

<https://thefnp.com/tncms/asset/editorial/ec1fe3d2-9000-4333-8097-3224a3533dd7/>

HOT

Approval process underway for 3rd Neighborhood Design District

By BRIAN BREHM The Winchester Star

Apr 23, 2026

Winchester's third Neighborhood Design District, this one along Berryville Avenue, moved one step closer to creation this week when the city's Planning Commission recommended that City Council add the district to its Comprehensive Plan.

Neighborhood Design Districts (NDDs) are designated areas of the city where the local government implements proactive rezonings to make the sites more attractive to commercial and residential developers, hopefully dissuading them from seeking special authorizations from council to build in less-conducive locations.

Winchester Planner Sean Benson said this week that NDDs are particularly useful in "select areas of the city that have aging commercial and industrial districts" that would be better utilized with mixed-use housing and retail development.

While NDDs allow by-right construction for most housing and business types except for factories and big-box department stores, some commercial, civic and nonprofit operations would still be required to obtain a conditional-use permit (CUP) from City Council before being allowed to build. Among them are halfway houses, bowling alleys, vehicle dealerships, nursing homes, service stations and private clubs.

Increased development in the NDDs creates a need for new roads, sidewalks, landscaping, utilities and public services within them. Rather than taxing all city residents and businesses to collect revenues for the improvements, the districts utilize a practice called Tax Increment Financing that makes it so residents of the NDDs will pay for the updated infrastructure themselves.

Using Tax Increment Financing, the city of 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.

Last year, City Council approved two of four planned NDDs. The first to get the green light was 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. The second was the Cider Hill NDD in Ward 1, which is in the city's North End and 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.

Still to be considered are NDDs that would be located along Berryville Avenue in Ward 2 and near Old Town Winchester in Ward 3. The Berryville Avenue NDD was presented to the Planning Commission for its consideration on Tuesday, and the Old Town NDD is expected to be finalized once the Berryville Avenue NDD approval process ends.

The first step in that process is amending the city's Comprehensive Plan to include the Berryville Avenue NDD and its proposed property uses. Benson said that must be done before any sites within them are rezoned.

Benson said people along the Berryville Avenue corridor shouldn't fear "a wholesale demolition and rebuild. This is a phased-over-time development."

As proposed, the Berryville Avenue NDD 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.

The Planning Commission voted 5-2 to recommend that the Berryville Avenue NDD be added to Winchester's Comprehensive Plan. Commissioners Leesa Mayfield and Brandon Pifer opposed the proposal due to lingering concerns regarding the district's future development.

If City Council adds the Berryville Avenue NDD to the Comprehensive Plan, designs for the district will be updated and refined before it is submitted for council's final approval.

For further information about NDDs and to see maps showing their exact locations and boundaries, visit <https://bit.ly/4d21Gon>.

— Contact Brian Brehm at bbrehm@winchesterstar.com

Brian Brehm
Reporter