CITY OF NORMAN, OK
JOINT CITY COUNCIL/PLANNING COMMISSION STUDY SESSION MEETING

Municipal Building, Executive Conference Room, 201 West Gray, Norman, OK 73069

Tuesday, October 06, 2026 at 5:30 PM

AGENDA

Joint City Council/Planning Commission Study Session Meeting

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CALL TO ORDER

AGENDA ITEMS

1. UPDATE AND DISCUSSION REGARDING THE NORMAN DEVELOPMENT CODE AND PARKING STUDY PROJECTS GENERALLY, AND SPECIFIC DISCUSSION REGARDING THE DEVELOPMENT CODE ASSESSMENT AND NEXT STEPS.

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NORMAN
DEVELOPMENT
CODE

Development Code Assessment

Public Review Version

September 2026

CLARION

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Part 1. Introduction

1.1 Project Overview

The City of Norman is updating its zoning and subdivision regulations, collectively referred to as the "Development Code," to better align with and support the community's vision for the future established through the recently adopted AIM Norman Comprehensive Plan. The project also includes a companion Parking Study that will use local data to evaluate how parking is used across Norman and recommend updated parking standards that better reflect actual conditions and reduce barriers to development.

The overall Development Code project is being led by a project team that includes Clarion Associates, RDG Planning & Design, and a group of City staff from Planning and Community Development, Public Works, Utilities, Parks and Recreation, and the City Attorney's Office. Nelson\Nygaard and Parkalytics are leading the companion Parking Study. The project is also supported by a Development Code Working Group made up of development professionals, including developers, engineers, designers, attorneys, and other stakeholders who regularly use Norman's zoning and subdivision regulations, to provide technical and practical input throughout the project.

The Development Code update is expected to take about two years to complete, with final adoption in November 2027. This schedule is intended to provide participants with enough opportunity to share their ideas and feedback before the Development Code is adopted. Community input will be welcome throughout the project and will be requested as part of the project drafting milestones (reference project timeline below).

1.2 Project Goals

The key goals of the Development Code update are to:

- Implement the AIM Norman Comprehensive Plan through updated regulations;
- Simplify and modernize the Development Code for clarity and predictability;
- Update the zoning map to align with adopted land use priorities; and
- Support housing for all residents, economic development, existing neighborhoods, and multimodal connectivity.

1.3 Development Code Assessment Approach and Context

The Development Code project team kicked off the project with a series of in-person meetings and listening sessions from May 4 through May 6, 2026, followed by additional virtual meetings with staff and stakeholders. The kickoff included conversations with City staff, members of the Planning Commission and City Council, the Development Code Working Group, and stakeholders who regularly work with or are affected by Norman's development regulations. The project team also participated in a City tour to better understand local development patterns, redevelopment opportunities, infrastructure constraints, and areas where the current regulations may not fully support adopted City priorities. Key takeaways from project kickoff discussions are summarized in Part 5 of this document.

The purpose of this Development Code Assessment is to establish a framework for the update of the Development Code. The Development Code Assessment is focused on: (1) preliminary issue spotting, (2) identifying potential regulatory approaches to address the issues identified; and (3) creating an organizational framework to ensure the code drafting process is comprehensive. The Development Code Assessment will not be revised following community input on the issues and options presented; instead, detailed drafting approaches and responses to community-based suggestions will be incorporated into the Development Code drafting process and reflected in the follow-up discussion with each draft of the Development Code.

1.4 Key Recommendations

The following recommendations are described in more detail in the following sections of this Development Code Assessment:

Update the base zoning districts

- Update residential districts to allow a wider range of housing types
- Consider adding standards for residential building forms
- Create a full range of mixed-use districts
- Review and update Intensive Commercial and Industrial Districts to support employers

Update the Center City Form-Based Code

- Adjust the regulating plan to align frontage types
- Delete the neighborhood manners section
- Delete the façade composition section
- Regulate block sizes the way they were platted

Reduce reliance on Planned Unit Development

- Consolidate the planned unit development options into one process
- Do not require a preliminary plat as part of every planned unit development application
- Tie PUDs to underlying base zoning district(s)
- Do not use planned unit developments to adjust allowed uses
- Do not allow new planned unit developments within areas regulated by the form-based code.
- Establish clear transition and amendment rules for existing PUDs

Organize and update the use regulations

- Create a single permitted use table
- Organize by use categories and use types
- Review use permissions and special uses
- Modernize use-specific standards
- Clarify allocation of unlisted uses

Diversify housing types

Enhance development quality standards

- Separate development code and EDC requirements for infrastructure and public facilities
- Specify requirements for access and connectivity
- Expand applicability of landscaping, buffering, and screening requirements
- Identify relevant site and building design requirements
- Update outdoor lighting standards
- Coordinate changes to off-street parking and loading standards with parking study

Protect sensitive lands and natural resources

Update and clarify subdivision standards

Improve the development review process

- Consolidate common review procedures
- Organize and update specific review procedures
- Tailor review and approval criteria to specific application types
- Add site-specific flexibility options
- Clarify board of adjustment processes
- Consolidate technical and administrative content
- Update and clarify types of nonconformities

Make the development code more user-friendly

- Improve the overall organization
- Make better use of document and page layout
- Clarify key terms and language
- Incorporate helpful illustrations and graphics

Part 2. Applicable Plans, Policies, and Related Regulations

2.1 Overview

Recommended changes to the Development Code are typically focused on one or more of the following goals:

(1) Implementing adopted plans and policies,

(2) Improving regulations to follow a recognized best practice or successful regulatory approach used by peer communities,

(3) Updating regulations to incorporate a more modern, simpler, or more effective approach,

(4) Streamlining and simplifying development review processes, and

(5) Focusing, or improving the focus on community-based preferences for development types and outcomes.

The starting point for a code update is application of the City's adopted plans and policies and coordination with related regulations. The following plans, policies, and related regulations will be used as reference points for the Development Code update. Key goals and relevant information are identified here for reader orientation, along with plan links to the City's website.

2.2 AIM Norman (2025)

AIM Norman is the City's Comprehensive Plan. Adopted in June 2025, AIM Norman is unique in that it is an "all-in-one" plan that focuses on future land use along with updating master plans for water; wastewater; storm water; transportation; housing; and parks, recreation, and culture. The community invested substantial effort into the creation of AIM Norman that now needs to be reflected in the updated Development Code to ensure that the proposed development types and patterns can be approved and built.

While AIM Norman cannot be fully implemented through the Development Code, the following goals will be relevant to the Development Code update project:

Land Use Goals

- Identify key mixed-use priority areas that enhance neighborhoods and reuse urban services
- Balance new development with infill development to reduce infrastructure extensions and promote connectivity
- To reduce infrastructure extensions and promote connectivity, maintain and improve existing services necessary to support infill development
- Update the zoning ordinance to make development of mixed-use and housing variety easier to produce
- Create policies, programs, and regulations that encourage new and creative ways to address housing gaps
- Expand homeownership opportunities for a wider range of socio-economic situations
- Better connect neighborhoods and residents.
- Identify key locations for Best Management Practices (BMP's) pertaining to stormwater storage and quality.
- Increase the public's access to nature and wildlife.
- Mitigate impacts of extreme storm events, wildfires, water quality, and provide continuous wildlife habitat.
- Increase the city's tree canopy and expand biodiversity across Norman, with preference to native species.
- Improve the experience of multi-modal transportation and accommodate a variety of mobility needs and preferences
- Implement a comprehensive trail network
- Expand public and multi-modal transportation options
- Guide the development of places and spaces that are safe and inviting
- Make Norman accessible to all by going beyond the basic Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements
- Facilitate a transportation system that is accessible and safe for all residents and allows for efficient emergency management
- Improve connections between parks, neighborhoods, public spaces, and destinations.
- Increase natural greenspace and create wildlife corridors.
- Update the zoning ordinance to create clear expectations for both developers and residents.

- Based upon the recommendations of the most recent Stormwater Management Plan (SWMP), improve stormwater management for all development projects.
- Where feasible, new streets and internal streets should follow a grid pattern of small blocks for a more condensed form of development
- Improve pedestrian and bicycle connectivity, especially between public transit stops and destinations with new projects, redevelopments, or reconfiguration of existing development.
- Amenities such as, but not limited to, seating, public art, natural green space, fountains and other outdoor landscape elements should be included within each development. These amenities should be conscious and considerate of impacts on the natural environment.
- Accommodate a variety of housing styles, sizes, densities, and price points to suit diverse housing needs.
- New non-residential development should use high quality building materials such as glass, brick, stone, wood or cementitious siding.

Housing Goals

- Modernize development regulations to achieve consistency, efficiency, and outcomes
- Add variety in housing types across more densities and design approaches

Stormwater Goals

- Protect the water quality runoff into Lake Thunderbird and the Canadian River to preserve the natural and beneficial uses of these water bodies
- Enhance and preserve the ecological character of Norman's unurbanized areas.

Transportation Goals

- Provide efficient and effective mobility to, from and within Norman by providing multi-modal transportation options and management for existing and anticipated future needs.
- Provide a transportation system planned and designed with people and places in mind, including amenities and aesthetic treatments to enhance the traveling experience for all modes of transportation.

Park, Recreation, and Culture Goals

- Improve the attractiveness of neighborhoods and living spaces,

as well as improve environmental resiliency.

- Have equitable distribution and connectivity of parkland within the community.
- Create a robust and strategic system of parks, natural lands, urban forests, and trails to contribute to the economic value of private residences, businesses, and public spaces.

2.3 Porter Avenue Corridor Project

North and South Porter Avenue is a significant corridor that has undergone land use changes that inadvertently resulted in conflicts over the decades, starting as a residential and institutional road, and evolving into a mix of land uses with heavy traffic congestion. Adopted in 2010, the Porter Avenue Corridor Plan-Staff Update is a combination vision for the corridor and Zoning Overlay District implemented in the current Municipal Code. As part of the Development Code update, the following will be explored as amendments to the Porter Avenue Overlay District to further reinforce the intent of the Porter Avenue Corridor Plan:

- Implement placemaking standards based on the Public Streetscape Concept Design Document recommendations, including site furnishings, lighting, paving, and signage.
- Consider unique architectural elements or requirements for the area, such as specific materials, colors, and building massing.
- Evaluate the zoning districts in the area as part of the overall code update to promote a more optimized balance of uses.
- Revise zoning district use allowances in the area to include more pedestrian-scale uses such as restaurants, small shops, and small service uses.
- Implement architectural design that promotes a pedestrian friendly environment, including pedestrian scale massing, windows along sidewalk areas, and emphasized entrances.
- Encourage multimodal usage of the corridor through bicycle parking, transit stops, and improved trail networks.
- Encourage gathering spaces such as pocket parks, plazas, or walking corridors.

2.4 Norman Engineering Design Criteria (2023)

Neither building code nor Engineering Design Criteria (EDC) are integrated into the Development Code, but often there is information included in the Development Code that overlaps with or is better suited for inclusion in the engineering criteria or building code. The role of the Development Code is to identify when infrastructure or services are needed for a development and what procedures are applicable to determine applicability or exemption, while the engineering criteria or building code specify relevant design requirements.

One of the improvements anticipated as part of the Development Code update is clarification of the best document for technical information followed by cleanup of the Development Code to remove overlapping information and provide cross-references to the Norman Engineering Design Criteria or Oklahoma Uniform Building Code, as relevant, to help code users in need of additional information. Engineering design criteria for the following will be removed from the Development Code to the extent possible and cross-references will be added to guide Development Code users to external documents:

- Site grading plan
- Earth change permit
- Retaining walls
- Solid waste container enclosures
- Water lines
- Sanitary Sewer
- Streets
- Stormwater
- Stormwater quality
- Sustainable stormwater development
- Traffic Studies
- Complete Streets
- Water Quality Protection Zones

Part 3. Key Areas to Improve the Development Code

The Norman Development Code update will be comprehensive in approach and include updates across all regulations as needed. This section of the Development Code Assessment highlights key areas for improvement that will impact the overall functioning of the Development Code.

3.1 Update the Base Zoning Districts

(1) Overview

Zoning districts are the basic building blocks of land use regulations. They identify the locations in the community where different types of development are appropriate and establish the overall scale for that development. Want to know where taller buildings are allowed? Check the zoning districts. Where mixed-use development is required? Check the zoning districts. Where to build new residential development? Check the zoning districts.

Zoning districts are generally organized into “base districts” that specify applicable dimensional standards and allowed uses, “overlay districts” that apply additional or adjusted standards over the base districts in certain geographic locations (e.g., environmentally sensitive areas or around an airport), and “special districts” such as Planned Unit Development (PUD) that regulate in a different manner than base or overlay districts.

Norman’s current zoning district lineup provides the following zoning districts:

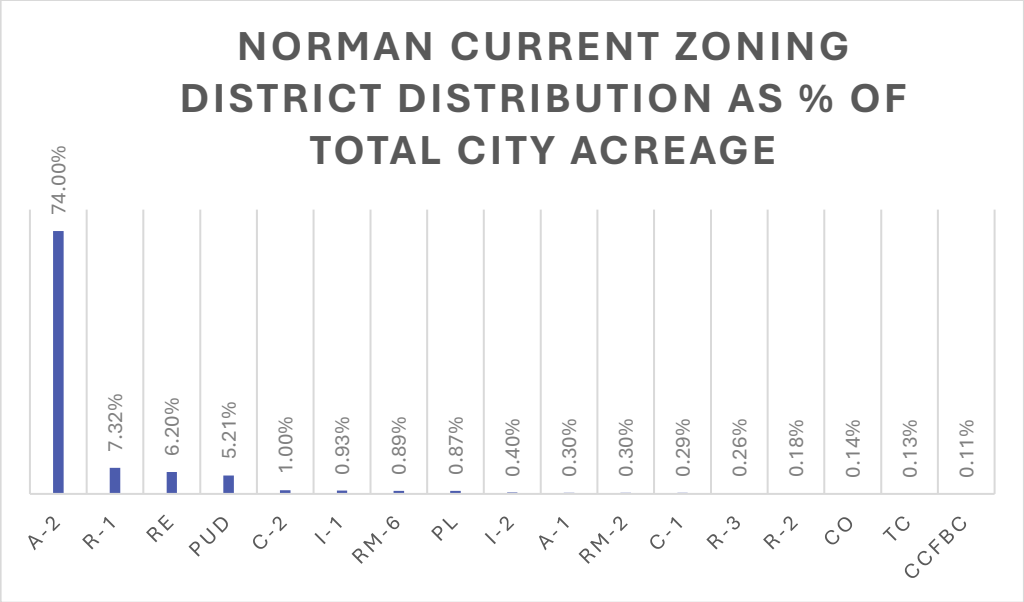
BASE: AGRICULTURAL	BASE: RESIDENTIAL	
A-1 General Agriculture	RE Residential Estate	RM-2 Low Density Apartment
A-2 Rural Agriculture	R-1 Single-Family	RM-6 Medium Density Apartment
	R-1-A Single-Family Attached	R-3 Multifamily
	R-2 Two Family	RM-4 Mobile Home Park

BASE: COMMERCIAL/ MIXED-USE		BASE: PUBLIC/ CIVIC/ INSTITUTIONAL
CO Suburban Office Commercial	C-1 Local Commercial	O-1 Office-Institutional
RO Residence Office	C-2 General Commercial	PL Park Land
MUD Mixed-Use Development	C-3 Intensive Commercial	**SPECIAL**
CCFBC Center City Form-Based Code	TC Tourist Commercial	PUD Planned Unit Development SPUD Simple PUD
CR Rural Commercial		

BASE: INDUSTRIAL	OVERLAY	
I-1 Light Industrial	HD Historic District	Central Norman Zoning Overlay
I-2 Heavy Industrial		Flood Hazard
M-1 Restricted Industrial	Porter Corridor Zoning Overlay	Max Westheimer Airport Overlay District

Initially, this looks like a fairly robust zoning district lineup, including a range of districts in each category that allow developers and property owners to provide a variety of housing, commercial, office, industrial, and civic development choices.

