

memorandum

DATE: January 17, 2025
TO: Lathrup Village Planning Commission
FROM: Jill Bahm & Eric Pietsch, Giffels Webster
SUBJECT: Zoning Amendment – Ground Floor Multi-Family Residential in the VC District

Introduction

What prompted this amendment?

The developer of the Annie Lathrup School site is pursuing a renovation and reuse of the historic school building, which includes the construction of two new apartment buildings attached to the north and south sides of the school. These proposed buildings consist of dwelling units on the ground floor, which is not permissible within the Village Center District of the zoning ordinance. The design and layout of the buildings will aim to incorporate the characteristics and standards of the Village Center District, most of which are written for commercial retail uses. Therefore, the ordinance amendment will require site plan review and approval by the Planning Commission when considering allowing for ground floor multi-family residential use in the VC District.

Current Ordinance

The ordinance allows for a mix of uses on the ground floor of buildings in the VC District, including, but not limited to retail and grocery, restaurants and bars, professional and administrative offices, businesses and services, health and wellness, civic and institutional uses such as academic, libraries and museums, childcare and live-work spaces. Residential uses, such as multi-family and single-family attached units are only permitted on floors above the first.

Considerations

What are the appropriate options for ground floor residential uses in the Village Center District?

Article 3. Zoning District. See the proposed amendment, attached below, which includes the changes to the existing ordinance language.

Summary / Recommendation

This proposed amendment to the Village Center District of Lathrup Village takes the vision and intent of the Master Plan into strong consideration. The evolution of economic conditions in recent years have brought to light challenges when developing commercial and retail tenant lease spaces. This amendment strives to continue to pursue a walkable sense of place for the city's central district, while providing relief to the ground floors of buildings that propose residential units abutting attractive public spaces and corridors. We propose that the Planning Commission consider the language in the draft amendment below, make modifications where it is seen as fit prior to forwarding to City Council for consideration and adoption.

Section 3.1.8.A. Intent. The intent of the VC Village Center District is to create a compact and unique downtown district for the City by encouraging the redevelopment of property where buildings feature a mix of residential, retail and office uses and are laid out in a pedestrian-oriented manner that reflects a traditional small town urban form. There will be two types of roads in the VC District: Primary roads that function as the main streets and other roads that support the grid network. Parking will be provided on-street and in shared parking areas. Alleys will provide service and parking access.

Section 3.1.8.B. Village Center District Uses

Use	Floor	
	Ground Floor	Upper Floor
Commercial Uses		
Restaurant, bar, tavern, live entertainment	P	P
Personal Services	P	P
Bed & Breakfast, inn, hotel	P	P
Retail commercial uses up to 6,000 sq. ft.	P	S
Grocery store up to 10,000 sq. ft.	P	
Post office and other government services	P	P
Professional & administrative offices		P
Business service uses	P	P
Establishments involving the manufacture or sale of any alcoholic beverages regulated by the Michigan Liquor Control Act, MCL 436.1101 et seq.	S	S
Banks and other financial institutions	P	P
Outdoor cafes	P	P
Temporary outdoor display and sales §36-4.14	A	A
Adult day care centers §36-4.15	S	S
Recreation, Education & Assembly		
Library, museum	S	P
Child care centers §36-4.15	S	S
Theater, cinema, performing arts, places of worship §36-6.2	S	S
Instruction centers for academic and fine arts purposes	P	P
Health/Fitness facility	P	P

Residential Uses	
Home occupations/Live-Work	P A
Single family attached	P
Multiple family	<u>P***</u> P
Accessory uses, customarily incidental to permitted uses	A A
Uses similar to the above uses, as determined by the Planning Commission	P*/S** P*/S**
Publicly owned and operated parks and parkways	

P = Permitted S = Special Land Use A = Accessory use

* If similar to a permitted use on this level, as determined by the Planning Commission

** If similar to a special land use permitted on this level, as determined by the Planning Commission, and subject to reasonable conditions to address impacts of similar special land uses.

*** Multiple family residential uses may be permitted on the ground floor of a building, subject to the review and approval by the Planning Commission and the standards of Section 3.1.8.I.

Section 3.1.8.D. Building Placement

1. Buildings shall be constructed to the Build-to-Line and occupy 90 percent or more of the full width of the parcel, subject to the following:
 - A. Build-to-Zone: To allow variation and design flexibility, portions of the building façade may include jogs up to five (5') feet from the property line. Additional variations in setback for architectural features that meet the intent and spirit of this ordinance may be permitted at the discretion of the Planning Commission.
 - B. Building Entrances: Recessed areas from three (3) to five (5) feet from the Build-to-Zone shall be provided for primary building entrances.
 - C. Flexible Building Placement.
 - i. Forecourts: The Planning Commission may grant an exception for a building façade to retreat up to fifteen (15') feet from to the Build-to-Zone, into the building mass, to provide an open space plaza or courtyard provided that at least thirty-five percent (35%) of the total frontage meets the Build-to Zone.
 - ii. Historic structures: The Planning Commission may allow flexibility for building placement for historic buildings and additions, provided that the development meets the intent of this district.
 - D. Paved areas: All areas located between the building and the street shall be paved for pedestrians unless specific landscaped areas within the paved sections are approved.
2. Other Roads: Buildings that abut other roads shall be constructed to the Build-to-Zone and occupy 75% or more of the full frontage of the parcel and must meet 3.1.8.D.1 above. The Planning Commission may reduce the 75% frontage requirement to 50% when it determines that development of the site will be phased and that it is not reasonable to meet the 75% requirement at the time of site plan approval.
3. Interior Side Setbacks—None required

