

To: Honorable Mayor Colbert and Town Council Members
Chairman Kenney and Planning Commission Members
Mercury Payton, Town Manager
Cindy Petkac, DPZ Director

From: Sean Suder, Lead Principal

Date: November 24, 2020

Re: Town of Vienna Residential Zones and Standards Calibration

The first substantive step in the process to clarify, simplify, reorganize and update the Town of Vienna zoning and subdivision ordinances is to calibrate the development standards for each zone and district. Because the predominant land use in Vienna is residential, we begin by reviewing existing residential standards and proposing revisions to address issues that have been identified by the Town.

We have found that proposed standards are best understood and reviewed by comparing them to the existing standards. This memo provides a summary comparison for your review and consideration.

Guiding Documents

Zoning standards should reflect the goals adopted in a comprehensive plan. Two of the Town's goals in the Comprehensive Plan directly address residential land uses:

- Ensure that Vienna retains its unique single-family residential character and quality of life; and
- Encourage a range of housing options for a diverse population.

The Comprehensive Plan challenges us to achieve a balance between these goals, which may appear to be competing but are actually positively complimentary.

The September 2020 Zoning Diagnostic Report provides, among other things, that:

- The RTH and RM-2 zones do not effectively permit a diversity of housing-types to attract and retain diverse residents of all ages and income levels; and
- The Single-Family Residential districts effectively maintain the desired low-density, large-lot residential development, but the Zoning Code lacks an ability for homeowners to improve older homes and expand outdoor living.

Our initial conclusions were supported by comments provided by the Town Planning Commission and Council at the project kick-off meeting on September 23, 2020. Our conclusions should not be viewed as criticisms, but as a challenge to the Town to calibrate standards that strike a balance to achieve these important goals.

The Vienna Residential Zones

The current and proposed list of residential zones are set forth in the following table:

Current	Proposed
RS-16 Single-Family Detached Residential	RS-16 – Residential Single-Unit - Large Lot
RS-12.5 Single-Family Detached Residential	RS-12.5 – Residential Single-Unit - Medium Lot
RS-10 Single-Family Detached Residential	RS-10 – Residential Single-Unit - Small Lot
RTH Townhouse and RM-2 Multifamily, Low Density	RMU – Residential Multi-Unit <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Townhomes- Multi-Unit Buildings and Complexes- Two-Unit Attached Dwellings/Duplexes- Cottage Courts

Only changes to the names of zones are proposed. No changes are proposed to the zone boundaries on the Official Zoning Map. Single-unit residential zones are proposed to be named in accordance with their relative lot sizes: large; medium; and small. The only use proposed to be added to the single-unit residential zones is Accessory Living Units (ALU). We propose that ALU's be permitted in all single-unit residential zones, subject to standards regarding maximum unit size, occupancy, parking, setbacks, landscaping and buffering.

All multi-unit residential regulations and standards are consolidated into a single new zone, the RMU – Residential Multi-Unit zone. Within the RMU zone, specific standards will be calibrated and applied to each of the four multi-unit development types: townhomes; multi-unit buildings and complexes; two-unit attached dwelling/duplexes; and cottage courts.

Summary comparisons of the existing and proposed standards for each residential zone are set forth below.

Single-Unit Residential Zone Standards

A summary comparison of current and proposed standards for each single-unit residential zone is set forth in the following table:

Single-Unit Standard	Existing Standards (Existing RS-16, RS-12.5, RS-10 zones)	Proposed Standards (New RS-16, RS-12.5, RS- 10 Single-Unit Residential Zones)
Lot Dimensions (Lot Area, Width, Frontage)	<p><u>RS-16</u></p> <p>Min. Lot Area: 16,000 sq. ft.</p> <p>Min. Lot Width: 50 ft. at street right-of-way line; 65 ft. at front building line; 90 ft. a midline</p> <p>Min. Lot Frontage: 50 ft.</p> <p><u>RS-12.5</u></p> <p>Min. Lot Area: 12,500 sq. ft.</p> <p>Min. Lot Width: 50 ft. at street right-of-way line; 65 ft. at front building line; 80 ft. a midline</p> <p>Min. Lot Frontage: 50 ft.</p> <p><u>RS-10</u></p> <p>Min. Lot Area: 10,000 sq. ft.</p> <p>Min. Lot Width: 45 ft. at street right-of-way line; 60 ft. at front building line; 75 ft. a midline</p> <p>Min. Lot Frontage: 45 ft.</p>	No proposed changes
Front Yard Setback	<p><u>RS-16; RS-12.5; RS-10</u></p> <p>Min. Front Yard Setbacks: 60 ft. from centerline to front building line for right-of-way over 50 ft. wide; 35 ft. from centerline to front building line</p>	<p>Front yard setbacks no longer measured from center line of streets for increased uniformity</p> <p>35 ft. standard front yard setback for all residential single-unit zones as</p>

