

**WORTHINGTON CITY COUNCIL  
SPECIAL MEETING**

**4:00 P.M. - Wednesday, April 22, 2026  
City Hall Council Chambers**

**A. CALL TO ORDER**

**B. CITY COUNCIL BUSINESS – COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

**1. Presentation and Discussion Regarding the City’s Zoning Code Update**

**C. ADJOURNMENT**

## **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT MEMO**

**DATE: April 17, 2026**

**TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL**

**SUBJECT: ITEMS REQUIRING CITY COUNCIL ACTION OR REVIEW**

### **1. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION REGARDING THE CITY'S ZONING CODE UPDATE**

In 2025, the City contracted with MSA Professional Services and their subconsultant, Michael Lamb Consulting to assist the City with a complete update of the zoning code of ordinances. Planning Commission has served as the primary advisory group for this project and has held a few discussions since starting the project.

City Staff and MSA Staff will be in attendance to present an update on the project so far, review the work completed, and hold a discussion regarding the annotated outline for the new code.

A memo from MSA is included with this packet along with an annotated outline.

Also included with this packet is Memo 1 and Technical Memo 2 that were reviewed by Planning Commission. These earlier memos are summarized in the first memo directed to City Council, dated April 17th, but are included for reference.

To: Worthington City Council

From: MSA Professional Services & Michael Lamb Consulting

Date: April 17, 2026

Subject: Zoning Code Update – Project Status and Summary of Findings

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## **Purpose**

This memorandum provides an update on the ongoing Zoning and Subdivision Code Update. It summarizes key findings from the initial diagnostic review and outlines major themes and recommendations moving forward. The goal of this project is to modernize the City’s zoning regulations to better align with the 2045 Comprehensive Plan, improve usability, and support future growth and development. The technical memorandums are attached as well, but they lengthy and very detailed. This memo provides a high level overview of the two technical memos..

## **Background**

The City’s zoning regulations are primarily contained in Chapter 155 of the Municipal Code, along with related provisions in other chapters such as parking, planning, and signage. Staff conducted a detailed review of these regulations to evaluate how well they support the City’s goals and to identify opportunities for improvement.

## **Key Findings**

### **1. Complexity and Organization**

The current code is difficult to navigate, with regulations spread across multiple chapters, tables, and appendices. Users often need to reference several sections to understand requirements for a single project.

### **2. Excessive Number of Zoning Districts**

The code includes multiple residential zoning districts with overlapping standards, some of which are not actively used. This creates unnecessary complexity without providing meaningful distinctions.

### **3. Limited Housing Variety**

Existing regulations primarily support single-family homes and large apartment buildings, with fewer options for smaller-scale or “middle” housing types such as duplexes, townhomes, and accessory dwelling units.

### **4. Barriers to Mixed-Use Development**



The current code does not clearly define or broadly permit mixed-use development, which limits opportunities identified in the Comprehensive Plan, particularly in downtown and along key corridors.

#### 5. Disconnected and Redundant Regulations

Key standards such as parking, density, and design requirements are located in separate sections or chapters. Some regulations are duplicated or overlap, leading to confusion and inefficiencies.

#### 6. Commercial Zoning Structure

A single commercial district accounts for the majority of commercial land and functions as a broad “catch-all,” limiting the City’s ability to tailor regulations to different development contexts.

### **Alignment with the Comprehensive Plan**

The 2045 Comprehensive Plan emphasizes the need for a wider range of housing options, support for mixed-use development, and more flexible and user-friendly regulations. The current zoning code does not fully support these objectives, highlighting the importance of this update.

### **Preliminary Recommendations**

- Simplify and reorganize the zoning code to improve clarity and usability.
- Consolidate zoning districts, particularly residential districts, to reduce redundancy.
- Expand allowed housing types to support affordability and diversity.
- Clearly define and allow mixed-use development in appropriate areas.
- Streamline development review processes and reduce approval timelines.
- Consolidate and clarify parking and related regulations.
- Update zoning districts and mapping to better reflect existing conditions and future land use goals.

### **Next Steps**

The project team will continue refining recommendations and begin drafting updated zoning code language. Future meetings with the Planning Commission and City Council will focus on reviewing draft concepts, policy direction, and implementation strategies.

155.001 Title	<i>rename</i>
<a href="#">155.002</a> Statement of purpose	
<a href="#">155.003</a> City land use policy	
<a href="#">155.004</a> Legal authority	
<a href="#">155.005</a> Provisions severable	
<a href="#">155.006</a> Nature of contents	
<a href="#">155.007</a> Ordinances repealed	
<a href="#">155.008</a> Jurisdiction	
<a href="#">155.009</a> Interpretation	
<a href="#">155.010</a> Definitions; rules of construction and interpretation	<i>Move to back of chapter</i>
<b>Zoning Map, Districts and Boundaries</b>	
<a href="#">155.025</a> Zoning map	<i>Move under title</i>
<a href="#">155.026</a> Boundary interpretation	
<b>General Regulations</b>	
<a href="#">155.040</a> Lots and yards	<i>locate with each district</i>
<a href="#">155.041</a> Height and bulk	<i>Locate with each district</i>
<a href="#">155.042</a> Parking and loading	
<a href="#">155.043</a> Appearance and buffering	
<a href="#">155.044</a> Performance standards	<i>Move to end of districts</i>
<b>Uses</b>	
<a href="#">155.055</a> Permitted uses	<i>Relocate table of uses here</i>
<a href="#">155.056</a> Conditional uses	
<a href="#">155.057</a> Use groups	
<a href="#">155.058</a> Transitional uses	
<a href="#">155.059</a> Accessory uses	
<a href="#">155.060</a> Conversion of dwellings	
<b>Residence Districts</b>	
<a href="#">155.070</a> General purposes	<i>Move to under districts</i>
<a href="#">155.071</a> Residential districts designated	
<a href="#">155.072</a> General provisions	
<a href="#">155.073</a> Multi-family special review	
<a href="#">155.074</a> R-7 special review	
<a href="#">155.075</a> Accessory buildings in R districts	
<b>Commercial and Industrial Districts</b>	
<a href="#">155.085</a> General provisions	<i>Move to under districts</i>
<a href="#">155.086</a> Commercial districts	
<a href="#">155.087</a> Industrial districts	
<b>Special Districts</b>	
<a href="#">155.100</a> General provisions	<i>Move to under districts</i>
<a href="#">155.101</a> Major Institution District (I)	
<a href="#">155.102</a> Flood Hazard District (F)	
<a href="#">155.103</a> Transition Zone District (TZ)	
<a href="#">155.104</a> Shoreland Overlay District	
<a href="#">155.105</a> Heritage Preservation	
<a href="#">155.106</a> Lakeshore District (L)	

<a href="#">155.107</a> Natural Features District (S)	
<b><i>Mobile Home Park District</i></b>	<i>Move to under districts</i>
<a href="#">155.120</a> License provisions	
<a href="#">155.121</a> Inspections	
<a href="#">155.122</a> Minimum park requirements	
<a href="#">155.123</a> Minimum mobile home lot requirements	
<a href="#">155.124</a> Site improvements	
<a href="#">155.125</a> Fire protection	
<a href="#">155.126</a> Miscellaneous requirements	
<b><i>Shoreland Overlay District</i></b>	
<a href="#">155.140</a> Statutory authorization and policy	
<a href="#">155.141</a> General provisions	
<a href="#">155.142</a> Definitions	
<a href="#">155.143</a> Administration	
<a href="#">155.144</a> Shoreland classification system and land use districts	
<a href="#">155.145</a> Zoning and water supply/sanitary provisions	
<a href="#">155.146</a> Nonconformities	
<a href="#">155.147</a> Subdivision/platting provisions	
<a href="#">155.148</a> Planned unit developments (PUD's)	
<b><i>Development Permits</i></b>	
<a href="#">155.160</a> Compliance of all development	
<a href="#">155.161</a> Four types of development	
<a href="#">155.162</a> Filing; applications	
<a href="#">155.163</a> Issuance of development permits	
<a href="#">155.164</a> Hearings when required	
<a href="#">155.165</a> Effect of permit	
<a href="#">155.166</a> Expiration of a permit	
<a href="#">155.167</a> Permits subject to conditions	
<a href="#">155.168</a> Inspections	
<a href="#">155.169</a> Certificates of occupancy	
<a href="#">155.170</a> Powers and duties of Building Inspector	
<a href="#">155.171</a> Non-permit general development	
<b><i>Special Development</i></b>	<i>Redefine with CUP</i>
<a href="#">155.185</a> Intent of special development for a conditional use	
<a href="#">155.186</a> Conditional uses	
<a href="#">155.187</a> Flood hazard use permits	
<a href="#">155.188</a> Planned unit development	
<a href="#">155.189</a> Shopping center, industrial park or major institutional development	
<a href="#">155.190</a> Interim use permit	
<b><i>Nonconforming Lots, Uses and Structures</i></b>	
<a href="#">155.200</a> Intent	
<a href="#">155.201</a> Nonconforming uses of land	
<a href="#">155.202</a> Nonconforming uses of structures	