To confirm whether this range of districts is being fully applied, the consultant team analyzed the distribution by percentage of acreage. This provides a general proxy for the types of development the City currently has and can expect to see. This analysis showed that the application of current districts can be organized into three groups: (1) a small percentage of the current zoning districts that are most frequently used, (2) a wider range of districts that are used for very small percentages of property, and (3) a third group of districts, not included in the chart below, that are used for less than one percent of the total acreage in Norman.



Group 1 districts, those currently used most frequently in Norman, are agricultural and residential: A-2, R-1, RE, and PUD. Note: for this simple analysis, we've assumed that most of the PUDs are for residential development (and may include a limited amount of neighborhood commercial), which is the typical practice for planned unit developments. Including A-2, Group 1 represents 92 percent of the City's zoning distribution. Not including A-2, the percentage is adjusted to 19 percent of the total acreage.

Group 2 districts, those applied in small percentages, include a wide variety of building types and uses – commercial, industrial, parks and open spaces, multifamily, and office: C-2, I-1, RM-6, PL, I-2, A-1, RM-2, C-1, R-3, R-2, CO, TC, and CCFBC. Group 2 zoning districts represent a little under six percent of the City's zoning distribution by acreage.

Group 3 districts, not included in this table, represent a total of .33 percent of the city's current acreage: CR, RM-4, S/PUD, C-3, R-1-A, M-1, RO, and MUD.

The high-level take away from this simple analysis is there are zoning district options available that are not appealing to property owners. Whether or not zoning districts are used usually reflects a combination of considerations, including:

(A) Existing uses and structure types combined with historic development patterns (how the City has developed over time, not historic preservation),

(B) Comprehensive plan future land use classifications,

(C) Market demand and cost of development at the time of development,

(D) Overall ease of the development process (length of approval process, certainty of application outcomes, applicant or developer's particular market niche), and

(E) Whether the zoning district standards allow or encourage a preferred type of development.

Building on the general information that most of the current zoning districts are not widely applied, the consultant team then looked to see how often PUD zoning is applied. "Planned Unit Development" zoning – the ability to propose development specific to a site that is then reviewed through a negotiated process – is frequently used as a procedural band aid when codes aren't working well. It is discussed in more detail in Section 3.3 of this Development Code Assessment. In Norman, PUDs fall into the Group 1 zoning districts that are used more frequently than all of the rest of the districts.

Continued reliance on PUDs is not a regulatory best practice nor a functional long-term solution. We recommend exploring the following changes to the zoning district lineup, combined with updated development standards and more flexibility incorporated in the review process to encourage development in base districts and allow the Development Code to change more easily with development over time.

(2) Update Residential Districts to Allow a Wider Range of Housing Types

AIM Norman focuses on the need to create housing options, including housing on smaller lots and providing for range of housing types. The current residential districts clearly allow single-family detached, duplex, some single-family attached (typically townhomes), and multifamily development. The dimensional standards and allowed mix of housing types across multiple districts appear to be very similar though, and the path to some "missing middle" housing types such as small unit/small lot, triplex/fourplex, or stacked instead of horizontal units is unclear. In our experience, when a code is unclear about how to achieve a specific outcome, only a very small group of applicants will feel compelled to find that path.

To improve this and help address the growing housing crunch, the residential districts need to be more specific about how a range of housing types can be provided. This includes adding standards that are specific to different building types, considering what types of housing are appropriate to introduce as infill or redevelopment, and establishing requirements for neighborhood fit that require residential building design in keeping with the surrounding area context, whether

that neighborhood is existing or new. It's important to note here, and the consultant team will repeat this throughout the process, changes to the zoning districts, such as to dimensions or allowed uses, in the new code WILL NOT require existing property owners to change their existing legal structures or uses unless they voluntarily make a change to their property that triggers the new regulations. Triggers will be explained in detail in the updated section on administration and procedures.

The drafting process for updating the residential districts will explore how to update dimensional standards and use allowances in existing districts, create new districts that easily allow the following housing types, and clarify how density and intensity should transition both between character area types and around the different street classifications, as identified in the AIM Norman Character Areas.

HOUSING TYPE	CORE NEIGHBOR-HOOD	CLASSIC NEIGHBOR-HOOD	SUBURB. NEIGHBOR-HOOD	CORRIDOR AREAS
Existing Dwelling Rehab and Renovation	✓	✓	✓	✓
Single-Unit	✓	✓	✓	
ADU	✓	✓	✓	
Duplex	✓	✓	✓	
Triplex/Quad	✓	✓	✓	✓
Townhome	✓	✓	✓	✓
Multi-Unit (apartment, loft, condo)	✓		✓	✓

Additional residential development standards will be provided in the Site and Building Design section (discussed in Section 3.6, ahead), focusing on: (1) balancing the impact of new housing on existing neighborhoods, (2) incorporating neighborhood scale (e.g., lot size, building size) where infill or redevelopment is allowed, and (3) establishing a required or preferred unit type mix for new development.

(3) Consider Adding Standards for Residential Building Forms

Providing more housing in the already developed parts of the City will be a complex, 3-D chess type of challenge. While there is general community agreement about the need for more housing provided at a lower price point (e.g., entry-level or smaller homes as a retirement step down), finding the right locations for more dense or different housing types in existing neighborhoods can be contentious. This may be compounded by the impact of OU on the surrounding housing market. One of the issues that was raised with the consultant team multiple times during our initial project meetings is the impact of student housing redevelopment in neighborhoods around the OU campus, including through the creation of large, multi-bedroom homes that have the same parking, noise, and activity impacts as apartments.

When a community is looking at encouraging new or different housing types or promoting increased density, it is helpful to provide some certainty about how the new development will fit. This can be done with contextual development standards, that focus on similarity of lot frontage dimensions (to avoid creating a really large lot in the middle of much smaller lots), restrictions on multiple lot combination, locational restrictions that direct traffic-generating uses to higher classification streets, and specification of building forms.

Regulating with building forms is an idea that borrows from form-based code regulations. At a minimum, building form regulations identify the general form, typically including scale, of the building allowed. This can be used to prohibit wider forms, such as side-by-side duplexes in places where a narrower form, such as front/back, would be more appropriate. More detailed building form standards also include regulations for building width and depth.

Figure 1: Examples of duplex building forms.

If Norman wants to explore the use of building forms outside of the CCFBC, the consultant team can help with examples from peer communities.

(4) Create a Full Range of Mixed-Use Districts

Mixed-use development is a term for a variety of development types that combine residential and commercial/employment uses either vertically, in a single building, or horizontally across a development. AIM Norman reflects a consistent theme of providing more mixed-use development options in the City. We see, however, that the City's current MUD mixed-use district has been applied but no development has taken place in the district. We'd like to collect more information about the intent behind the district standards to help us understand the disconnect between the MUD and actual mixed-use development.

Mixed-use development can be provided in a variety methods, ranging from local, neighborhood-scale mixed-use that can include a house converted to a coffee shop, to "horizontal mixed-use" where retail and commercial uses are surrounded by residential buildings, to the range typically found in core neighborhoods which can include both horizontal mixed-use and "vertical mixed-use" where commercial space is provided on the street and residential units are allowed on upper floors.

Mixed-use zoning districts can be created in two ways: (1) adding new mixed-use districts to the development code, and (2) carrying forward and updating some existing districts (either residential or commercial) to include them in the suite of mixed-use districts. To implement AIM Norman, we'd like to explore creating districts for the following range of mixed-use opportunities:

MIXED-USE (MU) TYPE	CORE NEIGHBOR-HOOD	CLASSIC NEIGHBOR-HOOD	SUBURB. NEIGHBOR-HOOD	CORRIDOR AREAS
Neighborhood-serving commercial (very limited, e.g., coffee shop or bakery at neighborhood entryway; and also include live/work units)		✓	✓	
Residential conversion capture (allow MU where houses are already converted to commercial)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Neighborhood MU (area at intersection where multiple small retail/commercial uses are allowed)	✓	✓	✓	
Community MU (serving multiple neighborhoods; transition from residential to commercial or employment)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Core MU (provision of retail, entertainment, restaurants in a walkable setting)	✓			✓
Regional MU (larger commercial and residential buildings in an auto-oriented location; can include TOD)			✓	✓

Mixed-use zoning doesn't mean that every building will need to have a mix of uses or that all locations are good for mixed-use. The district standards will need to identify the circumstances where mixed-use is likely to thrive and the locations where single-use buildings, such as residential, civic, or office are the better use and buffer between pedestrian-oriented mixed-use and more privately oriented adjacent and surrounding development.

(5) Review and Update Intensive Commercial and Industrial Districts to Support Employers

In the same way that residential building types and uses change over time, so do commercial and industrial building types and uses. Employment zoning district updates will focus on:

- Creating standards that allow adaptive reuse of existing buildings;
- Long-term conversion of existing big box and commercial strip development to sites with smaller structures or multiple tenants;
- Identifying opportunities to blend or co-locate employment development with supporting uses such as restaurants (or food trucks), child care, and residential development; and
- Provision of on-site amenities, such as green spaces and trails/walking paths, outdoor eating locations, and shaded parking that contribute to a positive employee experience.

Updates to screening, site layout, parking, and building design will be addressed in the development quality standards, generally described in Section 3.6 of this Development Code Assessment.

3.2 Update the Center City Form-Based Code

(1) Overview

The City Center Form-Based Code was developed in 2014 by the City and University of Oklahoma to establish a vision and plan for the western half of downtown and adjacent residential areas. The CCFBC is framed around a set of key urban design criteria: define the centers, decouple the one way pair, provide housing choices, improve the public realm by transforming the streets into complete streets and providing shade and greenery, improve the visual aesthetic of the street by reducing and hiding parking, incubate small businesses by allowing temporary

commercial space like shipping containers and mobile vendors, and provide more transportation choices with bicycle infrastructure. Overall, city center should be walkable and bikeable, and future development should support a walkable urban context.

Regulating through form-based code has changed and become more flexible over the past decade. Norman's CCFBC can be modernized through the following updates:

(2) Adjust the Regulating Plan to Align Frontage Types

The CCFBC contains a street frontage-based regulating plan (focused on the design of the front of the building and relationship to adjoining public spaces), as opposed to a transect based regulating plan (based on classifying the characteristics of structures along a continuum from rural to urban). A few frontages change mid-block or do not mirror one another on the same block. While this provides some variety along the block, it can also make for a muddled streetscape, with varying public and private realms. A general urban design rule is to allow for the corners of each block to vary from the rest of the block (like a corner store at the end of a residential block), and building frontages facing each other on the rest of the block should have a similar form and height.

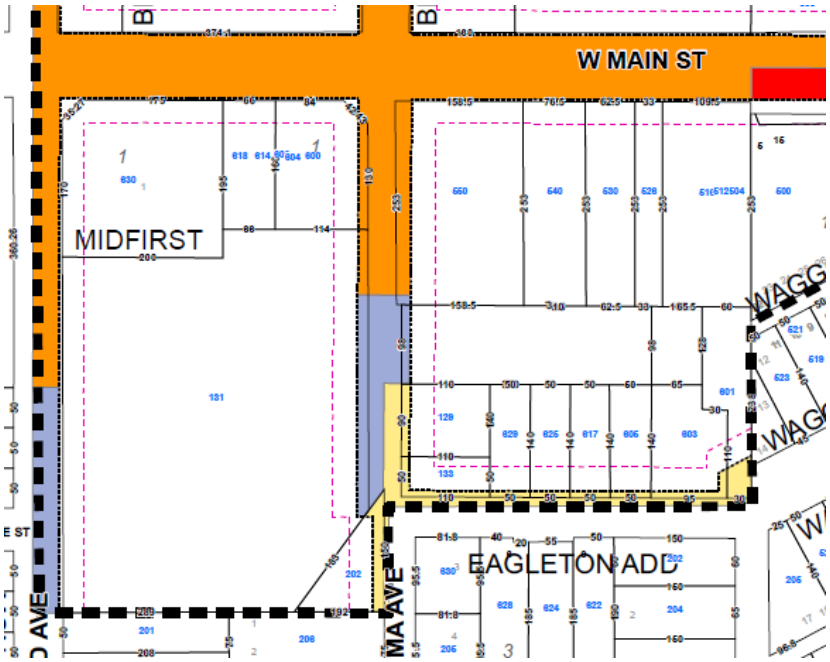


Figure 2: The large parcel on the left has three different frontage types.

(3) Delete the Neighborhood Manners Section

This section should be stricken in its entirety. This condition occurs when the frontage zone changes on the same block, as mentioned above. The parcel next to the single family detached home is limited in height and forced to set back from the street – which defeats the purpose of the CCFBC. The City can adjust the regulating plan so that the whole block face is the same frontage zone, or short of that, simply require a small vegetative buffer between the two properties. A 20-foot setback from the adjoining property line in front and a 50-foot setback in the rear are excessive, especially in light of how the area is platted. Limiting the height to 35 feet and adding a small vegetative buffer should be more than sufficient to transition to the next zone. The area is an urban neighborhood and should be built in that context.

(4) Delete the Façade Composition Section

This section can be deleted in its entirety. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, cities attempted to soften the appearance of large format retail, like supercenters and strip centers, and started to require the facades to be broken up in different colors and materials. Somehow, these regulations transitioned to Main Street all over America. This faux design required in this section works best when one is driving past the building at 50 miles per hour; but when one is standing right next to the building or even across the street, it immediately feels wrong- inauthentic. The requirement that window sizes should increase or decrease compared to its neighbor forces a proportion that may look out of place. Norman's Main Street east of the railroad tracks was clearly built before such regulations existed, and it is a charming downtown street. Windows are similar in size and rhythm, the brick facades are slightly different shades, and the awnings and signs are different: One can clearly tell each building is different with those subtle changes. The City can simply require an additional entrance(s) if the building is more than 100 feet wide.

(5) Regulate Block Sizes the Way They Were Platted

A common walkability rule encourages limiting block perimeters to 2,000 feet and block faces to 200 feet-500 feet. But there are walkable cities that bend those rules: New York City has some blocks that are 200 feet x 900 feet and Salt Lake City's downtown is platted at 600 feet x 600 feet. Although Norman's blocks are platted in ranges that meet the general walkability rule, the CCFBC limits block faces to a maximum of 300 feet. To meet this standard, the City would have to demolish a

considerable amount of its tax base or require pedestrian cut-throughs that interrupt the street wall. The City should maintain its built-out lot/block condition and simply allow redevelopment and infill to complete the street wall. Instead, the City could prohibit the vacation of rights-of-way in the form-based code area – especially its alleys.

