

LEGISLATIVE #

100697D

MEMORANDUM

To: Russ Blackburn
From: Thomas Hawkins
Date: May 6, 2011
Subject: Street network and block standard in Ordinance 100697 to regulate the Urban Village

The City Commission approved Ordinance 100697 on May 5, 2011 to transmit to the Department of Community Affairs a proposed Comprehensive Plan amendment governing development within the Urban Village neighborhood of Gainesville. The proposed amendment is a new Policy 4.3.7 within the Future Land Use Element. Paragraph b.4. of the policy plans for a new street network in the neighborhood by regulating block size and by outlining standards to be included in future land development code amendments. The new standards would guide the City's approval or denial of new applications based on the applicant's provision of required streets.

I have two concerns with paragraph b.4. First, the paragraph states that the preferred block size is 2,000 feet in perimeter. My review of published best practices and of existing blocks in Gainesville shows that appropriate block size varies but is generally no larger than 1,600 feet in perimeter.

Second, the paragraph does not make clear that a principal purpose of regulating block size is achieving an appropriately scaled street network. The paragraph should mention this goal so that future applicants and reviewing boards know that regulating block size is a means to achieving a pedestrian scale street network, not just to having modest sized blocks for their own sake.

This is paragraph b.4. as the City Commission transmitted it to the Department of Community Affairs:

New development and redevelopment shall establish a maximum perimeter block size of 3,200 feet, with the preferred perimeter block size being 2,000 feet. Land development regulations shall specify further block size requirements. Where streets are not feasible to form the block perimeter, the City may allow sidewalk and bicycle connections or multi-use paths to form the block perimeter. Land development regulations shall specify exemptions from the maximum perimeter block size, which may include, but are not limited to, locations where: public stormwater or park facilities create impediments; there are regulated natural or archeological resources or regulated wetlands that would be negatively impacted; access management rules prohibit connections; utility constraints make the block size infeasible; there are contamination sites; and the proposed block is inconsistent with City plans for a future street network in the area.

This is paragraph b.4. with strikethrough/underline to show how I propose the City Commission revise it on final adoption:

New development and redevelopment shall include pedestrian scaled blocks that establish a pedestrian scaled street network throughout the Urban Village so that the transportation system in this neighborhood functions well for automobile drivers, transit riders, bicyclists and pedestrians. Pedestrian scale blocks vary in size but are generally no larger than 1,600 feet in perimeter. ~~maximum perimeter block size of 3,200 feet, with the preferred perimeter block size being 2,000 feet.~~ Land development regulations shall specify ~~further block size requirements.~~ Where ~~a pedestrian scaled street network is not feasible, streets are not feasible to form the block perimeter,~~ the City may allow block sizes up to 3,200 feet in perimeter and may allow sidewalk and bicycle connections or multi-use paths to form the block perimeter. Land development regulations shall specify circumstance in which these exemptions from the maximum perimeter block size are appropriate. These circumstances, ~~which may include,~~ but are not limited to, locations where: the size or shape of the planning parcel makes inclusion of some streets infeasible, public stormwater or park facilities create impediments; there are regulated natural or archeological resources or regulated wetlands that would be negatively impacted; access management rules prohibit connections; utility constraints make the block size infeasible; there are contamination sites; and the proposed block is inconsistent with City plans for a future street network in the area.

Please consider these revisions and provide any feedback you find appropriate.