



**DATE:** July 15, 2020

**CASE:** Executive Summary for Townhome/Townhouse Development Regulations

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**BACKGROUND**

This memorandum is intended to serve as a summary to describe the proposed revisions to Article 7 (Base Zoning Districts) as they relate to minimum standards for townhome development. (Note that the NC Building Code designates them as “townhouses”.)

The City adopted the 2030 Land Use Plan (LUP) in 2018 and these revisions are part of a wholesale rewrite of the Concord Development Ordinance (CDO) to align the ordinance with the recommendations contained in the LUP. Furthermore, the last wholesale revision of the CDO occurred in 2007 and this effort is intended to modernize the development standards and to make the ordinance more user-friendly.

City has previously adopted changes to the CDO relative to conservation subdivisions, permitted uses and wholesale changes to Articles 5, 7, 8, 9 and 10 (known as “Group One” changes.) These changes were prepared by staff with the assistance of the consultant team (Tindale-Oliver and Michael Lauer Planning.) The townhome regulations were intended to be part of the Group One changes, but the staff felt that more research and detail would be necessary.

The CDO defines a townhome (or townhouse) as “A single-family dwelling unit constructed in a series, group or row of attached units separated by property lines and with a yard on at least two sides. (Source: North Carolina State Building Code, Vol. 1, § 201.2 and Vol. VII, § 202). The term "townhouse" also includes a single-family dwelling constructed in a series or group of attached units with property lines separating each unit. (Source: North Carolina State Building Code, Vol. 1, § 201.3)”.

In terms of development styles, townhomes are typically either developed as “front-load” or “rear-load” units. Front-load units have their driveways and/or garages from a major street at the front of the homes whereas rear-load units take access off of an alley. Here is an example of front-loaded townhomes without garages

(Settler's Landing) as well as a photo of front-loaded units with garages (Edison Square).



These are examples of rear-loaded units with the street and alley views (Afton Village and Christenbury Village).



The nature of townhome development, coupled with our zoning regulations, pose several challenges related to administration. These include:

- Closely spaced prominent driveways which lead to safety concerns on front load units;
- Lack of front yards and landscaping;
- Difficulty in provision of public services such as trash and garbage collection;
- Smaller lot sizes which lead to utility conflicts and difficulties; and
- Inability to provide enough space for healthy street trees due to the above factors.

The Settler's Landing and Edison Square examples above are indicative of the type of townhome development that is being proposed in Concord. These examples also illustrate the type of design issues cited above in that the lots are narrow, have driveways that take up most of the front yard and street trees and landscaping are nonexistent. The photos also indicate that the lack of separation between driveways (due to the narrowness of the lot) leaves no room for the garbage cans and no room for on-street parking without blocking a driveway. The narrow nature of the lots and the resultant increased number of driveways in a shorter street frontage have created maneuvering conflicts, particularly on higher traffic streets, such as collectors. Furthermore, the lack of driveway separation has led to conflicts between neighbors in the past.

The rear-loaded examples cited allow for front yard landscaping and on-street parking, but they are more costly to develop as it is necessary to construct a corresponding alley for access to the driveway/garage, and garbage pickup must be well thought out and coordinated. With rear-loaded units there is adequate room to provide street trees as the driveways are in the rear. In most instances, rear load units are easier to serve in terms of public utilities.

In our internal discussions, staff has discussed ways to encourage more rear-loaded townhomes in order to obtain a better mix as almost all proposed and constructed units are front-loaded.