(6) Additional CCFBC Updates

(A) Non-Conformities: Eliminate the form-based code non-conformities section and reference section 36-508 *Non-conforming Uses* (which also covers structures) of the municipal code. Add provisions to address issues of CCFBC legacy zoning.

(B) Required Building Line: Instead of using the RBL term, change it to “build-to-line." BTL is easier to understand and is a universal term in codes across the country. Required building line implies the minimum number of feet, expressed in a percentage, that the building facade must line across the front of a lot. Also, it is unclear what the build-to line is on the map (in feet). The build to lines are not listed anywhere in the CCFBC. It would be easier on the reader if they knew what the build-to-line is for each zone. The BTL should be the maximum distance a building face is located in relation to the property line or utility easement – the building can be built closer to the property line or easement if the developer desires. Some variety should be welcomed, especially for pedestrian amenities like bike parking and seating areas, flowers, outdoor display, etc. Civic buildings should be exempt from the BTL (but not the parking placement - parking should never be allowed in the front).

(C) Siting. The director or DRT should be allowed to grant relief from the RBL for outdoor seating (e.g. benches in front of a store, outdoor dining) and courtyards. This will allow street activation and some variety along the street without encroaching on the right-of-way.

(D) Urban General Frontage: There is a conflict between the requirement that 100 percent of the frontage be built out and allowing an opening for a garage or parking. Also, the required open area could be satisfied with a courtyard building, but it would not meet the 100 percent buildout requirement.

(E) Urban General Elements – Fenestration. Ten percent fenestration on the ground floor is too low. The built result could be a windowless facade.

(F) Urban General Street Walls – conflict with 100 percent facade build-out standard.

(G) Use Table: Auto-oriented uses should not be permitted in the FBC area. They tend to not contribute to the walkability of a neighborhood. Existing uses can be treated as legal non-conformities and be permitted to continue operating.

(H) Signage – Additional sign types should be permitted, the sign section should be amended for clarity, and the graphics should be updated.

(I) Expand adjustments. This would allow the City to get rid of the CCPUD district and is discussed more in Section 3.9(4) of this Assessment. Review criteria should include:

a. Granting the adjustment will promote the same general level of land use compatibility as otherwise applicable standards; and

b. Granting the adjustment will not materially affect adjacent land uses and the physical character of uses in the immediate vicinity of the proposed development because of inadequate buffering, screening, setback, and other land use considerations; and

c. Granting the adjustment will be generally consistent with the purpose and intent of the CCFBC and the Municipal Code, where applicable

3.3 Reduce Reliance on Planned Unit Developments

(1) Overview

One of the primary issues identified during the project kickoff was the need to evaluate the City's approach to and overuse of planned unit developments. Norman currently uses three forms of planned unit development zoning:

- **Planned Unit Development (PUD)**: available for properties of at least five acres and allows residential, commercial, industrial, or mixed-use development to be governed by a project-specific development plan rather than relying exclusively on the standards of a traditional base zoning district (e.g., C-2: General Commercial).
- **Simple Planned Unit Development (SPUD)**: serves a similar purpose as PUDs for properties of less than five acres and is intended to facilitate infill, redevelopment, and development of constrained or unusual sites through an adopted SPUD Narrative and Development Plan Map.
- **Center City Planned Unit Development (CCPUD):** may be applied within the Center City Form-Based Code (CCFBC) district to support development

that aligns with the intent and goals of the district that cannot meet the strict requirements of the CCFBC

All three PUD types require a rezoning application that is reviewed by the Planning Commission and approved by the City Council. Once approved, the PUD ordinance, narrative, and development plan establish property-specific uses and development standards that continue to apply to the site as ownership changes.

The use of planned unit developments as a zoning tool was originated in the 1940s, when zoning was a fairly new regulatory tool and most zoning codes were inflexible and focused on use separation (i.e., keeping industrial uses away from residential uses). Communities saw a need to introduce some flexibility and PUDs were created to allow applicants to propose development that would be a significant benefit to the community in terms of layout, mix of uses, or long-term predictability, when compared to the development otherwise allowed by the code. Over time, the "benefit" concept has fallen away and PUDs are more often used as: (1) a way to manage large developments, (2) as a band aid to fix gaps and problems in zoning code, and (3) where community leadership seeks more input into the development process and outcomes.

The use of PUDs in Norman makes sense upon closer examination of the current districts. Like most zoning codes that have been in place for a long time (parts of Norman's Zoning Code date back to 1958) and have been subject to many amendments over the years, there are overlaps, gaps, and conflicts that probably create more development barriers than opportunities. Key among these are:

- District dimensional allowances and use permissions that default to suburban scale development discourage or prohibit more compact development patterns;
- Missing districts that are needed to fully implement the Comprehensive Plan;
- Sets of districts that are subtle variations on same theme with only small, incremental differences that don't effectively provide for a range of development options (e.g., R-1, R-1-A, and R-2);
- "Interpretation gaps" where development options (like mixed-use or townhomes) may be allowed, but the regulations are silent about the path to get there;
- Unnecessary complexity in the form of:
    - Cumulative (or pyramidal) uses where one district refers back to the uses allowed in other districts;

  - Complex measurements, such as FAR and intensity of use ratios, that could be effectively replaced with options that are simpler to calculate; or
  - "Stepped" requirements for extra height;
- Standards that limit the buildable area of a lot, effectively increasing development costs, including:
  - Large setbacks; or
  - Requirement of extra lot area per unit for multiunit development;
- Commercial districts that don't align with different types of commercial in the City; and
- Focus on the impact of individual uses over the longer-term impact of the fit between different structure types and scales and how they set the stage for walkable or auto-oriented development.

Historically, PUDs, SPUDs, and CCPUDs have given Norman substantial flexibility to address these issues and accommodate innovative projects or development that cannot strictly meet the conventional zoning, but it also adds individually negotiated regulations to the City's land use system. The drafting of and legal support for development regulations that allow a mix of uses and speak to how development should be designed can provide greater predictability and eliminate the need for many PUDs.

As individually negotiated regulations, PUDs are standards that are essentially frozen in place and create friction in the City's overall land use system. Each PUD is a mini zoning district that requires individual attention whenever change is needed. The administrative burden on the City grows as more PUDs, SPUDs, and CCPUDs are approved. Individual PUD documents may use different terminology, formats, measurement methods, and levels of detail. Staff and property owners then have to determine how each PUD ordinance interacts with the generally applicable Zoning Ordinance, subdivision regulations, CCFBC, and the then-applicable comprehensive plan. Over time, this can create inconsistencies, interpretation difficulties, and uncertainty about which requirements apply to a particular property.

These issues become more complicated as properties change hands or development plans evolve. A new owner must either comply with the approved narrative and development plan or request an amendment or rezoning. The

current Zoning Ordinance provides some flexibility for limited changes to previously approved applications, but the rules vary among the three different PUD types. PUD provisions generally allow certain five-percent increases and ten-percent decreases; SPUD provisions allow a broader range of administrative amendments, frequently using a 20-percent threshold; and CCPUD provisions allow specified five-percent increases and ten-percent decreases. Staff analysis identifies these percentages as too low to allow the types of changes sought by applicants, resulting in a more extensive, and expensive, rezoning.

Other efforts to modernize the Development Code, like updating the base zoning districts and development standards, will reduce the need for individually negotiated zoning, but there is still a role for PUDs. Even communities with modern regulations generally retain a PUD option for complex projects, unusual sites, or proposals that provide development patterns and community benefits that cannot reasonably be achieved through the base districts. The Development Code should update the PUD, SPUD, and CCPUD framework as follows:

(2) Consolidate the Planned Unit Development Options into One Process

PUD, SPUD, and CCPUD maintain three different sets of standards, amendment thresholds, and procedures. The updated Development Code should replace them with a single PUD process that uses consistent application requirements, eligibility and approval criteria, and amendment procedures. The process can still recognize differences in project size and complexity where appropriate, but those differences should be addressed through the applicability and submittal requirements rather than maintaining separate processes. A single process would make PUDs easier for applicants to understand and easier for the City to administer over time.

(3) Do Not Require a Preliminary Plat as Part of Every Planned Unit Development Application

The current PUD provisions generally pair rezoning to PUD with a Preliminary Plat. While concurrent review can be useful for projects that are ready to subdivide, zoning and subdivision serve different purposes and do not always need to occur at the same time. The updated Development Code should allow, but not require, concurrent Preliminary Plat review and explain how the two applications are coordinated. Applicants could establish the zoning and development framework first without preparing detailed subdivision materials until the applicant is ready to

start the subdivision process. If additional information is needed with the initial PUD application, such as traffic analysis or drainage impact, that information can be submitted as a report rather than as part of a plat.

(4) Tie PUDs to Underlying Base Zoning District(s)

Rather than allowing each PUD to operate as its own "miniature zoning ordinance," a new PUD should identify an underlying base district(s) that it is modifying. The base district(s) would establish the uses, definitions, measurement rules, and other standards that remain applicable unless the PUD specifically modifies them. The PUD document would identify each approved deviation from or modification of those standards. This approach would make it much easier to understand what flexibility is being requested, reduce the information gaps in PUD documents, and provide a regulatory baseline when questions arise later.

(5) Do Not Allow New Planned Unit Developments Within Areas Regulated by the Form-Based Code

The CCFBC already establishes a specialized regulatory framework intended to implement a particular development form and character. Continuing to allow CCPUD zoning creates a second, negotiated path for departing from those standards and can undermine the predictability that a form-based code is intended to provide. New CCPUD applications should therefore be eliminated. Flexibility within the CCFBC area should instead come through clearly defined administrative adjustments or relief procedures within the CCFBC itself. Existing CCPUD approvals can remain in effect and be addressed through transition and amendment provisions.

(6) Require Clearly Defined Community Benefits

PUD zoning should be reserved for proposals that offer something conventional zoning cannot reasonably achieve. Approval criteria should require the applicant to identify the planning or community benefit that warrants property-specific zoning. Examples may include coordinated mixed-use development, greater housing variety, enhanced connectivity, coordinated open space or infrastructure, preservation of natural features, or another identifiable outcome that advances AIM Norman.

(7) Establish Clear Transition And Amendment Rules for Existing PUDs

Norman will continue to administer a substantial inventory of PUDs and SPUDs after the new Development Code is adopted. Many of those documents may refer to provisions, terminology, or measurement methods from the current Zoning Ordinance that will be replaced or reorganized. The updated Code should explain how those references will be interpreted, when new generally applicable standards apply, and how nonconforming conditions within an existing PUD are treated. The amendment process should also clarify when one portion of a PUD can be amended independently, whether the consent of other property owners is required, and which changes are minor enough for administrative approval.

3.4 Organize and Update the Use Regulations

(1) Create a Single Permitted Use Table

The current regulations identify each allowable use in every district in numbered lists, resulting in repetitious and inconsistent land uses. For example, the C-1 district lists over 50 individual permitted uses. The uses are listed alphabetically and not grouped by type, so unrelated uses appear one after another (e.g., hotel or motel, interior decorating store, jewelry shop). This makes for a lengthy document and also makes it difficult to compare allowed uses across districts.

Modern zoning ordinances typically include a single table of allowed uses, with rows representing land use categories and specific use types, and columns representing the zoning districts. This format (see example below) allows quick comparison of the allowable uses in each zoning district and reduces the potential for inconsistencies over time as uses are updated. An allowed uses table will minimize the need to repeat the same uses within separate district regulations, ensure consistent terminology is used, reduce document length, and allow readers to easily compare where a particular use is permitted across various districts in the city.

Table 20-8-1: Principal Use Table
P = Permitted Use S = Special Use Blank = Not Permitted

Zoning Districts	R-1	R-2	R-3	R-4	R-5	M-1	M-2	M-3	CD	CC	IL	IG	IBP	P-1	P-2	Use-Specific Standards
Residential																
Household Living																
Courtyard Development		P	P	P												20-904(b)
Dwelling, Attached	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P						P		
Dwelling, Detached	P	P	P	P		P	P									
Dwelling, Interior or Non-ground-floor			P	P	P	P	P	P	P/S	P				P		20-804(a)
Dwelling, Multiunit			P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P				P		
Dwelling, Small Lot		P	P	P												
Dwelling, Two-unit	P	P	P	P		P	P	P						P		
Manufactured Home Community			S	S	P	P										20-804(c)
Group Living																
Assisted Living	S	S	P	P	P	P	P	P								20-804(d)
Congregate Living			P	P	S	P	P	P								20-804(e)
Dormitory					P											20-804(f)
Fraternity or Sorority					P	P										
Group Home, General	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S						
Group Home, Limited	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P								
Civic and Institutional																
Community and Cultural																

Figure 3: Example permitted principal use table from another municipality.

The new table can be a helpful resource for consolidating key information. This structure would separate three questions that are currently mixed together in many district provisions:

- Is the use allowed in the district?
- What approval process is required?
- What additional standards apply to the use?

The table should categorize specific use types within larger categories and subcategories. In the example table above, the specific use type of “assisted living” falls within the category of “residential” and the subcategory of “group living.” Providing this hierarchy of uses is a more logical way to organize uses compared to the current list of uses in the development regulations and allows the City to make decisions on future proposed uses that are unlisted in the table.

The table should also include sections for accessory and temporary uses at the end of the table, identifying the appropriate districts for each of these types of uses.

This helps the user understand the difference between primary and accessory or temporary uses. Accessory uses are incidental and subordinate to a primary use on the same lot. Temporary uses are allowed in a zoning district for a limited and fixed period of time.

(2) Organize by Use Categories and Use Types

The current development regulations are more specific than needed when describing allowable land uses. For example, a definition for "retail" may be drafted to include many of the current land uses listed in the development regulations, such as "antique shop," "baby shop," "book or stationery store," "camera shop," and others that are commonly referred to as retail. The land-use impacts of an "antique shop" and "book or stationery store" are similar; customers arrive with the intent of browsing or purchasing goods. The same logic should be applied to personal service uses such as "barber shop, or beauty parlor" and "tailor shop," where again the impacts of such uses are similar. Part of this exercise should include review and likely removal of unnecessary or antiquated use types, like "leathergoods shop," "messenger or telegraph service," and "sewing machine sales." While the intent is to simplify and consolidate, some uses should still be called out as a specific land use with different regulations, such as "restaurant" and "hotel or motel."

The Development Code should also address land uses that are emerging or evolving across the country but are not clearly or comprehensively addressed in Norman's current regulations. The kickoff discussions specifically identified the need to provide greater flexibility for current and emerging commercial and industrial needs, including the following:

- **Agricultural businesses and farmstands.** Norman includes substantial rural and agricultural areas, and the kickoff discussions identified opportunities to better accommodate farmstands and other agricultural businesses. The Development Code should clarify the range of commercial activities that may occur in connection with agricultural uses and distinguish small-scale accessory activities, such as farmstands or cottage food sales, from more intensive agricultural businesses that may generate greater traffic, storage, processing, or other impacts.

Figure 4: Example of farmstand.

