



STAFF REPORT

DATE: 3/11/19

ITEM #: 5B

MOTION

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Ken Roberts, Planning Director

ITEM: **Zoning Ordinance Amendment – Minimum Lot Sizes – Multi-Family Housing**

REVIEWED BY: Ben Prchal, City Planner

BACKGROUND:

During the City's review of the proposed Bentley Village Townhouse development, staff became aware of a problem in the Zoning code. This involves the listed minimum lot size standards in the zoning code for single-family attached (townhouses) and multi-family housing in Lake Elmo. Staff is now proposing amendments to the text of the zoning code to correct this problem.

ISSUE BEFORE PLANNING COMMISSION:

Does the Planning Commission agree with the proposed ordinance amendment that would change the sections of the Zoning Code that now have a minimum lot size standard for single-family attached and multi-family dwellings?

PROPOSAL DETAILS/ANALYSIS:

There are several sections of the Zoning Code that have standards for the minimum lot size (per unit) for single-family attached and multi-family housing. These include the MDR (medium density), HDR (high density), VMX (village mixed use), MU-C (mixed use commercial) and MU-BP (mixed use business park). The difficulty with having a minimum lot size per unit in these types of developments is that townhouses, when several are attached to form one building, typically are each on lots of 1,500 – 1,800 square feet. The code now requires between 1,800 - 4,000 square feet per unit. The minimum lot sizes per unit do not account for overall project density as public streets, setbacks and required open space are all design factors that a project designer most account for when laying out a development with single-family attached or multi-family attached housing.

The City's Comprehensive Plan sets density standards for all residential land uses. These range from 2.5-4.0 units per acre for low-density residential development, 4.01 – 8 units per acre in the areas planned medium density residential (MDR) to 10-15 units per acre in the mixed use commercial (MU-C) land use area. It is important for the City to have future residential developments meet these density standards as these were the standards the City used when preparing the 2040 Comprehensive Plan for approval by the Metropolitan Council. In addition,

the City has based the long-term design needs of the City's Sanitary Sewer and Water systems on the land use designations and housing densities set in the Comprehensive Plan.

The overall project density is the most important factor that the City should consider when reviewing a single-family attached or a multi-family housing development. The total number of units in any one site or development (and thus the total number of expected residents in an area), determines the need for public services such as emergency services, street maintenance and public utility services. Having a minimum lot size per unit in these areas limits and lowers the overall project density when a project needs to meet all the other City-required design standards.

To remedy this problem, staff is proposing a Zoning Code text amendment that drops the minimum lot size per unit for single-family attached and multi-family dwelling developments from the Zoning Code. Instead, staff is proposing to have a note in the Zoning Code for these types of developments that states the density shall not exceed the maximum density allowed by the land use classification in the City's adopted Comprehensive Plan. This change will insure that minimum lot sizes do not overly restrict the number of units and it gives clear direct that the City intends to have new development meet the density standards in the Comprehensive Plan.

Staff is looking for feedback and direction about the proposed ordinance amendment from the Planning Commission. We will then be scheduling a public hearing for the proposed ordinance amendment with the Planning Commission to get a formal recommendation to pass on to the City Council.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission review the draft ordinance amendment about the minimum lot sizes for single-family attached and multi-family dwelling developments and provide staff with feedback and direction about the proposed changes.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Proposed Zoning Code Text Amendment