



Planning Commission Update

Update	Community Development Department	Date: 4/2/26
Task:	Study the feasibility of developing an alternate multifamily unit calculation using a flexible bedroom allowance for projects in GB, LB, and R-4 zones.	
Issues for analysis:	<p>There is considerable demand – currently and into the foreseeable future - for multifamily housing units in Grand Rapids. The number of suitable building sites near existing sewer and water utility service is limited. The current method of determining unit count for a multifamily project tends to underutilize the potential of available building sites - creating a dynamic where demand is strong and the economics of creating multifamily housing are made especially challenging with limited unit count.</p> <p>Is there a way to meet market demand by creating higher unit count without sacrificing important site development requirements such as green space, stormwater requirements, and parking?</p>	
Municipal Code:	<p>How unit count is calculated in the Municipal Code:</p> <p>Table 2A District Development Regulations list Area S/F Unit in column 2 – this is a key factor in establishing density. R-4 Area S/F Unit is 2,500 and GB/LB is 3,000.</p> <p>Example calculation for a 6-acre site:</p> <p>Project A (R-4)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Determine Gross Area by multiplying the number of acres by square feet per acre. $(6 * 42,560) = 255,360$ Sq. Ft. 2. Divide Gross Area by Area S/F Unit. $(255,360 / 2,500) = 102.144$ <p>Project B GB/LB</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Determine Gross Area by multiplying the number of acres by square feet per acre. $(6 * 42,560) = 255,360$ Sq. Ft. 2. Divide Gross Area by S/F Unit. $(255,360 / 3,000) = 85.12$ <p>The Municipal Code considers BOTH a three-bedroom apartment and a one-bedroom apartment as one unit. Project A and B could potentially have 306 and 255 bedrooms if all units were three-bedroom. However, multifamily developments typically have a mix of unit types.</p> <p>Example calculation for Project A using a mix of bedrooms:</p> <p>102 units * 3 bedrooms per unit = 306 bedrooms</p> <p>102 units * 1 bedroom per unit = 102 bedrooms</p>	

	<p>Mixed project</p> <p>6 - 4 bedrooms 10 - 3 bedrooms 42 - 2 bedrooms 26 - 1 bedroom 18 - studio (count as 1 bedroom)</p> <p>Total units = 102 Total bedrooms = 182 Potential bedrooms if all were three-bedroom = 306</p> <p>Is there a way to consider bedroom count in calculating number of allowed multifamily units to offer flexibility for developers to create and market economically viable projects?</p>
<p>Potential Solution:</p>	<p>Using a flexible bedroom allowance for multifamily unit calculations using an average – i.e. $4+3+2+1 = 10$</p> <p>$10 / 4 = 2.5$</p> <p>Example calculation for Project A:</p> <p>Project A (R-4)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Determine Gross Area by multiplying the number of acres by square feet per acre. $(6 * 42,560) = 255,360$ Sq. Ft. 2. Divide Gross Area by Area S/F Unit. $(255,360 / 2,500) = 102.144$ 3. $102.144 * 2.5 = 255.36$ bedrooms distributed across a flexible number of units. <p>This is 51 bedrooms less than if all R-4 units were three-bedroom and the same number of bedrooms were less dense GB and LB district unit counts maxed out with all three-bedroom units.</p> <p>Is this a reasonable alternative?</p>