

rezoned from TN-TCC to the TN-CC Zone District, and many TN-TCC uses are no longer appropriate; the proposed administrative departures will facilitate property owners' ability to make investments in their properties; and subjecting properties in the Grand River Overlay District to the uses of the base zone district will result in development consistent with surrounding properties.

3. The proposed amendments will enhance the natural features and environmental integrity of the city because the amendment to Section 5.11.15. Alternative Energy will allow for rooftop solar panels to be located on the street-facing sides of a structure, supporting green initiatives and alternative energy systems.
4. The proposed amendments will protect the health, safety, and general welfare of the public because the amendments to allow administrative departures for egress window wells and front yard parking, as well as street facing solar panels, will reduce cost and time barriers for property owners.
5. The proposed amendments are needed to correct an error or omission in the original text because the amendment to the Grand River Overlay District will reinstate text that was inadvertently eliminated during a 2023 text amendment.
6. The proposed amendments will address a community need in physical or economic conditions or development practices because the egress window well amendment will allow for existing housing stock to be more fully utilized and the amendment will allow for the placement of rooftop solar panels in the location best suited for energy collection.
7. The proposed amendments would not result in the creation of significant nonconformities in the city because replacement of front yard parking lots would be limited to situations where no other practical alternative exists, the parking lot is not expanded, and landscaping is brought closer to current requirements.

SUPPORTED by Mr. Jonker. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

RESULT:	RECOMMENDED TO CITY COMMISSION [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Susan Shannon, Board Member
SECONDER:	Aaron Jonker, Vice Chairperson
YEAS:	Swem, Joseph, Shannon, Williams, Jonker, Schottke, Helm
ABSENT:	Kristine Bersche, Arlen-Dean Gaddy

C. Downtown Height Overlay District DH-2(a) Amendment

Address: 748, 750, 830, 936, 942, 954, 1010, 1060, 1116, & 1155 Front Ave. NW; 260 & 282 Leonard St. NW; and 800, 832, 902, 934, 960, 1000, 1014, 1030, 1044, 1058 Scribner Ave. NW

Applicant: City of Grand Rapids Planning Department

Requesting: **Approval to amend Map A, Downtown Height Overlay District, to include the subject properties in the DH-2(a) subarea.**

This amendment will correct an omission from February 20, 2024 when the subject properties were rezoned to the TN-CC (Traditional Neighborhood–City Center Zone District without

assignment of a Downtown Height Overlay District subarea.
Zoning: TN-CC (Traditional Neighborhood-City Center)
Requirements: 5.8.02. Downtown Height Overlay District
5.12.10. Zoning Ordinance Text and Map Amendments
Case Number: PC-ZON-2025-0004
Staff Assigned: Elizabeth Zeller ezeller@grcity.us
Type of Case: Zone Change
Effective Date: City Commission approval and ordinance adoption

Ms. Zeller introduced the request to include the subject properties on the west side of the Grand River in the Downtown Height Overlay District DH-2(a) subarea. These properties were considered by the Planning Commission on December 14, 2023 for rezoning from Transitional City Center to City Center. The Planning Commission recommended in favor and the City Commission adopted the rezoning on February 20, 2024. During the presentation, staff report, during discussion, and during discussions with the affected property owners, it had been implied and explicitly stated that this area would be in the DH-2(a) Height Overlay District for Downtown. Unfortunately, when the Ordinance was written, that portion was not included. Adding these properties to the DH-2(a) subarea would be consistent with properties located to the south and east. Ms. Zeller explained that DH-2(a) allows a maximum of 20-stories.

Ms. Joseph opened the public hearing and invited public comment; there was none. The public hearing was closed.

Ms. Joseph invited Planning Commission discussion. She feels the request is consistent with the conversation they had when recommending the rezoning of these properties. As noted, it is consistent with nearby properties.

Mr. Jonker **MOVED, NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Planning Commission recommends approval of the request of the Planning Department of the City of Grand Rapids to amend Map A, Downtown Height Overlay District, to include 748, 750, 830, 936, 942, 954, 1010, 1060, 1116, & 1155 Front Ave. NW; 260 & 282 Leonard St. NW; and 800, 832, 902, 934, 960, 1000, 1014, 1030, 1044, 1058 Scribner Ave. NW in the DH-2(a) subarea. SUPPORTED by Ms. Shannon. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

RESULT:	RECOMMENDED TO CITY COMMISSION [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Aaron Jonker, Vice Chairperson
SECONDER:	Susan Shannon, Board Member
YEAS:	Swem, Joseph, Shannon, Williams, Jonker, Schottke, Helm
ABSENT:	Kristine Bersche, Arlen-Dean Gaddy

IV. Planning Commission Discussion

A. Update on Community Master Plan Implementation and Zoning Ordinance Rewrite

Planning Department staff will provide a presentation of Community Master Plan implementation activities, including the update of the Zoning Ordinance, detailed below.

