



Planning Commission Staff Report

Text Amendment	Community Development Department	Date: 4/2/26
Statement of Issue:	Consider a recommendation to the City Council regarding amendment to Chapter 30 of the Municipal Code increasing the maximum height for R-4 Multiple Family Residence (high density) zoning from 45' to 60'.	
Background:	<p>Introduction Community Development staff recommend the Planning Commission consider initiating a text amendment increasing the maximum height in R-4 zoning. This suggestion comes from a review of recent R-4 multifamily (high density) projects and Planning Commission recommendations on variances and district regulations, along with feedback from various developers in the multifamily housing space.</p> <p>Through this analysis, staff have identified an increase in R-4 building height as an opportunity for review, and potential update, to better reflect current building and land use trends. Most of the text in the City's Zoning Ordinance dates to 1978, and through the guidance of the Planning Commission has gradually been enhanced and modernized several times per year as community needs change. The Last district wide height change was 2018 when the General Business (GB) maximum height increased from 35' to 50'.</p> <p>Goal of a Change to R-4 Maximum Height Allow for economically feasible four-story projects – like those discussed below – to move forward in the zoning intended for multifamily (high density) development by identifying a path for creating more housing units and compliance with site development requirements such as lot coverage, open space, and parking.</p> <p>A Note on How the Zoning Ordinance Defines Height (30-421) <i>Building height</i> means the distance between the average ground level at the building line and the highest point of the roof or flat roof, to the decline of a mansard or to the highest gable on a pitched or hipped roof. In a shoreland district, the height of building means the vertical distance between the highest adjoining ground level at the building or ten feet above the lowest ground level, whichever is lower, and the highest point of a flat roof or average height of the highest gable of a pitched or hipped roof.</p>	

	<p>Survey of Recent Projects</p> <p>R-4 maximum height is currently 45'</p> <p>Pillars SR-4 Height to peak measurement = 56' – 6" Variance allowed for the construction of a four story, 120-unit senior living community building with an average building height to the mid-point of the roof of 50' 4"</p> <p>Mill + Miss SR-4 Height to peak measurement = 57' 6" Variance allowed for the construction of a four story, 132-unit multi-family housing community building with an average building height to the mid-point of the roof of 48'</p> <p>Riverview Apartments CBD Height to peak measurement = 50' 6" Underlying Central Business District (CBD) zoning permitted a Maximum Building Height of 60'</p> <p><u>All</u> these projects exceed the maximum height for R-4 zoning.</p> <p>Increased Multifamily Housing is a Community Need The HRA Comprehensive Housing Study for Itasca County suggests strong demand for multifamily housing – especially affordable and workforce rentals. Please see the Grand Rapids Submarket Housing Dashboard included with this report.</p> <p>Result of Last Maximum Height Change Previous district level changes in maximum height have encouraged developments in General Business zoning including Best Western Plus and My Place.</p> <p>Staff recommendation:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Amend 30-512 Table 2A District Development Regulations; Principal Structures by increasing the Maximum Height for R-4 zoning to 60'.
<p>Considerations:</p>	<p>The Planning Commission should make specific findings of fact regarding the proposed amendments to the ordinance:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Will the change affect the character of the neighborhood? 2. Will the change foster economic growth in the community? 3. Would the proposed change be in keeping with the spirit and intent

	<p>of the Zoning Ordinance?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Would the change be in the best interest of the general public? 5. Would the change be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan?
Recommendation:	Based on the above findings the Commission should consider a recommendation to the City Council regarding these draft changes.
Required Action:	<p>Pass a motion, based on the findings of fact, to forward either a favorable recommendation, either with or without changes to the draft amendments, to the City Council, or pass a motion, based on the findings of fact, forwarding an unfavorable recommendation to the City Council regarding and amendment to Chapter 30 of the Zoning Ordinance.</p> <p><u>Example Motion:</u></p> <p>Motion by _____, second by _____ that, based on the findings of fact presented here today, and in the public’s best interest, the Planning Commission does hereby forward a (favorable)(unfavorable) recommendation to the City Council regarding a draft amendment to Table 2A District Development Regulations; Principal Structures - increasing the Maximum Height for R-4 zoning to 60’.</p>
Attachments:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff presentation • Housing Study (Grand Rapids submarket dashboard) • Text Amendment Considerations