	for right-of-way over 50 ft. wide	measured from closest edge of right-of-way line Front porches may extend up to 8 ft. into front yard setback
Side Yard, Corner Side Yard Setbacks	<u>RS-16; RS-12.5</u> Min. Side Yard Setbacks: 15 Min. Corner Side Yard Setback: 25 <u>RS-10</u> Min. Side Yard Setback: 12 Min. Corner Side Yard Setback: 25	No proposed changes
Rear Yard Setback	<u>RS-16; RS-12.5; RS-10</u> Min. Rear Yard Setback: 35 ft.; decks may encroach up to 10 ft. into rear yard setback	No proposed changes
Building Height	<u>RS-16; RS-12.5; RS-10</u> Max. Building Height: 2.5 stories or 35 ft.	No proposed changes
Lot Coverage	<u>RS-16; RS-12.5; RS-10</u> Max. Lot Coverage: Not more than 25% of a lot shall be covered by buildings, accessory buildings, automobile parking spaces and access, sport courts, tennis courts, patios and terraces. Decks may not cover more than 5% of the total area of a lot.	Max. Lot Coverage: Count all buildings, patios, porches (enclosed or unenclosed), and decks, but do not count driveways Max. amount of front yard used for driveway shall be 50%

Multi-Unit Residential Zone Standards

A summary of current and proposed standards for the multi-unit residential zones is set forth in the following table:

Multi-Unit Standard	Existing Standards (Existing RTH, RM-2 zones)	Proposed Standards (New RMU – Multi-Unit Residential Zone)
Multi-Unit Lot Dimension Standards (Lot Area, Width, Frontage)	<p><u>RTH</u></p> <p>Min. Lot Size Per Dwelling Unit: 2,000 sq. ft.</p> <p>Avg. Lot Size: 2,400 sq. ft. plus 600 ft. additional rear yard</p> <p>Min. Aggregate Lot Size: 1 acre for townhouse group; 5 acres for townhouse cluster</p> <p>Min. Lot Width: 20 ft. for interior lots; 30 ft. for end lots; 40 ft. for corner lots</p> <p>Min. Lot Frontage: 40 ft.</p> <p><u>RM-2</u></p> <p>Min. Lot Size Per Dwelling Unit: 2,000 sq. ft.</p> <p>Avg. Lot Size: 2,400 sq. ft. plus 600 ft. additional rear yard</p> <p>Min. Aggregate Lot Size: 8,000 sq. ft.</p> <p>Min. Lot Width: 70 ft.; 40 at street right-of-way line</p> <p>Min. Lot Frontage: 70 ft.</p>	<p>Eliminate min. lot size per dwelling unit, average lot size, aggregate lot size, min. lot width, min. lot frontage</p> <p>Control for density by unit/acre maximums instead of lot area per unit maximums</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Townhouses and duplexes – 20 units per gross acre max. - Multi-unit buildings – 30 units per gross acre max. - Cottage courts – 10 units per gross acre max. <p>Use minimum open space requirements instead</p>
Multi-Unit Density Standards	<u>RTH</u>	No proposed changes