<a href="#">155.203</a> Nonconforming structure	
<a href="#">155.204</a> Nonconforming lots	
<a href="#">155.205</a> Nonconforming characteristics of use	
<a href="#">155.206</a> Nonconforming junk yards	
<b>Administration</b>	
<a href="#">155.215</a> Development Administrator	
<a href="#">155.216</a> Board of Zoning Appeals and Adjustment	
<a href="#">155.217</a> Powers of Board of Zoning Appeals and Adjustments	
<a href="#">155.218</a> Appeals	
<a href="#">155.219</a> Variances	
<a href="#">155.220</a> Limitations on powers	
<a href="#">155.221</a> Fees for variances and appeals	
<a href="#">155.222</a> Variance and appeal provisions for special districts	
<a href="#">155.223</a> District boundary changes and text amendments	
<a href="#">155.224</a> Zoning fee schedule	
<a href="#">155.225</a> Remedies	
<a href="#">155.999</a> Penalty	
Appendix A: Table 1. Schedule of Density, Area and Bulk Regulations	<i>Relocate data and standards in all tables to their corresponding topic in the code....</i>
Appendix B: Table 2. Schedule of Required Off-Street Parking and Loading Spaces	“ “
Appendix C: Table 3. Required Fences	“ “
Appendix D: Table 4. Required Distance Buffering	“ “
Appendix E: Table 5. Schedule of Use Regulations	“ “
Appendix F: Schedule of Use Regulations - Shoreland Overlay District	“ “
Appendix G: Table 6. Parking - Six Block Core Area	“ “
Appendix H: Table 7. Parking Lot Standards - Design Criteria	“ “
Appendix I: Hydrology	“ “
Appendix J: Specific Development Standards	“ “

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**To:** Matt Selof, Community Development Director  
**From:** Claire Stickler & Michael Lamb, Michael Lamb Consulting  
**Subject:** Policy Summary and Diagnostic Scan  
**Date:** November 25, 2025

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## Introduction

As part of the Zoning and Subdivision Code Update, MSA Professional Services Zoning Staff conducted an initial review of current regulations' alignment with the community's vision and goals, in order to identify key areas for improvement and provide direction for initial code revisions. This includes an initial scan and summary of the current Zoning and Subdivision Code to determine whether any regulatory or procedural barriers exist—such as overly technical language, unclear provisions, and/or inefficiencies—that may hinder the City's ability to maintain a code that promotes orderly growth, housing diversity, economic development, and a streamlined development process. Additionally, this memo summarizes several zoning-related goals and priorities that are drawn from the Comprehensive Plan, and other applicable land use and development-related policies. We will continue to review and analyze the existing policies, requirements and regulations as we proceed with the project scope.

The scope of work addresses the following chapters (as defined in the RFP):

- Chapter 99: Outside parking of vehicles; display of vehicles for sale. This Chapter primarily regulates vehicle parking, driveways, etc. It has significant overlap with regulations in Chapter 155.
- Chapter 151: Planning. This Chapter is primarily administrative in nature. It establishes a Planning Commission, identifies the role of a Comprehensive Plan, calls for zoning maps, street extension maps, and procedures relating to changes in maps and ordinances.
- Chapter 153: Signs. This Chapter regulates signage within the City.
- Chapter 154: Subdivisions. This Chapter regulates subdivisions, platting, and public improvements (streets, sidewalks, etc.).
- Chapter 155: Zoning. This Chapter covers all zoning regulations in the City and will be the main focus of the project. Appendices A through J will either be reviewed and updated, or dissolved and absorbed into the main chapter text.

## Worthington 2045 Comprehensive Plan

The Comprehensive Plan identifies several key zoning-related challenges and opportunities. One of the most significant is ensuring that the zoning code update aligns with the Comprehensive Plan's vision, particularly with regard to the Future Land Use Map, which outlines the City's desired land use development patterns. The alignment of the zoning code with the Comprehensive Plan's guidance becomes particularly critical when addressing housing, especially in terms of increasing housing diversity and affordability.

Currently, Worthington's housing stock is predominantly composed of single-family homes and large apartment buildings, with fewer smaller-scale housing options such as townhomes, duplexes, condominiums, and accessory dwelling units (ADUs). The Comprehensive Plan outlines several goals and

actions aimed at addressing these housing challenges, many of which will require adjustments to the zoning code to support the desired outcomes:

Land Use:

- Update the zoning ordinance to reflect land use category changes, including density and district modifications.
- Update and reorganize residential zoning districts, including dimensional standard updates, to promote a variety of housing types.
- Explore and pursue amendments to the zoning ordinance to support the commercial land uses and goals identified in the plan, including dimensional standards and allowed use updates.
- Develop zoning category and process fact sheets to educate the public and property owners on regulations and processes. Create versions in both English and Spanish.

Reorganization of Residential Districts:

- Adopt zoning amendments to better support variety of housing type and densities as transitional infill adjacent to larger apartment complexes, commercial areas, and high-volume transportation corridors.
- Identify underutilized properties, such as surface parking lots and vacant office spaces, for potential multi-family or mixed-use development. The Comprehensive Plan’s housing chapter discusses the objective to support the development of denser, more walkabout housing with adequate walking distance to recreational amenities.

Innovative Housing Solutions:

- Support flexibility for prefabricated housing and alternative construction methods in the zoning code.

Commercial Districts:

- To support future growth and investment of commercial properties, the City should maintain and understand the characteristics desires for various types of development to assist with development siting.

Flexibility:

- There is a desire for the updated code to ensure flexibility for a variety of uses within residential, commercial and industrial districts.

Other Applicable Policies

To be determined

**Summary of Code Chapters & Observations**

**Chapter 99: Outside Parking of Vehicles; Display of Vehicles for Sale**

Chapter 99 is found under Title IX (General Regulations). It includes a set of definitions and a number of requirements that are mainly performance in nature. There is reference to Chapter 97 (Abandoned and Inoperable Vehicles) which also include additional definitions and performance standards. One or both of these could be considered for inclusion in Chapter 155 (Zoning).

### **Chapter 151: Planning**

Chapter 151 is a relatively short chapter that identifies the Planning Commission and makes official reference to the Planning Commission’s program of work, Comprehensive Guide Plan (which is not the formal reference to the current Comprehensive Plan), zoning map, street extensions and procedures for change. This chapter is probably better served being incorporated into Chapter 155 (Zoning).

### **Chapter 152: Flood Plain Management**

MSA will update this chapter separately from the Zoning Code update. The purpose of this update is to align Chapter 152 with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Model Floodplain Ordinance (September 2023) and to ensure compliance with Minnesota Rules 6120.5000 – 6120.6200 and FEMA National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) regulations (44 CFR §§59–78).

### **Chapter 153: Signs**

Chapter 153 contains 8 pages of regulations including some definitions, types of signs that are exempt, signs that are prohibited and other related regulations. Sign requirements are regulated per each commercial and/or industrial district regarding total sign area, maximum size and maximum height contained in an easy-to-read table. Scoreboards have additional and more specific regulations. The September Planning Commission meeting included discussion about regulation of off-premise signs and digital billboard operation in particular. The November PC meeting included a text amendment regarding off-premise signs.

### **Chapter 154: Subdivisions**

This chapter includes pretty straightforward rules and regulations; we will provide more in-depth review and analysis at a future meeting.

### **Chapter 155: Zoning**

The Zoning Code appears to have been initially adopted in 1969 but we don’t have any definitive info about that date or if a code was in place prior to that date. Nonetheless, the code is a typical Euclidean-based ordinance that is comprised of a number of residential, commercial and industrial zoning districts that separate one use type from another. There are no true ‘mixed-use’ districts, though the B-1 Neighborhood Business District does allow residential uses either as permitted (single-family) or as a ‘special development’. Section 155.010 includes a list of definitions and Section 155.142 includes another set of definitions specific to the Shoreland Overlay district.

The code is generally arranged in a logical manner by addressing title and purpose, followed by separate sections for general regulations, uses, districts, etc. Administrative topics are located at the end of the chapter followed by an Appendix that includes a set of 7 tables containing most of the quantifiable urban standards, parking lot requirements and specific development standards. The Appendices make for a handy reference section but district urban standards could be more useful integrated into the zoning district-specific sections they are associated with.

