

MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 27, 2026

TO: Planning and Zoning Board

FROM: Autumn Cochella, AICP, FRA-RA, Growth Management

SUBJECT: Steeple Chase: Amendment of Approved Preliminary Subdivision Plat / Special Exception Use Permit for a Residential Planned Development Project (PDP)
PID: 273012000000033020, 273012000000034000,
273012000000041010, 273012000000041030, 273012000000014010,
273012000000023030, 273012000000023010
PUBLIC HEARING – Requirements have been met.

SYNOPSIS: *David Waronker, owner of CBD Land Investors, LLC, is requesting a recommendation of approval to City Commission, pursuant to Sec. 23-224.7.c., to amend the approved Steeple Chase Plan, a 318-unit Preliminary Subdivision Plat and a Special Exception Use Permit for a Residential PDP on approximately 97.86 acres of land north of Belleview Drive and east of Scenic Highway South.*

The request is accompanied by two plan options: Plan A, which includes single-family detached homes only and a Waiver from the mix of housing types; or Plan B, made up of single-family detached and duplex unit options, and a Waiver from the alleyway requirement for the duplex lots.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff supports a recommendation of approval to City Commission for the major modification of the **Special Exception Use Permit for a Planned Development Project (PDP)** and **Preliminary Subdivision Plat for Plan Option B, with waivers of strict compliance and conditions of approval**, finding the following:

- 1.) The amended plan is generally consistent with Section 23-443 Residential PDP Guidelines.
- 2.) Including a mix of housing options within Plan Option B reflects the motion of the Planning and Zoning Board in November of 2025 to deny the proposed amended plan, finding that the waivers requested were not justified due to the lack of a mix of uses and/or variety of housing options.

CODE REFERENCE

Sec. 23-224.7 *Amendment of approved plan*

Amendment of approved plan. The process for review and approval of amendments to approved PDP plans depends upon the extent of the changes proposed, as set forth below:

- a. Administrative. Amendments meeting the criteria below are reviewed and approved by the administrative official; however, the administrative official may refer the application to the planning board and city commission if there are issues deemed to warrant such review.*

Criteria for administrative amendments:

- Changes in layout involve less than 20 percent of the area of the development; and*
- Any increase in number of units or non-residential square footage is less than one percent and the change does not cause violation of density or intensity standards; and*
- No waivers of development standards are requested requiring planning board or city commission action; and*
- No conditions of approval are violated with the exception of those obviated by the proposed amendment.*

- b. Planning board. Amendments meeting the criteria below are reviewed and approved by the planning board; however, the board may refer the application to the city commission if there are issues deemed to warrant such review.*

Criteria for planning board amendments:

- Any waivers requested are those within the powers of the planning board to grant per the site plan review process; and*
- Any increase in number of units or non-residential square footage is less than five percent and the change does not cause violation of density or intensity standards; and*
- Any changes requested in conditions of approval pertain to matters in the board's purview under the site plan review process (section 23-222) and do not require city commission approval.*

- c. City commission. Amendments not meeting the criteria for administrative or planning board approval must be reviewed and approved as for a new planned development project. These include amendments that:*

- Entail major changes as determined by the administrative official or planning board in terms of the magnitude of the change in regard to affected area, density or intensity of the development, or*
- Change the approved housing type (e.g. single-family to multi-family); or*
- Significantly change the configuration of lots, buildings, roadways, common areas, parking areas or other major features; or*

- Have a significant impact upon the quality of the development with reference to the design guidelines for PDPs in this chapter; or*
- Violate conditions of approval; or*
- Deviate significantly from representations by the developer pertaining to the character and quality of the development.*

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The subject properties, comprising of approximately 97 acres of vacant grove, are located south of Highway 60 E and the CSX railroad, east of McLaughlin Middle School, and adjacent to the existing County subdivision known as Ridge Manor. The project is situated within existing neighborhoods and approved subdivisions to the south, including Belle Lago, Belleview Subdivision, and Grove at Orchard Hills.

