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Burlington
Planning and Zoning

TO: Planning Commission Ordinance Committee
FROM: Scott Gustin
DATE: November 2, 2017
RE: Sec. 5.2.7; Density and Intensity of Development Calculations

At their October 10, 2017 meeting, the Planning Commission referred this proposed zoning amendment to the Ordinance Committee for further discussion. The proposed amendment would drop the language pertaining to rounding fractional units up or down when calculating allowable residential density on a particular lot. The proposed language would simply keep the express residential density limits as is. Retention of the language pertaining to rounding fractional units up or down enables excess of allowable residential density by 1 unit in cases wherein the fractional unit is 0.5 or greater.

The basic question here is whether we adhere to the defined residential density limits expressed in Article 4 of the Comprehensive Development Ordinance or whether we allow surplus density by 1 unit in cases of rounding fractional units.

As noted at the October 10, 2017 Planning Commission meeting, this amendment is most applicable to the residential – high density, residential – medium density (incl. waterfront), and institutional zones. The residential – low density zone is generally limited to just single family homes or duplexes, regardless of lot size unless part of a planned unit development. Other zoning districts either do not allow residential use, or if they do, there is no per-acre density limit.

The density calculation prior to that presently in Sec. 5.2.7 entailed multiplying the allowable per-acre density by the lot size expressed in acreage.

Example (RM zone)
20 units (allowable per-acre density) X 0.58 acre = 11.6 units.
The fractional 11.6 is rounded up to 12, so 12 units would be permitted with rounding.

The density calculation articulated in Section 5.2.7 is different and starts with a number of dwelling units and divides by the lot size expressed in acreage.

Example (RM zone)
12 units (desired) / .58 acres = 20.7 units.
This number exceeds the 20 unit/acre limitation in the RM zone, so 12 units cannot be permitted.

As a matter of practice, units in excess of the permissible density have not been allowed, even with a fractional result of less than 0.5. Keeping the rounding language and changing practice to incorporate rounding can result in 1 surplus unit.

Example (RM zone)
12 units (desired) / .59 acres = 20.3 units.
The fractional 0.3 is rounded down to 20 units, which is compliant with the 20 units/acre density limitation in the RM zone. Note, however, that 11 units is the maximum density that results in less than 20.0 units/acre (11/.59 = 18.6).

Staff recommends keeping to the methodology that retains the integrity of the express density limits of the residential and institutional zones. Existing bonus provisions may be sought to exceed those limits based on defined performance measures.

Deleted language is ~~crossed out~~.

Sec. 5.2.7 Density and Intensity of Development Calculations

  (a) Dwelling Units per Acre:

In accordance with the district-specific provisions of Article 4, the calculation of development intensity shall be measured as follows in such cases where the intensity of development is measured on a dwelling unit per acre basis:

1. Density Calculation: The total number of dwelling units provided on a development site, or portion of the site where split by a zoning district boundary, shall be divided by the gross site area expressed in acres. ~~In calculating the number of residential units permitted, fractional units of less than five-tenths (0.5) shall be rounded down to the nearest whole number and fractional units of five-tenths (0.5) or greater shall be rounded up to the nearest whole number. Any rounding of fractional units shall be limited to a single final calculation for any development.~~

2. Density Equivalent, Nonresidential Uses: For purposes of density calculations, each one thousand, five hundred (1,500) square feet of nonresidential gross floor area not contained within a dwelling unit or within common hallways, stairwells and elevator shafts serving said dwelling units shall be counted as one dwelling unit.

  (b) Floor Area Ratio:
As written.