zoning Code; however, it is included the Guidelines, specifically based on lot width. Narrower lots shall have minimum side yard setbacks of 6 feet and not less than 8 feet, and mechanicals will need to be located in the rear.*
7. Include hedges at the front of the properties, behind the sidewalk. *This requirement is not currently included in Code, but is brought forward as an option within the Public Realm Micro Level discussion to create a transitional space between the truly public (street) and the private (front yard) realms. Staff has clarified Guidelines language to ensure the topic addresses CDC comments.*

Future Code Amendments

In addition to the proposed Neighborhood Design Guidelines, staff has identified a series of Code amendments that need to be considered to achieve the desire character. These are outlined below for discussion with the Commission.

1. As previously noted, some members of Council have expressed keen interest that stormwater ponds not count as open space, contrary to current Code language. Staff will draft a Code amendment that will describe this new approach, as well as provide flexible options for an applicant to earn the ability to count these features toward open space with superior design. This would address the original goal of maintaining some flexibility in order to not preclude superior design.
2. During the interviews, all PZC and Council members indicated that they would not be opposed to higher densities where design is superior. Current maximum lot coverage is capped at 45 percent per the Code, which limits higher densities and products. Staff will draft a Code amendment, with goal language, to allow this possibility within PUDs.
3. One way to create character in a neighborhood is through creative landscaping. As previously noted, current Code prescribes certain street tree sizes and placements, without flexibility for a different design. Staff will draft a PUD Code amendment to allow for additional options regarding mature size, placement, and rhythms.
4. Current Code permits the use of easements and required setbacks as open space, and these areas, unless carefully designed, can become straight, unimaginative alleys. Staff will draft a Code amendment about how these areas should be integrated into a broader and meaningful open space network.

Recommendation and Next Steps

Planning staff recommends the PZC review and provide feedback on the attached draft *Neighborhood Design Guidelines*. Following input from the Commission, staff and the consultant will revise the guidelines as necessary. The final draft document will then be presented in January to the Commission for review and recommendation to City Council, along with the required Code updates. Staff is proposing the following topics to facilitate the discussion.

1. Do the proposed design guidelines address the concerns raised about the quality desired for single-family residential development?
2. Does PZC support the recommendations within the Public Realm Macro, specifically how open space is determined?
3. Does PZC support the recommendations within the Public Realm Micro, specifically related to streetscape character, garage placement and design, and how lot layouts define the semi-private spaces?
4. Does PZC support the recommendations within the Private Realm, specifically the individual lot requirements recommendations (setbacks, buildable area, private open space, and AC locations)?
5. Are there additional design solutions or recommendations that should be included and addressed?
6. Does the Commission support the proposed Code amendments listed above?
7. Other considerations of the Commission.