The first phase of the Zoning Ordinance update, commencing in this spring, will include forming a technical advisory committee, preparing a request for proposals and selecting a consultant, preparing and administering a survey of design professionals, and rolling out an informational presentation to advise the community on the relationship of the Community Master Plan and the Zoning Ordinance.

The second phase, anticipated to begin in the fall of 2025 and be complete by early 2027, will consist of community engagement to report on outcomes of the April 2024 housing policy text amendments and solicit feedback on Zoning Ordinance content.

The Zoning Ordinance is anticipated to be adopted by late spring of 2027.

The Planning Commission is being asked to discuss the process and timeline proposed for the update of the Zoning Ordinance, and if not in agreement, provide input on desired modifications.

The draft Plan and Area Specific Plans can be found in their entirety at <http://grandrapidsmi.gov/cmp>.

Ms. Turkelson related that the Community Master Plan has been put on line in a more digestible fashion using story-mapping that was discussed during the adoption phase of the Plan. The idea is to help in understanding and referencing the Plan. There are also videos included for each chapter.

Ms. Turkelson also related that the Community Master Plan Online Dashboard is in development. The intent is to have it available online in the second quarter of 2025. During phase I, the pre-planning phase, one of the main questions they heard was what happened with the 2002 Plan and, as they moved through the adoption phase of the Plan, they heard expectations of the Plan being implemented. The Dashboard will track implementation for public review.

Ms. Turkelson advised that the next part of the implementation is an update of the City Zoning Ordinance. It will not be a wholesale rewrite. There have been a number of amendments and occasionally errors occur. It will be necessary to clean up the document and make it more user friendly. It is also important to rewrite sections to embed the recommendations of the land use strategies of the Master Plan. The intent is to make it a more user-friendly document. Before getting to the actual written language, it is necessary to continue to provide education on what a zoning ordinance is, some of the limitations related to land use legislation in the State of Michigan, and where the authority comes from. It is also necessary to look at the Community Master Plan, Area Specific Plans, and any other relevant laws that feed into the creation of the Zoning Ordinance rewrite. What they have found with engagement and educational opportunities around planning and zoning is that they need to continually step back to what zoning is, why it is important, some of the benefits, as well as the limitations.

Ms. Turkelson reviewed the tentative schedule of the Zoning Ordinance Update. During Phase 1, spring, summer and fall of 2025, they will provide the City Commission with a briefing; a Technical Advisory Committee will be formed; a Request for Proposal/Qualifications will be issued and a consultant selected; have conversations with design professionals, neighborhoods and business districts and determine what is working and what is not; and a Zoning 101 Road Show to explain what Zoning is. Phase 2 will include beginning to draft the Ordinance and develop an engagement strategy that will meet the needs of the community and likely also focus on testing different concepts that are recommended through the Community Master Plan. Ms. Turkelson provided an example. She noted that one of the recommendations of the Plan is to be more flexible in terms of the types of uses allowed in a Residential Zone District. There was quite a bit of support for small neighborhood shops or businesses that are embedded within a neighborhood. That concept is in the Plan and was well supported. It is now necessary to develop requirements around that. Ms. Turkelson explained that the community engagement piece will look different than that of the Community Master Plan. The Master Plan engagement is very broad and general whereas Zoning is more technical and specific to the recommendations/requirements put into the Ordinance. The end goal is to provide a document that is well loved and supported by the community, Planning Commission and City Commission. Adoption of the Zoning Ordinance is anticipated for spring of 2027.

Ms. Turkelson expanded on the formation of a Technical Advisory Committee. The current plan is to put together a team of individuals that work with the Ordinance and have knowledge about what a Zoning Ordinance is and how it would be used. Ms. Turkelson briefly reviewed the list of different sectors of the community she would like to have representation from on the Committee.

