

CITY OF SMYRNA

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor and City Council

From: Russell Martin, AICP, Community Development Director
Joey Staubes, AICP, Planner II

Date: September 6, 2022

CC: Joe Bennett – City Administrator
Planning & Zoning Board

RE: **Zoning Code Amendment – Townhome Design Standards**

BACKGROUND

The Mayor & City Council adopted a moratorium on townhome development on March 15, 2021, to provide an opportunity for the city to review its current design and development standards for townhomes and determine if additional standards are required. The Committee on Townhome Development was created in Spring of 2021 and met six times over the past 18 months. The Committee has researched and reviewed townhome standards for many cities and counties in the Metro Atlanta area. The Committee developed the proposed townhome design standards to raise the architectural quality and development of townhomes in the city. The proposed ordinance has been posted for the public to review, and a townhall meeting was held on August 23, 2022. Community Development staff has met with the Home Builders Association and the Brick Association regarding the proposed memo. The Planning & Zoning Board recommended approval by a vote of 7-0 at the September 12, 2022 meeting.

SUMMARY

The committee has reviewed the city's existing townhome regulations and proposed the following code amendments: (1) adding definitions in Article IV; (2) townhome architectural design standards in Article V; (3) amending Article VII so the townhome standards apply for any townhome use; (4) amending the townhome setbacks in Article VIII; and (5) amending parking ratios for townhome developments in Article IX. The purpose and intent of the proposed ordinance is to regulate the siting and design of townhomes in pursuit of cohesive and walkable development patterns.

STAFF COMMENTS

Community Development has reviewed the City's Zoning Ordinance and has proposed several code amendments. The full legislative copy of the proposed ordinance is attached. The proposed amendments include:

Amending Section 402 under Article IV of Appendix A - Zoning of the City's Code of Ordinances to add definitions relating to townhome development.

Community Development is providing architectural definitions relating to townhome development as well as eliminating the section numbers. The elimination of section numbers will allow definitions to be added to the section without renumbering each time.

Amending Article V of Appendix A -Zoning of the City's Code of Ordinances to add Section 515 - Townhome Design Standards relating to architectural and site design standards for townhome developments.

Section 515 is comprised of eight sections that provide regulations specific to townhome development including architectural standards, bulk standards, and development standards.

Section 515.1 Applicability: The regulations in this section will apply to all new townhome developments unless exempted elsewhere in the zoning ordinance.

Section 515.2 Purpose and Intent: The purpose and intent of the section to regulate the siting and design of townhomes in pursuit of cohesive and walkable development patterns.

Section 515.3 Minimum Architectural Design Requirements: This section provides minimum architectural design standards that are required for all townhome developments. These requirements primarily deal with façade materials, building articulation, roof pitches, roof styles, garage design, window requirements and screening of mechanical equipment.

Section 515.4 Design Elements Catalogue: The design element catalog provides a menu of features in four categories: private outdoor space, architectural projection, roof element, and unit or façade variation. Each townhome must provide one feature from each of the categories.

Section 515.5 Bulk Standards: The requirements in this section deal specifically with building setbacks, building separations, building height, unit floor area, unit width and lot configuration.

Section 515.6: Live-Work Units: Live-work units are permitted in the CBD and MU zoning categories. Each live-work unit is required to contain a minimum 2,400 sq. ft., with a minimum non-residential component of 500 sq. ft.

Section 515.7 Site Design Standards: This section provides the minimum design requirements for site development. These requirements primarily deal with use of the unit, building orientation, driveways, street design, open space, utilities, parking, fire protection and accessibility and HOA requirements. The primary components of this section are comprised of the following:

Use – a townhome shall only contain one single-family attached dwelling unit and permit live-work units where the applicable zoning district allows.

Buildings – a maximum of six units per building; a minimum 25% rear loaded garages; all units fronting a public or private street are required to face the subject street.

Driveways – requires a minimum driveway length of front and rear entry homes; driveways with front entry garages shall be paired together to create larger landscape areas.

Streets – all streets will be interconnected and provide a 5' sidewalk and 8' grass strip on one side and an 8' landscape strip on the opposite side. All streets will have a minimum width of 22' to 26' depending on building height.

Openspace – a minimum of 5% of site, and no less than 2,000 sq. ft. is required to be open space. A recreation area is required at a ratio of 1 acre per 50 units, with a minimum of 10,000 sq. ft.

Utilities – each unit is required to have individual water, electric, gas, fire suppression and HVAC systems.

Parking – each development will require 2 parking space per dwelling unit, and a minimum 0.33 guest parking spaces per unit.

Mail Kiosk – a centrally located mail kiosk is required for each development.

Fire Protection and Accessibility – each development requires proper access to all dwelling units.

Common Property – a mandatory homeowners association is required for developments containing eight units or more. The HOA will maintain common areas, front yards, private infrastructure, and architectural oversight for the development.

Section 515.8 Zoning Application Requirements: Any application for a townhome project shall include certain information so a clear and accurate understanding of the proposed project elements can be evaluated during the legislative review process.

Amending Sections 704, 705, 706, 707, 707.1, 707.2, 707.3, 716, and 720 of Appendix A - Zoning of the City's Code of Ordinances to require townhome developments to the meet the townhome design standards in Section 515.

Sections 704, 705, 706, 707, 707.1, 707.2, 707.3, 716 and 720 are proposed to be amended to require townhome developments under each of these zoning districts to meet the design requirements of Section 515.

Amending Section 801 under Article VIII of Appendix A - Zoning of the City's Code of Ordinances for townhome setbacks, building height and building separations.

Section 801 is proposed to be amended to make all the area, yard, and height requirements consistent with the requirements in Section 515.

Amending Section under Article IX of Appendix A - Zoning of the City's Code of Ordinances relating to townhome guest parking requirements.

Section 906.10.1 is proposed to be amended to increase the guest parking requirement from 0.25 parking spaces for every townhome unit to 0.33 parking for every townhome unit within the development.

REZONING ANALYSIS

Section 1508 of the Smyrna Zoning Code details nine zoning review factors which must be evaluated by the Planning and Zoning Board and the Mayor and Council when considering a rezoning request. The following provides the nine factors followed by an analysis of each factor in italics.

1. Whether the zoning proposal will permit a use that is suitable in view of the use and development of adjacent and nearby property.

Staff Analysis:

Townhome developments are allowable uses in the RDA, RM, & TD Zoning Districts. The proposed code amendments will not alter the allowable uses but will provide additional architectural and development regulations for townhomes.

2. Whether the zoning proposal or the use proposed will adversely affect the existing use or usability of adjacent or nearby property.

Staff Analysis:

The use of property for townhome developments is already allowed in the RDA, RM, & TD Zoning Districts. Therefore, the proposed code amendments will not adversely affect the existing use or usability of adjacent or nearby property.

3. Whether the property to be affected by the zoning proposal has a reasonable economic use as currently zoned.

Staff Analysis:

The proposed code amendments will not alter the reasonable economic use of properties that have a zoning district that allows a townhome use.

4. Whether the zoning proposal will result in a use which will or could cause an excessive or burdensome use of existing streets, transportation facilities, utilities or schools.

Staff Analysis:

The proposed code amendments require an interconnected street network for each townhome development. The required street connections will reduce burden on existing streets by creating new street networks. The proposed amendments do not change any density requirements for the zoning districts so no additional density is allowed by the change.

5. Whether the zoning proposal is in conformity with the policy and intent of the land use plan.

Staff Analysis:

The proposed code amendments do not alter the policy and intent of the land use plan.

6. Whether there are other existing or changing conditions affecting the use and development of the property which give supporting grounds for either approval or disapproval of the zoning proposal.

Staff Analysis:

There city has identified changing conditions where townhome developments are a primary component of housing. It is in the public interest to provide regulations for townhomes that contribute and benefit the surrounding the areas of new townhome development.

7. Whether the development of the property under the zoning proposal will conform to, be a detriment to or enhance the architectural standards, open space requirements and aesthetics of the general neighborhood, considering the current, historical and planned uses in the area.

Staff Analysis:

The proposed code amendments will enhance the architectural standards, open space requirements, and aesthetics for new townhome developments.

8. Under any proposed zoning classification, whether the use proposed may create a nuisance or is incompatible with existing uses in the area.

Staff Analysis:

The proposed code amendments will not alter the proposed use and will remain compatible with existing uses in the area.

9. Whether due to the size of the proposed use, in either land area or building height, the proposed use would affect the adjoining property, general neighborhood and other uses in the area positively or negatively.

Staff Analysis:

The proposed code amendments will provide additional architectural, open space, building setbacks and street widths that will positively impact neighborhoods.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The Committee on Townhome Development and the Community Development Department recommend **adoption** of the proposed text amendments related to townhome developments.