XENIA CITY COUNCIL
SPECIAL SESSION
APRIL 13, 2026

SPECIAL SESSION

(1) CALL TO ORDER: Mayor Reynolds called the Special Session to order at 5:00 p.m. in the City Administration Building, Conference and Training Room, 107 E. Main Street, Xenia.

(2) ROLL CALL: Councilwoman Faith Sorice, Councilman JD Mackiewicz, Councilwoman Rachel Huffman, Councilman Jesse Rubio, and Mayor Ethan Reynolds. President Smith was absent. Vice President James Crawford would be arriving late.

Staff Present: City Manager Brent Merriman, Assistant City Manager Eric Henry, Finance Director Ryan Duke, Law Director Donnette Fisher, Administrative Services Director Jackie Potter, City Planner Brian Forschner, Deputy City Clerk Nichole Haulman, City Clerk Amy Brown, Police Major Lon Etchison, and Police Chief Chris Stutes.

(3) EXECUTIVE SESSION: To discuss Labor Negotiations per ORC §121.22(G).

Motion by Councilwoman Huffman, seconded by Councilwoman Sorice, to move into Executive Session at 5:05 p.m. to discuss labor negotiations per ORC §121.22(G). No discussion followed. The Roll on this was the following:

Ayes: Sorice, Mackiewicz, Huffman, Rubio, Reynolds
Nays: None motion carried.

The Council convened in Executive Session with the same members present. Vice President Crawford arrived at 5:09 p.m. At 6:18 p.m., Vice President Crawford reconvened the Special Session.

(4) NEW BUSINESS:

LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATE PRESENTATION

Vice President Crawford turned the meeting over to Mr. Forschner. Mr. Forschner said staff had been working on this Zoning Update for the last nine months. One of the big changes in the Land Development Code was a focus on housing standards because Xenia's Comprehensive Plan recommended it. There were a little over 900 people who participated in that process, so there was a lot of good, constructive community input. Xenia was growing a lot; the housing was growing at an unprecedented rate. A lot of people wanted to move to Xenia, and there was a need for more variety with housing, more than just single family homes. There was also a need for effective ways to manage growth, so the City could use regulations to do that. People were very interested in revitalizing older neighborhoods and the area downtown. Those were all things that the zoning codes could potentially deal with and influence because it structured how and where development could happen, and what site development could happen. The housing market had changed dramatically nationwide, but especially in Xenia. Xenia was experiencing growth, the likes of which had not been seen since the '50s and '60s.

Mr. Forschner said there had been massive price inflation, and in five years, there had been an increase over 50% in the cost of an entry-level unit. The population was aging, and the median household age had gone from 35 in 2010 to 40 in 2026. The household size was also shrinking; in 1970, there was an average of 3.3 people per household in Xenia, and now it was 2.3. There were fewer people living in households, and people aging in place, which meant the detached single family house with a big yard was no longer the optimal solution for everybody. Whether someone was young and just starting out, or if they were an empty nester, a big yard might not be needed.



When people were younger, they wanted to be in a place where they could walk to restaurants and other businesses. In a lot of cases, people could not afford a new house and might need something like an apartment. As people aged in place, it was harder and harder to maintain a big house and lawn, and people looked to downsize. A community should offer options for all those people in order to continue attracting and keeping people as they went through life. Xenia's current zoning code was not really built for that, because the majority of the residential parts of the community were zoned for single family homes only. Someone could go to any street in Xenia, and for the most part, they would be allowed to build a single family home there. Duplexes, town homes, and apartment buildings were not allowed, which discouraged choice and revitalization. There were older neighborhoods where there were opportunities to redevelop, and restricting to single family homes only limited the economy of scale and what a builder could do there. It also made it more difficult to attract younger residents and to retain older residents as they aged.

Mr. Forschner said in addition to neXtPlan, staff wanted to have some community outreach for this project. Back in October, there was a workshop in Council Chambers in the City Administration Building. There was a presentation as well as a game where participants had puzzle pieces with different sized homes, and their job was to try to fit it on a lot under the current zoning constraints. They learned how zoning worked and how limiting the current code was to allow certain types of houses. People were asked what types of housing they would like to see and where they would like to see it, and there was also an online survey. Between the workshop and the online survey, nearly 500 people participated in the process, which was unprecedented. The last time there was a zoning code rewrite was in 2016, and they held a public meeting, but only five people showed up. He appreciated the Councilmembers who attended the meeting in October 2025. As a result, there was more-than-expected support for multi-family, multi-unit buildings. Five to 10 years ago, multi-family was a four letter word. Particularly in areas near downtown, there was a lot of support for higher density.

