

MEMORANDUM

TO: Doug McLean, Director of Planning and Development

FROM: Weston & Sampson

DATE: August 24, 2026

SUBJECT: Zoning Provisions for Multifamily Housing

This memorandum provides background information on potential zoning code amendment related to Multi-Family and Two-Family housing. This summary is based on previous discussions between the Planning Commission and Town staff regarding broad concepts on the Town's desired approach to considering these two uses. The purpose of the August 26 discussion with the Planning Commission is to confirm general agreement with this desired approach, consider how it could apply within residential and commercial/industrial districts, and identify issues requiring additional analysis before detailed zoning recommendations are developed.

R-20 Residential District

For residential districts, the current direction is to begin by considering multifamily housing as an allowed use within the R-20 District, before considering whether similar provisions should be extended to lower-density residential districts.

A central concept under consideration is to allow greater flexibility in housing type without increasing the residential density otherwise permitted by the underlying R-20 zoning. This has been referred to informally as an "even-Steven" approach: a property owner could develop two-family or multifamily housing, but doing so would not create an entitlement to additional dwelling units beyond the density supported by the underlying zoning.

For example, where a property could accommodate six dwelling units under the applicable R-20 density standard, those units could potentially be developed as six single-family homes, three two-family buildings, one six-unit multifamily building, or another configuration consistent with applicable development standards. The housing type could change, but the underlying permitted density would not.

This approach could expand the range of housing types available in Coventry without increasing the underlying residential density. It would also place greater importance on development standards

addressing the form and potential impacts of multifamily development. Potential standards for further consideration include:

- Limiting the maximum number of dwelling units within an individual multifamily building to approximately six units per building, as currently identified as a starting point for discussion.
- Establishing minimum separation between multifamily buildings and abutting single-family homes.
- Considering whether separation requirements should vary based on the size of the multifamily building or development.
- Requiring landscaping or buffering where appropriate, particularly for larger multifamily developments or where multifamily development directly abuts existing single-family homes.
- Establishing other dimensional or performance standards needed to address building scale, parking, access, site design, and other predictable impacts.

The specific method for calculating the number of dwelling units supported by the underlying R-20 zoning would need to be developed as the regulatory approach is refined.

An overlay district remains a potential regulatory option but is currently a lower-priority approach. At this stage, the focus is on exploring standards that could apply within the R-20 District generally rather than creating a separately mapped multifamily overlay.

Commercial and Industrial Districts

The Town is also considering whether two-family and multifamily housing should be added as allowed uses within selected commercial and industrial districts. These districts may provide additional opportunities for housing in locations where development patterns and surrounding uses differ from established residential neighborhoods and may therefore warrant a different regulatory approach.

As an initial step, the Planning Commission is asked to consider adding multifamily housing opportunities within the:

- General Business District;
- Industrial 1 District; and
- Business Park District.

The regulatory framework within these districts does not necessarily need to mirror the approach used in R-20. Issues for Commission consideration include whether two-family and multifamily uses should be allowed by right, subject to objective development or performance standards, through case-by-case review, or through some combination of these approaches.

The Commission should also consider whether standalone residential development and mixed-use development should be treated differently within commercial and industrial districts.

August 26 Planning Commission Discussion

The August 26 meeting is intended as an initial discussion of this emerging framework rather than review of final zoning recommendations. Weston & Sampson is seeking Commission direction on several key questions:

- Does the Commission support allowing two-family and multifamily housing within the R-20 District as an initial step before considering other residential districts?
- Does the Commission support the informal “even-Steven” concept—a density-neutral approach under which two-family and multifamily housing could be developed without increasing the number of dwelling units otherwise supported by the underlying R-20 zoning?
- Is approximately six units per multifamily building an appropriate starting point for establishing a maximum on building scale?
- What separation, landscaping, buffering, or other neighborhood compatibility standards should be explored?
- Should two-family and multifamily housing be subject to the same regulatory approach or treated differently?
- Does the Commission support adding multifamily housing opportunities within the General Business, Industrial 1, and Business Park districts?
- Should standalone residential and/or mixed-use development be treated differently within these districts?
- What regulatory approach is appropriate within commercial and industrial districts—by right, performance standards, overlay zone, or some combination?

Following the August 26 discussion, Weston & Sampson will use the Commission's direction to refine the proposed regulatory framework, identify issues requiring additional analysis, and develop more detailed zoning recommendations. A subsequent buildout analysis can then evaluate the potential development implications of the emerging approach.

Several related issues are not addressed in this memorandum but will inform the final regulatory approach, including fair housing implications of separation, buffering, and unit-cap standards; the treatment of substandard and nonconforming lots under the density-neutral approach; potential takings considerations associated with dimensional and buffer standards; and the relationship between the emerging framework and the Town's obligations under the Low and Moderate Income Housing Act. Weston & Sampson anticipates addressing these items with the Commission as detailed zoning recommendations are developed.