Section 3.1.8.E. Building Elements

The requirements listed in this subsection shall apply to all front-facing and exterior-side facing facades as well as facades that directly face a park or plaza. Walls shall not be blank. Walls shall include windows and architectural features customarily found on the front of a building in a traditional downtown setting such as awnings, edge detailing, cornice work, decorative materials, and decorative lighting. The following additional requirements shall apply:

1. Building Composition: Building facades shall be comprised of three distinct components: a base or ground floor, a middle, and a top.
 - A. Base: The base of a building shall be designed to clearly define where the building begins. It shall enhance the pedestrian experience by providing quality durable materials as well as ample windows that encourage views into a ground floor space. Frontage base types shall be one of the following on Primary Roads:
 - i. Arcade: A façade featuring a series of arches and columns.
 - ii. Storefront: The front façade build-to line is at or near the edge of the right-of-way (within the build-to-zone). The entrance to the building, which may be recessed, is at the grade of the sidewalk.
 - iii. Multiple family residential buildings: When ground floor residential is permitted by the Planning Commission, there is no prescribed building frontage, except that building fronts should generally run parallel to the street. Facades facing public rights-of-way, parks, and plazas should contain windows proportionate to the building façade.
 - B. Middle: For buildings with more than one story, the middle of a building, which begins above the ground floor, shall be separated from the ground floor by a visible break that may include a change of color, material, or window pattern. This break may include the sign band area. Upper floor windows shall be inset and grouped to reflect the rhythm of the ground floor openings.
 - C. Top: The top of the building will distinguish the building with a cornice or noticeable roof edge. Flat roofs shall be enclosed with parapets.
 - i. Equipment: Rooftop mechanical and other equipment shall be positioned and screened to minimize views from adjacent properties and obscure views from the public rights-of-way.
 - ii. Accessibility: Roofs may be accessible and may be used as balconies or terraces. Vegetated roofs are encouraged to cool buildings and limit stormwater runoff.
2. Windows and Doors
 - A. Generally
 - i. Materials: Structural elements to support canopies or signage, along with mullion and frame systems for windows and doors shall be painted, powder-coated or stained (or the equivalent). Glass shall be clear or lightly tinted. Reflective glass is not permitted. Glass block windows shall not be permitted unless the Planning Commission grants an exception for use as an accent.
 - ii. Shutters: When shutters are used, whether operating or decorative, they shall be equal to the width of one half of the adjacent window opening
 - iii. Façade Openings: All porches, doors, colonnades, and upper floor windows shall be vertically proportioned.
 - B. Ground Floor windows and doors for arcade and storefront frontage types:
 - i. Integral Design: All storefronts shall have doorways, windows, and signage that are integrally designed.

- ii. Transparency: Each storefront shall have transparent or lightly tinted areas, equal to at least 70 percent, but not more than 90 percent of its portion of the façade, between two (2) and eight (8) feet from the ground. These required window areas shall be either windows that allow views into retail space, dining areas, office work areas, lobbies, pedestrian entrances, merchandise display windows or other windows consistent with encouraging an active pedestrian environment along the storefront.
 - iii. Entry: At least one functioning doorway shall be provided for every street-facing storefront, with the primary entrance on the street. As applicable for a single ground floor use, one doorway shall be provided for every 75 feet in horizontal building length.
- C. Upper Floor windows and doors—Glazing: The glazed area of a façade above the first floor shall be between 30 and 50 percent, with each façade being calculated separately, floor to floor. Sill height: All windows shall maintain a consistent sill height, unless the Planning Commission grants an exception for a decorative window element or similar feature.

No change to the subsections 3.1.8.E 3-8.

No change to subsections 3.1.8.F-H

Section 3.1.8.I. First Floor Uses on Primary Streets

The following regulations apply to all first floor uses:

1. Retail and restaurant uses facing a primary street shall be at least twenty (20') feet deep, as measured from the street-facing facade. The Planning Commission may waive this requirement when it determines the following criteria are met:
 - A. The project involves the rehabilitation of a historic structure.
 - B. The project satisfies a demonstrated need for housing in the City of Lathrup Village.
 - C. The project includes passive or active open spaces, such as parks, plazas, and/or event spaces for public use.
 - D. The project is consistent with the City's Master Plan.
2. In order to promote a walkable downtown area as described in the intent of this zoning district and the City's Master Plan, Banks, financial institutions, professional, medical, administrative offices, and day care centers shall not comprise more than twenty-five (25%) percent of the street facing façade of the same side of a single block along a primary street.