The properties are within the corporate City Limits of Lake Wales. The current land use designations are LDR Low Density Residential and RO Residential Office, and the current zoning designations are R-1A and PF Professional. Parcel 27301200000023030, comprising of 3.92 acres, has the existing land use of RO Residential Office and zoning designation of PF Professional, and will remain within the project with its existing RO and PF designations, as single-family is permitted within the zoning district. Adjacent properties to the north and south of subject parcels have a land use designation of LDR and zoning designation of R-1A. Maximum density allowed on for this project is calculated up to 5 units per gross acre, or 489 dwelling units, under the Comprehensive Plan for LDR Low-Density Residential.

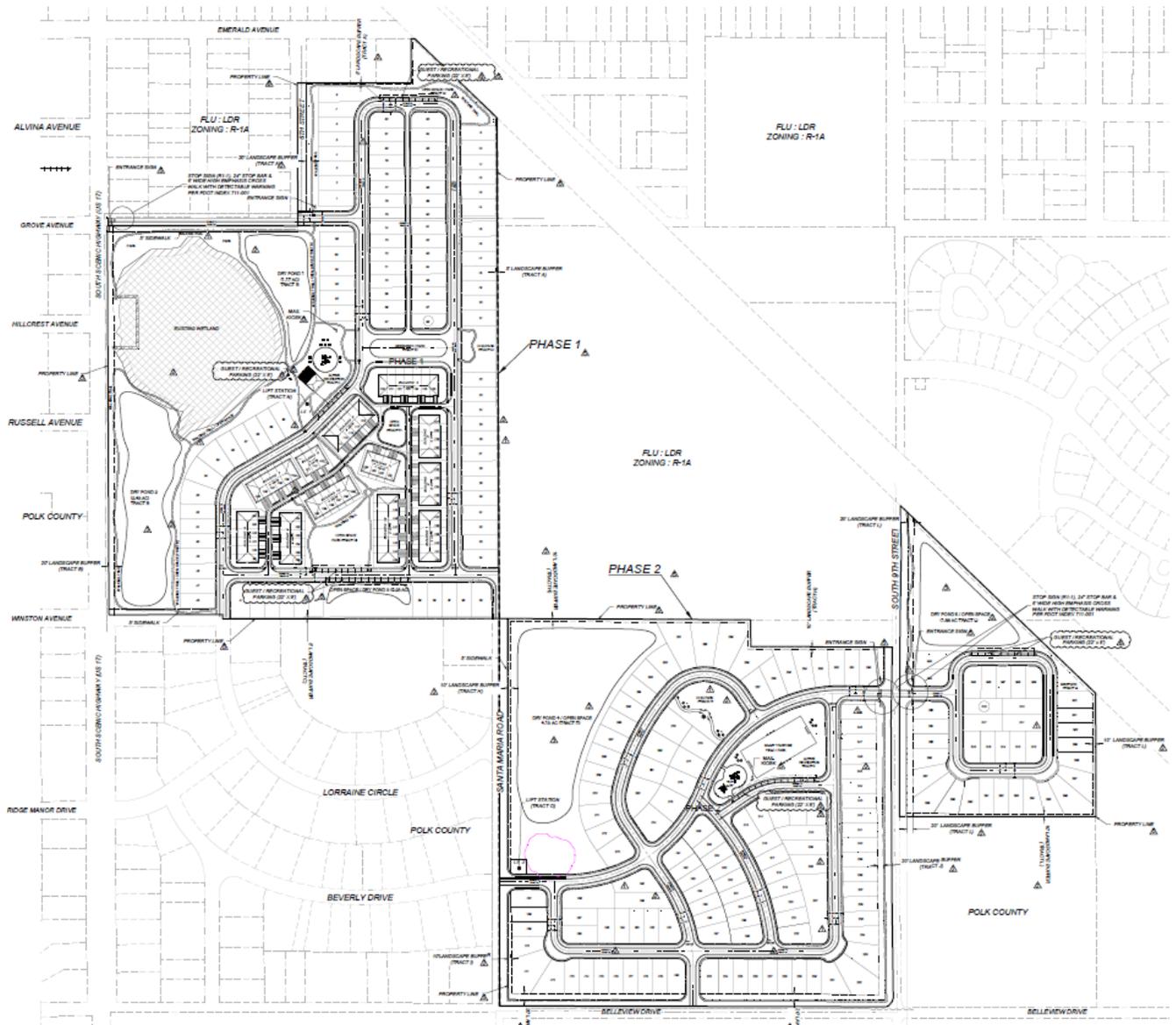
On December 19, 2023, City Commission approved the Steeple Chase PDP with waivers of strict compliance and conditions of approval. The originally-approved plan included a total of 250 single-family detached lots and 68 townhome units built in two phases. Phase one proposed alley-loaded townhomes, alley-loaded single family detached lots, and additional front-loaded single family detached lots between Scenic Highway South and Santa Maria Road. Phase two included the remaining 152 lots made up of 50' wide and 60' wide single family detached lots. Since the December 2023 approval, the applicant has not been able to find a developer willing to build the alley-loaded homes.