- **Live/work and accessory commercial uses.** Stakeholders expressed interest in allowing small-scale commercial activity to be integrated into neighborhoods through live/work units, accessory commercial units, coffee shops, corner grocery stores, and other neighborhood-serving businesses. These uses can help support walkability and neighborhood vitality without introducing the scale or impacts of conventional commercial development. The Development Code should define these uses and establish clear standards related to size, hours of operation, outdoor activity, parking, signage, and other potential impacts.

Figure 5: Example of neighborhood-scale coffee shop.

- **Data centers.** Data centers can range significantly in scale and impact, from smaller facilities occupying existing commercial or industrial buildings to large facilities with substantial power, water, cooling, noise, and infrastructure demands. The Development Code update will explore ways the City can regulate data centers, where different scales of facilities are appropriate, and use-specific standards addressing issues such as power and utility capacity, water use and cooling, noise, generators and other equipment, screening, and site design.

As the use list is updated, the City should also identify additional commercial, industrial, residential, and agricultural uses that have emerged since many of the existing use lists were drafted. The goal should be to create broader and more durable use categories that can accommodate changing business models without requiring frequent Code amendments.

(3) Review Use Permissions and Special Uses

As the use table is drafted, the City should reevaluate whether each existing use is assigned to the appropriate zoning districts and whether it should be permitted by right or require Special Use approval. The City should identify opportunities to allow more desired uses by right, particularly where current use limitations contribute to the need for PUD or SPUD zoning and expand opportunities for mixed-use development where appropriate. As part of this review, the City should evaluate

recent rezoning, Special Use, PUD, and SPUD applications to identify uses that are repeatedly requested but are not well accommodated by the current base districts.

Norman currently lists Special Uses separately in individual district regulations and processes them through Planning Commission public hearing and City Council approval under the general Special Use procedure. The Special Use process can be time- and cost-burdensome for applicants and is often used due to a lack of use-specific standards. The updated Development Code should make desired uses allowed by right while reserving Special Use review for uses that require a higher level of scrutiny due to their potential impacts on the surrounding neighborhood or community. Where the potential impacts of a use are known and can be addressed through objective standards, such as limits on size, location, hours of operation, outdoor activity, access, or screening, the City should consider allowing the use by right subject to those standards.

The update should also draw a clearer line between the Special Use procedure itself and the substantive standards that apply to individual Special Uses. Currently, Section 36-560 covers the process while Section 36-561 lays out the standards for specific uses. Moving forward, the procedural material should move to the Administration and Procedures article, and the substantive standards should be folded into the Use-Specific Standards section. Separating these two elements will help reinforce the distinction between how a use gets approved and the standards that govern it once it's allowed.

(4) Modernize Use-Specific Standards

A significant amount of Norman's use-specific regulatory content is currently located in the Additional District Provisions. Examples include standards for communication facilities, short-term rentals, rooming houses and boardinghouses, distributed small wind turbines, portable storage containers, home occupations, bed and breakfast establishments, childcare establishments, adult entertainment uses, and tobacco and electronic cigarette retailers. The updated Development Code should consolidate these requirements into a dedicated Use-Specific Standards section organized using the same categories as the use table.

The standards should focus on the characteristics of a use that require additional regulation, such as size, location, hours of operation, outdoor activity, noise, lighting, access, storage, or screening. Dimensional requirements that apply generally to a zoning district should be located with the district standards, while generally applicable site requirements should be located with the development

standards. This will make it easier to determine whether a standard applies because of the proposed use, the location of the property, or the physical design of the site.

For example, kickoff discussions identified interest in providing more flexibility for home occupations and other small home-based businesses. Updated use-specific standards could focus on their potential impacts, such as customer visits, employees, deliveries, outdoor activity, storage, noise, and commercial vehicles, rather than broadly limiting the business activity itself.

(5) Clarify Allocation of Unlisted Uses

The Development Code should establish a new procedure and criteria to follow when determining whether a use type that is not expressly listed or addressed in the use table should be allowed in a particular zoning district. The standards should require review of the nature, function, size, duration, impacts, and other characteristics of the use in relation to those of listed permitted uses in the district, as well as in relation to the purpose and intent of the district. New standards should also provide clear criteria to determine when unlisted uses that have been permitted through interpretation should be formally added to the use table via an amendment to the Development Code.

3.5 Diversify Housing Types

The need for a broader variety of housing options and housing affordability came up repeatedly during the kickoff meetings. Stakeholders identified small-lot homes, duplexes, triplexes, townhomes, small multiplexes, accessory dwelling units, and other missing middle housing types (i.e., housing types that fall between detached single-unit homes and larger apartment buildings) as important opportunities to provide housing for different household sizes, income levels, and stages of life. They also emphasized the need for starter homes and ownership opportunities for first-time buyers, recent graduates, and older adults.

Figure 6: Examples of "missing middle" housing types.

Norman's existing housing stock and zoning regulations illustrate the challenge. AIM Norman finds that recent housing construction has been dominated by single-unit detached homes and large multi-unit developments, while relatively few townhomes, duplexes, and small-scale multi-unit structures have been built. One obstacle to developing these housing products is the limited number of places where they can be built through base zoning. When an otherwise appropriate housing type requires a rezoning, PUD, SPUD, or other discretionary approval, the process becomes more costly and less predictable.

Updating the base districts to accommodate a broader range of housing types can help clarify where different housing types are appropriate, simplify the development review process, and reduce reliance on negotiated zoning. This approach should be tailored to Norman's different contexts. For example, AIM Norman identifies duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes, and townhomes as appropriate forms of compatible infill in Classic Neighborhood Areas (yellow area in map shown below).

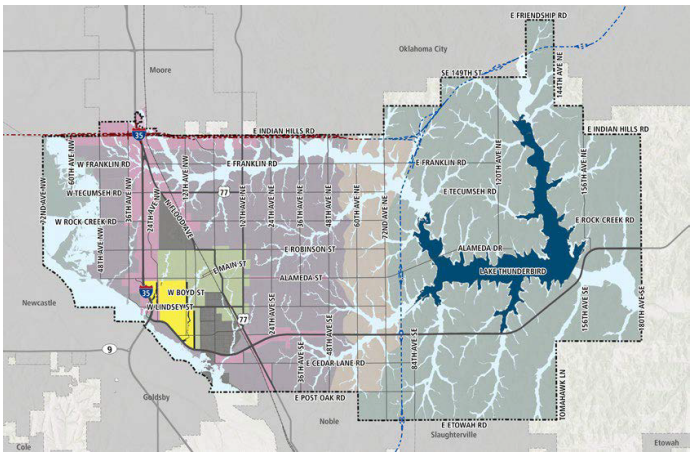


Figure 7: Map of Classic Neighborhood Areas.

Accessory dwelling units (ADUs) should also be revisited as part of this effort. Although Norman has adopted ADU regulations, stakeholders noted that relatively few ADUs have been constructed and identified potential barriers related to unit size, minimum lot requirements, alley access, and infrastructure conditions. The City should evaluate these barriers as well as consider opportunities for pre-approved plans or pattern books.

Figure 8: Examples of accessory dwelling units.

Allowing smaller lots, missing middle housing, ADUs, and a wider range of ownership configurations in appropriate locations can expand the types of homes that the market is able to provide. At the same time, providing standards for building scale, height transitions, parking, access, and other compatibility considerations can help ensure that additional housing choices respond appropriately to surrounding neighborhoods.

3.6 Enhance Development Quality Standards

Norman's Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations contain many of the standards that shape the quality and function of new development, but those requirements are spread across the two documents and were adopted at different times. Streets, sidewalks, parks, utilities, drainage, and other public improvements are largely addressed through the Subdivision Regulations, while site standards such as landscaping, screening, exterior appearance, and outdoor lighting are located in the Zoning Ordinance. As a result, some requirements are closely tied to subdivision even when the same issue may arise with infill or redevelopment that does not involve a land division.

The updated Development Code should bring the zoning and subdivision regulations into a more coordinated framework and clarify when they apply to new

development, redevelopment, and expansions of existing developments. The standards should also respond to Norman's different development contexts. AIM Norman's Character Areas establish differences in development pattern, scale, connectivity, and environmental sensitivity, and the Development Code should avoid applying the same site design approach everywhere. This direction also reflects kickoff discussions emphasizing both objective compatibility standards and the need to avoid one-size-fits-all requirements.

(1) Separate Development Code and EDC Requirements for Infrastructure and Public Facilities

Many of Norman's infrastructure requirements are specific to and applied at the time of subdivision. Chapter 30 addresses requirements for streets and alleys, sidewalks, sanitary sewer and water lines, drainage, erosion control, and other improvements. These standards are applied to new land divisions, but it is unclear if/when those standards apply when an existing site redevelops without creating new lots.

The updated Development Code should separate the basic obligation to provide needed infrastructure from the technical specifications for how that infrastructure is built. The Development Code can establish when sidewalks, frontage improvements, utilities, drainage improvements, and similar facilities are required. Engineering criteria and other technical documents (e.g., EDC: Engineering Design Criteria) can continue to handle construction details. Updates to the Development Code will need to align with and inform future updates to engineering standards rather than creating another set of overlapping requirements.

The Development Code also needs to more clearly address infrastructure for infill development and redevelopment. A small building addition should not trigger the same level of improvements as a large redevelopment project, but redevelopment also should not avoid reasonable infrastructure obligations simply because no subdivision is involved. The updated standards should establish clear thresholds and, where needed, proportional or alternative compliance, including consideration of stormwater impacts associated with increased impervious area. also needs to be clear. Staff and stakeholders raised ongoing maintenance of stormwater facilities, ponds, lakes, open space, alleys, and other shared infrastructure as an issue that should be addressed along with the initial improvement requirement, including clear ownership and maintenance responsibilities that are documented to carry forward to future property owners.

Figure 9: Examples of existing and new infrastructure in Norman.

(2) Specify Requirements for Access and Connectivity

The current Subdivision Regulations contain many of Norman's street and connectivity requirements. They address street layout, blocks, sidewalks, and connections to the planned transportation network. The updated Development Code should establish general access and connectivity requirements that apply to site development as well as subdivision. This may include:

- Pedestrian connections between buildings, sidewalks, parking areas, and adjoining properties;
- Bicycle and trail connections;
- Cross-access between commercial or mixed-use development; and
- Standards for street extensions, cul-de-sacs, dead ends, and blocks.

Table 4.5-3
Required Pedestrian Connections

From Main Entry to Public Sidewalk – Provide a safe, convenient, and accessible pedestrian connection from the main entrance of a building to a public sidewalk or internal walkway that connects to a public sidewalk.

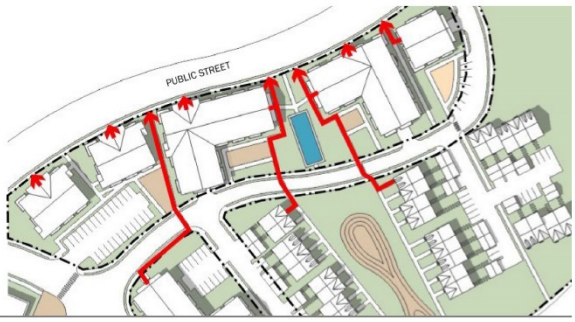


Figure 10: Example of pedestrian connection requirement within development.

Connected streets, alleys, smaller blocks, and direct pedestrian routes should be possible where they fit the surrounding context. The same expectations do not need to apply everywhere. Norman is still car-oriented, and the Development Code

should recognize that while making it easier to build a more connected pattern over time.

(3) Expand Applicability of Landscaping, Buffering, and Screening Requirements

Norman's current landscaping regulations are focused heavily on off-street parking facilities. Section 36-431.8 requires peripheral and street landscaping for parking areas with six or more spaces or a specified amount of vehicular use area, with additional interior landscaping requirements for larger parking areas. The regulations establish landscape-strip dimensions, allowed tree species and quantities, planting requirements, irrigation, and maintenance standards. Fencing, walls, and screening are addressed separately in Section 36-431.9, including requirements for screening where commercial, industrial, or multifamily development abuts certain residential development. These provisions should be consolidated so that applicants can find all generally applicable landscaping, buffering, fencing, and screening requirements in one location.

The updated Development Code should consider:

- General minimum site landscaping requirements for certain development types such as new development and redevelopment of multi-unit residential, commercial, or mixed-use;
- Street frontage landscaping;
- Landscaping and screening between developments of different scales or intensities;
- Screening of loading, service, refuse, mechanical, utility, and outdoor storage areas;
- Tree preservation and replacement standards;
- Standards for landscape islands and other heat-reduction measures;
- Clear fence, wall, hedge, and screening standards;
- Native, adapted, and drought-tolerant plant materials; and
- Installation, irrigation, long-term maintenance, and replacement requirements.

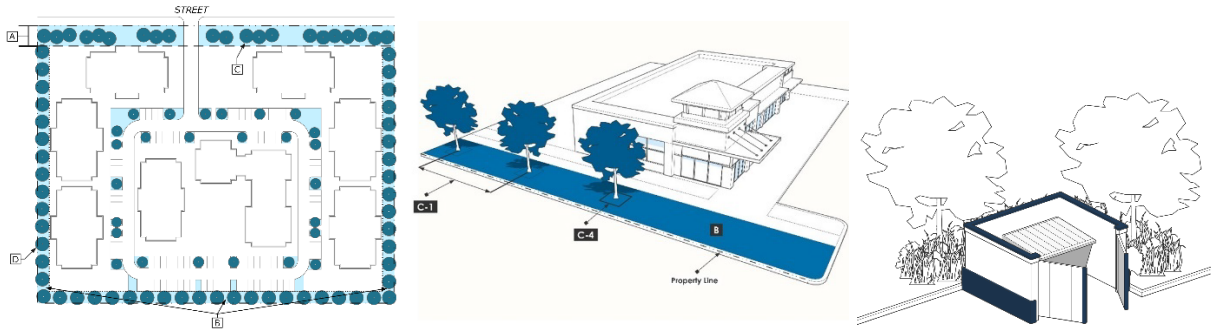


Figure 11: Examples of landscaping and screening standards graphics.

The Development Code should also be clear about when landscaping requirements apply. New development can generally be expected to meet the full landscaping standards, while additions, adaptive reuse, and redevelopment may need a more flexible approach that considers the size of the project and existing site constraints.

Tree and landscaping requirements should also be coordinated with utility and drainage easements, stormwater facilities, and other infrastructure areas so that required planting does not conflict with the function, inspection, access, or long-term maintenance of utilities and infrastructure. The Development Code should identify when alternative planting locations or materials may be used when an easement prevents compliance with the standard location. Existing tree planting and replacement requirements provide a starting point, but the update should consider broader preservation of healthy existing trees and significant vegetation, including opportunities to preserve high-quality wooded, prairie, or other natural habitat areas.

(4) Identify Relevant Site and Building Design Requirements

The current Zoning Ordinance contains site and building design standards that apply only to certain commercial or industrial buildings, townhouses, apartments, mixed-use districts, PUDs, SPUDs, or within the CCFBC. In practice, more detailed expectations for architecture, entrances, site layout, screening, access, and transitions are often worked out through a special district or negotiated development process instead of through the base standards.