## General Code Observations

- The code contains multiple superfluous or additive words and phrase such as: *thereof, hereby, adjudges, herewith, such, thereon, so indicated, shall be construed, said, above named features,* and other similar words that sometimes defy interpretation when more readable plain English would better serve the reader.
- Like additive words, there are many paragraphs in the code that are hard to read or interpret e.g., ... *“Average depth of front yards. In any R District, where the average depth of at least two existing front yards on lots within 150 feet of the lot in question and with in the same block front is less or greater than the least front yard depth prescribed elsewhere in this title, the required depth of the front yard on such lot shall be modified to be not less than the average depth of said existing front yards on the two lots immediately adjoining, less five feet; provided, however, that the depth of a front yard on any lot shall be at least ten feet and need not exceed 35 feet.”*
- Approximately 12 pages of definitions that could be better located near the back of the document. In addition, there are several more pages of definitions related to the Shoreland Overlay district and definitions included in the Appendix related to uses. All these definitions will need further review but, in any case, could all be compiled into one location.
- The definition of Development contains over 24 conditions or stipulations and seems highly over-written when a more direct or concise definition could be more applicable.
- Odd or obscure technical requirements and procedures such as....” *HIGH DENSITY CRUSHED ROCK. A type of material which will not generate quantities of fugitive dust and polluted runoff in excess of that typically found to be generated by conventional hard surfacing; and of which not more than 3% of the material by weight shall pass through a standard number 200 sieve.”* *“Smoke. Measurements shall be at the point of emission. The Ringelman Smoke Chart published by the United States Bureau of Mines shall be used for the measurement of smoke. Smoke not darker or more opaque than No. 2 on said chart may be emitted for periods not longer than four minutes in any 30 minutes. These provisions, applicable to visible grey smoke, shall also apply to visible smoke of a different color, but with an equivalent apparent opacity.*
- Section 155.042 that addresses parking and loading requirements contains over 9 pages of conditions not including information located in Tables 2, 6 and 7. The beginning of this section also includes almost an entire page of instructions on how to read and use the tables which seems very unusual.

## Residential Districts

- The code includes 8 residential districts that address single-family, duplex, multifamily and mobile home types.
- R-7 addresses smaller floor area dwellings (single-family detached, though minimum floor area of 850 SF is same as R2, R3, R4 and R5).
- R-3 and R-8 allow reinvestment in the older residential areas of the city.
- R4 parcels are mainly located adjacent to the central business core; contiguous to that is the R3 district. Both of these districts are part of the older, established residential blocks in the City and may have more in common than what differentiates them.
- Purpose & intent:
  - R1: single family detached residential
  - R2: allows up to 3 units/acre single family attached and detached types
  - R3 & R8: intended to encourage low density preservation
  - R4 & R5: intended to allow medium and high density residential including multifamily
  - R6: allows mobile home types
  - R7: single family detached for dwellings of small floor area

- Some common urban standards:
  - R1 & R8: min lot 7500 sf/min. width 75'/min front yard 30'
  - R2 & R3: min lot 6000 sf/min. width 60' & 50'/min front yard 20'
  - R6 & R7: min lot 5,000 sf/min. width 50'/min front yard 20'
- In general, it appears that there may be more residential districts than are practically necessary (for example, R7 and R8 do not appear to be mapped). It may be productive to consider the physical built form of the City and use these conditions to calibrate appropriate standards and regulations based on the character areas of the City.

#### Mobile Home Park District

R6 is the mobile home park district which includes minimum park requirements, home lot requirements, site improvements, and other standards. This district may need further review in order to determine regulations that are fair and equitable.

#### Commercial and Industrial Districts

The code contains four (4) commercial districts each focused on a particular scale and pattern at various locations:

- B1 Neighborhood Business District permits development that is compatible in scale and use to residential uses. Our initial mapping analysis shows that there is only one parcel with this zoning in the City.
- B2 is the Central Business District whose core blocks are bounded by 5<sup>th</sup> Ave, 12<sup>th</sup> St, 1<sup>st</sup> Ave and 9<sup>th</sup> St.
- B3 is the General Business District which accounts for most of the commercially zoned land in the City.
- B4 is narrowly defined as the Shopping Centers District intended to allow pre-planned shopping centers. Only 2 parcels are zoned B4.

#### Industrial Districts

There are two industrial districts named Light Manufacturing (M1) and General Manufacturing (M2). The former allows for non-nuisance uses which may be located close to residential areas; the latter allows for uses that are not compatible with most other uses.

#### Other Districts

These include:

- Major Institution District (I) – Includes schools and college campuses as well as the hospital downtown and the county fairgrounds.
- Flood Hazard District – Reference Chapter 152.
- Transition District – Regulates those areas that are not platted and thus allows agricultural uses as well as recreation uses. Low-density residential uses are allowed in this district.
- Shoreland Overlay District – Shown on the zoning map, contains a detailed set of requirements and standards as authorized by Minnesota State Statutes.
- Heritage Preservation – Well-defined and regulated part of the code. This section contains specific definitions, establishment of a Commission and all designated sites must follow design guidelines as adopted by the Commission. We are not sure at this time if there are any sites with this designation; additional review may be needed.
- Natural Features District – Addresses wetlands, woods and public waters

## Appendices

- The appendix is a convenient section that contains Tables 1-7, which include quantifiable standards related to bulk and height of buildings on lots, off street parking, fences, buffers, uses, Shoreland Overlay uses, parking in the six-block core area (B2) and parking lot standards. Appendix I addresses flood control for Okabena Creek and Appendix J addresses specific development standards for asphalt mixing and manufacturing plants.
- It may be more helpful if many of these tables and/or table requirements are co-located with applicable districts and other subjects as needed.

## **Planning Commission Agendas**

A quick scan of published agendas and minutes illustrated topics and trends that are being governed by the Planning Commission. These include (with number of times on the agenda in parentheses):

- Cannabis text amendment as well as CUP for 4 different locations in the city (7)
- Conditional use permits: industrial use, warehouse and auto repair (3)
- Accessory structure allowance on large lots (2)
- Off-premise signs (2)
- Topics that were addressed once: R1 side yard setbacks, PUD (Planned Unit Development) amendments, preliminary plat, variance, change of zoning district, terms of sale

## **Mapping**

Some initial GIS analysis shows:

- Only 1 parcel zoned B1 Neighborhood Business
- Only 2 parcels zoned B4 Shopping Centers
- Majority of land along and north of Oxford St is zoned B3 General Business

## **Issues Identified**

The zoning code amendments from our initial staff review are as follows;

- 1) Allow More Residential Use Types and Variety Across All Residential Districts
  - Expand Allowed Residential Use Types:
- 2) Allow Mixed-Use Building Types More Broadly
  - Add a Definition for Mixed-Use: Introduce a clear definition for mixed-use structures in the zoning code.
  - Permit Mixed-Use Structures by Right: Explicitly allow mixed-use structures in most commercial and high-density residential districts without requiring additional approval procedures.
- 3) Review Procedures
  - Approval Timelines: Evaluate and reduce approval timelines for rezonings, subdivisions, and administrative design review to a maximum of 30 days from a completed application.

4) Clarify and/or Consolidate Residential Districts

- Consolidate Zoning Districts: Reduce the number of residential zoning districts and include an intent statement for each district aligned with the Comprehensive Plan's Future Land Use categories.

5) Code Clarity

- Clear Language: Rewrite the code in clear, modern terminology.
- Cross-References: Add section text titles to cross-references for better understanding.
- Images and Illustrations: Include extensive use of illustrations in the code update.



# MSA Technical Memo 2

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**To:** City of Worthington Planning Commission  
**CC:** Matt Selof, Community Development Director  
**From:** MSA Zoning Code Team and Michael Lamb Consulting  
**Subject:** Diagnostic and Strategic Recommendations  
**Date:** March 3<sup>rd</sup> 2026

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## **1)Regulatory Audit**

The Worthington Code is found in Title XV of the Municipal Code and is defined by Chapter 155 and contains the following:

- A total of 74 pages
- 80 sections (numbered to 225 but there are 145 reserved sections)
- 10 Appendices with tables
- 16 base districts 7 Special Districts
- Uses are broken out in a table in Appendix E
- Residence Districts and Commercial and Industrial Districts are broken out into different sections which is confusing for users and would be better suited as one “districts” section.
- There are many subparts with a lot of “see also” and jumping around to find the rule in the text with a parameter or buried in a table.
- Critical rules like density, bulk, and parking sit outside the main text.
- A single site plan may trigger checks in five different tables (bulk/density, parking counts, buffering, fences, special district uses) there is no consolidated matrix showing which tables apply by district/overlay.
- Sections retain legacy numbering and phrasing (e.g., “(‘69 Code, § 7-...)”
- Title XV Land Usage includes Chapter 151 Planning, this could be absorbed into Chapter 155 Zoning

## **2)Topic Based Policy Review**

### **Residential Lot and Density Standards**

The current code includes 8 residential districts of which R-7 and R-8 have not been mapped. The R-4 and R-5 districts allow multi-family development by certain types and densities and R-6 regulates the mobile home use. The comprehensive plan defines different residential land use categories in Table 4-3 (at the end of this paragraph). And it may be as simple as organizing the residential districts to have a more direct response to the comprehensive plan guidance rather than have 8 different residential districts. Currently R-1 and R-8 share identical urban and dimensional standards; R-2 and R-3 also share very similar (almost identical) standards; and R-6 and R-7 also share similar standards, in particular lot area, though R-6 is focused on mobile home development. So thinking about a base set of R districts

from a “small, medium and large” point of view seems to align with the overlap in dimensional standards and certainly with the policies of the comprehensive plan.