In June of 2025, the applicant sought a recommendation of approval from the Planning and Zoning Board to amend the approved plan, keeping the overall layout but removing the alley-loaded design. The City's most recent PDP regulations were not taken into consideration by the applicant at this time.

The Board determined that the original plan was superior to the revised plan, and did not recommend approval of the modification.

In September of 2025, the applicant submitted a revised PDP designed to meet the new PDP regulations. A final revised PDP was submitted following Planning Staff comments in October. The modified plan removed the townhome units. In November of 2025, the Board moved to deny to recommend approval to City Commission of the proposed amended plan, finding the mix of housing types within the approved plan was superior.

Although the amended plan was not approved, the originally-approved plan is still considered approved.



Approved Plan

Amended Plan Options

Plan A:

Proposes 145 single-family detached lots within Phase 1, and 156 single-family detached lots within Phase 2, including recreation and open space meeting the requirements of Section 23-443.

SINGLE FAMILY LOT COUNT PHASE ONE		
MINIMUM LOT AREA	MINIMUM SIZE	NUMBER OF LOTS
6,000 S.F.	50' x 120'	145
TOTALS		145

RESIDENTIAL UNIT COUNT PHASE TWO				
MINIMUM LOT AREA	MINIMUM SIZE	DESCRIPTION	NUMBER OF UNITS	%
5,500 S.F.	50' x 110'	SINGLE FAMILY	120	76.9%
6,600 S.F.	60' x 110'	SINGLE FAMILY	36	23.1%
TOTALS			156	100.0%

Waivers of Strict Compliance: Plan A

- 1.) Reduction in required side yard setback to 5 feet where 10 feet is required by code.
- 2.) Reduction in required rear yard setback to 15 feet where 20 feet is required by code.
- 3.) Reduction in the minimum road frontage for lots to 50 feet in width where 85 feet (R-1A) and 75 feet (R-3 for single family within the PF) is required by code.
- 4.) Waiver from Section 23-443: *a mix of uses and/or variety of housing options that meet or exceed the intent of the city's land development regulations.*

RESIDENTIAL UNIT COUNT PHASE ONE				
MIMIMUM LOT AREA	MINIMUM SIZE	DESCRIPTION	NUMBER OF UNITS	%
6,000 S.F.	50' x 120'	SINGLE FAMILY	110	66.3%
7,200/3,600 S.F.	60' x 120'/30' x 120'	(28) DUPLEX LOT	56	33.7%
TOTALS			166	100.0%

RESIDENTIAL UNIT COUNT PHASE TWO				
MIMIMUM LOT AREA	MINIMUM SIZE	DESCRIPTION	NUMBER OF UNITS	%
5,500 S.F.	50' x 110'	SINGLE FAMILY	120	76.9%
6,600 S.F.	60' x 110'	SINGLE FAMILY	36	23.1%
TOTALS			156	100.0%

