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Barney S. Heath
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MEMORANDUM

DATE: December 9, 2022

TO: Councilor Deborah Crossley, Chair, Zoning & Planning Committee
Members of the Zoning & Planning Committee

FROM: Barney Heath, Director, Department of Planning and Development
Jennifer Caira, Deputy Director Department of Planning and Development
Zachery LeMel, Chief of Long Range Planning
Nevena Pilipovic-Wengler, Community Engagement Planner

RE: **#38-22 Discussion and review relative to the draft Zoning Ordinance regarding village centers**
ZONING & PLANNING COMMITTEE requesting review, discussion and possible ordinance amendments relative to Chapter 30 zoning ordinances pertaining to Mixed Use, business districts and village districts relative to the draft Zoning Ordinance. (formerly #88-20)

MEETING: December 12, 2022

CC: City Council
Planning Board
Jonathan Yeo, Chief Operating Officer

Village Center Zoning

At the November 28th meeting of the Zoning and Planning Committee (ZAP), Planning staff and their consultant Utile presented version 1.0 of the text of the draft Village Center Overlay District (VCOD). The Planning memo including the draft zoning text along with the report of the Committee and Planning presentation can be found [here](#). The draft overlay district includes three subdistricts with separate regulations regarding maximum building height, building footprint, and use. The Planning Department has also been hosting a series of info and input sessions on the proposed village center maps (see the recordings and notes from these sessions [here](#)). Planning staff will be presenting further analysis of the VC1 district for discussion at the December 12th ZAP meeting.

The draft VCOD includes the subdistricts Village Center 1 (VC1), Village Center 2 (VC2), and Village Center 3 (VC3). The VC1 district is typically located along the edges of the commercial core of village centers where proximity to the village center and transit make for an ideal location for smaller multi-family housing. These areas typically contain a mix of multi-family housing and large older single- and two-family homes. The existing zoning only allows for single- or two-family homes. The proposed zoning would allow for a 2.5 story building with a maximum footprint of 4,000 sf, which is similar in scale to many of the existing buildings but would allow for additional units.

Between the initial release of version 1.0 of the zoning maps and the zoning text staff made several changes to the VC1 district to reflect the more residential nature of these areas:

- the maximum building footprint was reduced from 5,000 sf to 4,000 sf;
- the ability to increase the height from 2.5 stories to 3.5 stories by special permit was removed and reserved as a potential future incentive for affordable housing;
- the open space requirement on sites larger than 30,000 sf was increased from 5% to 30%; and
- the use was limited to only residential uses by-right with very limited commercial uses allowed by special permit (more recent conversations indicate support for eliminating commercial uses entirely in VC1).

The VC1 district represents an important component of the zoning by allowing for more housing in areas where residents may not need to drive as much, while also helping support the businesses in the village center with additional patrons. Allowing for multifamily housing and reducing parking requirements will provide additional options for large, older homes which could be adapted into multiple units instead of being torn down. It is important to ensure the zoning controls are carefully calibrated however to achieve these goals while still respecting the scale of these neighborhoods.

Planning staff and Utile continue to study the VC1 district to determine if additional revisions are needed. Staff will be sharing additional analysis of the minimum lot size needed to maximize the building footprint, test fitting multiple buildings on a larger site, and analyzing what could be built on smaller sites that will be constrained by setbacks. Staff are also continuing to study ways to further incentivize historic preservation.

Next Steps

Planning staff will continue to collect public comments on version 1.0 of the maps online through the end of the year. Comments may be submitted [here](#). Discussion of the zoning text and maps will continue in ZAP in January.