



CITY OF
GRAND RAPIDS
IT'S IN MINNESOTA'S NATURE

Text Amendment

Alternate Unit Calculation / Flexible Bedroom Allowance

Recommendation to City Council

July 13, 2026



Text Amendment

Key Points from the Staff Report:

- **Recommendation to Council for text amendment originates with the Planning Commission**
- **Suitable Multifamily sites near utilities are limited**
- **Amendment is narrow – does not reduced unit size or increase total number of bedrooms allowed**
- **Balances market realities and site development requirements**



Text Amendment

Rationale

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.





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Text Amendment

How Unit Count is Calculated in the Municipal Code

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.





Text Amendment

How Unit Count is Calculated in the Municipal Code

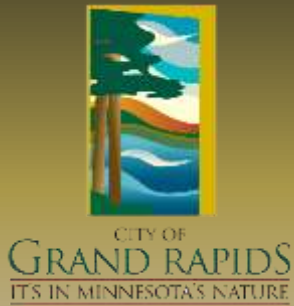
Example Calculations for a 6-Acre Site:

Project A (R-4)

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. $(255,360 / 2,500) = 102.144$

Project B GB/LB

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. $(255,360 / 3,000) = 85.12$



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Issue

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.





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Example

Mixed project

6 - 4 bedrooms

10 - 3 bedrooms

42 - 2 bedrooms

26 - 1 bedroom

18 - studio (count as 1 bedroom)

Total units = 102

Total bedrooms = 182

Potential bedrooms if all were three-bedroom = 306





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A Reasonable Alternative

Using a flexible bedroom allowance for multifamily unit calculations using an average – i.e.
 $4+3+2+1 = 10$

$$10 / 4 = 2.5$$





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Example Calculation

Project A (R-4)

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.**

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.



Text Amendment

Text Amendment Recommendations

30-421 Definitions

Dwelling, multi-family, alternate unit calculation / flexible bedroom allowance means a formula for calculating a maximum number of bedrooms in a multi-family building that can be allocated to a flexible unit count instead of using the fixed Gross Area / Area Sq. Ft. Unit calculation.

Example calculation for 1 acre in R-4: $(43,560/2500) \times 2.5 = 43.56$ bedrooms.

Flexible Bedroom Allowance subject to meeting all other site development standards for the district.



Text Amendment

Text Amendment Recommendations

30-512 Table 2A District Development Regulations

Add footnote (6) to LB, GB, R-3, and R-4 under column heading Area S/F Unit

(6) Formula for Dwelling, multiple-family, alternate unit calculation / flexible bedroom allowance is: (Gross Area / Area Sq. Ft. per Unit) x 2.5

Example calculation for 1 acre in R-4: $(43,560/2500) \times 2.5 = 43.56$ bedrooms.

Flexible Bedroom Allowance subject to meeting all other site development standards for the district.



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Planning Commission Considerations:

PLANNING COMMISSION

Considerations

ZONING ORDINANCE AMENDMENT

1. Will the change affect the character of neighborhoods?

Why/Why not?

2. Would the change foster economic growth in the community?

Why/Why not?

3. Would the proposed change be in keeping with the spirit and intent of the ordinance?

Why/Why not?

4. Would the change be in the best interest of the general public?

Why/Why not?

5. Would the change be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan?

Why/Why not?



Text Amendment

Planning Commission Findings:

Text amendment would not negatively affect neighborhoods because site development standards remain in place.

Text amendment would foster economic growth by offering developers flexibility.

Text amendment is in keeping with the spirit and intent of the ordinance because it builds on the existing ordinance.

Text amendment is in the best interests of the general public because it encourages needed development.

Text amendment is consistent with the Comp Plan by promoting development near commercial districts and public amenities.



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Questions?