

**To:** Members of the Dublin Architectural Review Board  
**From:** Jennifer M. Rauch, AICP, Director of Planning  
**Date:** January 29, 2025  
**Re:** 25-005ADMC - Zoning Code Amendments

## Summary

The Planning Staff requests a review and recommendation to the Planning and Zoning Commission of a proposed Zoning Code amendment regarding the review process for Concept Plans. The proposed change is in response to the City's Economic Development Strategic Plan initiatives to make the development process more transparent and predictable, which was introduced as part of the Joint Work Session in October 2024.

## Background

In 2023, the City of Dublin adopted its Economic Development Strategic Plan, which updated the City's development strategy. The second strategy identified in the plan is to "Make Dublin's Development Processes More Transparent and Predictable, Thereby Reducing Uncertainty."

The previous Economic Development Strategy from 2019 detailed that attracting and retaining value-added business enterprises is highly competitive, and the ability to grow and scale such companies within a region is extremely difficult. For a city to be a competitive location, it must ensure that its government policies, procedures, regulations, and codes encourage, rather than discourage, investment.

In gathering input for the 2019 Economic Development Strategy, business leaders indicated that there is a perception that Dublin can be a difficult and expensive place to do business. In follow-up questions, business leaders expressed concern over the lack of transparency in decision-making, as well as the predictability and timeliness of decisions, all of which increase costs to conduct business in Dublin.

In 2024, Staff engaged several City Council members, Board and Commission members, and members of the development community to identify opportunities to improve the development review process. Through these engagements, Staff determined several Code areas ripe for greater simplification, predictability, and consistency with the Community Plan.

The proposed amendment presented to the ARB for review and recommendation modifies the Concept Plan within the Historic District Zoning Code. The amendment will also apply to the Bridge Street District and Mixed-Use Regional District requirements, which will be provided to the Planning and Zoning Commission for review and recommendation to City Council following the ARB's review of the portion specific to the Historic District.

## Proposed Amendment

The current Code requires the Concept Plan as the first step in the review process for large-scale development projects within the Historic District. Under the current review process, the ARB is

required to make a determination as part of this step unless a Development Agreement (DA) is included. When a DA is contemplated, the ARB recommends the application to City Council for their determination.

The proposed amendment retains the Concept Plan as a required step in the review process for large-scale development projects. However, it would move from a determination step to a non-binding feedback step by the ARB for projects with and without a DA. The goal of this amendment is to provide consistency amongst the City's review processes, allow an applicant the opportunity to gain feedback and streamline the number of approval steps. As previously outlined, this amendment is also proposed within the Bridge Street and Mixed-Use Regional Districts.

### **Impacts on Other Processes**

The Informal process will remain an optional step for both Minor Projects and larger projects. Staff will continue to encourage this step for the earliest feedback, especially on more complex projects.

Development Agreements (DA) require approval from City Council via a separate action requested by the applicant. With the proposed modification, the Concept Plan would be discussion-only and not require a recommendation by the Board or approval by City Council when a DA is included. The timing of a DA will be the applicant's purview and will no longer be linked to a specific step in the review process. As is the current practice, project proposals are included in the ordinance documentation for a DA when approved by City Council. This would continue to be the case with future DAs, thus not requiring a separate City Council determination on a development application.

### **Recommendation**

Staff recommends the Board provide a recommendation of approval to the Planning and Zoning Commission of the proposed Code language.