**Table 4-3. Future Land Use Categories**

Category	Description	Typical Uses/Building Form	Density
Low Density Residential (LDR)	Areas for residential development primarily consist of one to two dwelling units to maintain residential growth while accommodating future growth at the lower density within the community.	One-dwelling residential, Duplex, Triplex, ADU	0 to 6 units per acre
Medium Density Residential (MDR)	Areas reserved for residential development containing a mix of dwelling units at a mid-density range to support a variety of housing types to meet the changing needs of community members.	Townhomes, Row Housing, Fourplex, Small Apartments (up to 8 units), Mobile homes	6 to 12 units per acre
High Density Residential (HDR)	Areas of the highest density residential development consisting of multiple dwelling units.	Apartments, Condos	12 or more units per acre

**Mixed Use Development**

The City’s comprehensive plan supports mixed use development in several areas. “Mixed use development within the downtown also creates opportunities for the creation of diverse housing options” The Future Land Use has a “Downtown Mixed Use” land use category which emphasizes vertical mix of commercial and residential.

It also states that neighborhood mixed use could be allowed within the Neighborhood Commercial land use category to allow both residential and commercial, along key transportation areas along key transportation areas and corridors out of downtown.

The plan also states that other areas may be suited for mixed use in the City with changes to the zoning ordinance and implementation guidance including commercial and industrial mixed use that could be explored to serve as a transition from low intensity neighborhoods into the industrial areas of the City.

The current code limits the ability to allow and permit a mixed use type development.

**Parking Regulations**

Topic	Section 155.042	Chapter 99
Purpose	Regulates <b>required off-street parking</b> for new development	Regulates how vehicles are actually parked/stored day-to-day
Application	Developers, builders, businesses, projects needing a permit	Homeowners, tenants, vehicle owners, property managers
Control	Number of stalls, loading spaces, parking lot design	Surfacing, driveway rules, outdoor storage, display for sale
Scope	Land-use compliance	Nuisance, safety, aesthetics

Examples	"Retail store requires 1 space per 400 square feet"	"You cannot park vehicles on grass" or "Trailer cannot be stored in front yard"
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Analysis of Chapter 99 Outside Parking of Vehicles: Display of Vehicles for Sale and Section 155.042 Parking and Loading

It is not uncommon to have some of the regulations in Chapter 99 in the zoning code, for example the zoning code also regulates the surfacing requirements and installation of required parking. There are several definitions in 155.042 that should be moved to the definitions section so everything is housed in one area rather than within the sections of the code. There are also definitions in Chapter 99 that should be consistent.

### Signs

The intent section places strong emphasis on minimizing visual impact, avoiding "excess size," "undesirable location," "visual competition," and protecting aesthetics. However:

- District sign provisions (§153.20) allow a wide range of signs without tying them directly back to the intent criteria.
- No requirement that the applicant demonstrate compatibility with the visual, aesthetic, or spacing goals stated in §153.01.

## **3)Built Form Study**

### **Historical Street and Block Pattern**

Worthington includes a grid block and street pattern with the downtown rotated on a NW/SE orientation and blocks due north of downtown arranged in an "end-grain" pattern. Unique in downtown was a two-alley plat layout that has been mostly vacated at this point but nevertheless this oversquare block arrangement and dual alleys certainly 'regulated' development and the built form of the community. Evidence still exists of where and how buildings were realized in downtown as separated by the alleys and this could have some clue to how parts of downtown maybe coded in the future. *Refer to Plate 1 Two Alley Block Pattern.*

The "end-grain" block composition contiguous and due north of downtown typically set up anticipated land use that was different than the remaining increments of the block (think commercial vs. residential). This does not appear to have been the case as most, if not all, of these blocks are residential uses. Another unique condition is that the lots tend to be much deeper than other lots in the downtown area, with the base dimension being about 275-276 feet. And the end grain lots, at 175 feet, are also a bit deeper than most lots. In some cases these deeper lots have been subdivided into small lots with an almost random layout of alleys that serve these lots and blocks. *Refer to Plate 2 End Grain Block Pattern.*

### **Residential**

What we are calling the "in-town" lots tend to be approximately 50 feet by 150 feet, or some close similar dimension, providing a fairly consistent increment of lot widths and sizes. Obviously, there are exceptions, but this residential consistency is something that can be explored relative to how to better calibrate a district (or districts). That being said the R-3 District which covers much of this area and R-4 District, contiguous to the commercial downtown blocks, share a number of qualities that may suggest a more workable combination of the two. *Refer to Plates 3 and 3A Residential Built Form.*

Residential development further west, south and around the lake is predominately single family detached, low density pattern. The area around Minnesota West campus does include some duplex, four unit and multi-family development. The western most area of the city is guided for low density residential development. An emerging multi-family development on the eastside of the city, between Flower Ln and Hwy's 59/60, is under construction using the R-5 and B-3 zoning districts. *Refer to Plate 4 Residential Built Form.*

A unique subarea of the city is the northeast quadrant north of Oxford and east of Humiston Ave. This area includes several residential districts as well as commercial B-3 and just east of Hwy 60 light and general manufacturing districts. There is a wide variety of built form here that is further separated by the single use districts. It may present an opportunity to explore a more mixed use approach here and calibrate regulations that could provide more defined, connected pattern. Refer to Plate 5 Residential Built Form.

### **Downtown**

The B-2 district regulates downtown that allows retail, restaurants, motels, offices and medical to name a few permitted uses. The area is compact and organized by an oversquare set of blocks that originally featured two alleys per block, a very unusual characteristic. A very walkable "main street" environment includes 10<sup>th</sup> St from 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave to 5<sup>th</sup> Ave; 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave from 9<sup>th</sup> St to 11<sup>th</sup> St; 4<sup>th</sup> St from 9<sup>th</sup> St to 10<sup>th</sup> St; and 9<sup>th</sup> St from 4<sup>th</sup> Ave to 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave. *Refer to Plate 6 Downtown Main Street.*

### **Commercial**

The B-3 district is far and away the most applied commercial district and, beyond the B-2 that is dedicated to downtown, there are only 3 other parcels in the city that are zoned B-1 or B-4. The built environment issue, at least on the surface, is the B-3 is sort of a 'catch-all' district that regulates, at a macro scale, most all types of commercial buildings – small, medium and large. Nonetheless there are more character-based areas that could be regulated in a more sensitive and context responsive manner. In particular the commercial parcels fronting the southside of Oxford St that have a very direct physical relationship to the scale residential scale neighborhoods to the south. Luckily parcel width and depth have helped to regulate the scale of development for the most part but more attention to these conditions may produce a more successful outcome in the future. *Refer to Plate 7 Commercial Pattern.*

### **Industrial**

Light and general manufacturing districts are located on the west and east edges of the city. It is anticipated that these areas and the related regulations may need little or no updates from current language.

## **4) Zoning Framework Recommendations**

A number of options can and should be considered relative to how a 'framework' for updating the zoning code should be defined. It is somewhat obvious that re-organization and streamlining the ordinance is a baseline element for the framework; other elements include:

- Cleaning up outdated language, revising the overall outline, updating definitions and updating/removing standards and requirement that are antiquated or do not apply,
- Moving the most applicable information about districts, development uses and standards toward the front of the document,

- Adding graphics and illustrations to better communicate district requirements,
- Incorporating Chapter 151 into the update,
- Cleaning up redundancies with Chapter 99 Parking,
- Incorporating Chapter 153 Signs into a consolidated update,
- Responding to policy guidance from the comprehensive plan,
- Relocating standards and requirements from the Appendix to reside with applicable districts etc. including the Use Table, some Performance Standards, and possibly incorporating Shoreland uses to a consolidate Use Table,
- A revised map with updated district boundaries and color coordination.

