



STAFF REPORT

DATE: 3/25/19

ITEM #: 4B

PUBLIC HEARING

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Ken Roberts, Planning Director

ITEM: **Public Hearing - 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:

The Planning Commission is being asked to review the proposed zoning ordinance amendment, conduct a public hearing and make a recommendation to the City Council about the proposed ordinance amendment. This amendment would delete the sections of the Zoning Code that now list a minimum lot size for single-family attached and multi-family dwellings and replace those with a reference to the density standards in the Comprehensive Plan.

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 direction that the City intends to have new development meet the density standards in the Comprehensive Plan.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission recommend approval of the proposed ordinance amendment that drops the minimum lot sizes for single-family attached and multi-family dwelling developments from the zoning ordinance and replaces those standards with references to the allowed densities in the Comprehensive Plan.

“Move to recommend approval of an ordinance amendment to Table 10-2 of Section 154.452; Lot Dimensions and Setback Requirements, Residential Districts, to Table 11-2 of Section 154.502: Lot Dimensions and Building Bulk Requirements; and to Table 14-2, Lot Dimensions and Setback Requirements, Mixed Use-Commercial and Mixed Use-Business Park Districts by deleting the minimum lot size standards for single-family attached dwellings and for multifamily dwellings on each table and adding a reference to each table to the residential density standards in the Comprehensive Plan.”

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Proposed Ord. No. 08-XXX – Amending the Zoning Code