



MEMORANDUM

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SENT VIA EMAIL

To: City of Wauwatosa, WI
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Plan Commission

From: Houseal Lavigne Associates
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**Re: Targeted Chapter Diagnostics and Preliminary
Recommendations Report**

This report evaluates the extent to which Wauwatosa's existing zoning code aligns with the Tosa Tomorrow 2045 Comprehensive Plan to support the City's long-term housing vision. The analysis includes two key sections:

1. **Future Land Use and Zoning Alignment** – This section compares the City's residential zoning districts with the future land use categories in the Comprehensive Plan. It highlights where zoning already supports the Plan's housing goals and where changes may be needed to improve consistency.
2. **Zoning Code Update Recommendations** – This section outlines how the Plan's housing-related recommendations can be implemented through zoning code updates. It identifies necessary changes to permitted uses and development standards to better align with the City's housing goals.

Together, these sections provide a foundation for zoning updates that will help ensure that zoning regulations effectively support the housing goals of the Comprehensive Plan.

Future Land Use and Zoning Alignment

To ensure that zoning regulations support the long-term vision for Wauwatosa’s housing development, it is essential to evaluate how well the City’s existing zoning districts align with the future land use categories established in the Tosa Tomorrow 2045 Comprehensive Plan. The table below compares these categories, identifying areas where zoning regulations effectively implement the plan (high alignment) and areas where modifications may be needed (medium or low alignment). Only the districts that allow residential uses are included in this comparison. Medium and low ratings indicate gaps between existing zoning districts and the Plan’s goals, where adjustments to permitted uses, densities, or development standards could improve consistency. The recommendations following this analysis provide strategies to refine zoning regulations to better align with Wauwatosa’s future land use goals.

Future Land Use Category	Corresponding District	Alignment Level
Neighborhood Residential	Single-Unit Residential Districts	Medium
Mixed Residential	Two-Unit Residential (R2)	Medium
Multi-Family	Multi-Unit Residential (R4)	High
	Multi-Unit Residential (R8)	High
Mixed-Use	Midtown Residential (MID-RES)	Low
	Midtown Transitional (MID-TRN)	Medium
	Midtown Mixed-Use (MID-MIX)	Medium
The Village	Neighborhood/Village Trade (C1)	High
Community Commercial	Neighborhood/Village Trade (C1)	Low
	General Commercial (C2)	Low
Regional and Corridor Commercial	General Commercial (C2)	Medium
Office and Medical	Office Commercial (CO)	Medium
	Medical Center (SP-MED)	Medium
	Institutions (SP-INS)	Medium
	Research Park (SP-RP)	Medium

Neighborhood Residential Land Use Category

Aligned Zoning Districts – Single-Unit Residential Districts

The City of Wauwatosa has three single-unit residential districts that allow detached houses, with lot sizes ranging from 6,000 to 15,000 square feet. In contrast, the Neighborhood Residential category supports not only single-family homes on individual lots but also attached units such as two- and three-unit dwellings, townhomes, and accessory dwelling units (ADUs).

Mixed Residential Land Use Category

Aligned Zoning District – Two-Unit Residential (R2)

The R2 district allows detached houses, semi-detached houses, and two-unit residential buildings, which provides some variety but remains lower in density compared to the Mixed Residential category. Mixed Residential generally encourages a broader range of housing types, often including small-scale multi-unit buildings that go beyond the scope of R2.

Multi-Family Land Use Category

Aligned Zoning District – Multi-Unit Residential (R4)

Both the R4 district and the Multi-Family land use category support a range of housing types including detached houses, semi-detached houses, two-unit dwellings, and small (maximum 4-unit) multi-unit residential buildings.

Aligned Zoning District – Multi-Unit Residential (R-8)

The R8 district is highly aligned with the Multi-Family land use category as it allows for a range of residential building types, including detached houses, semi-detached houses, two-unit dwellings, and multi-unit structures.

Mixed-Use Land Use Category

Aligned Zoning District – Midtown Residential (MID-RES)

While the MID-RES district allows multi-family housing, it is primarily focused on residential development rather than integrating commercial or mixed uses. The primary objective of the Mixed-Use category is to provide an appropriate mix of uses by prioritizing residential above ground-floor retail and restaurant uses to create a more engaging pedestrian experience.