Waivers of Strict Compliance: Plan B

- 1.) Reduction in required side yard setback to 5 feet where 10 feet is required by code (single-family detached).
- 2.) Reduction in required interior side yard setback to 0 feet where 10 feet is required by code for attached duplex units only.
- 3.) Reduction in required rear yard setback to 15 feet where 20 feet is required by code.
- 4.) Reduction in the minimum road frontage for lots to 50 feet in width for single-family detached and to 30 feet in width for each duplex lot, where 85 feet and 75 feet is required by code.
- 5.) Increase in the maximum lot coverage for the duplex lots to 70% where 60% is required by code.
- 6.) Waiver from required alleyways for lots smaller than 50 feet in width (duplex lots).

proposed buffer may be a wall or berm, and will be planted with shrubs, canopy trees, and understory trees. The following landscape requirements shall be applied:

- Residential tree density requirements will be enforced at building permit issuance, pursuant to section 23-307.2.a.3: *a minimum of three, two-inch caliper shade trees, minimum of eight feet at planting for lots less than 10,000 sq. ft. and four, two-inch caliper shade trees, minimum of eight feet at planting for lots greater than 10,000 sq. ft. At least one of the shade trees shall be a street tree. Corner lots shall have a minimum of one additional tree to ensure that each frontage has at least one street tree. NOTE: Street Trees are required to have root barriers. Root barriers shall be approved by the Administrative Official prior to planting.*
- Minimum buffer landscaping shall be met, per section 23-307.3: *Buffer between non-residential use and residential district. A five-foot wide separation strip shall be provided on property in non-residential use and a residential district. Within this strip, a permanent visual buffer, such as a wall or evergreen hedge, with a minimum height of six (6) feet shall be provided. Buffer along streets exterior to a development. 1. Along a local street, the buffer shall be a minimum of ten (10) feet in width, and along collector and arterial roadways, twenty (20) feet in width. 2. The buffer shall be in a separate parcel or tract maintained by a homeowners' association or similar entity, in accordance with an approved landscaping plan. 3. The buffer shall be landscaped to provide a solid screen, such as a wall or hedge, a minimum of six (6) feet in height. One (1) tree shall be provided for every fifty (50) feet of buffer length.*
- Recreation areas shall be landscaped per Section 23-310(d)2: *A minimum of two (2) shade trees per recreation area or a minimum of five (5) shade trees per acre, whichever is greater, shall be provided in recreation areas.*
- Drainage retention areas shall be landscaped per Section 23-307.4: *Landscaping shall be required along retention areas abutting all travel ways, including streets, accessways, bikeways, sidewalks, and driveways... The buffer shall be landscaped in accordance with a landscaping plan approved by the administrative official and meeting the following minimum requirements...*

CONSISTENCY WITH THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Policy I.1.2.12 Low Density Residential (LDR) of the Comprehensive Plan is intended to preserve the character of existing single-family residential areas with large lots and to allow the continued development of these areas. It is also intended to provide single-family housing where existing residential areas also have a density of 5 or fewer dwelling units per acre. The subdivision is situated between existing neighborhoods to the north and south with 50', 55', and 60' wide lots along with newly-approved neighborhoods to the southeast that provide a range of lot sizes from 40' to 60' wide lots.

CODE REFERENCE & PDP Analysis: Steeple Chase

Section 23-443 Residential PDPs

The residential PDP process is intended to provide an opportunity for applicants to present alternative designs for new neighborhoods that may **require waivers to lot sizes and setbacks so as to provide for a mix of uses and/or variety of housing options that meet or exceed the intent of the city's land development regulations to provide thriving neighborhoods.**

Staff Comment: Modification of the PDP eliminates the mix of uses and housing options within Plan A.

Walkable streets, expansive tree canopies, accessibility to functional park space, and a connected street grid (through the construction of traditional blocks) are core components of the desired development form within Lake Wales. The residential PDP process is not intended to provide relief from the park standards, block standards, street connectivity, sidewalks, driveway widths, or street tree requirements of this section. Any requests for waivers from the requirements of this section shall include a written statement delineating existing site constraints, natural features of the site, or unique project design elements which requires relief from the standard. In the event that existing site constraints prevent street connectivity standards from being achieved, waivers may be granted, provided that the applicant demonstrates street connectivity to the greatest extent feasible. **The residential PDP process is intended to provide an opportunity for applicants to present plans that clearly enhance the community by incorporating these core components, along with innovative approaches to density and/or intensity** that remain in keeping with the limitations established in the Future Land Use Element of the Comprehensive Plan.