**Proposed/Working & Annotated Outline**

(See separate document for annotated outline)

<b>155.001 Title</b>
<b>Districts</b>
<i>Residential</i>
<i>Commercial</i>
<i>Manufacturing</i>
<i>Institutional</i>
<i>Natural</i>
<i>Transition</i>
<i>Special districts</i>
<b>Uses</b>
<b>Performance Standards &amp; General Regulations</b>
<b>Shoreland Overlay District</b>
<b>Development Permits</b>
<b>Nonconforming Lots, Uses and Structures</b>
<b>Administration</b>
<b>Appendix</b>
Appendix A: Table 1. Schedule of Density, Area and Bulk Regulations
Appendix B: Table 2. Schedule of Required Off-Street Parking and Loading Spaces
Appendix C: Table 3. Required Fences
Appendix D: Table 4. Required Distance Buffering
Appendix E: Table 5. Schedule of Use Regulations
Appendix F: Schedule of Use Regulations – Shoreland Overlay District
Appendix G: Table 6. Parking – Six Block Core Area
Appendix H: Table 7. Parking Lot Standards – Design Criteria
Appendix I: Hydrology
Appendix J: Specific Development Standards

155.001	Title	<i>rename</i>
<a href="#">155.002</a>	Statement of purpose	
<a href="#">155.003</a>	City land use policy	
<a href="#">155.004</a>	Legal authority	
<a href="#">155.005</a>	Provisions severable	
<a href="#">155.006</a>	Nature of contents	
<a href="#">155.007</a>	Ordinances repealed	
<a href="#">155.008</a>	Jurisdiction	
<a href="#">155.009</a>	Interpretation	
<a href="#">155.010</a>	Definitions; rules of construction and interpretation	<i>Move to back of chapter</i>
	<b>Zoning Map, Districts and Boundaries</b>	
<a href="#">155.025</a>	Zoning map	<i>Move under title</i>
<a href="#">155.026</a>	Boundary interpretation	
	<b>General Regulations</b>	<i>Move to after districts</i>
<a href="#">155.040</a>	Lots and yards	<i>locate with each district</i>
<a href="#">155.041</a>	Height and bulk	<i>Locate with each district</i>
<a href="#">155.042</a>	Parking and loading	
<a href="#">155.043</a>	Appearance and buffering	
<a href="#">155.044</a>	Performance standards	<i>Move to end of districts</i>
	<b>Uses</b>	
<a href="#">155.055</a>	Permitted uses	<i>Relocate table of uses here</i>
<a href="#">155.056</a>	Conditional uses	
<a href="#">155.057</a>	Use groups	
<a href="#">155.058</a>	Transitional uses	
<a href="#">155.059</a>	Accessory uses	
<a href="#">155.060</a>	Conversion of dwellings	
	<b>Residence Districts</b>	<i>Move to under districts</i>
<a href="#">155.070</a>	General purposes	
<a href="#">155.071</a>	Residential districts designated	
<a href="#">155.072</a>	General provisions	
<a href="#">155.073</a>	Multi-family special review	
<a href="#">155.074</a>	R-7 special review	
<a href="#">155.075</a>	Accessory buildings in R districts	
	<b>Commercial and Industrial Districts</b>	<i>Move to under districts</i>
<a href="#">155.085</a>	General provisions	
<a href="#">155.086</a>	Commercial districts	
<a href="#">155.087</a>	Industrial districts	
	<b>Special Districts</b>	<i>Move to under districts</i>
<a href="#">155.100</a>	General provisions	
<a href="#">155.101</a>	Major Institution District (I)	
<a href="#">155.102</a>	Flood Hazard District (F)	
<a href="#">155.103</a>	Transition Zone District (TZ)	
<a href="#">155.104</a>	Shoreland Overlay District	
<a href="#">155.105</a>	Heritage Preservation	
<a href="#">155.106</a>	Lakeshore District (L)	

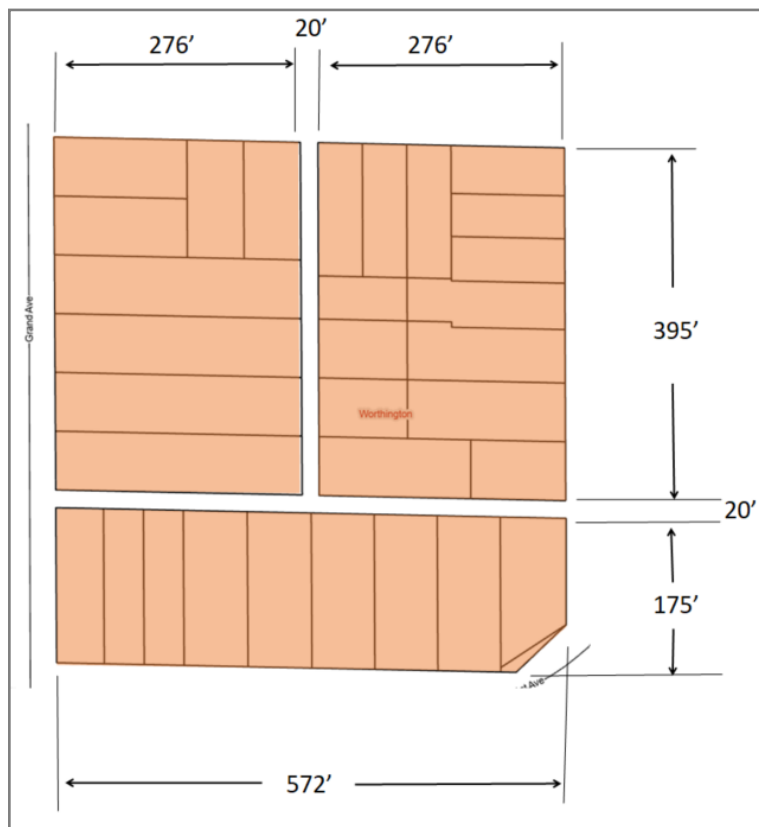
<a href="#">155.107</a> Natural Features District (S)	
<b><i>Mobile Home Park District</i></b>	<i>Move to under districts</i>
<a href="#">155.120</a> License provisions	
<a href="#">155.121</a> Inspections	
<a href="#">155.122</a> Minimum park requirements	
<a href="#">155.123</a> Minimum mobile home lot requirements	
<a href="#">155.124</a> Site improvements	
<a href="#">155.125</a> Fire protection	
<a href="#">155.126</a> Miscellaneous requirements	
<b><i>Shoreland Overlay District</i></b>	
<a href="#">155.140</a> Statutory authorization and policy	
<a href="#">155.141</a> General provisions	
<a href="#">155.142</a> Definitions	
<a href="#">155.143</a> Administration	
<a href="#">155.144</a> Shoreland classification system and land use districts	
<a href="#">155.145</a> Zoning and water supply/sanitary provisions	
<a href="#">155.146</a> Nonconformities	
<a href="#">155.147</a> Subdivision/platting provisions	
<a href="#">155.148</a> Planned unit developments (PUD's)	
<b><i>Development Permits</i></b>	
<a href="#">155.160</a> Compliance of all development	
<a href="#">155.161</a> Four types of development	
<a href="#">155.162</a> Filing; applications	
<a href="#">155.163</a> Issuance of development permits	
<a href="#">155.164</a> Hearings when required	
<a href="#">155.165</a> Effect of permit	
<a href="#">155.166</a> Expiration of a permit	
<a href="#">155.167</a> Permits subject to conditions	
<a href="#">155.168</a> Inspections	
<a href="#">155.169</a> Certificates of occupancy	
<a href="#">155.170</a> Powers and duties of Building Inspector	
<a href="#">155.171</a> Non-permit general development	
<b><i>Special Development</i></b>	<i>Redefine with CUP</i>
<a href="#">155.185</a> Intent of special development for a conditional use	
<a href="#">155.186</a> Conditional uses	
<a href="#">155.187</a> Flood hazard use permits	
<a href="#">155.188</a> Planned unit development	
<a href="#">155.189</a> Shopping center, industrial park or major institutional development	
<a href="#">155.190</a> Interim use permit	
<b><i>Nonconforming Lots, Uses and Structures</i></b>	
<a href="#">155.200</a> Intent	
<a href="#">155.201</a> Nonconforming uses of land	
<a href="#">155.202</a> Nonconforming uses of structures	

<a href="#">155.203</a> Nonconforming structure	
<a href="#">155.204</a> Nonconforming lots	
<a href="#">155.205</a> Nonconforming characteristics of use	
<a href="#">155.206</a> Nonconforming junk yards	
<b>Administration</b>	
<a href="#">155.215</a> Development Administrator	
<a href="#">155.216</a> Board of Zoning Appeals and Adjustment	
<a href="#">155.217</a> Powers of Board of Zoning Appeals and Adjustments	
<a href="#">155.218</a> Appeals	
<a href="#">155.219</a> Variances	
<a href="#">155.220</a> Limitations on powers	
<a href="#">155.221</a> Fees for variances and appeals	
<a href="#">155.222</a> Variance and appeal provisions for special districts	
<a href="#">155.223</a> District boundary changes and text amendments	
<a href="#">155.224</a> Zoning fee schedule	
<a href="#">155.225</a> Remedies	
<a href="#">155.999</a> Penalty	
Appendix A: Table 1. Schedule of Density, Area and Bulk Regulations	<i>Relocate data and standards in all tables to their corresponding topic in the code....</i>
Appendix B: Table 2. Schedule of Required Off-Street Parking and Loading Spaces	“ “
Appendix C: Table 3. Required Fences	“ “
Appendix D: Table 4. Required Distance Buffering	“ “
Appendix E: Table 5. Schedule of Use Regulations	“ “
Appendix F: Schedule of Use Regulations - Shoreland Overlay District	“ “
Appendix G: Table 6. Parking - Six Block Core Area	“ “
Appendix H: Table 7. Parking Lot Standards - Design Criteria	“ “
Appendix I: Hydrology	“ “
Appendix J: Specific Development Standards	“ “



**Plate 1—Two Alley Block Pattern**

It appears that most of the downtown that was organized by the rotated NW/SE block orientation included a very unique “two alley” system. It seems most have been vacated at this point.