Aligned Zoning District – Midtown Transitional (MID-TRN)

The MID-TRN district serves as a buffer between more intense mixed-use areas and lower-density residential neighborhoods. While vertical mixed-use is permitted, the district is primarily focused on managing the transition between different land use intensities. The Mixed-Use category prioritizes the inclusion of residential uses, supporting a mix of commercial and residential developments, including horizontal mixed-use, with active ground-floor uses and pedestrian-friendly streetscapes.

Aligned Zoning District – Midtown Mixed-Use (MID-MIX)

The MID-MIX district and the Mixed-Use land use category both support mixed-use development. However, the MID-MIX district is limited to vertical mixed-use, while the Mixed-Use land use category also accommodates horizontal mixed-use.

The Village Land Use Category

Aligned Zoning District – Neighborhood/Village Trade (C1)

The C1 district is highly aligned with The Village land use category as both aim to foster a vibrant, mixed-use area that supports pedestrian-friendly development. Both encourage a blend of commercial and residential uses, with a focus on small-scale commercial and service uses.

Community Commercial Land Use Category

Aligned Zoning District – Neighborhood/Village Trade (C1)

The C1 district aligns with the Community Commercial land use category in areas outside of the designated Village by supporting small-scale, neighborhood-serving retail and service uses that provide daily goods and services to surrounding residents. However, Community Commercial also allows for a broader range of uses, including larger-scale commercial development and more flexibility for mixed-use and multifamily housing, which may not always align with the smaller-scale, pedestrian-oriented focus of C1.

Aligned Zoning District – General Commercial (C2)

Certain areas of the C2 district align with the Community Commercial land use category by accommodating a broad range of retail and service uses that provide daily needs for residents. However, the C2 district's emphasis on shopping centers, large retail, and auto-oriented development conflicts with the Community Commercial focus on neighborhood integration, appropriate scale, and mixed-use flexibility.

Regional and Corridor Commercial Land Use Category

Aligned Zoning District – General Commercial (C2)

Both the C2 district and the Regional and Corridor Commercial category aim to accommodate a variety of commercial uses. However, the C2 district is more oriented towards automobile-dependent developments, while the Regional and Corridor Commercial land use category emphasizes large-scale retail and service establishments that complement the needs of residents and establish a vibrant and attractive destination.

The Regional and Corridor Commercial category also supports multi-family and mixed-use developments along Mayfair Road and Burleigh Street.

Office and Medical Land Use Category

Aligned Zoning District – Office Commercial (CO)

The CO district aligns with the intent of the Office and Medical land use category by allowing for office-related uses. However, it does not allow residential development. While this district supports employment and healthcare-related facilities, it lacks housing options such as workforce housing and live-work units. Expanding the districts permitted uses to include multi-family housing could better align with the land use category.

Aligned Zoning District – Medical Center (SP-MED)

The SP-MED district aligns with the medical focus of the Office and Medical land use category by accommodating healthcare-related facilities and institutional uses. However, it does not allow traditional housing, limiting its alignment with the land use category's emphasis on multi-family and live-work housing options. While group living, community arrangement living, and colleges are allowed, either conditionally or by right, it is unclear whether student housing is included. Clarifying or expanding the district's residential options, particularly for students and medical professionals, could strengthen its alignment with the land use category.

Aligned Zoning District – Institutions (SP-INS)

The SP-INS district shares similarities with the SP-MED district as a special purpose zoning classification, allowing for institutional and healthcare-related uses. While it supports the Office and Medical land use category's emphasis on employment, education, and healthcare facilities, it does not permit traditional housing. The allowance for group living, community arrangement living, and colleges suggests some residential flexibility, but expanding or clarifying residential options within this district could improve its alignment

Aligned Zoning District – Research Park (SP-RP)

The SP-RP district supports research and development, specialized manufacturing, and professional office uses. This aligns with the employment and innovation focus of the Office and Medical land use category. The district does allow multi-unit residential buildings conditionally, which partially aligns with the category's goal of integrating housing for students, medical professionals, and workers. Providing clearer guidance on where and how multi-unit housing can be incorporated would improve consistency with the land use category's vision.