23-443.1 *Minimum design standards—Residential PDPs.* The preliminary plan for a residential PDP shall demonstrate that the site design complies with the minimum design standards of this section.

a.

Density. The number of units per acre shall not exceed the maximum as allowed for the classification of the property under the Future Land Use Element of the Comprehensive Plan. Acreage for density calculations shall not include areas of open water or lands within the "Conservation" classification of the future land use map.

Staff comment: meets requirement

b.

Open space. Excluding roadways and parking areas open space shall make up a minimum of 20 percent of the site area. The recreation area required under section 23-310 may be included to meet the open space requirement except that recreation buildings and parking areas shall not be included.

Staff comment: meets this requirement

c.

Lighting. Lighting is adequate for safety and enhances the streetscape, residential sites, parking areas, signs, and recreation facilities without being excessive or creating glare.

Staff comment: Site lighting plan shall be reviewed upon Site Development Permit application.

d.

Relationship to surrounding area. The development is not isolated from the surrounding community, but is an integral part of the community.

Staff comment: Meets this requirement.

e.

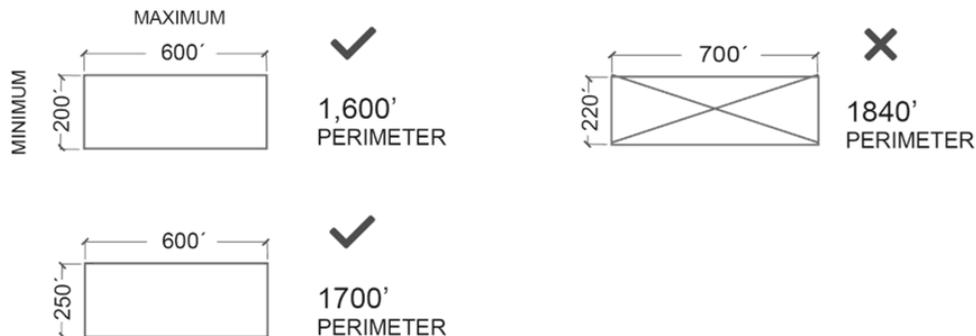
Overall design. The layout of the development is suited to the configuration and characteristics of the land and integrates natural features into the overall design, including wetlands, ponds, hills, and vegetation.

Staff comment: The site is high and dry, and vegetated with failing citrus.

23-443.2 *New development block standards.*

a.

New developments proposing a street network shall adopt a traditional block pattern. Block length shall be 200 feet or greater, but shall not exceed 600 feet, with a perimeter of less than 1,800 feet. For the purpose of this section, block shall be defined as a group of lots within well-defined and fixed boundaries, usually surrounded by streets.

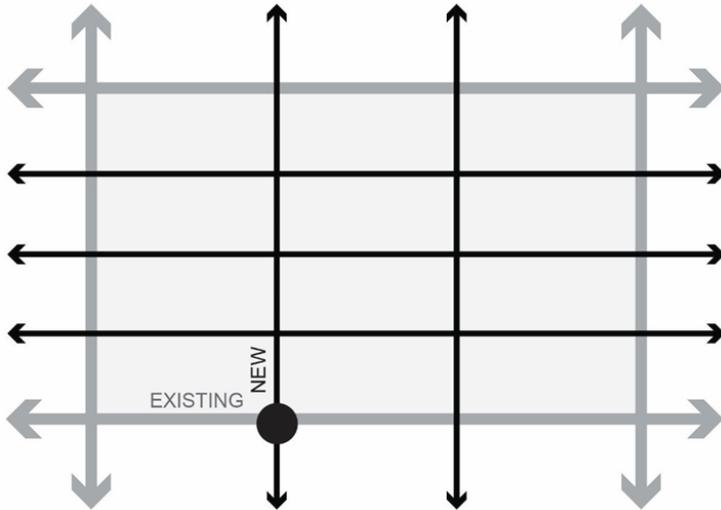


Staff comment: Block lengths do not exceed the code maximum.