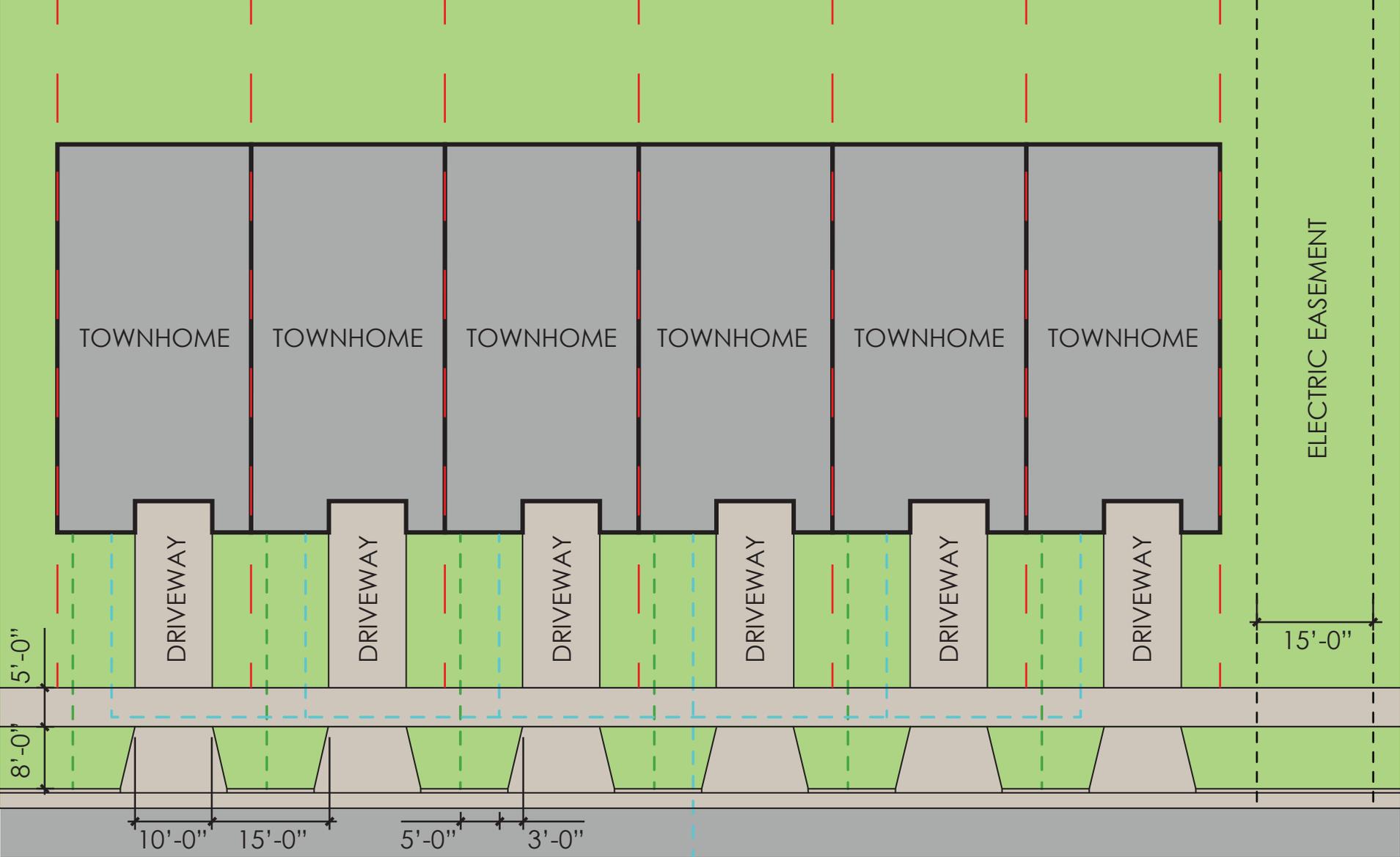
## **SUMMARY**

Main features of the proposed revisions to Section 7.7.4 include:

- Clarifying that private streets have to be constructed to public standards;
- A minimum of 20 feet is required between groups of townhomes;
- No group of townhomes can be longer than 160 feet;
- Additional parking is required on either one side of the street, or in a visitor parking area within 500 feet of the group of townhome units;
- Front load townhomes may not be constructed on streets that are classified as collectors (or higher) and their driveways must be at least five feet (5') from a side property line and at least fifteen (15') apart;
- Permanent patios for front load townhomes are required to be at least five feet (5') from a side or rear property line, but paver patios are required to maintain a setback of three feet (3');
- Rear load units may have driveways three feet (3') from the property line, and front setbacks may be reduced to ten feet (10') with a detached garage; and
- Addition of a set of minimum requirements for rear-load units.

These changes are intended to provide clear guidance relative to new townhome development and to ultimately achieve safer and more efficient design with a mix of front and rear loaded units. The changes are also intended to help the City achieve safe provision of public services/utilities and to provide for the establishment of a desirable street tree canopy.

# FRONT LOAD TOWNHOMES



- PROPERTY LINE
- - - ELECTRIC EASEMENT
- - - WATER LINE
- - - SEWER LINE

