

MEMORANDUM
November 16, 2020

To: LFP City Council

CC: LFP Planning Commission
Jeff Johnson, Mayor
Phillip Hill, City Administrator
Steve Bennett, Planning Director

From: Maddy Larson, Planning Commission Chair

Topic: Final Town Center Code Recommendations

Dear Councilmembers,

I am writing to you on behalf of the LFP Planning Commission (Commission). We're aware that you've received our recommendations for the current Lake Forest Park Municipal Code, regarding the Town Center (TC), as approved at our last meeting – Tuesday, November 10, 2020. These recommendations include edits to the recommendations we sent you in April and a few additional revisions. These revisions were necessary to remove redundancies or language that conflicted with our recommendations for the administration of development applications. We also reestablished key provisions that were deleted in our earlier recommendations. These provisions were in section 18.42.040 and were the subject of a separate memo we sent to you last month.

While we have not sent additional recommendations regarding a number of topics we've discussed over the last two years, we did want to provide you with a reflection on our work in hopes it may be of help to you during your own deliberations regarding the municipal code that governs development in our town's center.

Per Council direction, we've spent the last two years reviewing the alignment of our TC Vision with our current building code for TC. While it was clear we needed language to guide the development of a standalone parking structure, we did not reach a conclusion on whether we should make additional recommendations for changes to the code. Several members of the Commission feel the current code, in tandem with the Town Center Framework, was well vetted by the community when it was put into place and maintains a strong alignment to the more recent TC Vision that also received a tremendous amount of community input. They feel the form-based approach is preferable to a prescriptive approach to development. Still, several members were interested in making additional recommendations to enhance our current code and that may have provided more specificity for key sections. In the end, what we did all agree on is that we could not provide recommendations for density and open space in the time provided and as requested in your September memo to the Commission. We felt strongly that there were too many areas of the code that collectively affect those components, and to provide narrow input out of context with other relevant code recommendations, or sufficient community input, would be unproductive.

Further, while we are not providing additional TC code language recommendations, we do want to encourage you to provide serious consideration for code provisions that would address the following:

1. Ensuring pedestrian mobility and safety are key components of any new TC project;
2. Prioritizing public gathering spaces, open space and other public benefits in each phase of new development in TC;
3. Supporting measures to encourage affordable housing; and
4. Encouraging exemplary levels of sustainability in any new TC project.

And, finally, we've been guided for some time now by the deeply thoughtful remarks we've heard from the community throughout this process, as well as from one of our own, Commissioner John Lebo. He has reminded us at multiple points that ***our shared work should yield a result that ensures any new TC development reflects the vision and values of our community and not simply set us up for redevelopment in the short-term.*** The work before all of us relies on our commitment to code and design guidelines that are aligned to our long-term TC Vision. On these points, the commission is united.

We appreciate your consideration and the work that lies ahead.

Sincerely,

Maddy Larson
LFP Planning Commission Chair