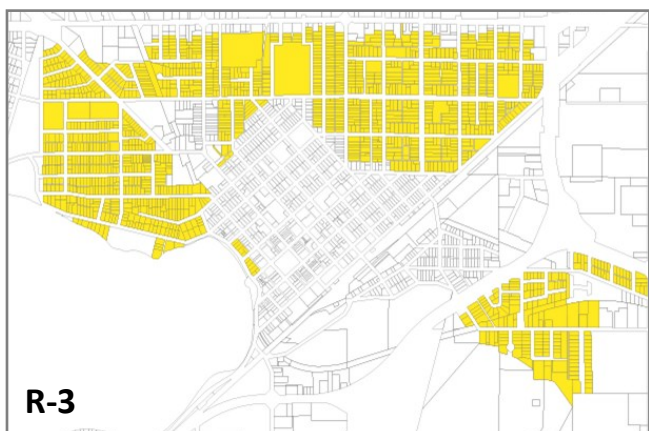
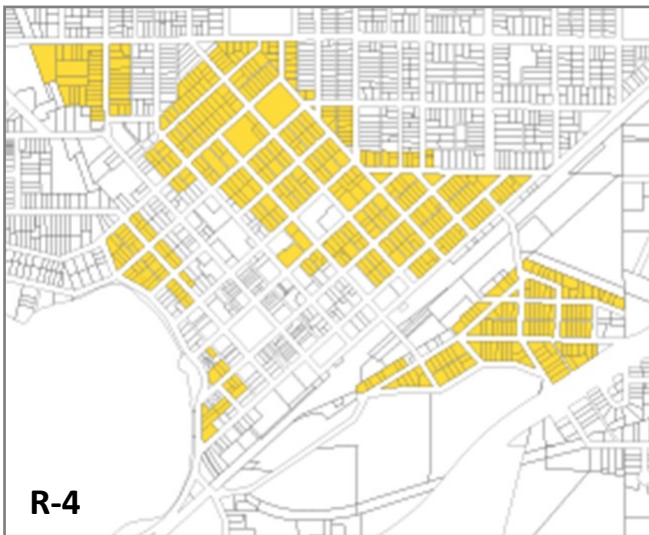
### Plate 2—End Grain Block Pattern

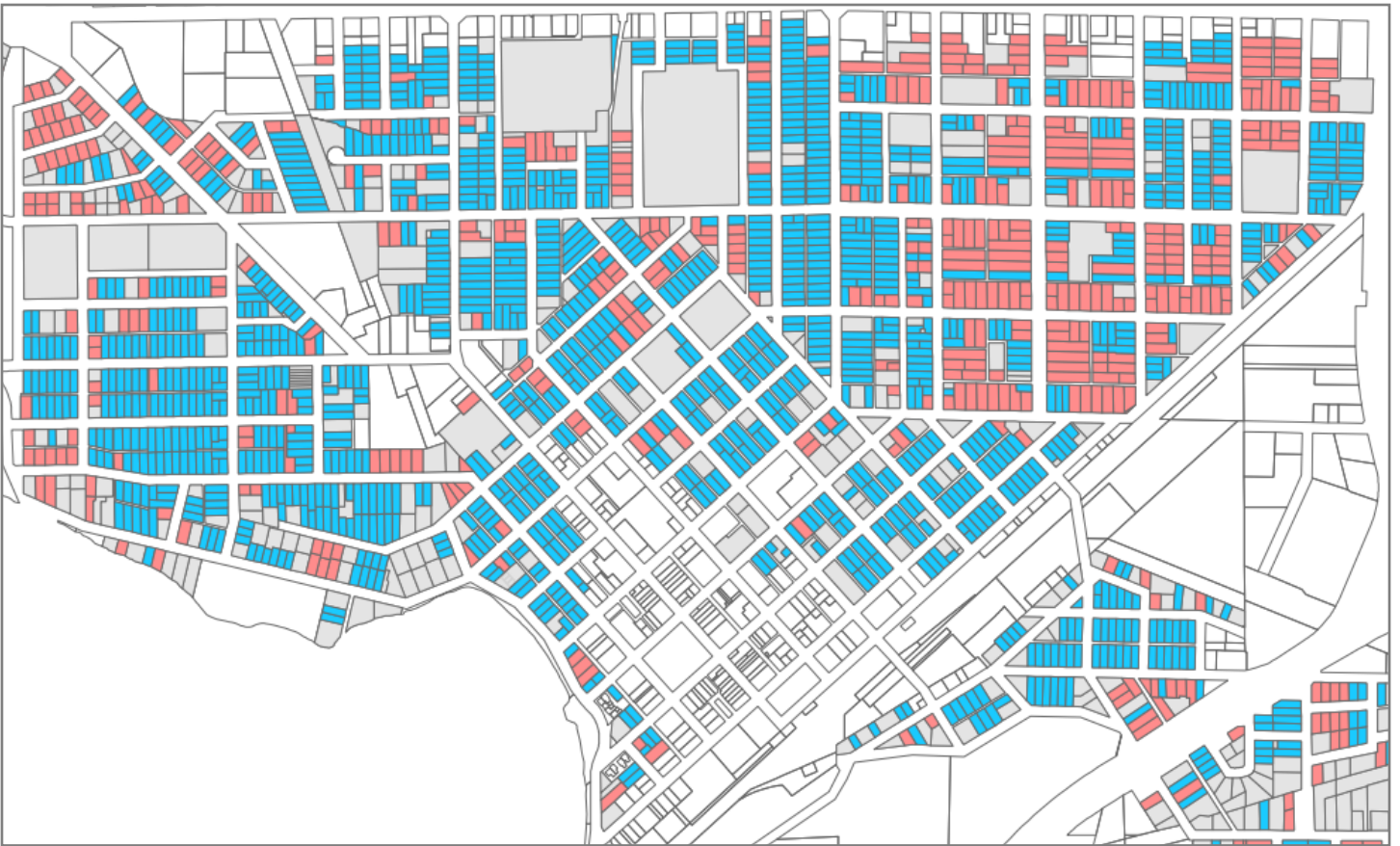
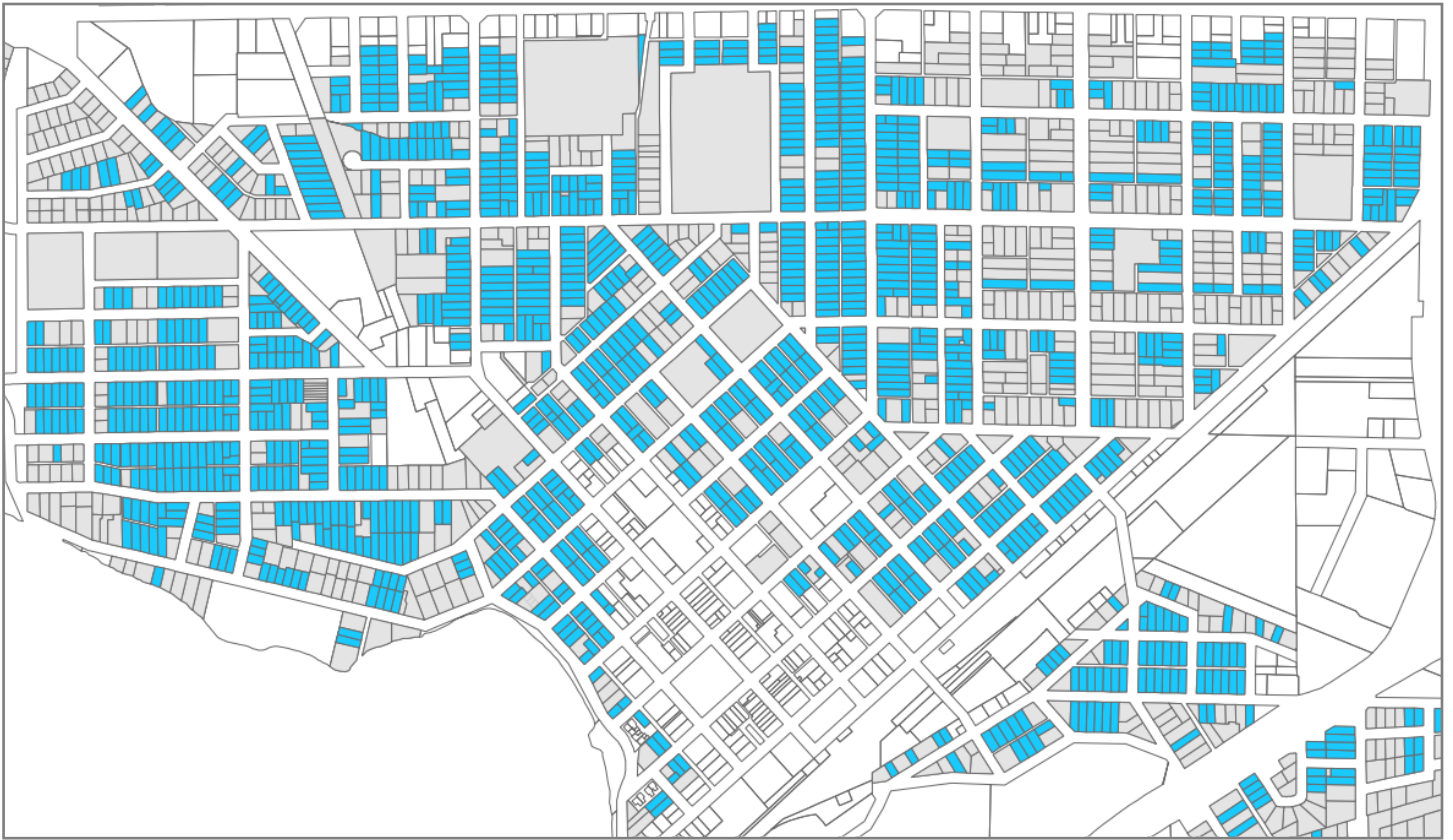
The blocks north of downtown (east of Church Ave) exhibit an “end grain” condition with access provided, typically, by a “T” alley layout. This was a common block pattern when land use or building types were expected to change, typically the end grain supporting non-residential uses. In this case the end grain block increments are predominately, if not all, residential.