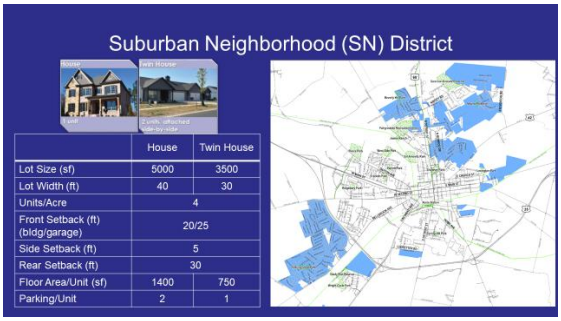


Mr. Forschner said this would mean more housing units per acre and more diversity of housing types. There was support for multi-unit buildings in a lot of different locations in the City. Staff also learned that architectural details were more important to people than the number of units in

the building, which was significant. People were okay with a multi-unit building as long as it was designed to fit into the existing neighborhood, and that it looked like a house. Architectural details were more important than the building materials, like the siding, and people were okay with vinyl siding as long as there were details like trim and porches. That helped inform the goals for this zoning rewrite, and increasing housing choice was a big part of it. Aside from responding to what the community wanted, this could improve the quality of life by being a multi-generational community and attracting people of all ages, as well as allowing people of different ages to live together in the same neighborhood. It could help Xenia attract and retain residents, and by being good at attracting and retaining residents, that helped to attract and retain businesses. If a wide range of housing was provided, it would attract retail, as well as offices and businesses that needed a workforce, and in turn, housing for that workforce. Another goal was to encourage revitalization of the older areas and neighborhoods to open up options for redeveloping those areas. At the same time, staff wanted to protect the character of existing family neighborhoods. The average household size in 1970 was three, and that was at the end of a big building boom. A large chunk of this community was built as single family homes from the 1950s and through the '60s. Staff wanted to protect the character of those existing areas and to manage growth efficiently and effectively so as Xenia grew, it did not affect the ability to serve and maintain infrastructure.



Mr. Forschner reported there were currently six zoning districts, and they had been redefined to five zoning districts. The first was the Suburban Neighborhood (SN) District. Staff renamed the districts to correspond with the names in Xenia's neXtPlan, because it was always a good idea for code to follow a Comprehensive Plan. The SN District would be on the periphery of the City where most of the new developments and subdivisions were going to happen. Staff took what was currently a mix of R-1A, R1-B, R-1C and Planned Unit Developments (PUDs), and combined them into the SN District. PUDs were areas where a developer was having trouble meeting the code requirements for an R-1A or R-1C District, and they worked with the City to come up with a unique set of standards that was just for that property, which was done on a case-by-case basis. Staff wanted to get away from that because PUDs were inefficient, a bit more complex, and they took longer to approve. If someone wanted to find out what the standards were for their property, they could not just go online and look at them; they would have to call the City. These could lead to a patchwork of standards across the City, versus a District standard, which was more transparent. Developments could come in, it would be a quicker approval process, and they would be more efficient to administer over time as well. Straight zoning like this should be more flexible so that people and developers were more likely to use it, and not go the PUD route. Staff had looked at a lot of the PUDs that Council had approved over the years, and had modeled the standards after those. While a 40-foot minimum lot width and 5,000 square foot lot size was smaller than what the R-1A or R-1B District allowed, it was in line with what Council had



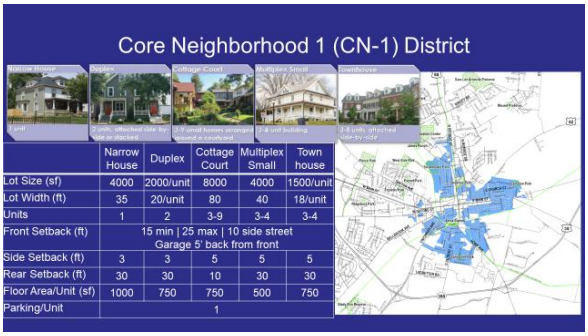
approved in the past. For example, Wright Cycle Estates had 40-foot wide lots, the Reserve of Xenia had duplexes, and the recently approved Highland Green Subdivision had town homes. This District would allow single family homes or a twin house, which was a side-by-side duplex, like in the Reserve and Edenbridge. A twin house would also be able to be split so the lot line would run right through the wall between the units, and each unit could be owner-occupied and have their own yard. That was why the lot width of 30 feet was narrower for the twin house, and front setbacks would be reduced a bit. The minimum floor area would be 1400, which was about what R-1C was now. The minimum parking would stay the same for a house, but it would only be one space per unit for a twin house.

Mr. Forschner said at the same time as allowing for smaller lots, they were limiting the density to four units per acre. People living in Kinsey Meadows on 100-foot lots would not want a lot of 40-foot lots adjacent to them. The City was allowing flexibility for a 40-foot-wide lot or an 80-foot-wide lot. However, the cap would still be four units per acre density, which was relatively low, and it followed what Xenia's Comprehensive Plan recommended for these areas. For the 40-foot lots, there would be a lot of open space in a neighborhood which could make up for that to keep the density what it was now. That open space could be used as a buffer from other neighborhoods with larger lots so as to not affect the character of those areas, which was the goal with this zoning district. Vice President Crawford asked if this had yet to be approved or if it was already approved. Mr. Forschner said this was a proposal, and it had not been brought to Council yet. Vice President Crawford was concerned about putting a connected house on a lot line that was only separated by a parcel ID. Mr. Forschner said this was currently in the Reserve of Xenia where there were duplexes with a lot line between the units and a party wall that separated the two. Vice President Crawford was concerned that not all lenders would be happy with a connected house sitting on two parcels, and he was not sure that was something that should be continued. Mr. Forschner assured him it was pretty common. On the East Coast, there were whole neighborhoods of row homes. Councilwoman Sorice asked if Mr. Forschner saw these units as being more appealing to retirees or all sorts of residents. Mr. Forschner said all types of residents, but especially for anyone who wanted a compromise between having their own house and yard, and having something that was less to maintain and more affordable. He said it was less common in this area than in other parts of the country and it could take a while to catch on. A lot of times builders and lenders wanted to do what had happened in the past to reduce their risk.

Mr. Forschner recognized the point that Vice President Crawford raised. With the Suburban Core Neighborhood District, those were currently R-1C or R-1D, generally built in the '50s and '60s. For example, Laynewood, Old Arrowhead, and South Hill, which were areas where there were very few development opportunities right now. If someone were to buy a house and demolish it or if a house burned down and the owner wanted to build something new, this would provide them with more options. They could build a single family house; a duplex, not just a side-by-side, but also vertically stacked (two stories); or a cottage court, which was a group of three to nine smaller single family homes arranged around a courtyard. That provided an attractive, yet affordable means to own a home, but there would be less to maintain. This would require more land, at least a 100-foot-wide lot, and there would not be a lot of this because this area was already built out. But, it allowed these neighborhoods to evolve with the market over time. When an area was zoned a certain way, it limited what could be built. If a Laynewood or Arrowhead style house fell out of favor in the market, then there would be a massive neighborhood filled with the same housing

type. This allowed some flexibility over time to adapt with the market to keep that neighborhood vibrant.

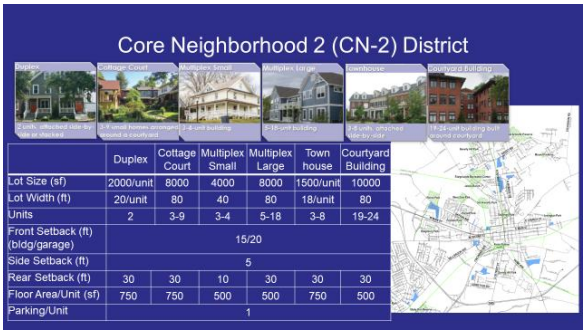
Mr. Forschner said the Core Neighborhood 1 (CN-1) District would be the pre-World War II neighborhoods that were much older. They were built before mass-produced suburban and tract housing, located on the east end, the old north end, the old south end, and S. Detroit Street. These neighborhoods had homes that were built in an era before cars were very common. A lot of them did not have garages, but a lot of them had front porches. They were narrow homes on narrow lots, which had a certain character that some people liked. These neighborhoods were very walkable, and there was a sense of community. In some cases, garages were added later, and there were some rear alleys. The intent for this district was to keep that character and what was best about those neighborhoods, and reinforce it. A lot of those neighborhoods were also built with a variety of housing types. N. King Street and N. Galloway Street had big, majestic single family homes, but there were also row houses and duplexes. That also existed in the Waterstreet Historic District and parts of the east end where there were multi-units mixed in. Right now, those were all nonconforming per Xenia code. Staff would like to make them conforming and allow more of them. But, standards needed to be in place to make sure they were done in a way that reinforced the character of the neighborhood. In this case a single family home could be a narrow house, a duplex, or a cottage court, and a multiplex would be up to four units in a building. For a townhouse, up to four attached town homes would be allowed. There would be building size and width restrictions to make sure things were built at the scale of the neighborhood, as to not disrupt the neighborhood's character. The minimum floor area would be close to what currently existed, which was 1,000 feet for a house, 750 feet for duplexes and cottage courts, and 500 feet for a multiplex, and setbacks would be reduced.