23-443.3 *Streets.*

a.

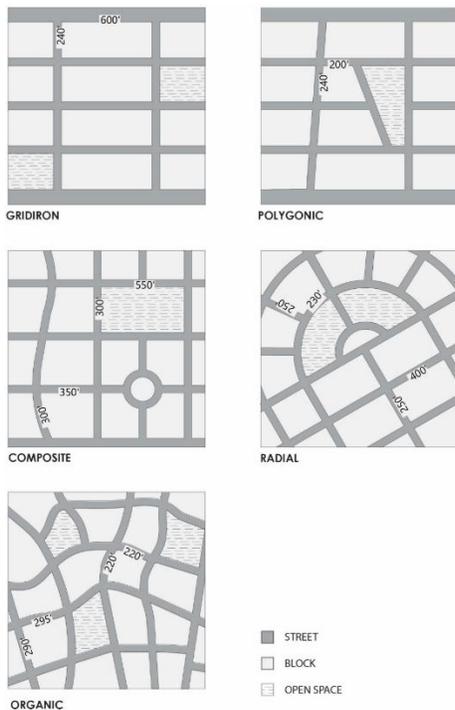
New streets shall connect to existing streets to create new street grids and patterns. The street layout of a new neighborhood shall provide for the continuation of streets already existing in adjacent areas. Stub-outs to adjacent undeveloped parcels shall be provided with a spacing no greater than 1,000 feet.



Staff comment: Street interconnectivity is achieved.

b.

Street grids can include a variety of patterns, as shown in the graphics below, with blocks of equal or varying sizes provided they meet the block length requirements outlined in section 23-443.1, new development block standards.



Staff comment: Street patterns vary.

23-443.4 *Street tree standards.*

a.

Street trees shall be planted on both sides of the street, within the eight-foot planting zone located between the back of curb and sidewalk and shall be spaced between 25 and 50 feet, depending on appropriateness for species type.

Staff comment: Street trees are proposed. Landscape plan will be reviewed following Site Development Permit application and will be required to adhere to this section, as well as Section 23-307 of the Land Development Code.

b.

Allowable street trees species include Live Oak, Cathedral Live Oak, Shumard Oak, Allee Elm and Red Maple. All street trees must have a minimum three-inch caliper at planting.

Staff comment: Landscape plan will be reviewed following Site Development Permit application and will be required to adhere to this section, as well as Section 23-307 of the Land Development Code.

c.

Provide a diversity of species within each neighborhood but maintain the same species for the street segments of each neighborhood block.

Staff comment: Landscape plan will be reviewed following Site Development Permit application and will be required to adhere to this section, as well as Section 23-307 of the Land Development Code.

d.

Street trees are required to have root barriers. Root barriers shall be approved by the administrative official prior to planting.

Staff comment: Landscape plan will be reviewed following Site Development Permit application and will be required to adhere to this section, as well as Section 23-307 of the Land Development Code.

23-443.5 *Sidewalks.* Sidewalks constructed in accordance with this section shall be provided in all new developments and along all streets on which a development has frontage.

a.

Sidewalks shall be provided on both sides of all streets.

Staff comment: Sidewalks are proposed on both sides of the streets.

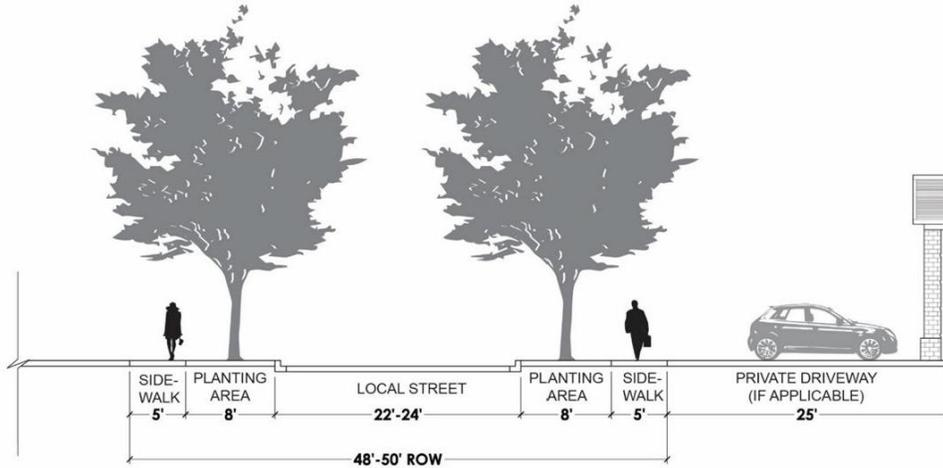
b.