### Plate 3—Residential Built Form

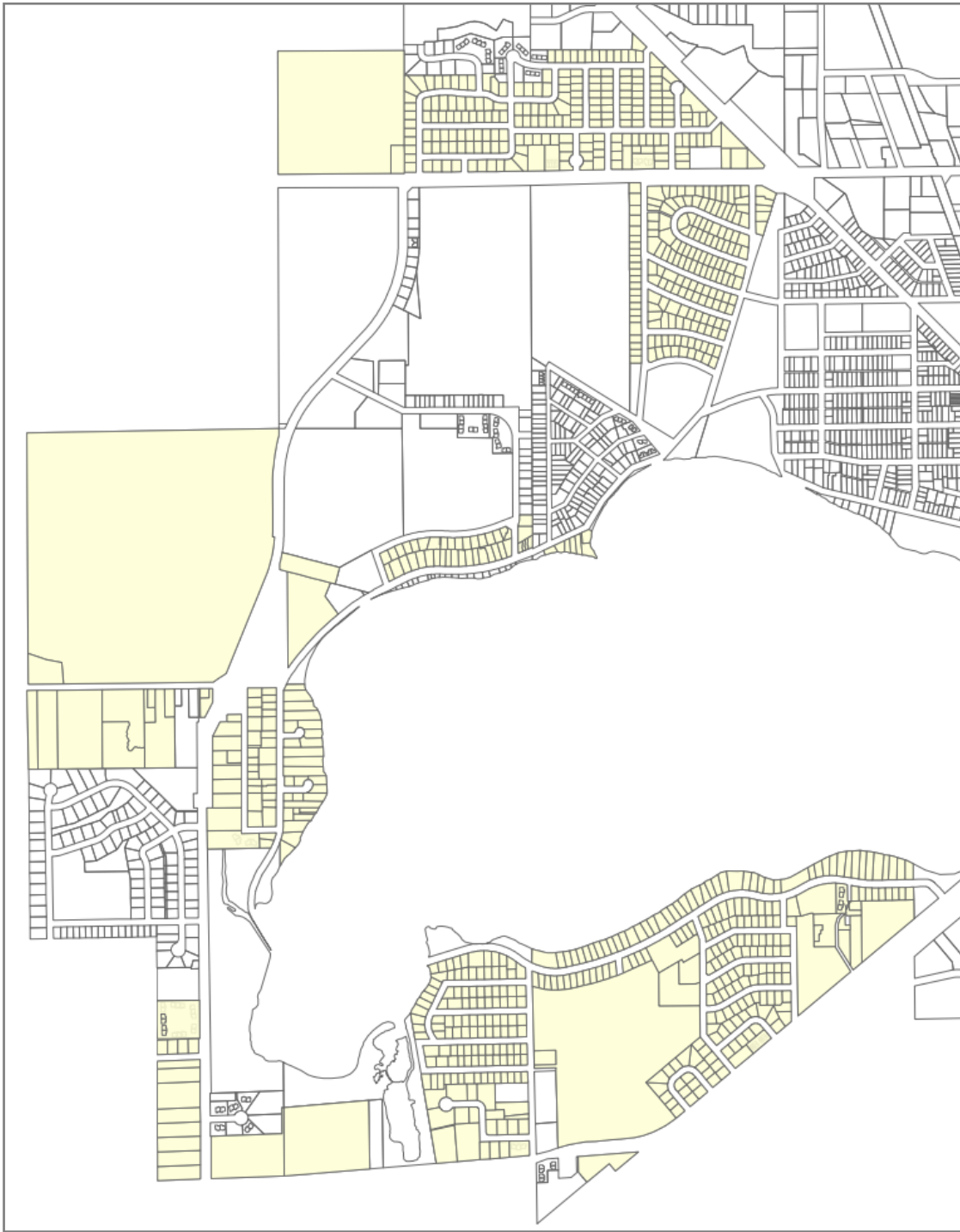
The “in-town” housing area contain similar lot widths and sizes, for the most part, though they are zoned two different districts. And though the building type is single family detached for most of the lots in this combined area, a major distinction is that many units in the R-3 are front loaded even though alleys do exist in several blocks.





**Plate 3A—Residential Built Form**

- Lots 40 to 60 feet wide (above/blue)
- Lots 60-75 feet wide (below/red)