Zoning Code Update Recommendations

For the Tosa Tomorrow 2045 Comprehensive Plan to be effectively implemented, the City of Wauwatosa’s zoning code must align with its recommendations.

The table below outlines how the housing-related recommendations from the Comprehensive Plan can be implemented through updates to the zoning code. The first column outlines the key housing recommendations, while the following columns highlight the relevant zoning code sections and the specific updates needed to align with the Comprehensive Plan. Some recommendations will require further policy direction from the Plan Commission and refinement throughout the code update process to determine appropriate development types and standards.

These recommendations do not encompass all the changes that will be made as part of the zoning code update. Additional updates, including minor cleanups, new definitions, and clarifications, will also be incorporated to ensure consistency and usability.

Comprehensive Plan Recommendation	Current Code Section	Recommended Zoning Code Change
Modernize Parking		
Reduce minimum parking requirements for new residential developments in mixed-use districts.	24.11.020 Minimum Parking Ratios	Separate the parking minimums for mixed-use residential from those of multi-unit buildings, and reduce the requirements for mixed-use residential in the C1, C2, MID-TRN, CO, and MID-MIX districts.
	24.11.050 Shared Parking	
	24.11.060 Location of Off-Street Parking	
	24.11.080 Bicycle Parking	
		Eliminate parking requirements for properties within ½ or ¼ mile of a Connect BRT station in the /MAY Overlay, CO, C2, SP-MED, and SP-RP districts and consider reductions for other transit-accessible areas.
		Expand the applicability of shared parking to include mixed-use developments.

		<p>Reduce the minimum required spaces for short-term bicycle parking for multi-unit residential and multi-unit residential (elderly).</p> <p>Remove the one space minimum for multi-unit residential (elderly), where demand is likely to be low.</p> <p>Reduce dimensional standards for bicycle parking.</p>
Update the zoning code to require EV charging stations in new commercial and multi-family developments.	24.10.040 Electrical Vehicle Charging Stations	Require a percentage of parking spaces in new multi-family developments to include EV charging infrastructure, with a specified minimum number of parking spaces. For each EV charging space provided, the corresponding reduction in the overall parking requirement will be allowed.
Encourage Mixed-Use and Multi-Family Development		
Encourage mixed-uses and transit-oriented development (Major Employment Areas).	24.06.07 SP-RP, Research Park District	Consider allowing mixed-use development in the /MAY Overlay and SP-RP districts.
Promote highly-accessible mixed-use districts and transit-oriented housing development along existing and future potential BRT routes.	24.05.020 /MAY, Mayfair Corridor Overlay	
	24.06.060 SP-MED, Medical Center District	Consider allowing multi-family in the /MAY Overlay, SP-RP, and SP-MED (additional policy direction needed on appropriate multi-family types).
	24.07 Allowed Uses	
Encourage housing, hotels, restaurants, entertainment venues, and other public amenities (Mayfair Area).	24.08 Use Classifications	Consider establishing student housing as a

		distinct use and allowing it in areas near the university. Allow horizontal mixed-use in the C2 district and multi-family development on Mayfair Road and Burleigh Street to align with the Regional and Corridor Commercial land use category (additional policy direction needed on appropriate multi-family types).
Implement Form-Based Regulations		
Implement form-based regulations and development guidelines to preserve neighborhood character.	<p>24.03 Commercial Districts</p> <p>24.06.060 SP-MED, Medical Center District</p> <p>24.09 Supplementary Use Regulations</p>	<p>Consider expanding supplemental use standards for residential uses to include objective design standards that address exterior building materials, glazing, building entryway design, façade design and articulation, and roof design.</p> <p>Consider implementing height transition requirements in the SP-MED to ensure compatibility with surrounding areas.</p> <p>Establish height transition standards such as step downs or step backs in height, increased setbacks, dormers and sloping roofs, or landscape buffers, when development is located next to residentially zoned property. These standards will align closely with those for the MID districts.</p>