	<p>Max. Units Per Gross Acre: 8</p> <p><u>RM-2</u></p> <p>Max. Units Per Gross Acre: 20</p>	
Front Yard Setback (Min. Ft.)	<p><u>RTH</u></p> <p>Min. Front Yard Setback: 20 ft. and average of 25 ft. from front lot line; no more than two units in a row may have same front setbacks</p> <p><u>RM-2</u></p> <p>Min. Front Yard Setback: 60 ft. from centerline to front building line for right-of-way over 50 ft.; 35 ft. from centerline to front building line for right-of-way over 50 ft.</p>	<p>All front yard setbacks for multi-unit buildings - 20 ft.</p> <p>No townhome shall be situated so that direct vehicular access to a public street</p> <p>Maximum front yard setback of 30 ft. for townhomes</p>
Front Yard Setback (Max. Ft.)	None	Max. Front Yard Setback for townhomes: 30 ft.
Side Yard and Corner Side Yard Setbacks (Min. Ft.)	<p><u>RTH, RM-2</u></p> <p>Min. Side Yard Setback Each Side: 10 ft.</p> <p>Min. Corner Side Yard Setback Along Side Street: 20 ft.</p>	<p>No proposed changes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 20 ft. minimum side yard setbacks and corner side yard setbacks for cottage courts
Contiguous Series/Row of Attached Units (Max. #)	<p><u>RTH</u></p> <p>Max. # Units in a Row: 10</p>	<p>Max. # Units in a Row:</p> <p>Rows of 6-10 units: Two or more unit shall have front façades offset from adjacent units by minimum of two feet</p> <p>Rows of 3-5 units: Each unit's front façade shall be offset from</p>

		adjacent units by minimum of two feet
Building Courtyard Dimensions	<p><u>RTH</u></p> <p>None</p> <p><u>RM-2</u></p> <p>Min. Dimensions: Width equal to greater than height of adjoining building but not less than 20 ft. in width; max. depth 1.50 times width</p>	Delete and control through minimum open space requirements
Internal Setbacks Between Buildings on Same Lot	Front to front orientation, or front to rear, 2 x height of tallest building but not less than 70; side to side, 1 x higher than height of tallest building but not less than 20; front side, rear to rear, 1.50 times height of tallest building but not less than 55 and roadways between buildings not counted in setbacks	Remove and control through spacing requirements of Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code
Rear Yard Setback Standards	<p><u>RTH; RM-2</u></p> <p>Min. Rear Yard Setback: 35 ft.</p>	<p>No proposed changes</p> <p>20 ft. minimum rear yard setback for cottage courts</p>
Building Height	<p><u>RTH</u></p> <p>Minimum Building Height: None</p> <p>Max. Building Height: 2.5 stories or 35 ft.</p> <p><u>RM-2</u></p> <p>Minimum Building Height: None</p>	<p>Minimum Building Height: 2 stories</p> <p>Max. building height for townhomes and multi-unit buildings, 3 stories or 40 ft.</p> <p>Max. building height for cottage court housing, 1.5 story or 25 ft.</p> <p>Height measured to the top of the highest point of the roof</p>

	<p>Max. Building Height: 3 stories or 35 ft.</p> <p>Height measured to the mid-point of highest gable</p>	excluding chimneys and unoccupiable cupolas
Lot Coverage/Open Space	<p><u>RTH</u></p> <p>None</p> <p><u>RM-2</u></p> <p>Max. Lot Coverage (excluding all impervious surfaces, buildings, drives, patios and decks): 25%; decks 5% max.</p>	<p>Remove lot coverage requirements</p> <p>Include open space minimum for all multi-unit application is 30% of gross development acreage not including driveways, drive aisles, paved areas, buildings or garages</p>
Unit Area	<p><u>RTH</u></p> <p>Min. Area Per Unit: 1,200 sq. ft.</p> <p>Avg. Area Per Unit: 1,400 sq. ft.</p> <p><u>RM-2</u></p> <p>None</p>	<p>Remove minimum unit area</p> <p>Include maximum unit area of 1,500 sq. ft. for cottage court units</p>

In summary, the proposed RMU – Residential Multi-Unit standards focus primarily on maximum densities, minimum open space requirements, building orientation, massing and rhythm to provide for a range of housing options for a diverse population with the goal of ensuring that Vienna retains its unique single-family residential character and quality of life.

We look forward to discussing your comments in more detail at the upcoming work session.