Ms. Turkelson related that one of the next major steps is to begin drafting the Request for Proposals/Qualifications. The idea is to solicit support from a consultant that would help support City staff and the Planning and City Commissions.

Ms. Turkelson explained that another idea that has emerged is to issue some sort of survey. The Development Center collects a lot of data, including a data base of individuals that submit applications for their services. Asking questions of them about how they use the Ordinance, what processes are a benefit or hindrance to their projects, code sections they struggle with or feel may be eliminated or enhanced is the feedback desired. The survey will be targeted to the design professional community. Ms. Turkelson related that they had a good response rate when doing the Customer Service Survey in 2023 with a similar list. She is hopeful they will be as kind in spending some time providing their feedback.

Ms. Turkelson expanded on the proposed Zoning 101 Road Show, which is an educational opportunity for the community. The intent is to bridge the recommendations of the Community Master Plan and its recommendations and what the relationship is between the Plan and the Zoning Ordinance. Common terminology such as setbacks, Special Land Use review, by-right development, etc. would be included in those conversations. Staff feels that who is at the table is important. She welcomed the Planning Commission's feedback on the list drafted at this point and ideas on expanding the list if appropriate. Ms. Turkelson explained that the content of the Road Show will include the authority of zoning; alignment with other plans; components of a Zoning Ordinance; impacts and constraints; historical impacts; and implications and tradeoffs of plan objectives.

With respect to Phase II, Ms. Turkelson explained that they hope to get into the specific ordinance writing later this summer/early fall once the consultant is on board. They also feel it would be important to report out on the housing policy text amendments adopted last spring to answer the questions about what happened with the last round of amendments, which were fairly extensive and powerful.

Ms. Turkelson provided further explanation on the Technical Advisory Committee. The Committee would support City staff. If the Planning Commission feels the list of general sectors of the community would be helpful, City staff will come up with ideas on who may be available and able to provide support throughout the entire process.

Ms. Schottke suggested a contractor representative may add value.

Mr. Jonker asked, with a group of this size that doesn't have the expertise in turning a concept into a legal document, how do you avoid getting off track and not rediscuss all the points.

Ms. Turkelson replied that in her opinion it will be strong leadership; both from City staff and the consultant. The concepts within the Community Master Plan will not be relitigated. That document was well supported by and written by the community. It is staff's job, when meeting with a candidate for the Committee, to have that conversation about understanding what their role, responsibilities, and limitations are and reminding participants throughout the process that we are not redoing the Master Plan. It will likely be a struggle with the community as well. There will be people who didn't participate in the process that wish to add or subtract recommendations within the Plan and that simply isn't part of this process.

Mr. Jonker wondered if that extent of engagement is necessary vs. having the consultant rewrite the Ordinance.

Ms. Turkelson agreed that they could likely write a Zoning Ordinance that would implement the recommendations of the Community Master Plan. However, she feels there is tremendous value in how those requirements are practically applied. Understanding the practical applications of the codes from the standpoint of an architect, civil engineer, etc. provide that value. Ms. Turkelson provided the example of the Downtown Building Height Ordinance. For her to simply choose a building height she thinks is appropriate feels a bit arbitrary because she doesn't have a full appreciation for the cost benefit analysis. If she were to say that 16 floors is the maximum number that would be appropriate, based on the patterns of development, someone may argue that if they are permitted 18 floors the building code and cost of construction makes it a far more reasonable project. There is tremendous value in the knowledge of these professionals providing the feedback on how the practical application of the requirements plays out.

Ms. Turkelson explained that while she is asking for the Planning Commission's feedback on the different groups of people to include, this is not going to be the same process as appointing a steering committee for the Community Master Plan. Staff will be looking for individuals that they work with that they know have good experience within the city and with the Ordinance.

Ms. Joseph feels the Zoning 101 Road Show will be a good educational opportunity for those within the community to understand what Zoning is and is not. Ultimately the City Commission will adopt the Zoning Ordinance and they will want to see public engagement. She doesn't feel that what they want is for people to hear about the Ordinance changes for the first time at the City Commission public hearing.

Ms. Turkelson added that as they get into Phase II, writing the code, being strategic in the engagement will be important. They won't be asking the same questions asked as part of the Community Master Plan; it will be very specific. It will be much more narrowly tailored to implementing the recommendations of the Plan.

Mr. Jonker asked, now that the Master Plan has been adopted, are there things the City cannot do until the Ordinance is adopted.