The new Development Code should be more deliberate about which design issues actually need regulation such as building placement, entrances, massing, long blank façades, the location of garages and vehicle-oriented features, and where service areas are placed. Norman already uses several of these tools in its mixed-use standards, including façade articulation, front-facing residential entrances, building

placement, and locating parking to the side or rear. Those concepts can be carried forward where they fit without turning them into a citywide architectural template. Additionally, neighborhood transition standards such as height and massing, roofline or building stepbacks, building orientation, screening, and lighting can allow higher-intensity redevelopment next to lower-density neighborhoods.

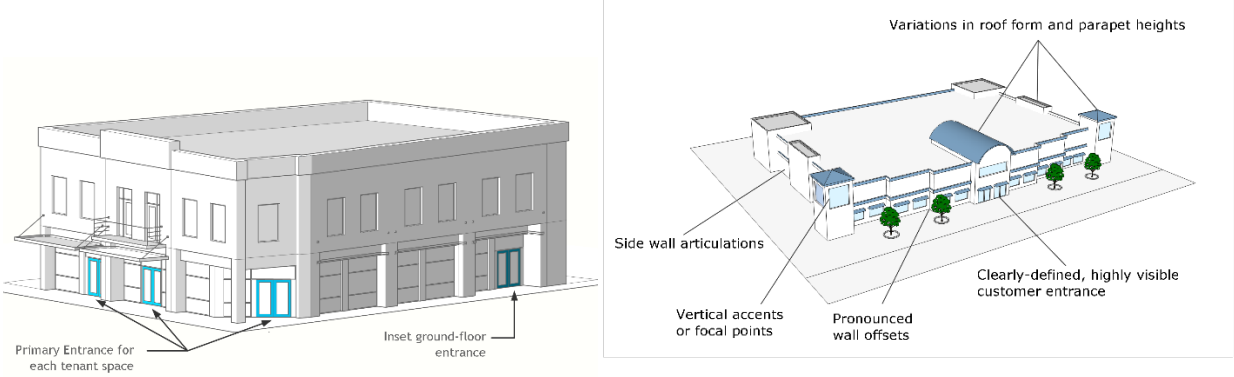


Figure 12: Examples of site and building design graphics.

(5) Update Outdoor Lighting Standards

Staff and stakeholders expressed interest in moving Norman's outdoor lighting standards toward more dark sky-friendly practices while maintaining appropriate lighting for safety and site function. The current Zoning Ordinance includes standards for full cut-off fixtures, glare and light spillover, canopy lighting, and photometric plan requirements for certain larger projects. Rather than replacing those provisions, the Development Code update should modernize and reorganize them to address current lighting technology and make the standards easier to apply and enforce.

Updates to the Development Code should include exploring new or adjusted standards for:

- Fixture and shielding requirements;
- Measurable limitations on light spillover onto adjacent properties;
- Light pole heights;
- Canopy and building-mounted lighting;
- Maximum color temperature; and
- Hours of operation for nonresidential lighting.

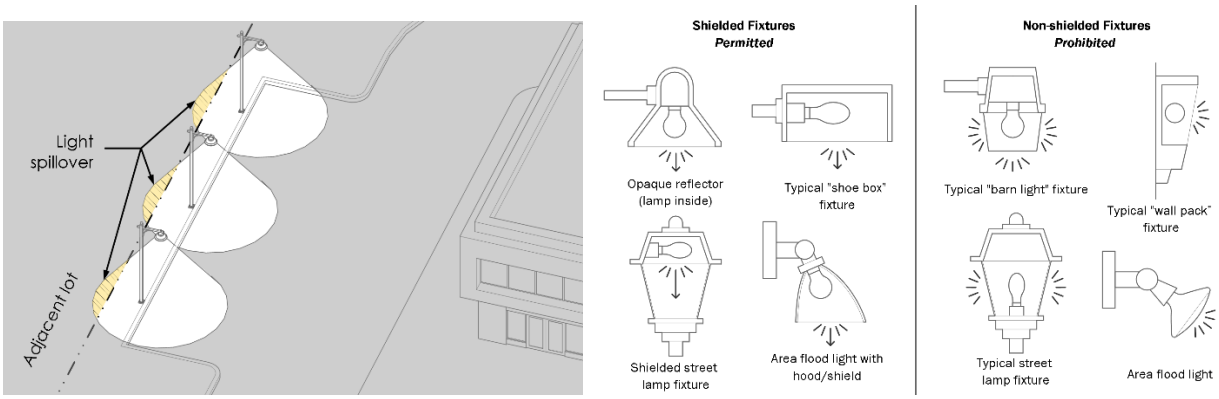


Figure 13: Examples of outdoor lighting standards graphics.

(6) Coordinate Changes to Off-Street Parking and Loading Standards with Parking Study

The Parking Study being completed alongside the Development Code update will help the project team better understand how much parking currently exists in Norman, how much is actually needed, and where parking may be over- or under-supplied. The findings and recommendations from that process will directly inform updates to Norman's off-street vehicle parking requirements, including the amount of parking required and appropriate opportunities for flexibility or reductions.

The Development Code update will also address related standards that fall outside the primary focus of the Parking Study. This will include reviewing and simplifying requirements for off-street loading and vehicle stacking/queuing areas and updating their location and design standards. Bicycle parking requirements will also be reviewed, including the appropriate amount of short- and long-term bicycle parking and basic standards for location and design. The update will also consider how these standards should account for growing electric scooter use and indoor bicycle storage, including whether dedicated electric scooter parking is appropriate in some locations. These are common components of modern parking regulations and will help ensure that the updated standards address the full range of parking and access needs rather than vehicle parking ratios alone.

3.7 Protect Sensitive Lands and Natural Resources

Norman already has several regulations aimed at protecting environmentally sensitive areas. Chapter 30 includes Water Quality Protection Zone (WQPZ) standards, applied at the time of subdivision, along streams and Lake Thunderbird that extend into adjacent wetlands, floodplains, slopes, and other sensitive areas.

AIM Norman builds on that direction through the new Protected and Sensitive Character Area, which includes FEMA-designated floodways and floodplains, Stream Planning Corridors, wetlands, watersheds, steep slopes, and other environmentally sensitive lands.

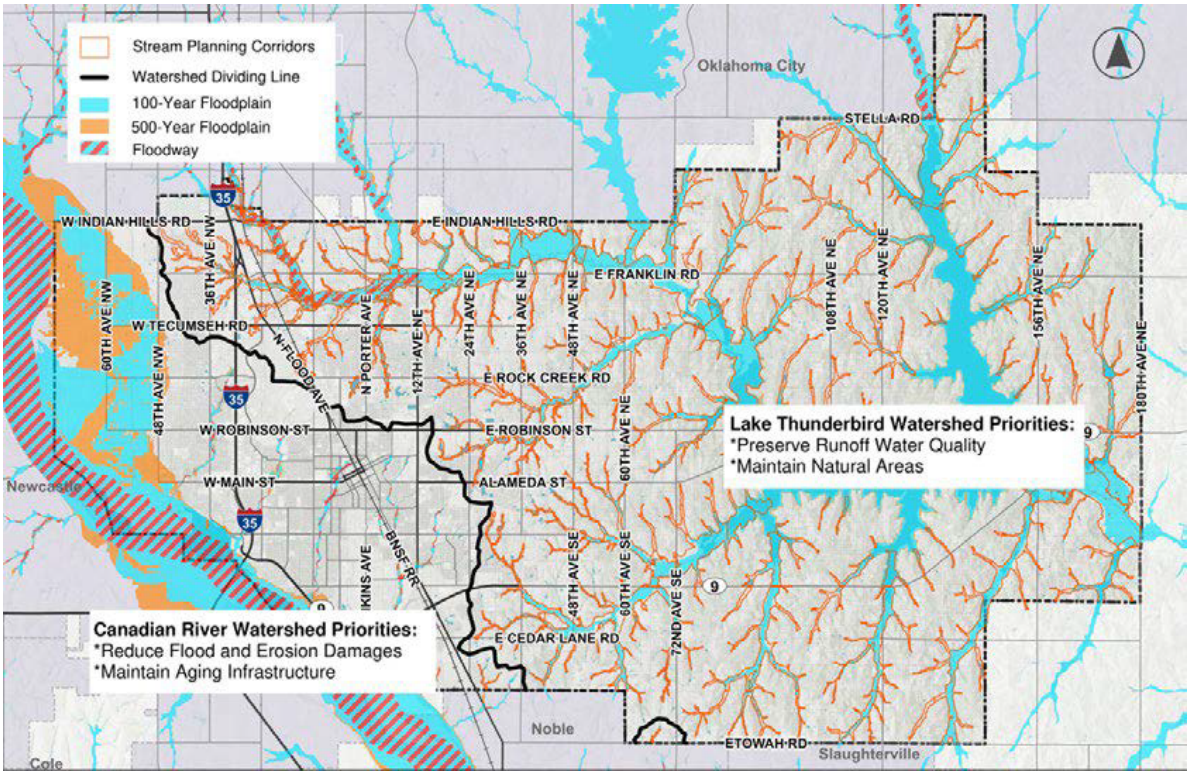


Figure 14: Map of watersheds in Norman.

These standards should be revisited as part of the Development Code update and better coordinated with subdivision and site development requirements. AIM Norman identifies different stormwater and water-quality concerns across the city and staff and stakeholders also raised water availability and capacity, erosion, recharge areas, and long-term infrastructure responsibilities as issues that should be addressed alongside zoning and subdivision changes, particularly in rural and edge areas. Participants also noted the need to better coordinate zoning, subdivision, stormwater, and engineering standards so applicants are not working through separate sets of requirements that point in different directions.

The updated Development Code should build from the existing WQPZ framework and AIM Norman's Protected and Sensitive Area policies to establish a clear process for identifying sensitive areas early in development review. Preliminary plats already require information such as WQPZ boundaries, flood boundaries, wetlands, and other topographic features. The update should consider whether those

requirements need to be expanded, clarified, or tied more directly to site design and subdivision standards. Floodplain regulations should remain clearly distinguishable from WQPZ and other sensitive-area standards, even where regulated areas overlap. The update should also clarify how existing development within a WQPZ is addressed when a property later becomes subject to platting or other subdivision requirements.

3.8 Update and Clarify Subdivision Standards

One of the City's initial requests of the Development Code project was to clarify the relationship between the role of the Development Code and Engineering Design Criteria regarding subdivision standards. The Development Code needs to identify when infrastructure is required and how its placement or provision works within the design of the overall site. The Engineering Design Criteria should provide detailed requirements for the actual design of the infrastructure. As a very simple example, the Development Code should require new subdivisions provide public streets, and the EDC should provide details about right-of-way width, pavement depth, and turning radii.

The consultant team will review and make sure the Development Code reflects Norman's infrastructure and public services requirements for both new development and redevelopment and that both sets of standards are clearly linked. We will also incorporate some flexibility in the requirements that allow applicants or the City to adjust to rapidly changing technology and energy provision. Any resulting changes that affect the EDC can be incorporated through the City's regular EDC update process.

3.9 Improve the Development Review Procedures

In our experience, improving the substantive content of a code also improves the review and decision-making process. Norman's current procedures are difficult to interpret and navigate because they are divided among multiple chapters of the Municipal Code, the CCFBC, individual zoning district provisions, and application instructions maintained outside of those documents. For example, PUD and SPUD procedures are embedded in the regulations for those districts, Special Use procedures are located within additional district provisions, and many of the generally applicable filing and public notice requirements are located in the zoning

amendment provisions. The updated Development Code should focus on the following best practices:

1. **Streamlining Approvals.** Applications should be decided at the "right" level. Where development can be reasonably regulated by the standards in the Development Code (and other applicable manuals or specifications) without significant public input—as is the case many types of applications—development review and decision-making should be administrative. Where applications require unique applications of City policy or benefit from wide public input—a far more limited set of applications—development review should be quasi-judicial or legislative.
2. **Targeting Public Input.** Formal public input on an application via a public hearing should also be right sized and limited to those projects where a hearing is either required by law or very beneficial to the decision-maker. Norman already provides opportunities for early community input through Pre-Development Informational Meetings required for certain types of applications. The updated Code should clarify when these meetings are required, when they should occur, and how they relate to subsequent public hearings. For applications that do not require a formal hearing or Pre-Development Informational Meeting, community input may be invited through written comments or other appropriate methods. The overall goal should be to focus community input on the front end of a project while it is still being designed, rather than late in the process as part of the application decision.
3. **Establishing Clear Redevelopment Review Processes.** Redevelopment is an umbrella term for many potential types of changes on a site. It requires sliding scale applicability thresholds across categories such as use, structure, site features (landscaping, lighting, and parking). The updated Development Code should also clarify when redevelopment or changes to an existing site require platting or compliance with other subdivision requirements. Depending on the existing site circumstances, applicability of updated standards to redevelopment can also require prioritizing what will be required on the site. The review process should clearly identify how the City will establish requirements and priorities.

4. **Adding Flexibility.** Creating some regulatory flexibility through procedures that allow site-specific adjustments is beneficial to both the applicant and the community.

(1) Consolidate Common Review Procedures

We recommend establishing a consolidated section for common review procedures that apply to most development applications unless a specific procedure provides otherwise. At a minimum, the common procedures should address:

- **Preapplication conferences.** Identify which applications require a preapplication meeting, which applications may use an optional meeting, and the staff departments that should participate. The Development Code should also clarify that comments provided through preapplication or other preliminary discussions with staff do not constitute a final decision or guarantee approval.
- **Public Input Meetings.** Consolidate and rename the current Pre-Development Informational Meeting requirements and clearly identify which applications require a meeting, when the meeting must occur, how surrounding property owners are notified, what information the applicant must present, the role of City staff, and how the meeting is documented. The Development Code should also establish criteria for determining when revisions are substantial enough to require an additional meeting.
- **Concurrent applications**. Explain when an AIM Norman amendment, rezoning, Special Use, preliminary plat, development plan, or other related application may or must be submitted and reviewed together. This is particularly important where a development proposal requires both a change in land use policy and a zoning or subdivision approval.
- **Application submittal and acceptance.** Establish the process for submitting an application, determining whether it is complete, requesting missing information, identifying when formal review begins, and determining when an inactive application is considered abandoned. The Development Code should require applicants to comply with submittal requirements established by the City, while detailed submittal checklists and administrative review timelines may be maintained outside the Development Code.
- **Staff review and action.** Identify the procedures for reviewing applications, coordinating comments among City departments and outside agencies, and

preparing staff reports or recommendations. Applicants should receive a coordinated set of comments that distinguishes Code requirements from advisory recommendations. Explain how applicants may respond to staff comments, when revisions are considered substantial, and when substantial revisions require new notice, an additional Public Input Meeting, or a continued or new public hearing. Internal review procedures should also be streamlined and able to account for differences in project complexity, including whether a standing Development Review Team meeting is necessary or project-specific coordination would be more appropriate.

- **Public hearing scheduling and notice**. Identify the types of public hearings and the applicable notice requirements, including published, mailed, posted, and online notice. Norman's current property-owner notification radius and protest provisions should be consolidated in this section rather than repeated or incorporated indirectly into individual procedures.
- **Decision-making review and action.** Establish the general procedures for administrative decisions, Planning Commission recommendations, Board of Adjustment decisions, and City Council action. The Development Code should address continuances, withdrawals, remands, conditions of approval, and the documentation of findings.
- **Post-decision actions and limitations.** Describe how decisions are provided to applicants and made available to the public, when approved plans or agreements must be recorded, whether approvals expire, and how extensions may be requested. Identify which administrative decisions may be appealed, who may file an appeal, the deadline for doing so, the body that hears the appeal, and whether an appeal stays further action on the application. Establish a consistent method for distinguishing minor amendments that may be approved administratively from major amendments that require review by the original decision-making body.