The sidewalks shall be concrete and shall be a minimum of four inches thick. Sidewalks shall be a minimum of five feet wide.

Staff comment: Sidewalk construction will adhere to the standards of this section, as well as the City's Public Works Development Standards.

c.

There shall be at minimum an eight-foot-wide strip of landscaped area (as defined in section 23-307) between the sidewalk and curb in which a tree as defined in section 23-307 shall be planted with consistent spacing, between 25 and 50 feet, depending on appropriateness for species type.



Staff comment: Landscape plan will be reviewed following Site Development Permit application and will be required to adhere to this section, as well as Section 23-307 of the Land Development Code.

23-443.6 *Driveways*. Single-family detached, single-family attached (townhouses), and duplexes.

a.

Lots with a width greater than 60 feet may have one driveway not exceeding 20 feet in width.

b.

Lots with a width of 50 feet to less than 60 feet may have one driveway, not exceeding 12 feet in width.

c.

Lots with a width of less than 50 feet are not allowed a front driveway and shall provide access via a rear alley.

Staff comment: Lots less than 50 feet in width are not proposed within Plan A. A Waiver from this requirement is requested within Plan B for the duplex lots.

d.

Curb cuts shall be located at least two-thirds of the distance of the lot frontage or 100 feet, whichever is less, from any intersecting roadways.

Staff comment: Driveways shall meet this standard.

e.

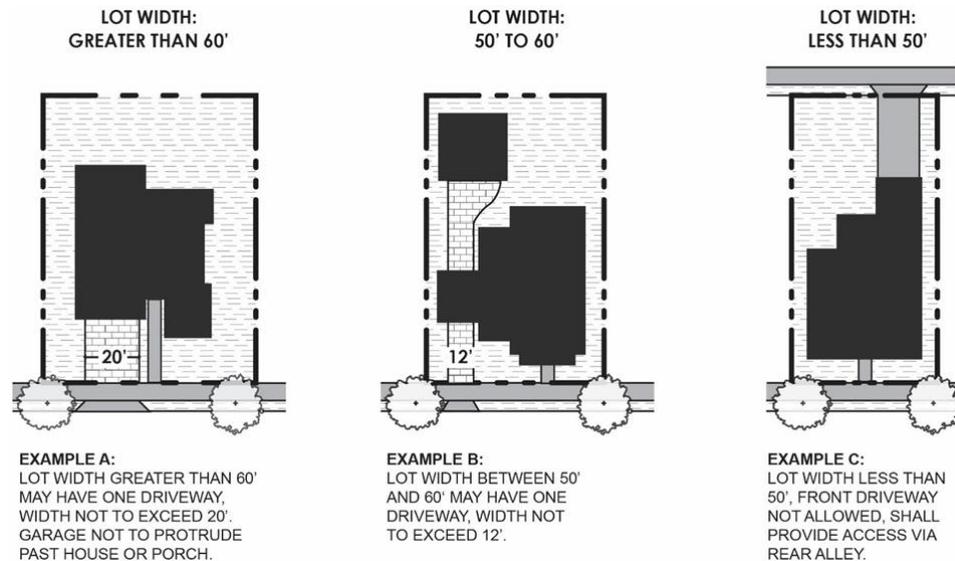
The minimum length of a driveway shall be 25 feet measured from the property line.

Staff comment: Driveways shall meet this standard.

f. Driveway aprons shall be located within the planting zone and not exceed a 12 percent grade.