Ms. Turkelson explained that a Plan is a legally required document to support the Zoning Ordinance but the Zoning Ordinance is the law. There could very well be recommendations within the Plan that can't be done today, such as non-residential uses in residential zone districts; the code isn't in place to allow it. Therefore, there are limitations on the effectiveness of the implementation of the Plan until the Zoning Ordinance is rewritten.

Mr. Helm commented on Ms. Turkelson's use of the word *arbitrary* and how it relates to who will comprise the Technical Advisory Committee. In many discussions he has had, the question is why, why was that done. To avoid the arbitrary is very important.

Ms. Turkelson asked how the Commission would like to make the decision on the Planning Commissioner appointee to the Committee; vote, volunteer, etc.

Ms. Joseph and Ms. Shannon were comfortable with a volunteer. There was no disagreement.

Mr. Swem expressed his interest.

Ms. Turkelson related that throughout the process the Planning Commission will receive updates and draft language as they reach milestones.

Ms. Turkelson invited feedback on the user survey, which she believes will be valuable. She invited Commissioners to formulate questions they feel would be helpful and provide those to staff.

Ms. Turkelson also invited feedback on the Road Show, which is intended to provide education on what the relationship is between the Plan and the Ordinance. It will be a carefully crafted presentation that makes it clear that there is a Plan and the intent is not to redo the Plan but rather implement it. There is a neighborhood association collaborative comprised of leadership from each neighborhood association. Staff believes that one general meeting in each ward would be appropriate. They also feel that going to business districts or Corridor Improvement Authorities would be helpful. The Development Center also has a lunch and learn, which is typically tailored toward the design professional community that engages City services and utilizes the code. They appreciate that not all of the community is represented by a neighborhood association and not all

businesses are represented by an association, which is why the one meeting per ward is beneficial. She asked if there are other ideas anyone has about bringing this message to the community.

Ms. Joseph suggested the Commission Night Out events.

Ms. Shannon feels the list targets many of the right organizations. She suggested perhaps the Rotary or Economic Club, understanding the amount of staff work involved however.

Ms. Turkelson related that it won't be within their capacity to go to every association, business district, non-profit, realtor, etc. Her focus is for locations where they know there will be a larger gathering of people.

Ms. Schottke stated that if an audience that matters is the construction or design community, she would suggest AIA for the architects and there are a number of associations for the construction community. From a process standpoint it reminds her of the work she did while on the Grand Rapids Public School Board in developing the facility master plan. In that outreach work they were very intentional about choosing which schools they were in as they identified the schools that would most likely be the schools that were impacted. She wonders if there is a way in this work to identify locations to host the meetings that could most likely be impacted so they can best envision what may change.

Mr. Swem suggested staff could likely put some of the suggested organizations to work for them in terms of outreach. He indicated he could assist with the AIA.

Ms. Shannon thanked Ms. Turkelson for the thoughtfulness.

Ms. Joseph agreed, including how user friendly the story map is for the Master Plan. She related that she randomly found it when sending someone else information about the Community Master Plan. She was also impressed at how quickly that was made available. Typically, things can lag between when a document is adopted and a user-friendly version is available.

Mr. Helm expressed his appreciation on the lesson regarding Plan and law. He hears regularly that there is now a new Community Master Plan and that should be it. He hasn't had the words previously but now has a better understanding on how to explain that yes, there is a Plan but now there is law that has to be adapted to the Plan, which takes time.

Ms. Turkelson agreed that that is the kind of messaging in the Road Show idea that they need to stress. There are other laws, such as the Rent Control Act, that are applicable and will inform how they zone for the community.

Ms. Shannon suggested that bringing on a consultant that has some background on how similar things have worked in other communities would be another good source of input and expertise that can be time saving.

Ms. Turkelson expressed excitement about the different tools that are available. It is challenging and inappropriate for a community member or design professional to have to call a City staff

planner to interpret the code. We should have a code that is far more user friendly and far more intuitive. Staff is certainly happy to help and explore solutions with individuals but it shouldn't be so confusing that people get frustrated. They didn't have the same technological advances that are available today when writing the code in 2008. She would like to focus on that and take advantage of it. The interactive mapping tool is one example.

Ms. Turkelson asked that if the Planning Commission has recommendations on individuals to serve on the Technical Advisory Committee that they provide them to staff via email.

V. Public Comment

None.

VI. Adjournment

The meeting was closed at 2:10 PM