



Planning Commission Staff Report

Text Amendment	Community Development Department	Date: 6/4/26
Statement of Issue:	Amend the Municipal Code to include an alternate multifamily unit calculation using a flexible bedroom allowance for projects in GB, LB, and R-4 zones.	
Background:	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. 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. Example calculation 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. $(255,360 / 3,000) = 85.12$ 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. Example calculation for Project A using a mix of bedrooms: 102 units * 3 bedrooms per unit = 306 bedrooms 102 units * 1 bedroom per unit = 102 bedrooms	

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

Flexible Bedroom Allowance for Multifamily Unit Calculations

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?

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

$$10 / 4 = 2.5$$

Example calculation for Project A:

Project A (R-4)

1. Determine Gross Area by multiplying the number of acres by square feet per acre. $(6 \times 42,560) = 255,360$ Sq. Ft.
2. Divide Gross Area by Area S/F Unit. $(255,360 / 2,500) = 102.144$
3. $102.144 \times 2.5 = 255.36$ 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.

Staff recommendation

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.

	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) x 2.5 = 43.56 bedrooms. Flexible Bedroom Allowance subject to meeting all other site development standards for the district.
Considerations:	The Planning Commission should make specific findings of fact regarding the proposed amendments to the ordinance: 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 of the Zoning Ordinance? 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:	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. <u>Example Motion:</u> 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 30-421 and 30-512 Table 2A: 30-421 Definitions <i>Dwelling, multi-family, alternate unit calculation / flexible bedroom allowance</i> 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) x 2.5 = 43.56 bedrooms. Flexible Bedroom Allowance subject to meeting all other site development standards for the district.

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Attachments:	• Staff presentation • Housing Study (Grand Rapids submarket dashboard) • Text Amendment Considerations