

ZONING FROM A TO Z

Business and Commercial Districts (Chapter 17-3) – Part I

The new zoning code adopted in late 2004 continues the use of the letters “B” and “C” to generally designate business and commercial districts respectively. B and C districts accommodate retail, service, and commercial uses and ensure that business and commercial areas are compatible with the character of existing neighborhoods. In certain districts, residential dwelling units are allowed in addition to business and commercial uses, but usually above the ground floor.

The new code reduces the number of business districts from five to three. The three categories are as follows: B1 (Neighborhood Shopping District), B2 (Neighborhood Mixed-Use District), and B3 (Community Shopping District).

The B1 Neighborhood Shopping District accommodates small-scale retail and service uses, typically in compact nodes at the intersection of major streets or in a cohesive linear fashion along narrow streets with low traffic speeds and volumes. B1 districts permit dwelling units above the ground floor.

The purpose of the B2 Neighborhood Mixed-Use District is identical to that of the B1 district but allows a greater range of options for streets where market demand for retail and service uses is relatively low. Unlike B1 and B3 districts, B2 districts permit residential dwelling units on or above the ground floor. This is intended to help stimulate development along under-developed streets and is a new concept in business districts.

The B3 Community Shopping District accommodates a very broad range of retail and service uses, often in the form of shopping centers or larger buildings than found in the other districts and accommodating some uses not allowed in B1 or B2 districts. B3 development is expected to be destination-oriented, with a large percentage of customers arriving by automobile, thus generally resulting in more off-street parking. The B3 district typically should apply to large sites with primary access to major streets, or along other streets to accommodate use types not allowed in B1 or B2 districts. Like the B1 district, B3 districts permit dwelling units above the ground floor.

Most of the business districts in Sheffield are designated B3.

Within each of the three business categories, districts are further differentiated based upon bulk and density standards, that is, on the basis of floor area ratio standards and minimum lot area requirements, as in residential districts. Floor area ratio is the maximum square footage that can be built on a lot; minimum lot area is the minimum area required per dwelling unit on a lot. The bulk and density designation is indicated by a numeral following the dash in the district name, *e.g.*, B1-2.

Most of the business districts in Sheffield carry a bulk and density designation of “-2.” In a “-2” district, the maximum floor area ratio is 2.2 and the minimum lot area 1,000 per dwelling unit, 700 per efficiency unit, and 700 per SRO (single-room occupancy) unit.

Thus, on a standard lot measuring 25 x 125 feet, the maximum square footage allowed is 6,875 (25 x 125 x 2.2). The number of dwelling units depends upon the type of unit. Note that the floor area calculation includes below-grade areas only when more than one-half of the area is above grade level.

In comparison, the predominant residential designation in Sheffield, RT4, carries a maximum floor area ratio of 1.2, resulting in maximum square footage of 3,750 on a standard lot.

The new code likewise reduces the number of commercial districts from five to three. The three categories are as follows: C1 (Neighborhood Commercial District), C2 (Motor Vehicle-Related Commercial District), and C3 (Commercial, Manufacturing and Employment District).

The C1 Neighborhood Commercial District accommodates a broad range of small-scale, business, service, and commercial uses. C1 is intended to be applied in areas similar to B1 but permits more intensive, more auto-oriented use types; it also allows taverns and liquor stores by right. Like B1 districts, C1 districts permit dwelling units above the ground floor.

The C2 Motor Vehicle-Related Commercial District is the highest intensity business or commercial zoning district, allowing nearly any type of business, service, or commercial use including outdoor operations and storage. Development generally will be destination-oriented, with the majority of customers arriving by automobile. Again, dwelling units are permitted above the ground floor.

The C3 Commercial, Manufacturing and Employment District accommodates retail, service, commercial, and manufacturing uses and is intended to serve as a buffer between M (Manufacturing) districts and business, commercial, and residential areas. C3 districts are intended for large sites with primary access to major streets. C3 districts likely are found adjacent to M districts or Planned Manufacturing Districts to act as a buffer against incompatible residential use or high-traffic generating uses. Thus, as one might expect, unlike C1 and C2 districts, dwelling units are not permitted.

As with the business categories, districts are further differentiated based upon the bulk and density standards described above. Few C districts are found in Sheffield; these are C1-2, C1-3, and C2-2 districts.

This is the sixth in a series of articles designed to educate the community about the basics of the new zoning code adopted in late 2004. The first five installments focused on residential districts. If you would like to learn about a particular topic, contact the Association by calling 773-929-9255 or by sending an e-mail message to sheffieldneighborhoodassociation@hotmail.com; please be as specific as possible when describing your topic or question. Electronic copies of previous installments also are available by request via the SNA email address.