

New Standards Streamline Downtown Clearwater Development Process

The city of Clearwater has established new Downtown District and Development Standards designed to streamline the approval process for residential and commercial development in Downtown Clearwater.

Under the new standards, most commercial and residential development in Downtown Clearwater can be approved at the staff level, instead of requiring a public hearing.

The city's Planning and Development Department has created standards to complement the different neighborhoods that make up Downtown Clearwater, and has developed a convenient guide to understanding permissible uses on each Downtown Clearwater property.

The new standards also eliminate parking requirements, allowing businesses to determine the amount of parking they will provide. Townhomes and small apartments are now allowed in the residential neighborhoods in Downtown Clearwater, which will make it easier for incremental changes and infill development that is compatible with these downtown neighborhoods. The standards also recognize key downtown corners where active uses such as restaurants, brewpubs or retail are required.

"We are very excited to complete this update to the Community Development Code," said Michael Delk, the city's Planning and Development Department director. "We have provided for a predictable and expedited review process that should assist our business community in making changes necessary to accommodate a wide range of exciting business opportunities in Downtown Clearwater."

The standards apply to Downtown Clearwater property located at Clearwater Harbor to the west, Highland Avenue to the east, Drew Street to the north and Court Street to the south. In some areas, Downtown Clearwater extends to Cedar Street to the north and Druid Road to the south.

The new standards apply to new properties or existing properties where substantial changes are being made.

"New zoning is key to unlocking the development potential of downtown," said Amanda Thompson, the city's Community Redevelopment Agency director. "With our new approach to parking and design standards, Clearwater is creating a business-friendly environment."

"The city worked hard to create a code that we hope will stimulate additional projects and quicken the approval process for those who want to invest in Downtown Clearwater - which will only strengthen the business climate in North Pinellas County," said Carol Hague, the Clearwater Regional Chamber of Commerce president and chief executive officer.

<http://myclearwater.com/downtownplanupdate>