

**MINUTES
WORKSHOP
DESTIN CITY COUNCIL
AUGUST 26, 2024
ANNEX COUNCIL CHAMBERS
5:30 PM**

The Council of the City of Destin met in special session with the following members and staff present:

Destin City Council

Mayor Bobby Wagner
Councilmember Jim Bagby
Councilmember Kevin Schmidt
Councilmember Johnny King

Councilmember Dewey Destin
Councilmember John Stephens
Councilmember Terésa Hebert

City of Destin Staff

Interim City Manager Larry Jones
Community Development Director Tina Deater
Public Information Director Tamara Young
Projects/Grants/Contract Manager Jeffrey Cozadd
Planner Ashley Dominguez
City Attorney Kimberly Romano Kopp

City Clerk Rey Bailey
Finance Director Krystal Strickland
Principal Planner Steve O'Connor
Principal Planner Daniel Butler
Planner Sheri Burney
City Engineer Ryan Scott

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Mr. Jim Wood, Chairman of the Local Planning Agency, expressed his support for the Land Development Code (LDC) moving closer to adoption. He emphasized the importance of finalizing the LDC, which, along with the comprehensive plan, zoning map, Future Land Use Map (FLUM), and design manual, will provide a comprehensive framework for the community. He highlighted the main goals of the LDC revision, which include clearer language, improved organization and format for ease of use, and consolidation of subjects where possible, such as eliminating redundant zoning areas.

Mr. Wood acknowledged that no plan is perfect and unforeseen issues may arise after adoption, as the LDC is a "living, breathing document" subject to updates. He urged the council to continue progressing with the adoption process, stating that a good plan now is preferable to waiting for a perfect one. Wood also reminded the council that significant efforts had already been made in previous years, such as eliminating the tier system and lowering building heights, some of which were incorporated into the city charter. He concluded by encouraging the council to listen carefully to the staff's update on Article 6 and the design manual.

WORKSHOP

A. Article 6 – General Development Standards & The Destin Design Manual

The city's Principal Planner Steve O'Connor gave the following presentation:

Topics of Discussion:

- What is in Article 6:
- Major Changes
 - ❖ Language
 - ❖ Format
 - ❖ Organization & Consolidation
- Public Workshops and LPA Meetings
- What is the Destin Design Manual (DDM)?

What is in Article 6?

- A majority of current:
 - ❖ Article 8 – Transportation
 - ❖ Article 10 – Infrastructure
 - ❖ Article 15 – Levels of Service
- Elements of current:
 - ❖ Article 12 – Recreation and Landscape Development
 - 12.04.00 – Landscape Development
- Parking Agreements and Shared Parking Requirements
- All site development requirements (what must be done)

The Principal Planner discussed changes to Article 6, which now includes components from multiple other articles of the Land Development Code (LDC). Specifically, Article 6 incorporates content from Article 8 (Transportation), Article 10 (Infrastructure), and Article 15 (Levels of Service), along with elements from the landscape regulations, buffer regulations, and parking regulations originally found in Article 8. All these regulations have been consolidated into a single site design article. He also mentioned that they will explain how the design manual will complement this article by clarifying both the "what" and the "how" of the regulations.

Major Changes

- Language

The Principal Planner addressed the challenges with the current LDC highlighting that it is difficult to read and poorly organized. This disorganization makes it challenging for staff to enforce the regulations because relevant rules are scattered and hard to locate, leading to potential oversight. He emphasized that reorganizing and rewriting the LDC would facilitate consistent interpretation, making it easier not only for staff but also for residents and developers to understand and apply the regulations.

➤ Format

There is a significant deviation in the format of the current LDC. The existing LDC contains large paragraphs that lack specific section references, making it difficult to pinpoint particular regulations. The absence of numbered paragraphs adds to this challenge. The new approach aims to address these issues by incorporating more charts and graphics, particularly in the design manual, to improve clarity and usability.

➤ Organizational & Consolidation

- Section 6.02
 - Includes Access Management - **8.00.00 - 8.10.00**
 - Updates many regulations that are currently not in compliance with FDOT, NFPA or general engineering standards
 - Clear Zones and Sight Triangles - **8.03.00 & 8.07.00**
 - Access (Ingress/Egress) Section - **8.04.00**
- Section 6.03
 - Reorganized and formatted Parking regulations for agreements, shared and off-site parking requirements - **8.06.00**
- Section 6.04
 - Utility infrastructure (Sewer, Water) - **Article 10**
- Section 6.05
 - Lighting Regulations - **7.17.00, 8.09.00, 12.02.00**
- Section 6.06
 - Reorganizes all Landscaping requirements from current **Article 12**
- Section 6.07
 - Consolidates all fences and gates from various sections throughout the current LDC
- Section 6.08
 - Reorganizes, reformats, consolidates and deconflicts all current buffer regulations
- Section 6.09
 - Consolidates the environmental control plans such as erosion, vibration, and dust control.
- Section 6.10
 - Adds regulations that clarify standards for easements
- Section 6.11
 - Provides clarity on the Harbor Boardwalk development requirements that are currently not properly placed or readily known - **8.09.00**
- Section 6.12
 - Clarifies construction activity requirements
- Section 6.13
 - Reorganizes the Concurrency Management System regulations - **15.03.00**
- Section 6.14
 - Reorganizes the adopted LOS - **15.02.00**

The Principal Planner discussed the issue of disorganization in site development requirements, where information is scattered across various sources. He highlighted that the current situation is confusing, with requirements for different aspects like sewer, water, property access, mechanical equipment screening, and landscaping elements being spread out. He introduces a new article that consolidates all these requirements into one document, making it easier for developers to find and understand what is needed for their projects in one place.

