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Altoona City Council,

We appreciated the extra time given before you considered action on the proposed Altoona Zoning Code for a chance to review the code and provide our insight and perspective. There are a lot of great things in the new code, and we know there are builders who want to be able to use the smaller lot sizes that will be allowed. However, there are still some areas that we have concerns about and would like to request edits before approval and implementation of the new Zoning Code.

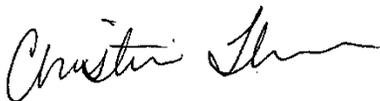
- 19.03 – Town Home & Two-Family Garage Standards (pdf page 29)
 - The proposed code includes a new garage standard for town home and two-family homes that would limit the garage to not exceed 45% of the façade's total width.
 - *We are concerned about the implication on design standards, the ability to build more affordable homes with garages, and make these properties work on smaller lots.*
 - This standard doesn't apply to twin homes, however many of the town home or two-family homes are built with the garages underneath and in front of the living space in order to be able to build upwards or behind on smaller lots. This would limit the flexibility in building design for the smaller lots and would increase costs. Example: there are new duplexes built on Harriet Street that have a 50' wide lot, the building is 40' wide and the garage is 32' wide. These nice-looking homes would not be able to built in this new code.
 - ***The Plan Commission asked to have the code revised to allow for a multi-story two-family or town home with the garage on the bottom. We have not seen the revised code wording but support the idea of this change to allow more flexibility for this type of housing.***

- 19.08.06 & 19.08.07 – Residential Park Space and Public Gathering Space (pdf pages 272-276)
 - We know that Altoona is trying to balance the need for public spaces and parks with managing the capacity of the Park system. However, we are concerned about the requirement of a Homeowner's Association to manage the facilities of a public gathering space.
 - Requiring public gathering space, while it adds cost, is more feasible in a multi-family development that has one company that is responsible for maintaining and managing the space.
 - *We have major concerns about this requirement and the impact on future development and housing affordability.* HOA's can be a deterrent when trying to sell a home and relying on an HOA to maintain public space may not have the intended impact, the homeowners may not want to spend the funds needed to maintain the area or may disagree on what that maintenance should be.
 - We know that Homeowners Associations can impact the affordability of a home because of the added costs. The HOA fees affect the debt to income ratio for lenders and can price families out of being able to afford a home.
 - According to the National Association of Home Builders' Priced Out Estimate for 2025, in the Eau Claire region every \$1,000 increase in housing costs prices 31 people out of home ownership.
 - ***We are requesting that the requirement of public gathering space and a Homeowner's Association to manage that space not be required for single family and two-family/twin homes.***

- 19.05 – Exterior Building Cladding Materials Percentages (pdf page 197)
 - We appreciate the changes in the building cladding materials that were made based on the ZPAC recommendations. After reviewing this with our builders, they had some concerns about the percentages outlined in the table on page 195. They agree that it makes sense to require a variety of materials on the buildings but setting a certain percentage of the ‘primary’ material to 60 or 70% limits design standards.
 - ***We are requesting that percentages for the primary building cladding materials be expanded to 50 – 75% to allow for more flexibility in building design.***
 - If a nicely designed building only has the primary building materials at 55% of the total because they have more windows or are using other materials, would that be denied because it doesn’t meet the percentage threshold?
 - We support requiring multiple materials, but setting a small 10 percent range on the materials, limits building design opportunities.

- 19.04 – Parking Lot and Landscaping Requirements (pdf page 85 – 92)
 - In the ZPAC meeting on this section multiple people had brought up a lot of concerns about the structure of the parking lots required and the impact on costs. The proposed code would require a lot more medians, islands and endcaps in parking lots which add a lot of extra cost to construct, to plant landscaping material, and the ongoing maintenance cost is higher because of added costs for snow plowing around these items, maintaining broken concrete from plows, and maintaining the required vegetation.
 - *We are concerned about the added cost for multi-family buildings for these added requirements. We know based on our research that adding \$50,000 in costs on a 30-unit building could result in an average of \$10-20 per month increase in rent.*
 - Realistically, the harsh winters, salt and sand needed in parking lots, and the lack of soil around them make maintaining vegetation in these areas more challenging and more costly. Vegetation in parking lots suffer chronic stress, reduced growth and premature death. This makes maintaining them much more expensive. We appreciate wanting to add greenery where we can but think the level of what’s required in the code will add on too much cost and maintenance challenges.
 - ***We recommend revising the parking lot requirements to reduce the amount of concrete islands, medians, endcaps and plantings required.***

We will also be in attendance at the meeting on February 26 to speak in more detail on these items but wanted you to have our perspective in advance so you had an opportunity to review the code. Thanks for your consideration.



Christina Thrun
Executive Officer



Pat Smith
Government Affairs Chair