

MEMO

TO: Northfield Township Planning Commission
FROM: Sally Hodges, AICP, Senior Vice President
SUBJECT: Proposed Zoning Ordinance Amendments re. Lake Overlay District
DATE: April 13, 2016

At the February 17th Planning Commission meeting, we discussed the characteristics of two potential lake overlay districts that would cover those parcels zoned SR1 and SR2 that abut the Township's three developed lakes. The purpose of the overlay districts is to better reflect existing lot sizes and conditions typical of these lots around the lakes. In the course of the February discussion, you asked us to:

1. Provide additional information regarding setback regulations and potential requirements for decks and docks, and
2. Review the impact that reducing the front yard setbacks would have on the existing conditions around the lakes, particularly with regard to availability and the location of residential parking.

COMMENTS

1. Decks and Docks

There are generally two types of deck locations: decks that are attached to the principal structure, such as a house, and freestanding decks. The zoning ordinance requires attached decks to meet the same setback standards as the principal structure. Article IV. Schedule of District Regulations, (g) exempts freestanding decks from the setback regulations and allows them to be located anywhere on a lot.

Permanent docks require approval from Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ). Seasonal docks for non-commercial use do not typically require a permit from the MDEQ. The proposed lake overlay district zoning amendments would not affect the location of freestanding decks or docks, nor do we propose any changes to these regulations.

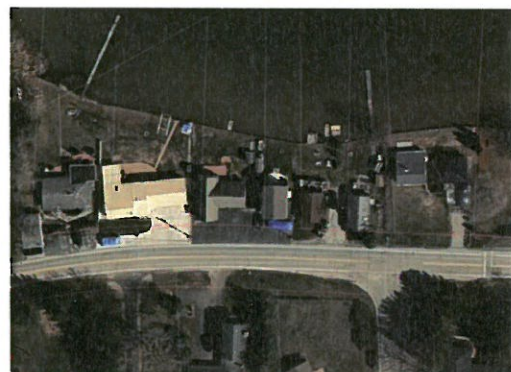
2. Street Front Yard Setbacks

The conditions at each of the three lakes relative to the street front yard setbacks and parking are described below:

a. Whitmore Lake

The homes along Whitmore Lake do not have a consistent street front setback. In general, Beckett & Raeder found that the homes are located closer than 30 feet from the

road right-of-way. Reducing the setback to 10 feet would reduce the number of nonconforming lots. The concern that we discussed with the Commission has to do with safety and visibility for vehicles pulling in and out of the residential lots. In some shallow front setback situations, the owner has designed a parking pad for parking parallel the roadway rather than a 90-degree pull-in/pull-out. Such a parking design can minimally fit in a 10 foot setback. After review, we continue to support the 10 foot street front yard setback recommendation around Whitmore Lake. Some typical conditions can be seen on the aerial photos below.



b. Wildwood Lake Setbacks

According to Beckett & Raeder, the homes along Wildwood Lake meet the street front yard setback requirement of the zoning district. We believe the reduction to a 10 foot street front setback is not necessary and could create a lack of consistency and unintended problems between neighbors. The homes also have driveways that accommodate cars.

In addition, the inventory conducted by Beckett & Raeder found that 11 lots have nonconforming side yard setbacks. Applying the proposed reduced side yard setback requirements would only reduce the number of nonconforming lots by 2, to 9. Unlike the older residential developments along the other lakes, Wildwood has been developed to meet the zoning ordinance. Changing the side yard setbacks could upset the development patterns of the neighborhood and cause conflicts with neighbors. Therefore, it appears that there is little need for a lake overlay district on Wildwood Lake.



c. Horseshoe Lake Setbacks

Lake Shore Drive provides access to the majority of lakefront lots on Horseshoe Lake. Lake Shore Drive is unpaved and has a 50 foot right-of-way. A large percentage of the lots along Horseshoe Lake do not meet even the minimal 10 foot street front setback proposed for the Whitmore Lake Overlay district. As a result, a 0 foot street front setback is proposed for the Horseshoe Lake Overlay district. Some of the homes with a nonconforming front yard setback have recessed garages that allow parking next to the house. Other nonconforming lots have a driveway along the side of the house that allows parking in the side yard or a parking pad for parking parallel to the street. A 0 foot street front setback would be consistent with the development pattern and there would be limited traffic conflicts due to the lower speed and lower volume nature of the streets surrounding Horseshoe Lake.

Adopting the proposed side yard setback requirements will reduce the number of nonconforming lots around Horseshoe Lake. See photos below.



3. Lakefront Rear Yard Setbacks

Currently the SR1 and SR2 districts require a 20 foot setback for buildings from the lake and almost all lots were reported in the prior report as conforming to that standard. Because the primary purpose of these new overlay districts is to better accommodate the developed lakefront lots, many of which were platted and development patterns established many years ago, we believe there would be very limited value in increasing the lakefront setback to 25 feet as was recommended in the Beckett and Raeder report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Previously, the proposed Whitmore Lake Overlay District included Wildwood Lake. Our analysis of the existing conditions and development pattern at Wildwood Lake indicates that an overlay district would be of limited use based on the existing development, and could cause future conflicts. Our revised recommendations are summarized below.

Lake Overlay Districts

1. **Whitmore Lake Overlay District.** This overlay district would apply to all SR1 and SR2 parcels abutting Whitmore Lake (only the waterfront parcels, not those that have no water frontage). In this Overlay District, the yard and setback requirements of the underlying district shall be replaced with the following:
 - a. **Street Front Yard:** Not less than 10 feet.
 - b. **Side Yards:** Not less than 10 feet; except in the case where the lot does not meet the requirements for minimum lot width. In the case where the lot does not meet the requirements for minimum lot width, the narrowest side yard shall not be less than 5 feet or 15% of the lot width, whichever is greater, and the sum of the two side yards shall not be less than 30% of the lot width.
 - c. **Lakefront Rear Yard:** Not less than 20 feet, consistent with the Ordinance as currently applied.

2. **Horseshoe Lake Overlay District.** This overlay district would apply to all SR1 and SR2 parcels abutting Horseshoe Lake. In this Overlay District, the yard and setback requirements of the underlying district shall be replaced with the following:
 - a. **Street Front Yard:** No minimum setback.
 - b. **Side Yards:** Not less than 10 feet; except in the case where the lot does not meet the requirements for minimum lot width. In the case where the lot does not meet the requirements for minimum lot width, the narrowest side yard shall not be less than 5 feet or 15% of the lot width, whichever is greater, and the sum of the two side yards shall not be less than 30% of the lot width.
 - c. **Lakefront Rear Yard:** Not less than 20 feet, consistent with the Ordinance as currently applied.

If the Commission agrees with the above recommendations, the appropriate action would be to direct us to put the standards into draft zoning ordinance text for your further consideration. We look forward to discussing this topic with you at your April 20, 2016 meeting.