		Consistent with Wisconsin Statute 62.23(7)(c), building and site design regulations should be designed to conserve the value of buildings and encourage the most appropriate use of land throughout the City, including their impact on neighboring districts, where appropriate.
Preserve Historic Character		
Consider updating residential zoning designations to allow for a greater variety of housing types while maintaining existing neighborhood character.	24.02 Residential Districts 24.07 Allowed Uses 24.05.050 /HIS, Historic Overlay	Allow the redevelopment of existing structures into two-unit and three-unit dwellings in the /HIS Overlay district. Allow historic buildings to be repurposed for mixed-use by allowing residential above the ground floor and live-work units in the /HIS Overlay district, if the base district allows for such uses. Remove Footnote 5 Section 24.02.030B., which establishes a square footage maximum for accessory buildings, while maintaining the maximum building coverage standards.
Encourage innovative future housing development and improvements within historically designated areas and sites.		
Encourage Missing Middle and Attainable Housing		
Encourage additional missing middle housing types to accommodate residents of all abilities and incomes.	24.02 Residential Districts 24.07 Allowed Uses 24.08 Use Classifications	Create distinct use categories for different types of multi-family housing instead of grouping them all under “Attached House.”

<p>Support attainable housing for middle and upper-middle income populations.</p>		<p>Delineate new missing middle housing types such as three-unit dwellings, four-unit dwellings, courtyard buildings, cottage courts, and townhomes, and include supplemental standards for each.</p> <p>Consider allowing attached housing such as two-unit houses, three-unit dwellings, and townhomes in the R-1 districts (additional policy direction needed on specific approval process).</p> <p>Consider allowing three-unit dwellings, townhomes, multi-unit buildings (4-6 units), and live-work units in the R2 district to align with the Mixed Residential land use category and the MID-TRN to align with the Mixed-Use category.</p> <p>Allow cottage courts and live-work units in the R4 district to align with the Multi-Family land use category.</p> <p>Remove minimum lot area requirements and increase maximum building coverage requirements for multi-unit buildings within the R4 and R8 districts.</p> <p>Modify lot dimensional standards for residential districts to create</p>
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		<p>opportunities for subdivision development.</p> <p>Revise the purposes of districts to align with the future land use categories.</p>
Continue to encourage the development of housing at all price ranges.	24.02 Residential Districts	Consider affordable housing incentives such as development bonuses, required parking reductions, expedited permitting, fee waivers, or relief from building standards and dimensional requirements.
Offer density bonuses, fee waivers, or other financial incentives for redevelopment projects that incorporate middle housing.	24.03 Commercial Districts	
	24.06. Special Purpose Districts	
Allow alternative small-scale housing options integrated into existing neighborhoods to support aging in place.	24.02 Residential Districts	<p>Consider incentivizing the inclusion of Universal Design features such as no-step entries, wide doorways and hallways, and ground-level bathrooms in new residential development through development bonuses or other incentives.</p> <p>Consider allowing cottage courts for smaller, more accessible homes in the R2 districts to align with the Mixed Residential Land Use category.</p> <p>Consider allowing multi-family housing in the CO, SP-RP, and SP-INS districts to align with the Office and Medical land use category, restricting them to specific locations identified within each district. This can include townhomes,</p>
Revise local codes to incorporate universal design elements in new residential construction.	24.03 Commercial Districts	
	24.06. Special Purpose Districts	
	24.07 Allowed Uses	
Allow additional mixed-use and/or residential uses (Traditional Urban Commercial Districts).		

		<p>duplexes, or small apartment buildings.</p> <p>Consider allowing administrative approval for small-scale multi-family, such as three- and four-unit buildings, provided they meet established design standards.</p> <p>Increase maximum lot coverage requirements in the SP-INS district.</p> <p>Reduce ADU requirements to encourage their development as detailed in the row below.</p>
Update ADU Regulations		
Reduce square footage restrictions and exterior design standards for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs).	24.10.075 Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)	<p>Increase the maximum square footage to 1,000 or 1,200 square feet and retain the requirement that the ADU cannot exceed the size of the principal dwelling unit.</p> <p>Consider allowing ADUs on lots occupied by two-unit houses.</p> <p>Allow ADU entrances to face the nearest side property line, provided they maintain a specified setback distance.</p> <p>Maintain the 12% maximum building coverage limit for garages, sheds, and other accessory structures but remove the limit for ADUs.</p>

		Revise design standards to reduce requirements for exterior finish, roof pitch, and trim while maintaining general compatibility language.
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