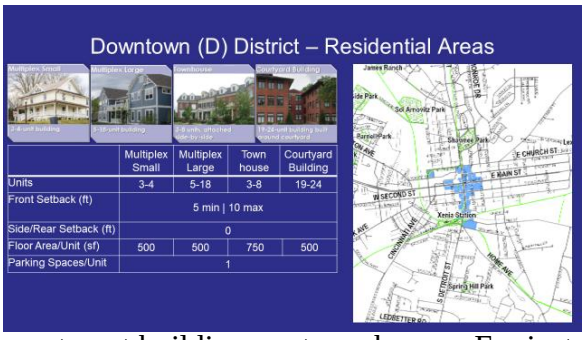
Vice President Crawford asked for clarification on square footage. He wondered if it was regardless of the number of bedrooms, or if there was a bedroom minimum. Mr. Forschner said the square footage was regardless of number of bedrooms. Xenia's current code broke it down by bedrooms, but this update would be a flat minimum, and this update would also reduce the front yard setbacks to 15. Staff did some GIS analysis to figure out what the current setbacks were, and that was what it was; however, there would be a maximum setback. In the east end, there were a couple of cases where homes were 100 feet from the street, and they did not mesh with the neighborhood well. This would encourage revitalization because there would be more options. In those areas, smaller builders would have more flexibility and would maybe want to try some of the other housing types. Builders with small volumes build whatever people wanted, and they would build whatever the City told them to build.

Mr. Forschner said the Core Neighborhood 2 (CN-2) District was mostly existing complexes, currently zoned in the R-3 District, and this update would allow that to continue. This was very intentional in terms of the types of buildings the City wanted to see. Following the community input, instead of having a one-size-fits-all set of standards, regulating would be done by building

type. Right now, the apartment complexes in the City were varied, with Xenia Trails being the newest. There were some older 1970s complexes on Frederick Drive, for instance, where there were long, wide, block-long buildings. Here, the building width and depth would be limited so there was more sense of community. This was a little closer to a house scale – a little bigger than a house, but buildings that had up to 24 units each. Xenia would not be looking at high-rise apartment buildings and were limiting the scale. There could still be a lot of density, but it would be at more of a human scale. That included the vacant lots by the hospital, which were development opportunities, and there was also a vacant piece of land on South Columbus.



	Duplex	Cottage Court	Multiplex Small	Multiplex Large	Town house	Courtyard Building
Lot Size (sf)	2000/unit	8000	4000	8000	1500/unit	10000
Lot Width (ft)	20/unit	80	40	80	18/unit	80
Units	2	3-9	3-4	5-18	3-8	19-24
Front Setback (ft) (bldg/garage)	15/20					
Side Setback (ft)	5					
Rear Setback (ft)	30	30	10	30	30	30
Floor Area/Unit (sf)	750	750	500	500	750	500
Parking/Unit	1					



	Multiplex Small	Multiplex Large	Town house	Courtyard Building
Units	3-4	5-18	3-8	19-24
Front Setback (ft)	5 min | 10 max			
Side/Rear Setback (ft)	0			
Floor Area/Unit (sf)	500	500	750	500
Parking Spaces/Unit	1			

Mr. Forschner said with the Downtown (D) District, the City would start to allow residential-only buildings on streets other than Detroit Street and Main Street. Currently, the Downtown District allowed residential, but it only allowed it under four apartments. Staff wanted to reinforce a strong Business District on the main drags, Main Street and Detroit Street. A block off of those streets, it would be okay and it could be helpful to have some apartment buildings or town homes. For instance, the Market District, because Church Street and Market Street would have town homes with future apartments south of there. This also looked at areas like the Hub District, for example, on Hill Street and Washington Street, as a future opportunity for residential redevelopment or mixed use. It would allow these residential-only buildings, businesses, or mixed-use buildings on these side streets, and it would have the same built-to-the-sidewalk scale of downtown buildings. Currently, there were architectural standards, and staff was looking to update those.