The updated Development Code should begin the procedures article with one or more summary tables identifying the procedural steps, required notice, public meetings or hearings, recommending body, decision-making body, appeal route, and expiration period for each application type. This approach gives applicants, staff, decision-makers, and the public a clear overview before they consult the detailed procedures.

Table 2.3-1: Summary Table of Review Procedures

R = Review & recommend D = decide A = appeal
✓ = required ◊ = optional * = public hearing required

Application Type		UDC Reference	Pre-Application Activities: Pre-application conference	Pre-Application Activities: Neighborhood Meeting	Review & Decision-Making Bodies: Staff	Review & Decision-Making Bodies: Planning and Zoning Commission	Review & Decision-Making Bodies: City Council	Review & Decision-Making Bodies: Board of Zoning Adjustment
Rezoning, Zoning Text, and Plan								
Special Use Permit		2.5.1	✓	◊	R	R*	D*	
Rezoning		2.5.2	✓	◊	R	R*	D*	
Rezoning to Planned Development (PD)	Preliminary	2.5.3	✓	◊	R	R*	D*	
	Final	2.5.3	✓	◊	R	R*	D*	
Zoning Text Amendment		2.5.4	◊	◊	R	R*	D*	
Comprehensive Plan Amendment		2.5.5	✓	◊	R	R*	D*	
Annexation		2.5.6	✓		R	R*	D*	
Site Planning and Miscellaneous Permits								
Concept Plan	For Rezoning	2.6.1.C	✓	◊	R	R*	D*	
	Other	2.6.1.D	✓	◊	R	D*		
Site Plan	Major	2.6.2.E	✓	◊	R	D		A*
	Minor	2.6.2.D	◊	◊	D			A*
Tree Permit		2.6.3			D			A*
Temporary Use Permit		2.6.4			D			A*
Sign Permit		2.6.5			D			A*

Table 21.02-3: Summary Table of Commonly Applicable Procedures
*** = Optional ✓ = Required Gray Box = Not Applicable**
PDIM = Proposed Development Information Meeting
NCM = Neighborhood Comment Meeting

Section	Procedure	General Mtg	Pre-App Mtg	Applic. Outreach Mtg	Public Notice	Public Hearing
	Detailed requirements in GJMC.	21.02.030(b)(1)	21.02.030(b)(2)	21.02.030(c)	21.02.030(g)	
21.02.040(j)	Simple Subdivision	*	*			
21.02.040(k)	Site Plan (Major and Minor)	*	✓ [1]			
Applications Requiring a Public Hearing						
21.02.050(c)	Annexation	*	*	NCM	✓	✓
21.02.050(d)	Code Text Amendment	*	*	NCM	✓	✓
21.02.050(e)	Comprehensive Plan Amendment (CPA), Non-Administrative	*	*	NCM	✓	✓
21.02.050(f)	Conditional Use Permit (CUP)	*	*	NCM	✓	✓
21.02.050(g)	Conditional Use and Special Dimensional Permit Amendment, Termination, or Revocation	*	*	NCM	✓	✓
21.02.050(h)	Institutional and Civic Facility Master Plans	*	*	NCM	✓	✓
21.02.050(i)	Planned Development	*	✓	NCM [4]	✓	✓
21.02.050(j)	Rehearing and Appeal	*	*		✓	✓

Figure 15: Examples of review procedures summary tables.

(2) Organize and Update Specific Review Procedures

(A) Overview

The current Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations include or reference processes for the following types of applications:

- AIM Norman Amendment
- Amendments (Rezoning)
- Building Permit
- Classification of New Additions
- Final Plat
- Plat Modification
- Preliminary Plat
- Public Easement or Right-of-way Dedication
- Rural Certificate of Survey
- Short Form Plat
- Special Uses
- Variation
- Vacation/Closure of Public Easements or Right-of-Way

The updated Development Code should consolidate these procedures in an Administration and Procedures article or clearly cross-reference the applicable procedure when substantive regulations must remain elsewhere (e.g., floodplain development permit). Additionally, any procedures that would benefit from formal codification (e.g., Zoning Verification) or new procedures that may result from this update process will be added as well.

(B) Organization

The current procedures have some general organization, but the content and level of detail vary substantially among application types. Each specific procedure should be presented using the same basic structure. At a minimum, each procedure should describe:

- **Purpose** - what the procedure does
- **Applicability** - when is the process required
- **Process** – what are the steps for approval, particularly any that are specific to the given application type
- **Review Criteria** – what requirements must be satisfied for review bodies to approve the application
- **Appeals** – can the decision be appealed, and to what body?
- **Expiration** – is there a time limit on an approval?

This consistent organization will make it easier to compare procedures and identify missing steps. It will also prevent scattered procedural requirements that appear only in district regulations or applicant instructions.

(C) Subdivision Procedures

Norman's subdivision procedures involve several review steps that may not be necessary for every application. Staff and stakeholders highlight the opportunity to explore whether an applicant's entire common ownership must be included in a Preliminary Plat, and whether more lot splits, lot line adjustments, and other smaller subdivision actions could be approved administratively. The updated Development Code should match the level of review to the scale and complexity of the subdivision rather than sending routine applications through the same process used for larger projects.

The subdivision procedures should also be clearer about what information is required at each stage. Preliminary Plats are intended to establish the basic layout and infrastructure framework for a development, but current requirements can pull in site details that may be premature or unnecessary. Staff and applicants should have a clear understanding of what must be submitted, including the level of engineering, site, and ownership information that is required before review begins.

(3) Tailor Review and Approval Criteria to Specific Application Types

Clear approval criteria are important for making consistent decisions grounded in City policy. This was also a recurring issue during project kickoff, where staff and stakeholders noted that the amount of discretion involved in many development decisions can create uncertainty for applicants and the public. The updated Development Code should establish criteria that are tailored to each application type and, where possible, tied to identifiable standards rather than broad statements about compatibility or general policy. Some decisions, such as rezonings, will continue to involve policy judgment, but the Development Code should be clearer about the factors that are relevant to that decision and what an applicant is expected to demonstrate.

For example, the PUD provisions call for development with a “distinct character” that “harmonizes with surrounding development,” while the SPUD provisions refer to development that is “compatible and harmonious” with adjacent uses. These provisions provide substantial room for different interpretations from one application to the next.

The updated Development Code should replace or supplement this type of terminology with more specific criteria related to consistency with AIM Norman, development intensity, access and infrastructure, transitions in height and massing, and identifiable impacts on surrounding properties. The same approach should be taken for Special Uses, variances and adjustments, and other discretionary procedures so applicants, staff, and decision-makers understand what is being evaluated and there are clear guardrails around how much discretion is allowed. Where decisions may be appealed, the Development Code should also make clear what is being reviewed and the criteria that apply to that review.

(4) Add Site-Specific Flexibility Options

Development in Norman ranges from new subdivisions and large planned developments to building additions, adaptive reuse, infill, and redevelopment of older commercial sites. As applicants move from greenfield development toward infill and redevelopment, additional flexibility may be necessary to respond to existing lot dimensions, buildings, parking areas, access points, and surrounding development.

Norman currently provides flexibility primarily through PUD and SPUD zoning, Board of Adjustment variances, minor changes to approved plans, and the administrative adjustment provisions of the Center City Form-Based Code. These options do not create a consistent citywide system for addressing limited departures from otherwise applicable standards.

The updated Development Code should:

- Establish an administrative adjustment procedure for minor departures from dimensional and site development standards with clear limits on what staff may adjust, by how much, and the criteria that must be met for an adjustment to be approved;
- Allow sliding-scale compliance with new standards for infill, redevelopment, and adaptive reuse;
- Move most site-specific development approvals to staff-level where future changes or adjustments can be addressed without a public hearing;
- Add an alternative compliance option where another design can meet the intent of a development standard; and
- Reserve Board of Adjustment variances for true hardship situations that cannot be addressed through other flexibility tools.

Table 2.10-1: Table of Allowable Minor Modifications	
UDC Standard	**Allowable Modification (maximum percentage)**
Site Standards	
Lot width, minimum	10% decrease
Lot depth, minimum	10% decrease
Lot area, minimum	10% decrease
Building coverage, maximum	10% increase
Total impervious coverage, maximum	10% increase
Block length, minimum/maximum	10% decrease/increase
Lot Dimensional Standards	
Front building setback, minimum	15% decrease
Build-to range, minimum/maximum	15% decrease/increase
Front building façade at build-to range, minimum	15% decrease
Side building setback, minimum	15% decrease
Rear building setback, minimum	15% decrease

Table 20-16-7: Administrative Adjustments	
LDC Standard	**Allowable Adjustment, Maximum: % Adjustment**
Site Standards	
Lot area, min	20
Lot coverage, max	20
Lot Dimensional Standards	
Front setback, minimum	20
Side setback, minimum	20
Rear setback, minimum	20
Encroachment into setback	20

Figure 16: Examples of permitted administrative adjustments.

(5) Clarify Board of Adjustment Processes

The Board of Adjustment provisions should also be reorganized and clarified. The current Zoning Ordinances mixes several different types of relief and review, while some BOA responsibilities are referenced only through other ordinances. As part of creating a consolidated Development Code, the City should also evaluate how subdivision variations and related relief procedures are incorporated and assigned for review. The updated Development Code should separately identify administrative appeals, variances, and special exceptions, with clear applicability and approval criteria for each. Variances should remain tied to the required hardship findings rather than becoming a general tool for relief from inconvenient standards. Minor departures that do not involve a true hardship should instead be handled through the administrative adjustment or alternative compliance procedures discussed above. This will give applicants a clearer path for limited flexibility while reserving BOA review for the types of decisions it is intended to make.

(6) Consolidate Technical and Administrative Content

The current Code and supporting application materials contain information that is technical or administrative in nature and may not need to be carried forward into the updated Development Code. Examples include:

- Required numbers and sizes of plans or application copies;
- Application filing dates and calendars;
- Fee amounts and calculation methods;
- Ownership-list formats and certification forms;
- Department and referral-agency contact lists;

- Detailed application checklists;
- Professional certification forms; and
- Technical plat-drawing and document-format requirements.

This content not only makes a development code longer, but it can also become outdated as administrative practices or technology change. It is generally better suited to an administrative manual, technical manual, application packet, or the City's website, where staff can update it without processing a formal Code amendment.

3.10 Update and Clarify Types of Nonconformities

The adoption of a substantially updated Development Code will inevitably create situations where existing development does not meet every new requirement. The current nonconformity provisions in Section 36-508 focus primarily on nonconforming uses and provide limited direction for other existing conditions. The updated Development Code should establish a more complete framework that separately addresses nonconforming uses, structures, lots, and site features such as landscaping, lighting, parking, screening, drainage, and access. These provisions should apply consistently across the Development Code, with individual districts and overlays cross-referencing the general nonconformity standards rather than establishing separate rules (e.g., within the CCFBC).

The standards should clearly explain when each type of nonconformity may continue, be maintained, be expanded or altered, be reconstructed following damage, or be required to move toward compliance as redevelopment occurs. These provisions should be coordinated with the redevelopment applicability thresholds discussed earlier in this Assessment so that minor improvements to an existing property does not unexpectedly trigger full site compliance.

The Development Code should also address how the new nonconformity and transitional provisions apply to existing PUD, SPUD, and CCPUD approvals, including when existing PUD standards continue to control and when new generally applicable standards apply.

3.11 Make the Development Code More User-Friendly

Many communities find that as zoning regulations are modified and updated over time, they become increasingly complicated and more difficult to navigate and understand.

This update provides an opportunity to step back and develop a well-organized, well-illustrated, user-friendly set of regulations for Norman that improve the efficiency of review processes and help clarify the rules for land development. In addition to the range of content changes described in this Code Assessment, the following changes will help make the Development Code a more user-friendly document.

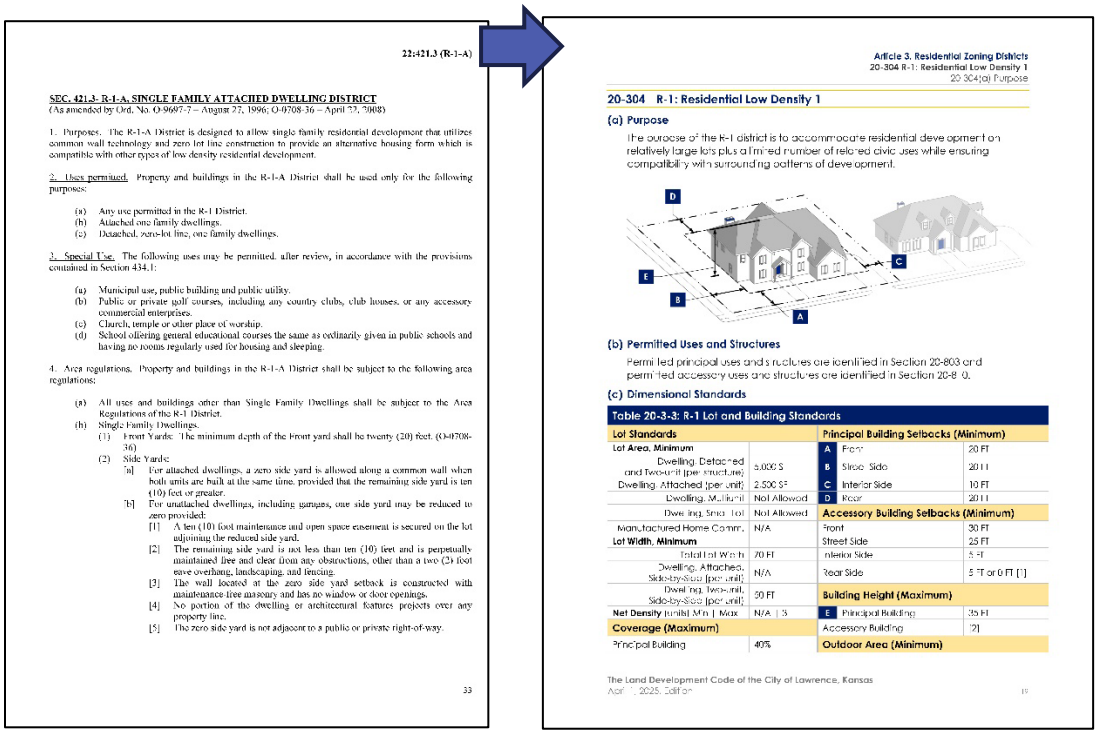
(1) Improve the Overall Organization

The current Zoning Ordinance contains several sections that have become repositories for unrelated regulations over time. For example, Division 36-V-3, Additional District Provisions, currently includes topics ranging from height and exterior appearance to parking, lighting, landscaping, fencing, short-term rentals, townhouse development, wind turbines, Special Uses, portable storage containers, home occupations, and childcare establishments. The updated Development Code should separate this content and relocate each provision to the district, use, development standard, or procedure section where a Code user would reasonably expect to find it.

A similar review should occur across Chapters 30 and 36 to eliminate duplicate general provisions and ensure that each regulatory topic has one primary home in the Development Code.

