



AGENDA REPORT

City Council Meeting

TODAY'S DATE: December 10, 2024

MEETING DATE: December 18, 2024

TO: Sandpoint City Council, Mayor

FROM: Bill Dean, City Planner and Jason Welker, Planning & Community Development Director

SUBJECT: Staff presentation: Sandpoint City Code Observations and Possible Updates for Coming Year

DESCRIPTION/BACKGROUND:

This staff presentation aims to provide observations on the Sandpoint Zoning Ordinance and propose key areas for updates in 2025. The goal is to align the City's development processes with its policy aspirations, improve clarity and usability of the Code, and identify opportunities to enhance procedural and substantive outcomes.

OBSERVATIONS:

1. **Strengthening Deliberate Decision-Making in Development Permitting:** There is a gap between the aspirational vision of the Comprehensive Plan and the realities of building permit approvals. The **Site Plan Review permit** (SCC 9-1-4) serves as a critical intermediary step but is underemphasized in practice. Suggested updates include:
 - a. **Reinforcing the Site Plan Review process:** Clarify its role as a bridge between policy documents and building permits, ensuring development aligns with Comprehensive Plan goals.
 - b. **Enhancing findings for discretionary approvals:** Findings should integrate engineering considerations for City infrastructure systems (water, sewer) and transportation networks.
 - c. **Strengthening procedural clarity:** Revisions would highlight the City's ability to review development within its broader context without adding new processes or permits, ensuring due process for applicants and neighbors.
2. **Simplifying and Modernizing the Zoning Code:** The Zoning Code has become cumbersome over time, with amendments leading to conflicting standards and poor organization. Updates should aim to:
 - a. Consolidate development standards into clear, accessible tables to reduce reliance on multiple code sections.
 - b. Provide clarity on common scenarios, such as:
 - i. Placement of accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and garages.
 - ii. Alley functionality for new development.
 - c. Create a more intuitive structure to facilitate better understanding and decision-making for residents, developers, and staff.

3. **Leveraging the Foundation of Objective Development Standards:** The Code already includes a solid framework of measurable, objective standards for development, such as those for architecture, landscaping, and pedestrian circulation. Recommendations include:
 - a. Retaining and refining these categories to reduce inconsistencies.
 - b. Adding clarity on where and how these standards apply to ensure consistent application.
4. **Affirming Opportunities for Small Lot Development:** While the Code allows development on substandard lots of record (smaller than 5,000 sq feet), it does not facilitate the creation of new small lots except through Planned Unit Developments (PUDs). Suggested updates include evaluating whether small lot development should be allowed by-right in certain zones to increase flexibility and streamline development on smaller parcels and reviewing the current standards for substandard lots of record and lot-line adjustments to ensure they align with broader goals for efficient and innovative land use.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2025 CODE UPDATES:

Priority 1: Clarify the Site Plan Review permit process to better connect Comprehensive Plan policies with on-the-ground development.

Time permitting:

- ☐ **Reorganize and streamline Code standards** into user-friendly formats to improve accessibility and reduce inconsistencies.
- ☐ **Preserve and enhance objective development standards** while reducing ambiguities in their application.
- ☐ **Affirm opportunities for small lot development** by exploring zoning adjustments that allow for greater flexibility without requiring a PUD.

NEXT STEPS

Staff will conduct further internal review and public outreach on these observations and proposed updates. A detailed work plan for 2025 Code revisions will be developed for Council's consideration in early 2025.

ACTION REQUIRED

This is an informational item; no action is required at this time.

WILL THERE BE ANY FINANCIAL IMPACT? No HAS THIS ITEM BEEN BUDGETED? No

ATTACHMENTS: