

The following excerpt is taken from “Section 5: Next Steps” of the Town Center Study Phase 1 Report (approved by City Council on March 18, 2008)

Development Regulations: Realization of the vision also largely depends on the City’s utilization of appropriate development regulations (zoning, subdivision, building). Phase 1 has revealed that certain aspects of current development regulations may be ineffective at not only addressing unique redevelopment challenges but also at achieving the desired form and character of the vision. Additionally, while it is acknowledged that development regulations cannot solely address the redevelopment problem (land use controls cannot compel anyone to invest in an area), development regulations can be cumbersome, conflicting, and redundant. A city that proactively improves its development regulations and removes regulatory impediments can help to entice investment and redevelopment.

Most current zoning regulations in the Town Center are oriented to a conventional low-density suburban development pattern. This study confirmed that the City needs to be very careful not to undermine the eclectic charm and place-making character of the Town Center with generic development regulations. Therefore, Phase 2 should be used to explore form-based development standards which may be better suited to produce the community’s desired outcome (the vision) by achieving synchronization between zoning and the surrounding context (street types, building form, lot size). In other words, instead of continuing with conventional regulations that only prohibit extremely undesirable outcomes, it may be better to use regulations that actually produce the types of development that have historically shown to be economically sustainable and attractive.

Revising development regulations to ensure consistency with the Town Center vision should send a signal to the private sector and go a long way toward establishing a level playing field for developers and investors. It is possible to revise development regulations in such a way to insure that realization of the vision will not depend on future political pressure or discretionary design review by city officials or staff. More predictability in the development process translates to less risk for the private sector and comfort in knowing that adjacent property owners will be held to the same set of standards.