

<https://thefnp.com/tncms/asset/editorial/f7dfd97f-7c53-4b05-b122-39738871f689/>

HOT

4th Neighborhood Design District gets nod

By BRIAN BREHM The Winchester Star
Jun 17, 2026

The approval process for Winchester's fourth, and possibly final, Neighborhood Design District (NDD) is underway.

The city's Planning Commission on Tuesday heard details about the proposed Old Town NDD from Winchester Community Development Director Mike Ruddy and city Planner Sean Benson.

"This district is very distinct and different from the other three in that it is not calling for a lot of major renovations of Old Town," Benson said, referring to the Cedar Valley, Cider Hill and Berryville Avenue NDDs. "The main point is to try to preserve the old Historic District and try to encourage growth, mainly in the infill of surface parking lots or underutilized or vacant properties, and to provide compatible growth in the Historic District.

"We also emphasize wider sidewalks for the pedestrians [and] more gateway features to kind of mirror what's on the Piccadilly Street [traffic] circle right now ... to help citizens recognize that they're entering downtown," Benson said.

As proposed, the Old Town NDD would be bounded by East Cork Street to the south, North Braddock Street to the west, Baker Street to the north and South East Lane to the east. It also includes extensions to the west along Boscawen and Amherst streets, to the south along Braddock Street and to the southeast along South East Lane.

During the process of formulating the proposed Old Town NDD, Ruddy said a variety of downtown stakeholders offered their input including Friends of Old Town, Shenandoah Valley Discovery Museum, Handley Library, Preservation of Historic Winchester, Winchester Public Schools, the Board of Architectural Review, the Museum of the Shenandoah Valley, Shenandoah University and Discover Winchester Virginia.

Based on that input, Ruddy said the Old Town NDD proposal was fine-tuned to create a better, more attractive and more navigable downtown that will provide "continued economic growth in Old Town through compatible infill development, revitalization of historic buildings ... recommendations for improved circulation systems within the Old Town area, recommendations for streetscape amenities, the creation of public spaces, and it emphasizes connectivity, pedestrian and bike safety, and the integration of new public spaces in the Old Town area."

NDDs are sections of the city where officials hope to focus future growth and development by proactively rezoning land parcels to create walkable communities and make it easier for developers to build housing, stores and offices. For example, Benson said the former Southern States property at 447 Amherst St., which has been vacant since February 2025 and was purchased last year for \$2.3 million by the nonprofit Winchester House II LLC as a possible location for a new apartment complex, would be zoned for a variety of purposes, including a mix of retail businesses and apartments "with a small park area in the rear."

To pay for infrastructure improvements needed to support the NDDs, the city has implemented a practice called Tax Increment Financing. Using the TIF strategy, Winchester puts up the money for infrastructure improvements but is reimbursed over a 20-year period. As residents and businesses move into an NDD, they pay the city's standard taxes on real estate, personal property and so on. As more development occurs within a district, property

values increase and, correspondingly, so does the amount of taxes paid by district occupants. The extra tax revenues collected by the city are used exclusively to create and support the infrastructure and public services within the districts.

Tuesday afternoon's Planning Commission discussion also included a public hearing on the Old Town NDD. Joel Richardson, executive director of Friends of Old Town, and City Council member Chip Newcome both spoke in favor of the Old Town NDD's implementation. Newcome called the proposal "something that all of Winchester can be proud of."

"No plan is perfect," Planning Commission member Mark Dyck said on Tuesday, "but I will move to approve the resolution as presented."

The panel voted unanimously to forward the Old Town NDD proposal to City Council with a recommendation of approval.

Council has already approved two of the four planned NDDs: the Cedar Valley NDD in Ward 4, which runs along Valley Avenue in southern Winchester and encompasses the site of the since-demolished Ward Plaza and surrounding properties, and the Cider Hill NDD in Ward 1, which includes industrial properties operated by National Fruit at 701 Fairmont Ave., Winchester Cold Storage at 605 N. Loudoun St. and Glaize Apples at 601 Pennsylvania Ave. Those industrial uses were grandfathered into the Cider Hill NDD and will remain in effect as long as the current owners continue their manufacturing operations.

Next week, City Council is expected to vote on whether to create the Berryville Avenue NDD, which would run along the Berryville Avenue corridor to Winchester's city limits to the north and east, Baker Lane to the west and existing residential neighborhoods to the south. Council is then expected to make a decision regarding the Berryville Avenue NDD, which is expected to occur sometime next month.

— Contact Brian Brehm at bbrehm@winchesterstar.com

Brian Brehm

Reporter

Do Not Sell or Share My Personal Information