

ZONING FROM A TO Z

Residential districts – Part 1 (Chapter 17-2)

By Judith Lauth Casey

The new zoning code adopted a year ago continues the use of the letter “R” to generally designate residential districts. These districts are intended to promote a variety of housing opportunities for individual households and to maintain the desired physical character of the city’s existing neighborhoods. “R” districts also allow nonresidential uses that are compatible with residential neighborhoods.

In the new code, residential districts are divided into three categories: RS (Residential Single-Unit, Detached House), RT (Residential Two-Flat, Townhouse, and Multi-Unit), and RM (Residential Multi-Unit). Within each of the three categories are districts differentiated primarily on the basis of floor area ratio and minimum lot area requirements, identified by a number after the letters, e.g., RS1 or RM5. 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.

Most of the residential housing in Sheffield is designated RT4. RT districts accommodate a range of housing types, from detached houses to low-density multi-unit buildings, and are intended to be applied in areas characterized by a mix of housing types. Nevertheless, in Sheffield and in some other areas of Lincoln Park, much of the RT4 housing consists of single-family structures.

In an RT4 district, the maximum floor area ratio is 1.20 and the minimum lot area is 1,000 square feet. Thus, on a standard lot measuring 25 by 125 feet, the maximum square footage allowed is 3,750 (25 x 125 x 1.20), and the maximum number of dwelling units is three; other factors, such as parking requirements and lot configuration could limit density further. Note that the floor area calculation includes below-grade areas only when more than one-half of the area is above grade level.

In the western portion of Sheffield are a few pockets of RS3-zoned lots. RS districts accommodate detached houses on individual lots. RS3 districts are the densest of three RS districts, with a maximum floor area ratio of 0.90 and a minimum lot area of 2,500 square feet. Thus, on a standard lot, the maximum square footage allowed is 2,812.5, and the maximum number of dwelling units is one.

This is the first in a series of articles designed to educate the community about the basics of the new zoning code. 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 specific when describing your topic or question. **Judith Lauth Casey** is SNA First Vice President and Planning Chair.