A summary of our preliminary review and potential reorganization of the current regulations is provided in Part 4 of this Assessment.

(2) Make Better Use of Document and Page Layout



22:421.3 (R-1-A)

SEC. 421.3- R-1-A, SINGLE FAMILY ATTACHED DWELLING DISTRICT
(As amended by Ord. No. O-9697-7 – August 27, 1996; O-0708-36 – April 23, 2008)

1. Purposes. The R-1-A District is designed to allow single family residential development that utilizes common wall technology and zero lot line construction to provide an alternative housing form which is compatible with other types of low density residential development.

2. Uses permitted. Property and buildings in the R-1-A District shall be used only for the following purposes:

(a) Any use permitted in the R-1 District.
(b) Attached one family dwellings.
(c) Detached, zero-lot line, one family dwellings.

3. Special Use. The following uses may be permitted, after review, in accordance with the provisions contained in Section 434.1:

(a) Municipal use, public building and public utility.
(b) Public or private golf courses, including any country clubs, club houses, or any accessory commercial enterprises.
(c) Church, temple or other place of worship.
(d) School offering general educational courses the same as ordinarily given in public schools and having no rooms regularly used for housing and sleeping.

4. Area regulations. Property and buildings in the R-1-A District shall be subject to the following area regulations:

(a) All uses and buildings other than Single Family Dwellings shall be subject to the Area Regulations of the R-1 District.
(b) Single Family Dwellings.
(1) Front Yards: The minimum depth of the Front yard shall be twenty (20) feet. (O-0708-36)
(2) Side Yards:
[a] For attached dwellings, a zero side yard is allowed along a common wall when both units are built at the same time, provided that the remaining side yard is ten (10) feet or greater.
[b] For unattached dwellings, including garages, one side yard may be reduced to zero provided:
[1] A ten (10) foot maintenance and open space easement is secured on the lot adjoining the reduced side yard.
[2] The remaining side yard is not less than ten (10) feet and is perpetually maintained free and clear from any obstructions, other than a two (2) foot eave overhang, landscaping, and fencing.
[3] The wall located at the zero side yard setback is constructed with maintenance-free masonry and has no window or door openings.
[4] No portion of the dwelling or architectural features projects over any property line.
[5] The zero side yard is not adjacent to a public or private right-of-way.

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Article 3. Residential Zoning Districts
20-304 R-1: Residential Low Density 1
20-304(a) Purpose

20-304 R-1: Residential Low Density 1

(a) Purpose

The purpose of the R-1 district is to accommodate residential development on relatively large lots plus a limited number of related civic uses while ensuring compatibility with surrounding patterns of development.

(b) Permitted Uses and Structures

Permitted principal uses and structures are identified in Section 20-803 and permitted accessory uses and structures are identified in Section 20-810.

(c) Dimensional Standards

Table 20-3-3: R-1 Lot and Building Standards

Lot Standards		Principal Building Setbacks (Minimum)		
Lot Area, Minimum		A	Front	20 FT
Dwelling, Detached and Two-unit (per structure)	5,000 S	B	Street Side	20 FT
Dwelling, Attached (per unit)	2,500 SF	C	Interior Side	10 FT
Dwelling, Multi-unit	Not Allowed	D	Rear	20 FT
Dwelling, Single Lot	Not Allowed	Accessory Building Setbacks (Minimum)		
Manufactured Home Comm.	N/A	Front		30 FT
Lot Width, Minimum		Street Side		25 FT
Total Lot Width	70 FT	Interior Side		5 FT
Dwelling, Attached, Side-by-Side (per unit)	N/A	Rear Side		5 FT or 0 FT [1]
Dwelling, Two-unit, Side-by-Side (per unit)	50 FT	Building Height (Maximum)		
Net Density (units) Min | Max	N/A | 3	E	Principal Building	35 FT
Coverage (Maximum)		Accessory Building		[2]
Principal Building	40%	Outdoor Area (Minimum)		

The Land Development Code of the City of Lawrence, Kansas
April 1, 2025, Edition

Figure 17: Current layout (left) and example of revised layout (right).

The updated Development Code will feature a new document layout with content-specific headers (showing section references for that page), footers, page numbers, and illustrations with captions. The Development Code content will also be organized with user comprehension and navigation in mind. The sample below shows how layout and graphics can be incorporated to help Code users identify key zoning district information and cross-references to related development standards, such as uses and off-street parking.

(3) Clarify Key Terms and Language

The use of clear and precise language is just as important as document organization and format. There are several opportunities to improve definitions in the new Development Code. Currently, definitions are located in multiple places across Norman's Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances. The Zoning Ordinance includes a section that collects most definitions in one place, but also includes separate definitions and rules of interpretation elsewhere, while Chapter 30 contains its own set of subdivision definitions.

Many terms used in the regulations, such as "drive-through" and "outside storage," do not have stand-alone definitions. Other terms are defined differently or more

specifically depending on where they appear. For example, Chapter 30 treats "building line," "setback line," and "yard line" as related concepts, while the Zoning Ordinance only defines front, side, and rear yard types. In the new Development Code, missing definitions should be added, key terms should be defined consistently, while obsolete, duplicative, or unnecessary definitions should be removed. Regulations that are currently embedded within definitions should also be relocated into the main body of the Development Code.

All text should also be reviewed and rewritten as necessary to provide greater clarity. When carrying forward existing language, we will identify and remove "legalese" and replace jargon with plain language. Subjective language in the current ordinances can create uncertainty by requiring interpretation or negotiation with staff and reviewing bodies. This is particularly apparent in the PUD and SPUD provisions. These regulations describe review and approval as a "process of negotiation," allow consideration of factors not listed in the ordinance, and rely on concepts that are not defined within the Zoning Ordinance such as "compatible" development.

Terms like "character," "compatible," "appropriate," "adequate," and "feasible," appear throughout both ordinances. Staff, decision makers, developers, and community members may interpret these terms differently. For example, Chapter 30 requires lots to be of an "appropriate size and arrangement" and allows certain decisions based on the opinion of the Planning Commission.

There are also examples of duplication between the Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances. Definitions and standards related to yards, setbacks, streets, access, and development appear in both, while Chapter 30 frequently cross-references zoning requirements. Related provisions should be reconciled and consolidated where possible so that the new Development Code uses a consistent set of terms and standards.

(4) Incorporate Helpful Illustrations and Graphics

Illustrations, flowcharts, and tables should be used frequently throughout the updated Development Code to explain standards and summarize detailed information. Graphics in the updated Development Code can support the following standards:

- **Zoning districts.** District diagrams can illustrate key information related to the allowed building types in form-based districts as well as lot and building

standards, such as lot area, lot width requirements, building setbacks, and height.

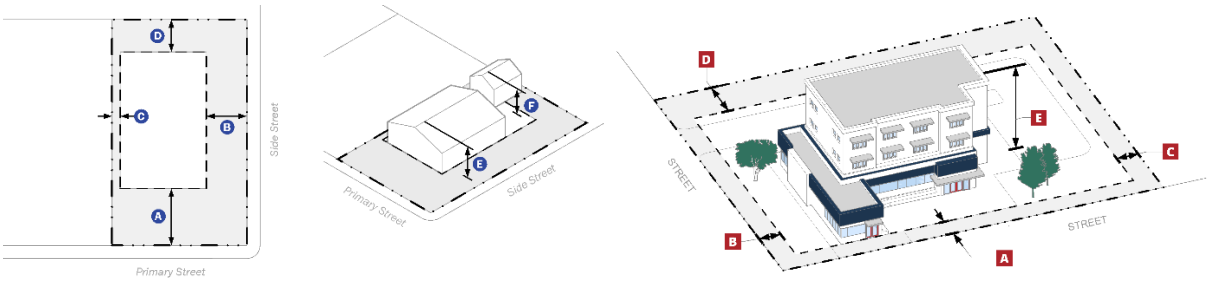

Figure 18: Example zoning district and building form graphics.

- **Development standards.** Graphics may include illustrations of outdoor lighting or building design requirements, rules of measurement, and diagrams for site layout standards.

Figure 19: Example development standards graphics.

- **Administration and procedures.** Process-related flowcharts can clarify (and visually communicate) the approval process for development applications.

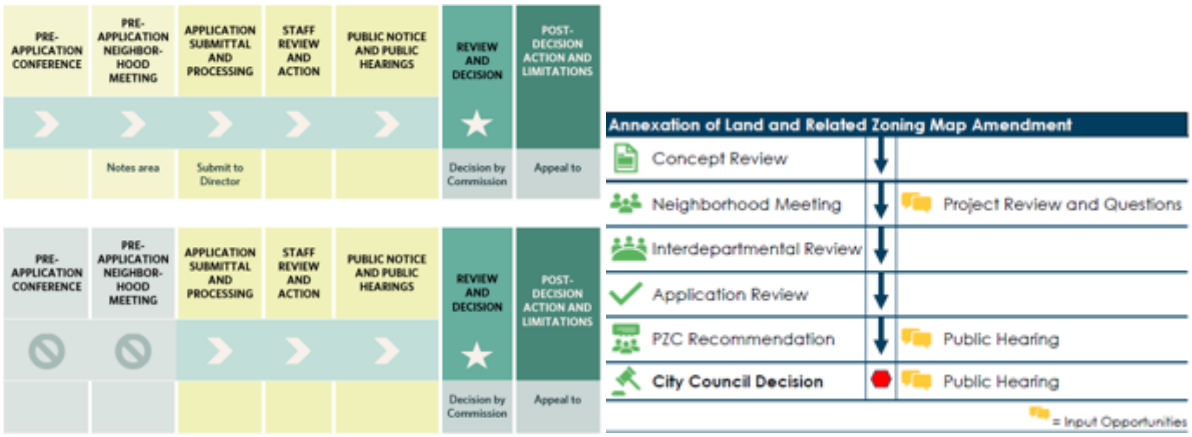

Figure 20: Example procedural flowcharts.

Part 4. Proposed Organization

The table below shows where current Chapter 30: Subdivisions and Chapter 36: Zoning content will be incorporated into the updated Development Code. The listing of a section in the "Current Sections to be Incorporated" column does not necessarily mean the existing language will be carried forward with no change – each section will be evaluated for needed revisions or deletions as a part of the drafting process.

Summary of Proposed Development Code Organization		
NEW ARTICLE/SECTION NUMBER	**NEW ARTICLE/SECTION TITLE**	**CURRENT ZONING AND SUBDIVISION SECTIONS TO BE INCORPORATED**
Article 30-1	**General Provisions**	
30-101	Title	36-501: Citation
30-102	Authority	30-103: Authority
30-103	Purpose	36-502: Purpose and Necessity 36-503: Nature of Zoning Plan 30-102: Purpose
30-104	Minimum Standards and Private Restrictions	
30-105	Relationship to Other Plans and Conflicting Provisions	36-302: Major Streets and Highways Plan Adopted 30-105: Relation to Zoning
30-106	Transitional Provisions	
30-107	Severability	30-206: Validity and Severability
Article 30-2	**Zoning Districts**	
30-201	Zoning Districts Established	36-505: Zones 36-572: Classification of New Additions
30-202	Official Zoning Map	36-201: Description of Zoning District Boundaries
30-203	Interpretation of District Boundaries	36-506: Interpretation of District Boundaries

Summary of Proposed Development Code Organization		
NEW ARTICLE/SECTION NUMBER	**NEW ARTICLE/SECTION TITLE**	**CURRENT ZONING AND SUBDIVISION SECTIONS TO BE INCORPORATED**
30-204	Residential and Agricultural Districts	36-511: A-1, General Agricultural District 36-512: A-2, Rural Agricultural District 36-513: RE, Residential Estate Dwelling District 36-514: R-1, Single-Family Dwelling District 36-515: R-1-A, Single-Family Attached Dwelling District 36-516: R-2, Two-Family Dwelling District 36-517: RM-2, Low-Density Apartment District 36-518: RM-4, Mobile Home Park District 36-519: RM-6, Medium-Density Apartment District 36-520: R-3, Multifamily Dwelling District
30-205	Mixed-Use and Commercial Districts	36-521: RO, Residence-Office District 36-522: O-1, Office-Institutional District 36-523: CO, Suburban Office Commercial District 36-524: C-1, Local Commercial District 36-525: C-2, General Commercial District 36-526: TC, Tourist Commercial District 36-527: CR, Rural Commercial District 36-528: C-3, Intensive Commercial District 36-532: MUD, Mixed-Use Development District
30-206	Industrial and Employment Districts	36-529: I-1, Light Industrial District 36-530: I-2, Heavy Industrial District 36-531: M-1, Restricted Industrial District

Summary of Proposed Development Code Organization		
NEW ARTICLE/SECTION NUMBER	**NEW ARTICLE/SECTION TITLE**	**CURRENT ZONING AND SUBDIVISION SECTIONS TO BE INCORPORATED**
30-207	Special Purpose and Form-Based Districts	36-534: PL, Park Land District 36-540: CCFBC, Center City Form-Based Code
30-208	Overlay Districts	36-535: HD, Historic District 36-536: Max Westheimer Airport Overlay District 36-537: Airport Height Zoning 36-539: PCZOD, Porter Corridor Zoning Overlay District 36-541: CNZOD, Central Norman Zoning Overlay District
30-209	Planned Unit Development District	36-509: PUD, Planned Unit Developments 36-510: SPUD, Simple Planned Unit Developments
30-210	Dimensional Standards and Exceptions	36-303: Setback Lines 36-544: Open Space 36-546: Height 30-405: Subdivision Design Standards—Building Lines
Article 30-3	**Use Regulations**	
30-301	Purpose	
30-302	General	36-542: Applicability of Additional District Provisions 36-543: Determination of Applicable Regulations
30-303	Use Table	Division 36-V-2: Specific District Regulations
30-304	Use-Specific Standards	36-545: Communication Facilities 36-554: Short-Term Rentals

Summary of Proposed Development Code Organization		
NEW ARTICLE/SECTION NUMBER	**NEW ARTICLE/SECTION TITLE**	**CURRENT ZONING AND SUBDIVISION SECTIONS TO BE INCORPORATED**
		36-555: Group Housing Project 36-556: Townhouse Development 36-558: Rooming house or Boardinghouse 36-559: Distributed (Small) Wind Turbines 36-561: Regulations for Special Uses 36-565: Bed and Breakfast Establishments 36-566: Childcare Establishments 36-567: Adult Entertainment Uses 36-567.1: Restrictions on Tobacco and E-Cigarette Retailers 36-404: Location of Certain Utility Structures
30-305	Accessory Uses and Structures	36-563: Sales Prohibited from Residences or Garages 36-564: Home Occupations
30-306	Temporary Uses and Structures	36-562: Portable Storage Containers and Roll-Off Trash Containers
30-307	Unlisted Uses	
Article 30-4	**Site Planning and Development Standards**	
30-401	Purpose	
30-402	Applicability	36-542: Applicability of Additional District Provisions
30-403	Mobility and Connectivity	30-402: Subdivision Design Standards—Alleys 30-404: Subdivision Design Standards—Blocks

Summary of Proposed Development Code Organization		
NEW ARTICLE/SECTION NUMBER	**NEW ARTICLE/SECTION TITLE**	**CURRENT ZONING AND SUBDIVISION SECTIONS TO BE INCORPORATED**
		30-409: Subdivision Design Standards—Sidewalks 30-410: Subdivision Design Standards—Streets
30-404	Off-Street Parking and Loading	36-548: Off-Street Parking Requirements 36-550: Development and Maintenance of Off-Street Parking Facilities
30-405	Landscaping, Buffering, and Screening	36-551: Landscaping Requirements for Off-Street Parking Facilities 36-552: Fencing, Walls, and Screening 30-505: Fencing and Permanent Evergreen Plant Screening
30-406	Site and Building Design	36-544: Open Space 36-547: Exterior Appearance 36-555: Group Housing Project 36-556: Townhouse Development 36-557: Entrance to Dwelling Units in Apartment Houses and Group Dwellings 30-401: Design Principles
30-407	Outdoor Lighting	36-549: Commercial Outdoor Lighting Standards
30-408	Natural Resources and Environmentally Sensitive Lands	36-533: FH, Flood Hazard District 30-411: Water Quality Protection Zone Design Standards 30-510: Storm Sewers and Drainage 30-513: Vegetative Cover and Erosion/Sedimentation Control Measures for Drainage Improvements 30-514: Water Quality Protection Zone Management and Maintenance
Article 30-5	**Subdivision**	

Summary of Proposed Development Code Organization		
NEW ARTICLE/SECTION NUMBER	**NEW ARTICLE/SECTION TITLE**	**CURRENT ZONING AND SUBDIVISION SECTIONS TO BE INCORPORATED**
30-501	Purpose	30-102: Purpose 30-501: Purpose
30-502	Applicability	30-104: Jurisdiction 30-105: Relation to Zoning
30-503	General Standards	30-203: Sale of Property Not Abutting on Public Street 30-401: Design Principles 30-403: Subdivision Design Standards—Access and Availability of Fire and Police Protection and Sanitation
30-504	Lot Layout and Design	30-404: Subdivision Design Standards—Blocks 30-405: Subdivision Design Standards—Building Lines 30-406: Subdivision Design Standards—Easements 30-407: Subdivision Design Standards—Lots 30-408: Subdivision Design Standards—Public Areas and Open Space
30-505	Streets, Alleys, Sidewalks, and Bicycle Paths	30-402: Subdivision Design Standards—Alleys 30-409: Subdivision Design Standards—Sidewalks 30-410: Subdivision Design Standards—Streets 30-608: Exception to Allow Private Streets in Planned Unit Developments
30-506	Required Improvements	36-403: Fees Charged by Utility Companies 36-405: Rules and Regulations

Summary of Proposed Development Code Organization		
NEW ARTICLE/SECTION NUMBER	**NEW ARTICLE/SECTION TITLE**	**CURRENT ZONING AND SUBDIVISION SECTIONS TO BE INCORPORATED**
		36-406: Underground Utility Facilities 30-502: Improvements to Be Logical Extension or Expansion 30-503: Improvements Required 30-506: Maintenance and Supervision 30-507: Permanent Markers 30-508: Sanitary Sewers 30-509: Sidewalks 30-510: Storm Sewers and Drainage 30-511: Street and Alley Improvements 30-512: Water Lines 30-513: Vegetative Cover and Erosion/Sedimentation Control Measures for Drainage Improvements
30-507	Dedication and Easement Requirements	36-402: Easement Dedications 30-406: Subdivision Design Standards—Easements
30-508	Utility Extensions and Cost Participation	30-207: Utility Line Extension—Improvement Responsibilities 30-208: Utility Line Extension—Additional Improvement Alternatives 30-209: Utility Line Extension—Payback of Costs for Oversize or Extended Utility Main Construction
30-509	Public Park Land Dedication	30-701: Applicability 30-702: Dedication of Land 30-703: Reservation of Future Public Park and Recreation Sites 30-704: Standards for Determining Amount of Land and/or Fee 30-705: Suitability of the Land

Summary of Proposed Development Code Organization		
NEW ARTICLE/SECTION NUMBER	**NEW ARTICLE/SECTION TITLE**	**CURRENT ZONING AND SUBDIVISION SECTIONS TO BE INCORPORATED**
		30-706: Use of Money Paid in Lieu of Dedicating of Land 30-707: Form of Dedication
Article 30-6	**Administration and Procedures**	
30-601	Review and Decision-Making Bodies	36-570: Board of Adjustment
30-602	Summary Table of Review Procedures	
30-603	Common Review Procedures	30-201: Agenda 30-202: Filing Fee 30-204: Official Recording
30-604	Specific Review Procedures	36-304: Variations Permitted 36-507: Vacation of Public Easements 36-560: Special Uses 36-568: Building Permit 36-571: Amendments 30-205: Issuance of Permits Article 30-III: Plat Preparation and Approval Procedure Article 30-VI: Variations and Exceptions
30-605	Violations and Enforcement	36-407: Violations 36-569: Violations and Penalties 30-210: Penalties
Article 30-7	**Nonconformities**	
30-701	General Standards	
30-702	Nonconforming Uses	36-508: Nonconforming Uses
30-703	Nonconforming Structures	
30-704	Nonconforming Lots	

Summary of Proposed Development Code Organization		
NEW ARTICLE/SECTION NUMBER	**NEW ARTICLE/SECTION TITLE**	**CURRENT ZONING AND SUBDIVISION SECTIONS TO BE INCORPORATED**
30-705	Nonconforming Site Features	
Article 30-8	**Measurements and Definitions**	
30-801	Rules of Construction	
30-802	Measurements	
30-803	Definitions	36-101: Definitions 36-301: Definitions 36-401: Definitions 30-101: Definitions

Part 5. Project Kickoff Summary

Key Themes and Takeaways

The following key themes are presented in no particular order or prioritization.

1. Align The Development Code with AIM Norman

A consistent theme during the kickoff meetings was that Norman has a strong adopted plan, but the current zoning and subdivision regulations do not always make it easy to build the types of places, housing, and transportation connections called for in AIM Norman. Specifically, the Development Code should be updated to:

- Better align the zoning map and base zoning districts with the Future Land Use and Transportation Map;
- Tailor standards to Norman's different contexts, including core neighborhoods, suburban areas, rural areas, commercial corridors, Campus Corner, Downtown, and emerging growth areas; and
- Coordinate zoning, subdivision, stormwater, transportation, and infrastructure standards so they work together instead of creating conflicting expectations.

2. Reduce Reliance on Planned Unit Development and Discretionary Decision-Making

Participants repeatedly noted that Planned Unit Developments (PUDs), Simple Planned Unit Developments (SPUDs), and Center City Planned Unit Developments (CCPUDs) are often used to get around relatively minor code barriers or negotiate standards that could be handled more predictably through clear regulations. Staff and stakeholders identified several opportunities for improvement including:

- Review common PUD/SPUD/CCPUD requests to identify what should be incorporated into updated base zoning standards, including increasing mixed-use opportunities across zoning districts;
- Allow more desirable development types by-right when they meet clear standards;
- Clarify when a PUD/SPUD/CCPUD is still appropriate and establish stronger public benefit requirements in exchange for flexibility; and

- For existing PUD/SPUD/CCPUDs, create clearer standards for amendments and minor adjustments so small changes do not require a full public hearing process.

Stakeholders also noted that the level of discretion exercised by the City Council over many types of development applications and decisions introduces a level of uncertainty into the development review process that impacts both applicants and interested community members. Improving predictability in both the application of standards and decision-making process is likely to have a positive overall impact on the amount and types of development proposed in Norman.

3. Diversify Housing Options

Stakeholders emphasized that Norman needs a broader range of housing choices to serve different household types, income levels, and stages of life, and that some current dimensional standards may make smaller, more attainable housing difficult to build. Specifically, the Development Code update should:

- Reevaluate minimum lot size, lot width, setbacks, lot coverage, and other dimensional standards that may limit smaller homes and more attainable housing types;
- Support a broader range of housing types, including small-lot homes, duplexes, triplexes, townhomes, small multiplexes, and other missing middle housing types;
- Address the need for starter homes and ownership options that are attainable to first-time buyers, recent graduates, and older adults;
- Address university-adjacent housing pressures, including student housing demand and conversions of single-unit detached homes;
- Define “affordable housing” and consider how to accommodate both more affordable housing and more market rate housing;
- Consider where additional housing types may be appropriate in existing neighborhoods, near the University of Oklahoma, in Downtown and core areas, and in new development areas;
- Balance housing flexibility with clear standards for scale, height transitions, parking, and compatibility; and
- Update the accessory dwelling unit (ADU) standards to:
    - Identify requirements that are preventing ADU construction (e.g., maximum unit size and alley-access standards); and
    - Explore whether ADUs could support additional ownership opportunities.

4. Encourage Neighborhood Commercial and Mixed-Use Developments

Small-scale, neighborhood-serving commercial, and mixed-use development emerged as an important opportunity to support more walkable neighborhoods without relying on large, negotiated PUD-style projects. Specific updates to consider include:

- Accessory commercial units, live/work units, scale retail or service uses, and other neighborhood-serving businesses (e.g., coffee shops or corner grocery store);
- Compatibility standards for these uses related to hours of operation, noise, outdoor lighting, parking, buffering, and scale; and
- Recognizing that Norman is still car-oriented in many areas while creating a path toward more walkable development patterns over time.

5. Address Infrastructure Constraints

Infrastructure constraints, especially stormwater, water, sewer, road capacity, fire access, and long-term maintenance responsibilities, were repeatedly identified as issues that need to be addressed alongside zoning and subdivision updates. When updating the Development Code:

- Consider how development standards, subdivision standards, and green infrastructure can better support stormwater management;
- Update landscaping, tree preservation, parking lot design, and open space standards to better support stormwater management, heat mitigation, tree canopy, and native planting;
- Coordinate zoning and subdivision updates with infrastructure realities;
- Identify where Development Code changes may need to be coordinated with future updates to engineering standards;
- Address long-term maintenance responsibilities for stormwater facilities, ponds, lakes, open space, alleys, and other shared infrastructure; and
- Consider rural and edge-area concerns related to water supply, recharge areas, erosion, road capacity and agricultural activity.

6. Support Infill, Redevelopment, and Core-Area Growth

Participants identified Downtown, Campus Corner, Center City, older commercial corridors, and other core areas as important opportunities for context-sensitive

infill, redevelopment, additional housing, and mixed-use activity. Updates should consider standards and incentives that:

- Make it easier to redevelop underused commercial sites, older strip centers, former large-format retail sites, and other aging commercial properties;
- Support additional housing, commercial activity, and mixed-use development in Downtown, Campus Corner, Center City, and other core areas;
- Review the Center City Form-Based Code and CCPUD process to identify what has worked, what has not worked, and where standards may be too difficult or costly to use;
- Address transitions between higher-intensity redevelopment and adjacent lower-density neighborhoods (e.g., building setbacks, height, and massing);
- Consider how infrastructure limitations affect redevelopment feasibility in older areas; and
- Use tools such as form-based standards, targeted development incentives, and administrative approvals to support context-sensitive redevelopment.

7. Modernize Subdivision Procedures

In addition to the zoning regulations, staff and stakeholders identified current challenges with the subdivision regulations and platting procedures, particularly the need for updates that better support infill, redevelopment, smaller projects, and more connected development patterns. The subdivision regulations should be updated to:

- Clarify procedures for preliminary plats, final plats, short-form plats, lot splits, and lot line adjustments;
- Consider expanding administrative approval pathways for smaller or simpler subdivision actions;
- Clarify standards for phasing plans, easements, dumpsters, plugged oil wells, open space, parkland dedication, and long-term maintenance responsibilities; and
- Ensure subdivision standards support connected, walkable development patterns rather than reinforcing disconnected, car-oriented layouts.

8. Streamline the Development Review Process

A consistent theme across the kickoff meetings was that, while the City of Norman Development Center and staff are attentive and helpful to applicants navigating the review process, there are opportunities to better calibrate review procedures

based on the scale and potential impact of different application types. Specific updates to consider include:

- Clarify application completeness and sufficiency requirements so that applicants, staff, decision-makers, and the public understand what information is required, when it is due, and how revised materials will be handled;
- Review which applications require City Council action, Planning Commission review, Board of Adjustment review, or administrative approval;
- Review the public hearing scheduling process/timing to limit the placement of incomplete or significantly revised applications on Planning Commission or City Council agendas;
- Move more routine or low-impact applications to staff-level review where appropriate (e.g., minor PUD amendments and lot splits);
- Draft objective review criteria so applicants, staff, elected and appointed officials, and the public understand what is being evaluated;
- Refine the pre-development meeting process, including clarifying which types of projects require a meeting, what information should be provided, and whether the process should be renamed to more accurately reflect its purpose (e.g., "neighborhood meeting");
- Create administrative tools for minor adjustments, PUD amendments, site plan changes, and other small development requests;
- Maintain appropriate public input opportunities for larger, more complex, or higher-impact projects; and
- Lower barriers to entry for smaller scale developers through easier processes to navigate the system and flexibility in upfront investments.

9. Support Economic Development and Business Flexibility

Another key theme identified during the kickoff meetings was that Norman's zoning regulations should do more to support a business-friendly environment. The Development Code should be updated to:

- Review use allowances across the zoning districts and increase opportunities to construct or operate neighborhood-serving businesses such as home occupations and farmstands;
- Evaluate whether existing commercial and industrial districts provide enough flexibility for current and emerging market needs;
- Consider standards for emerging or evolving uses such data centers and agricultural businesses;

- Identify where zoning standards limit redevelopment, adaptive reuse, or expansion near University North Park, the airport area, Downtown, commercial corridors, and other employment or redevelopment areas; and
- Make it easier for applicants and property owners to understand what uses are allowed and what can be built without defaulting to a PUD or negotiated approval process.

10. Balance Growth, Compatibility, and Local Identity

Across the kickoff meetings, stakeholders emphasized that Norman's updated standards should allow reasonable growth and change while responding to the city's varied urban, suburban, university-adjacent, rural, and commercial contexts. The updated Development Code should:

- Allow traditional development patterns such as connected streets, alleys, smaller lots, zero-lot-line or reduced-setback buildings, and small-scale neighborhood commercial where appropriate;
- Address compatibility through objective standards related to scale, height, transitions, setbacks, lighting, landscaping, parking, and use impacts; and
- Avoid one-size-fits-all standards that do not respond to local conditions.

5.1 Community Engagement

As part of the kick-off meetings, the project team also asked participants to provide feedback related to future engagement activities to ensure widespread and meaningful input and participation throughout the project. Staff and stakeholders highlighted that future engagement should:

- Build on the outreach completed through AIM Norman;
- Provide plain-language education about zoning, subdivision, development review, and what the Development Code can and cannot regulate;
- Use a range of outreach tools, including open houses, local media, and online materials while reaching out to neighborhood groups, HOAs, builders, developers, business districts, Campus Corner stakeholders, the Chamber, civic organizations, and the University of Oklahoma;
- Explain tradeoffs related to affordability, compatibility, infrastructure, stormwater, parking, walkability, and development cost;
- Use local examples to help residents understand what different housing types, neighborhood commercial uses, and redevelopment patterns could look like in Norman; and

- Continue involving the Working Group, Planning Commission, City Council, City staff, and the public at key drafting milestones.