Public Workshops and LPA Meetings

Staff conducted multiple workshops and public meetings discussing Article 6 and specific topics pertaining to article 6:

- February 13, 2024 – Public Works/Public Safety meeting (Street Trees)
- February 27, 2024 – Parks & Recreation meeting (Park Trees)
- March 21, 2024 – LPA meeting
- April 11, 2024 – LPA meeting
- May 2, 2024 – LPA meeting

- May 16, 2024 – LPA meeting (No substantive discussion, just an update on what had been added or changed)
- June 11, 2024 (Destin Design Manual only) – Public Works/Public Safety meeting
- August 8, 2024 – LPA meeting

Tandem Parking: Section 6.03.02:

The current regulations allow tandem parking for both residential and non-residential uses, with specific restrictions. For residential properties, tandem parking is limited to two vehicles in a line, meaning that if a car is parked in front, only one car can be parked behind it. This prevents a situation where two cars need to be moved to access the front vehicle. This rule generally applies to typical household parking arrangements.

For non-residential uses, tandem parking of up to three vehicles is permitted, but only if managed by a valet service, not for general use.

The LPA has recommended changes to these regulations, particularly for residential areas. They propose removing the tandem parking restriction from all residential districts. This recommendation reflects a desire to return to more traditional neighborhood designs, where tandem parking was more common and organic before the prevalence of cars. The Principal Planner references historic neighborhoods in cities like Denver, where houses often had small driveways running alongside the home, allowing for more flexible parking arrangements without impacting the street view.

DISCUSSION:

The council discussed issues related to tandem parking and residential district regulations. Councilmember Bagby expressed concern about accessory structures like garages causing water drainage onto neighboring properties. He suggested adding language to the regulations to require driveways to be sloped to retain water on the owner's property, which was agreed upon.

There was also a discussion on limiting tandem parking to one side of the house, as there are restrictions on having more than one access point for a residence unless justified by a traffic study. Councilmember Destin highlighted the impact of these regulations on short-term rentals (STRs), particularly how increased parking capacity could lead to more STRs, which is not desired. He considered whether they could enforce the parking rules specifically for long-term residents and suggested potential measures like requiring valet services for STRs to better manage parking.

Overall, the council was cautious about expanding parking options that might inadvertently encourage more STRs and undermine current regulations meant to limit them. The discussion ended with agreement to refine the language and explore more ways to control parking and ensure compliance, particularly in relation to short-term rentals.

Shuttle Parking:

The conversation focused on the issue of parking requirements for businesses in the harbor area, specifically concerning the use of shuttle services as a means to reduce parking demand. The staff frequently receives inquiries from businesses interested in using shuttles to transport customers, thereby reducing the need for on-site parking.

- Shuttle Service Proposal:

Some businesses proposed using shuttle services to pick up customers from their homes, hotels, or rentals and bring them to their establishments. This would potentially reduce the need for on-site parking. The main challenge with allowing shuttle services to reduce parking demand is the risk associated with a business being sold. A new owner may not continue the shuttle service, leading to a parking deficit.

Staff could not find any existing regulations that adequately address this issue and prevent potential future parking shortages. After discussing the issue, the LPA recommended not allowing parking reductions based on shuttle services due to the potential future issues with parking deficits if ownership changes.

- Clarification of Current Regulations:

The city does not currently allow for reduced parking requirements in exchange for shuttle services. Businesses can still offer shuttle services, but they must meet the required on-site parking standards.

A suggestion was made to include language in business regulations that would make shuttle service requirements non-transferable upon the sale of the business. However, this was deemed impractical as it would still result in a parking deficit if a new owner did not continue the service.

The conversation referenced a similar issue with livery businesses, where all current operators meet their parking demands, but it remains a point of concern for future transfers.

An example was provided of existing businesses using shuttles voluntarily, such as the Destin Harbor Haulers, who partner with other businesses to provide customer transportation. This practice is allowed but does not qualify for parking reductions.

The staff and LPA concluded that while shuttle services are a beneficial option for businesses, they should not be used to justify reduced parking requirements due to the potential for creating future parking shortages if the service is discontinued by a subsequent owner. The City aims to protect the interests of current and future property owners by maintaining the standard parking requirements.

Sewer Connection Requirements: 6.04.02.D.2.

There was a discussion regarding the enforcement of sewer connection requirements for properties within a certain distance from existing sewer lines. According to both city regulations and state statutes, property owners must connect to the sewer system within a year if service is

available. However, this has not been actively enforced by the city, leaving several homes still unconnected.

