

MEMORANDUM

TO: Howey-in-the-Hills Planning Board
CC: J. Brock, Town Clerk
FROM: Thomas Harowski, AICP, Planning Consultant
SUBJECT: Residential and Commercial Design Guidelines
DATE: March 13, 2023

Following the Board's request to review design guidelines for residential development including both single-family and townhouse units, staff has been reviewing design guidelines in use in other jurisdictions to compare with the Town's program. What we found is that the Town's rules cover the same basic areas of regulation that other jurisdictions use. This situation suggests that our discussion should begin by focusing on specifically what outcomes the Town is seeking from its design rules and where the outcomes are falling short in the process.

The code section from Chapter 4 of the land development regulations lists the purpose and intent as follows:

4.06.01 *Purpose and Intent*

- A. Architectural requirements are an integral part of the LDC in order to ensure quality development, create a sense of place and community, and to enhance the physical environment. All architectural plans submitted under this Chapter must be signed and sealed by a licensed architect registered in the State of Florida.
- B. These standards are intended to:
 - 1. Encourage a diversity in housing styles, shapes, and materials in order to create variety in the streetscape,
 - 2. Encourage richness in design through materials and details,
 - 3. Maximize the positive impact of development,
 - 4. Ensure that non-residential building facades are designed to a human scale, for esthetic appeal, pedestrian comfort, and compatibility with adjacent development,
 - 5. Ensure that larger non-residential buildings are designed to reduce their apparent bulk and volume through design and landscaping,
 - 6. Encourage sustainable architecture.

The regulations then include standards for residential development generally, single-family homes and non-residential development. The same regulations as set for single-family homes are applied to townhouse units. Since the rules were adopted they have been applied almost exclusively to single-family homes which for the most part have been in the Venezia South and Talichet developments. There have been a relative handful of single-family homes on scattered sites throughout the town that have been reviewed as well. There have been no non-residential projects that have undergone a full design review since the rules were adopted, and the only townhouse project has been the Venezia Townhouse development.

Thus, there is some experience in evaluating the design output for single-family units but little else with other types of structures. The Venezia Townhouse project, while having an approved design, has yet to be constructed to allow an effective review of the output. The only commercial project that has gotten to the serious discussion point is the commercial component of the Lake Hills PUD, and the PUD agreement includes specific design standards that will be applied within the project. For the most part, single-family reviews to date have resulted in reasonably well articulated front facades and minimally articulated side and rear facades. Until recently the various iterations of the planning board have been satisfied with this outcome.

The full set of design guidelines is laid out in Section 4.06 of the land development code. An excerpt of the code has been added to the agenda packet for review, and a copy of a single-family residential review checklist has been provided to offer a short-hand list of requirements for single-family units. This checklist includes the landscaping guidelines as well as structural components as landscaping adds to the overall design impact.

The last time the residential design guidelines were modified was in August 2014 when Ordinance 2014-005 was adopted. This ordinance defined the term block face and set a standard for spacing between houses with the same floor plan. This ordinance also defined primary and secondary facades and specified the number of design elements required for each façade type. Other provisions for the minimum colors and materials were made mandatory rather than suggested. Ordinance 2014-005 is included in the agenda packet.

The other issue related to the discussion is Florida Statutes 163.3202 (5) which limits the local government's ability to apply requirements for building design elements to single-family and two-family dwellings unless the residence qualify under one of the exemptions. The most critical exemption for our discussion is dwellings located in a planned unit development. This means the Town can apply the minimum standards to projects within our planned unit developments. (Venezia, Talichet, Talichet Phase 2, The Reserve, Watermark, Lake Hills.) The Town has been careful to include compliance with Section 4.06 of the land development code in these planned unit development agreements. Technically the rules cannot be applied to infill development elsewhere in the Town and in areas with standard zoning (Whispering Heights). We should note that the current legislature is proposing to remove the exemption for planned unit developments which would then potentially exclude enforcement in these projects. A copy of the excerpt from the Florida statutes is attached.

Discussion questions:

What does the Board consider the purpose of the design regulations for single-family and other types of structures?

How do the current regulations contribute or fail to contribute to the desired outcome?

Should there be a balance between the components of design required by rule and the freedom of the house designer in creating individual designs? (Note: This is in part why the rule sets a standard for a minimum number of design elements while allowing the designer to select from a broad range of options in meeting the requirement.)

Should the Town direct new development to a range of specific architectural styles? (Common styles used in Florida are Spanish Mission, Mediterranean, Italianate, Colonial, Neoclassical, Greek Revival, Craftsman, Florida Vernacular)