

Zoning Text Amendment #2020-00010

Practical Updates - RT Zone Setbacks

Issue: RT/Townhouse zone A. Initiation of a text amendment; and (B) Public Hearing and consideration of a text amendment to the Zoning Ordinance to amend RT/Townhouse zone side yard and rear yard setbacks (sections 3-1306 (A)(2) and (3)).	Planning Commission Hearing:	January 5, 2021
	City Council Hearing:	January 23, 2021
Staff: Tony LaColla, AICP, Division Chief – Land Use tony.lacolla@alexandriava.gov Christina Zechman Brown, Deputy City Attorney christina.brown@alexandriava.gov Mary Christesen, Zoning Manager mary.christesen@alexandriava.gov Marlo Ford, AICP, Urban Planner marlo.ford@alexandriava.gov		

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION, JANUARY 5, 2021: On a motion by Vice Chair McMahon, seconded by Commissioner Lyle, the Planning Commission voted to initiate Zoning Text Amendment #2020-00010. The motion carried on a vote of 6-0.

On a motion by Vice Chair McMahon, seconded by Commissioner Lyle, the Planning Commission voted to recommend approval of Zoning Text Amendment #2020-00010, as submitted. The motion carried on a vote of 6-0.

Mr. Koenig did not vote.

I. Issue

The current Zoning Ordinance dates to 1992. The 1992 zoning amendments changed many of the zoning classifications from the 1963 zoning ordinance; however, there was one zone, the RT zone, that was not modified. Application of the RT zone has proven challenging and severely limits the use of properties zoned such compared with all other zones which allow more flexibility for residential uses.

The purpose of the proposed text amendment to the Zoning Ordinance is to modify and amend two aspects of the RT zone regulations. These changes to the regulations are to accommodate changes in planning practice and to ensure that the regulations are consistent with other residential zone regulations in the Zoning Ordinance.

Article III, Residential Zone Regulations Section 3-1306 (A)(2) and (A)(3)

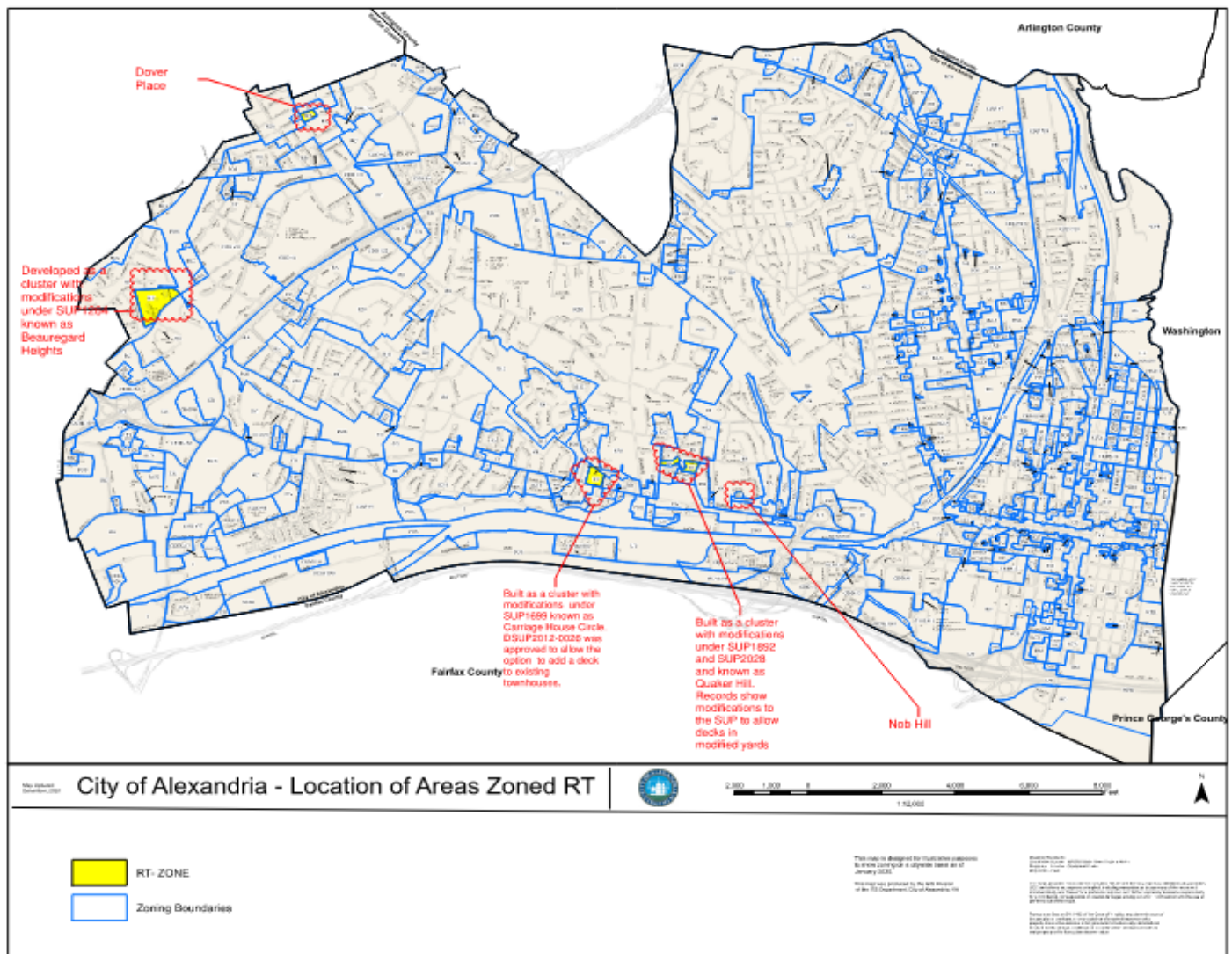
1. Amend the side yard setback for the RT/Townhouse Zone
2. Amend the rear yard setback for the RT/Townhouse Zone