Staff comment: Driveways shall meet this standard.

g. Driveways must be of a different color and/or material that provides clear distinction to the concrete sidewalks.



Staff comment: Driveways within Plan A shall meet this standard. Duplex lots within Plan B are requested to be front-loaded, requiring a waiver from the Board.

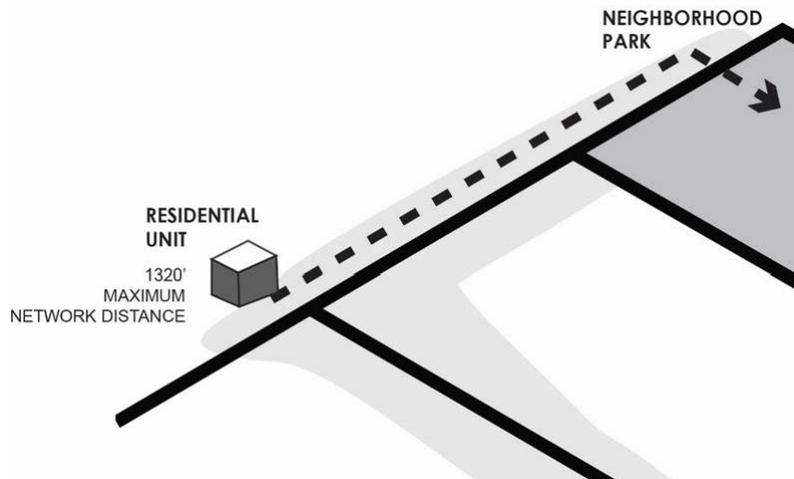
23-443.7 Neighborhood parks.

a. All residential lots shall be within 1,320 feet of a neighborhood park, based on walkable street/network distance.

Staff comment: Qualifying parks meet the distance requirement.

b. Neighborhood parks must be a minimum of 32,670 square feet in size, with a minimum width of 40 feet.

Staff comment: Qualifying parks meet the width requirement.



Conditions of Approval:

- 1.) A Detailed Landscape Plan is required at Site Development Plan Submittal and will be reviewed and approved by Staff and the City's Horticulturist.
- 2.) Decorative, dark sky friendly street lighting to minimize glare and reduce light pollution. Street lighting design to be approved by the City, and maintained by the HOA.
- 3.) Parking areas in the front yard for duplex lots shall not eliminate more than 50% of the area available for grass or landscaping, pursuant to Sec. 23-422.
- 4.) Mechanical equipment shall be located at the rear of the home and not permitted within side yards for all single family lots in the development.
- 5.) Although the City does not have front setback requirements, corner lots shall have a minimum front setback of 15 feet within the functional side yard.
- 6.) The developer must enter into a developer's agreement, capacity queue agreement and/or utilities agreement with the City, as applicable, and at the administrative official's discretion.

STAFF FINDINGS:

1. The neighborhood is surrounded by existing residential development and proposed residential development.
2. The development attempts to connect to the existing roadway network, creating an integrated and walkable neighborhood.
3. The amended plan is generally consistent with Section 23-443 Residential PDP Guidelines.
4. Including a mix of housing options within Plan Option B reflects the motion of the Planning and Zoning Board in November of 2025 to return to the Board with a plan that includes a mix of uses and/or variety of housing options.

5. This development site is located within the City's utility service area and will maximize existing infrastructure investments by connecting to municipal water and sewer.
6. Waivers of strict compliance for lot sizes and setbacks are not guaranteed through the PDP process. *The residential PDP process is intended to provide an opportunity for applicants to present alternative designs for new neighborhoods that may require waivers to lot sizes and setbacks so as to provide for a mix of uses and/or variety of housing options that meet or exceed the intent of the city's land development regulations to provide thriving neighborhoods.*

ATTACHMENTS

- Preliminary Development Plan for Steeple Chase, prepared by Dave Schmitt Engineering, dated November 21, 2023 (APPROVED PLAN)
- Steeple Chase Plan A and Plan B (AMENDED PLANS)