Mr. Forschner noted following community input, the City would increase the amount of vinyl allowed on a front façade. In return, if the primary material used was vinyl, there would be additional standards to meet, including trim requirements, a water table to divert moisture, and a porch or stoop for a house and a duplex. Or, with bigger buildings, it could be a courtyard or terrace, which was a raised outdoor area. The idea was to connect those buildings to the street and create safer neighborhoods. When there were defined divisions between public and private spaces with homes engaging with the public space, which would create natural supervision where people watched over the space, making for safer neighborhoods. There would be a maximum building width and depth for some of the bigger multi-family buildings, as well as a maximum garage door width so there could be a three-car garage. The garage could be



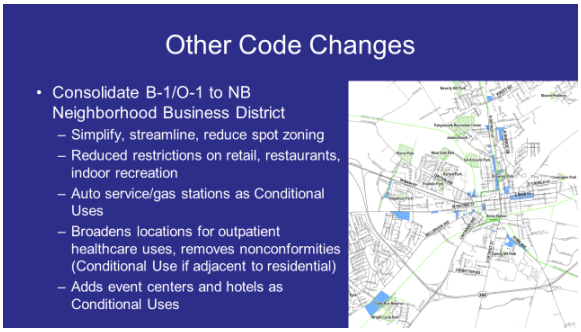
split into two doors, which was what most people did anyway. Street-facing garages would not be allowed in the Downtown District.

Mr. Forschner noted some additional provisions included accessory dwelling units, but there had not been a ton of that in Xenia yet. Currently, accessory dwelling units were allowed in the code. These units were when there was a house with a second unit on a property where extended family lived or was rented out as an apartment. Currently, Xenia allowed this if there was an unfinished area of a house like an attic, a basement, or a detached garage the owner wanted to convert, but it required a Conditional Use hearing. This update would make that easier because it would not require a hearing. Owners could build a new structure and it could be dedicated as an accessory dwelling unit in a rear yard, but it would be subject to similar size constraints that accessory garages were now. In addition to extended family, it could be a way for someone to supplement their income. If the buyer could not afford to purchase that particular house, but they could afford it if they had rent coming in from a second unit, that was something people had done in more expensive housing markets to make it more affordable.



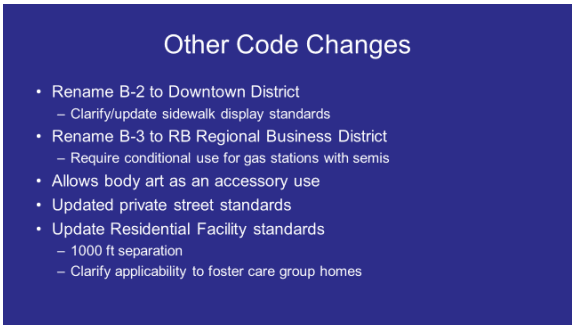
Mr. Forschner said in newer developments with smaller lots going next to a neighborhood that had larger lots, there would be measures in place to make sure there was buffering and easier transitions between those developments. Buying a 100-foot lot and dividing it into 40-foot lots would not be allowed, as a way to protect existing neighborhoods. Another change being made to reduce development costs and improve the character of neighborhoods, particularly with infill developments, would be reduced on-street parking requirements. In newly developed areas, the City would maintain the same two off-street spaces per single family home. But in the CN-1 and CN-2 neighborhoods, those would be reduced to only one space per unit, and adjacent on-street parking would be used as a way to meet that standard. If someone in the east end wanted to build a house, instead of devoting a lot of space and money to a driveway and a garage, they could build a house with a nice front porch, making use of their frontage. Instead of using their frontage as a driveway, that could be used as a parking space. Most people wanted to have their own garage, and people would probably build their own off-street spaces anyway. Staff wanted to leave it to the market to decide, which would allow for housing that fit in with the character of these old neighborhoods, if people chose to do so. He noted there was a lot of reorganization required with these updates. Regulation would be done by building type, and there would be one page of standards for each building type, which would make the code easier to use.