II. Background

Since the current Zoning Ordinance was adopted in 1992, there have been changes to certain sections to update zoning regulations to more closely align with current planning strategies and emerging principles. As a result, over the past two years staff have recommended practical updates to the Zoning Ordinance. This is another practical update that staff is putting forward.

The RT zone is a townhouse zone with the most restrictive residential side and rear yards requirements in the Zoning Ordinance. It is one of two zones for single-family and townhouses where the rear yard and the side yard setbacks are not based on a height to setback ratio with a minimum yard and it is the only zone in the ordinance where the rear yard setback is set at a minimum of 35.00 feet and the side yard setback for an end unit is set at a minimum of 20.00 feet. Far more restrictive than any other zone.

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Of the five areas that are zoned RT, three (Beauregard Heights, Carriage House Circle, and Quaker Hill Court) were granted modifications from lot size, yard, and coverage requirements, through the Special Use Permit process for cluster developments prior to construction. In another RT zoned area (Dover Place), since the late 1960s the BZA has granted variances from multiple zoning requirements. One RT zoned area, on Nob Hill Court, was developed by-right with five townhomes, one is adjacent to the R-8 single-family zone and all five back up to the RC zone with a multi-family apartment building.

Based on the difficulty for homeowners to undertake minor expansions that are allowed under the setbacks in many other zones and the preexisting lot modifications for most lots in RT zoned areas, staff have determined that the minimum rear yard and side yard setbacks should be equal to the most restrictive of the single-family zone. The goal of the RT zone is “to provide land areas for low density residential townhouse development at approximately nine units per acre which may be appropriate for infill sites in proximity to

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neighborhoods of low density single-family detached homes” Zoning Ordinance Section 3-1301. Because RT zoned townhouse developments are intended to be compatible with predominantly single-family neighborhoods, it is appropriate to match the required side and rear yard setbacks to the most restrictive single-family zone side and rear setbacks.

The most restrictive single-family residential side yard and rear yard setback is that of the R-20 zone. The side yard setback is based on a setback to height ratio of 1:2 with a minimum of 12 feet and the rear yard setback is based on a setback to height ratio of 1:1 with a minimum of 12feet.