#### **Plate 4—Residential Built Form**

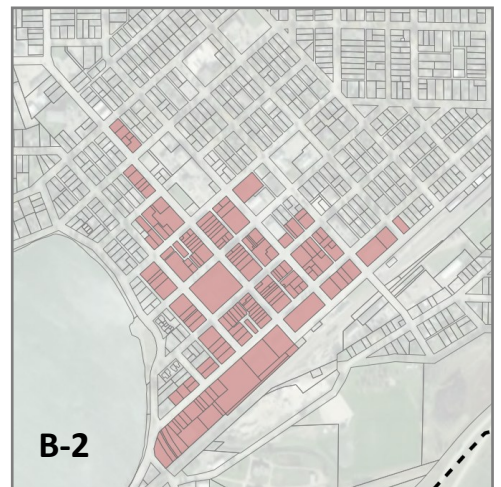
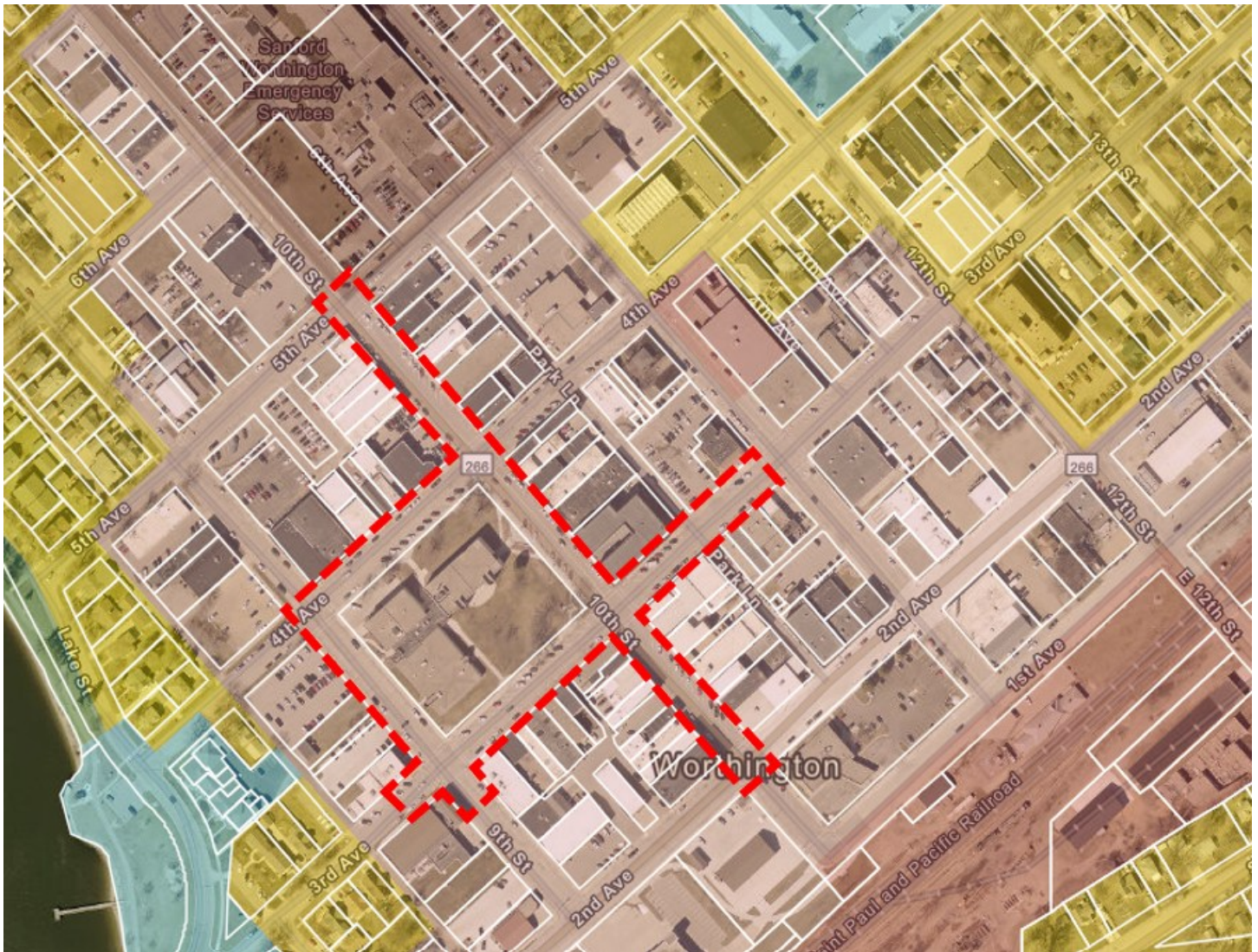
The R1 district regulates the common single family detached development that has the largest setbacks, lot widths and lot sizes. The minimum front setback is 30 feet but many lots have much larger setbacks. And though the minimum lot size is 7500 sq. ft. many are much larger than that creating more of a garden-like setting.



### Plate 5—Residential Built Form

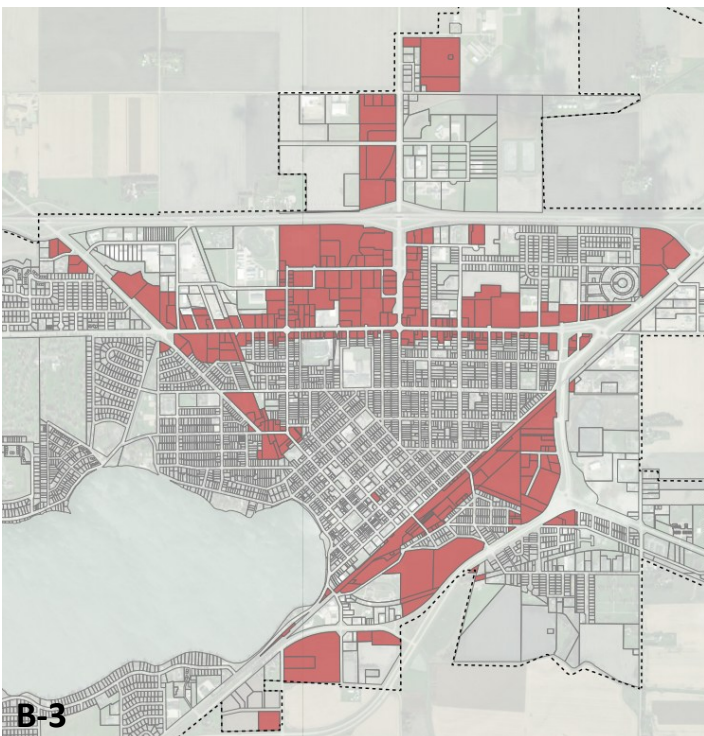
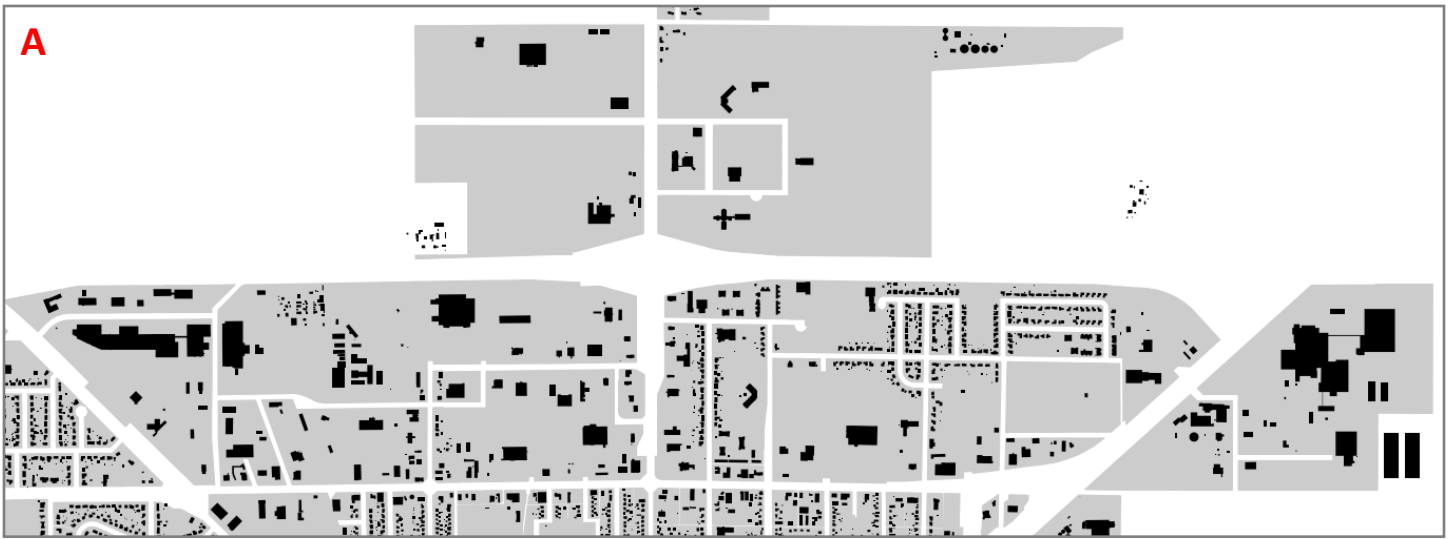
This area is probably the most diverse in terms of building type and can easily be thought of as a ‘horizontal’ mixed use area with single family, two-unit, town-house, mobile homes, and small/large multi-family buildings. It includes R-1, R-2, R-4, R-5 and R-6 districts bordered by commercial development along Humiston Ave and Oxford St. In the middle of this area sits the municipal movie theater located on Darling Dr.





### **Plate 6—Downtown Main Street**

The downtown area includes major buildings like the county offices, retail businesses and the medical center all located in a compact area. The contiguous blocks are mostly low density residential. The area shown in the red dashed outline illustrates the most well defined walkable commercial streets (with pedestrian-friendly stores and shopfronts).



### Plate 7—Commercial Pattern

The majority of commercial development, mainly along and off of Oxford St, is regulated by the B-3 district and addresses all manner and size of buildings from small, medium and large floorplates and parcels (A). North of Oxford St this district will probably continue to work well for most applications. Along the southern edge of Oxford (B) this commercial pattern comes in contact with a distinct residential scale and building increment, and most of the commercial buildings seem to respond to this scale (probably as a function of lot and block dimensions). Another area that presents some scale and compatibility issues is along 1st Ave in particular between 12th St and Oakabena St (C). A more character-based and context sensitive set of regulations may be considered here that can provide a more nuanced response than the current B-3 district.