Mr. Forschner said with the B-1 and O-1 Districts, staff proposed those be merged into a Neighborhood Business (NB) District. B-1 and O-1 had become very similar over time based on changes made to Xenia's code, in terms of the uses permitted. They were also similar in location – on thoroughfares, adjacent to neighborhoods. The intent was to serve as a Neighborhood Business



District with smaller scale types of businesses and buildings that were within walking distance of residents. Gas stations and auto service centers would become a Conditional Use, which was a compromise between how they were regulated now and the B-1/O-1 districts. A lot of these properties were too small to make a gas station work. If there was one proposed, then there would be a Conditional Use process. Outpatient health care included everything from a dentist's office to a treatment center, and staff wanted to allow those. However, if it was being proposed adjacent to a zoning district that permitted single family homes, it would require a Conditional Use. That way if there were a more objectionable health care establishment, the City would have a way of addressing that. Finally, event centers and hotels would become a Conditional Use in this District.

Mr. Forschner noted other code changes, including clarifying downtown sidewalk displays to make sure they were not unkempt or infringing on safe walking areas. Also, since Xenia was getting a lot of interesting gas stations, including ones that accommodated semis, he suggested differentiating those and requiring a Conditional Use for any gas station that had semis. Mainly because semis had a different set of impacts on neighborhoods, including noise and traffic. He noted that permanent makeup and micro-blading were technically tattoos, but they were very superficial and not as deep or permanent as a regular tattoo. The Health Department regulated those the same way they regulated tattoo artists. This was an emerging trend in the beauty sector. He looked into how the City of Hamilton regulated these businesses, and they started allowing it as an accessory use. For this update, Xenia would allow an existing business like a beauty salon to have one or two body art practitioners, but they would be limited in space to a certain percentage of the business and of the earnings of that business. It would still be primarily a beauty salon, and not a tattoo shop. It would be a small part of their business, and this update would be a way of recognizing that trend, and accommodating those businesses.

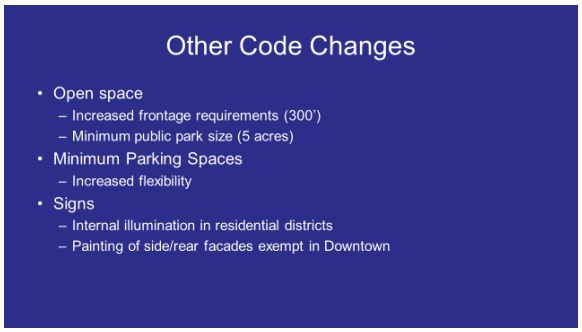


Mr. Forschner explained there was a big change in Xenia's code a few years ago where staff learned there were limits to what can be regulated when it came to group homes. Regarding homes for people with any kind of disability, including addiction, the City was not allowed to prevent those facilities because they were protected under the Americans with Disabilities Act. If they were a smaller group home with eight or fewer people, the City could not prevent them from locating in any neighborhood where single family homes were allowed. There was some room for limiting the clustering of them. Since passing Xenia's standards, Dayton had taken a turn toward being more restrictive, because they had recently been overwhelmed with these foster care group homes. Mr. Merriman emphasized that they were usually for-profit, and they were largely unregulated by the State. Mr. Forschner said the City of Dayton had made a number of presentations to the region about this because the west side of Dayton had become the largest concentration of these homes in the State. Obviously, kids coming from foster care needed help, but these group homes could be somewhat taxing on services because the kids ran away frequently.

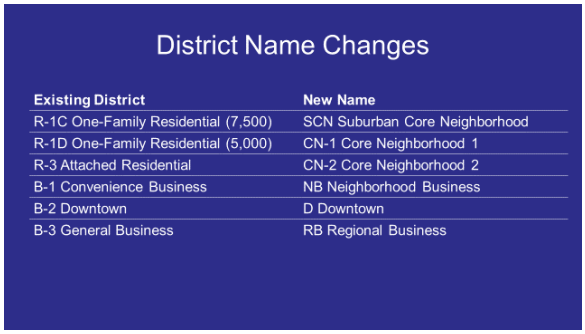
Councilwoman Sorice asked if these were truly foster homes or residential treatment centers. Mr. Merriman said neither, they were something in between. It was essentially a paid babysitting