Single-Family and Two-Family Zones	Lot Size	Side Yard Ratio	Minimum Side Yard Required	Rear Yard Ratio	Minimum Rear Yard Ratio
R-20 Zone	20,000 sq. ft.	1:2	12.00 ft.	1:1	12:00 ft.
R-12 Zone	12,000 sq. ft.	1:2	12.00 ft.	1:1	10.00 ft.
R-8 Zone	8,000 sq. ft.	1:2	8.00 ft.	1:1	8.00 ft.
R-5 Zone	5,000 sq. ft.	1:3	7.00 ft.	1:1	7.00 ft.
R-2-5	5,000 sq. ft. (single-family) 2,500 sq. ft. (two-family, semi-detached)	1:3	7:00 ft. (single- family) 10.00 ft. (two-family, semi-detached)	1:1	7.00 ft.
Townhouse and Multi-Family Zones	Lot Size	Side yard Ratio	Minimum Side Yard Required	Rear Yard Ratio	Rear Yard Ratio minimum
RA	1,980 sq. ft.	1:3	7.00 ft. (single-family or two family) 8.00 ft. (end unit townhouse)	1:1	8.00 ft.
RB	1, 980 sq. ft.	1:3	7.00 ft. (single-family or two family) 8.00 ft. (end unit townhouse)	1:1	8.00 ft.
RCX	1,600 sq. ft.	1:3	8.00 ft	1:1	8.00 ft.
RC	1,600 sq. ft.	1:3	8.00 ft	1:1	8.00 ft.
RM	1,452 sq. ft	N/A	5.00 ft.	1:2	16.00 ft.
RS	2,904 sq. ft.	1:3	Minimum 8.00 ft.	1:1	16.00 ft.
RT	2,500 sq. ft	N/A	20.00 ft.	N/A	35.00 ft.
RMF	N/A	N/A	Minimum 8.00 ft.	N/A	8.00 ft

Staff has no concern with the potential of out-of-scale additions being added to a site because this zone has a lot coverage maximum of .30 that does not exist in other zones. This means no more than thirty percent of any lot that has not been modified by a Special

Use Permit can be developed with structures. Section 3-1306(B) states that “no more than 30 percent of any lot may be covered with buildings or structures.”

III. Discussion of Proposed Text Changes

The proposed text amendments seek to modify certain Zoning Ordinance regulations by changing and codifying the side yard setback for end unit townhomes and the rear yard setback in the RT/Townhouse zone. The amendment would create consistency with other townhouse zones and allow homeowners greater flexibility in making changes to their property including construction of additions, porches, decks, and other accessory structures. Below is a description of the proposed modifications to the City’s Zoning Ordinance.

A. Amend General Regulations

1. Amend the side yard setback for the RT/Townhouse zone to permit each end lot in a group of townhouses to provide a side yard setback ratio of 1:2 with a minimum of 12 feet.
2. Amend the rear yard setback for the RT/Townhouse zone to permit a rear yard setback ratio of 1:1 with a minimum of 12 feet.

IV. Recommendation

Staff recommends that the text amendments contained in Attachment 1, be initiated and recommend approval of each of the attached Zoning Ordinance text changes.

Staff: Tony LaColla, AICP, Division Chief, Land Use Services
Christina Zechman Brown, Deputy City Attorney
Mary Christesen, Zoning Manager
Marlo Ford, AICP, Urban Planner

Attachment #1

3-1306 - Bulk and open space regulations.

(A) *Yards.*

(1) *Front yard.*

- (a) The average front building line within a group must be at least six feet from the front lot line.
- (b) No front building line may be less than four feet from the front lot line.
- (c) No more than three dwellings in a group may have the same front building line or roof line.

(2) *Side yards.* Each end lot in a group of townhouses shall provide a side yard setback ratio of at least 20 feet, 1:2 with a minimum of 12 feet.

(3) *Rear yard.* Each dwelling shall provide a rear yard setback ratio of at least 35 feet, 1:1 with a minimum of 12 feet.