service for kids no one else would take. Mr. Forschner said with this proposal, staff was trying to better define those residential facilities. A 1,000-foot separation would be established so there would not be multiple residential facilities on the same block or even in a two-block area. Some new infill homes were being built in the City on the east end as well as a few blocks from the City Administration Building, and some of those properties had been obtained as group homes because they were relatively affordable, and they were new. Xenia needed places for these people to seek treatment, but integration into the community was part of the goal of having these. Whether someone was recovering from addiction or they had cognitive or physical disabilities, it was a way for them to live in a residential setting as opposed to an institution. Most of them blended into the neighborhood, but where there was an over concentration of them, it could become taxing on emergency services, which was the reason the 1,000-foot separation was being proposed.

Mr. Forschner noted other code changes included increased frontage requirements for open space dedication, which were required of new subdivisions. If the City was going to accept a public park, he suggested they only accept land as a public park if it was of enough scale to be usable. Five acres was the recommended threshold, but there would be increased flexibility with off-street parking. Regarding signs, he proposed allowing internal illumination, including LED signs in residential districts. There were a number of churches located in residential districts as well as schools. They all wanted LED signs, and in the past, the property had to be rezoned to P-1 in order to do that. It would be easier and cause less harm if the City allowed them to have the LED signs. To deal with murals, since those were technically signs, he proposed exempting the painting Mr. Forschner was proposing exempting the painting of side/rear façades in the downtown area, because regulating based on content was not allowed. Vice President Crawford asked if staff wanted more murals, and Mr. Forschner said yes. Right now, if someone wanted one, they were limited to the same size limits as a wall sign, and usually, that was way too small. A mural typically covered an entire wall.



Mr. Forschner said in addition, the Neighborhood Business District would deal with a lot of spot zoning that had evolved over time where there was B-1, O-1, B-3, and B-2, so it would be unified under a more rational, defensible zoning scheme. In areas that used to be O-1, some restrictions would be reduced on retail restaurants and indoor recreation, which would allow for a small neighborhood cafe or small neighborhood restaurant. That was a good thing and could be helpful to some of the areas along N. Detroit Street, around the hospital, and on W. Second Street, and would allow for opportunities to encourage more neighborhood businesses. He reviewed the District Name Changes as listed on the adjoining slide.



Mr. Forschner presented the new zoning map as listed below. He stated the current schedule was to introduce the ordinance at the April 23rd Council meeting, and the public hearing and vote would occur on May 14th. If approved, these updates would go into effect on June 13th. He wanted to familiarize the Councilmembers with the changes and answer any questions because it was a big, complicated piece of legislation. Mr. Merriman acknowledged this was a lot to cover, but it was a really important policy consideration at a period where the City was seeing a lot of growth. Mr. Forschner stressed the intent was to try to move this forward because it had been promised for a while, and it was a lot of substantive changes. Councilmember Mackiewicz asked if the zoning plan was voted for unanimously by the Planning and Zoning Commission, and Mr. Forschner concurred. Mr. Merriman asked Vice President Crawford with his real estate background, if he felt like these things improved the marketability of properties in the community. Vice President Crawford said it definitely did. The idea of investment diversification was huge, and he thought this plan was brilliant. Mr. Merriman said they wanted to be transparent with Council so they were aware of the scope of changes. Vice President Crawford said this would bless Xenia with sustained growth and sustained development. Mr. Merriman said hopefully they could concentrate that growth in terms of infill redevelopment where Xenia had the infrastructure, where higher density was needed to promote projects like the Market District. This could help some of the neighborhoods where there was development, but it continued to lag behind because there were limits on what could be built, and it should open up additional opportunities. Mr. Forschner said at the Planning and Zoning meeting, there were some people who expressed their appreciation of this process, and there was some very constructive input. Councilman Mackiewicz complimented Mr. Forschner on an amazing job. He believed this would solve a lot of problems and would provide flexibility. Mr. Forschner said he had talked to builders and landlords who wanted to show up and support this.



GENERAL DISCUSSION: None

(5) ADJOURNMENT: Motion by Vice President Crawford, seconded by Mayor Reynolds, to adjourn the Special Meeting at 7:09 p.m. No discussion followed. The Roll on this was the following:

Ayes: Crawford, Sorice, Mackiewicz, Huffman, Rubio, Reynolds, Smith
Nays: None motion carried.

Nichole Haulman
Deputy City Clerk

Wesley E. Smith
President, Xenia City Council