The main issue discussed was whether to actively enforce these regulations or to align solely with state statutes and collaborate with Destin Water Users (DWU) for enforcement. The LPA recommended maintaining the current city regulations and beginning active enforcement.

A DWU representatives stated that there are currently 33 homes with access to sewer services that have not connected, and 96 homes that do not yet have access. Questions were raised about the specifics of enforcement and the number of affected homes. The LPA suggested developing a one-year plan to notify property owners and enforce the connection requirement, with the current tap fee being \$2,800.

Further discussions touched on which areas have access to sewer, including Vintage Circle and Crystal Beach, where previous projects extended sewer lines. However, some areas like Main Street do not have sewer available yet, but there are plans for future expansion.

Tree Removal: 6.06.05

The discussion centered around the removal of trees on residential properties, a recurring issue for city staff. The LPA recommended that residential properties, including duplexes and single-family homes, should not require a permit to remove trees, regardless of the tree's age or size. There are no replanting requirements, though maintaining landscaping is encouraged.

Several concerns were raised about the impact of unrestricted tree removal, especially regarding large, old, and heritage trees. There was debate over the need for some regulation to protect significant trees while balancing property owners' rights. Suggestions included focusing on the size of trees, like heritage oaks, as a threshold for protection, and possibly exempting smaller trees from strict regulations.

City staff highlighted previous failed attempts to regulate tree removal due to strong public opposition, with residents expressing frustration over perceived bureaucratic overreach, such as requiring a licensed arborist for tree removal. It was noted that while the desire to protect trees is strong, any new regulation would need to be carefully considered to avoid backlash and ensure community buy-in.

Insurance companies' concerns were also mentioned, as they sometimes require tree limbs to be cut back from houses, complicating the issue further. The discussion concluded with an acknowledgment of the complexity of the topic and the need for thoughtful consideration if any new policies are to be proposed.

Common Boundary Buffer: 6.08.02.F.

The discussion addresses the issue of common boundary buffers in residential areas, which are meant to create a space between more intense and less intense uses. Staff noted that the current regulations require a 5-foot buffer between similar residential properties, even though setbacks are already mandated and often exceed this buffer. Staff and the LPA discussed the limitations these buffers impose, particularly the inability to install hardscaping like driveways within them. To address this, they proposed redistributing the required buffer space to other areas

on the property, such as the front yard, which must then be permanently vegetated. Despite these adjustments, the consensus was that the common boundary buffer serves little purpose for residential-to-residential properties due to existing setback requirements. As a result, the LPA recommended removing the common boundary buffer requirement altogether in residential districts where it applies between residential properties.

Fences: 6.07

The discussion centers around the removal of the old Destin MMTD (Multimodal Transportation District) and its impact on fencing regulations. The old MMTD exempted properties from the common boundary buffer and allowed fences taller than the usual three feet on front property lines. With its removal, many existing fences would become non-conforming, limiting repairs to 25% at a time or requiring compliance with the three-foot height limit for complete replacements. This has raised concerns among residents, as stricter regulations could cause dissatisfaction, especially after events like hurricanes, where fences may need to be rebuilt.

Several solutions were proposed, including exemptions from the three-foot rule for residential properties in specific planning areas. The LPA directed staff to develop regulations accommodating these solutions, allowing for eight-foot fences in certain areas. The council discussed potential issues with non-compliance and the impact on properties, particularly corner lots where taller fences provide necessary privacy. There was general agreement to adopt the new regulations to avoid widespread discontent among residents.

View Corridors: Comp Plan Policy 7-1.2.5

Policy emphasizes maintaining vertical open spaces and preserving Waterfront views and vistas that are crucial for both Destin residents' quality of life and the tourism economy. The policy requires the LDC to establish standards by 2019 to regulate site development, building mass, height, and fencing to promote Waterfront views. However, it was noted that these standards have not been implemented.

Although the policy called for the establishment of view corridors and specific regulations, none have been developed. Current regulations, such as setbacks and the 3-foot fence requirement, do not address the preservation of views adequately. There were concerns that introducing new regulations now, such as a mandatory buffer for view corridors, might infringe on existing property rights, given the current setback requirements. The LPA advised not to pursue view corridor regulations until specific corridors are identified. If no identification occurs, the policy should be removed from the comprehensive plan, as it is not being implemented under the current LDC.

Some council members supported maintaining view corridors and continuing efforts to protect views, especially along the Destin Harbor and beaches, despite past challenges with developers circumventing the intent by planting vegetation that obstructed views. The idea of keeping the policy in the comprehensive plan was supported to ensure the city continues to work toward creating view corridors, even if progress has been slow.

Staff noted that to implement view corridor regulations, a study by a consultant or extensive public workshops would be needed, which is not feasible in the immediate future. An evaluation and appraisal report of the comprehensive plan is due soon, possibly next year, to

ensure all regulations align with the plan. Adjustments to the language regarding view corridors may be considered during this process.

The discussion concluded with acknowledgment that while progress has been made on view corridors in certain areas, a more comprehensive city-wide approach is needed, and any future steps will require careful planning and community involvement.

What is the Destin Design Manual (DDM)?

- A supplemental document to the LDC
- Houses the design or development specifications for site design and elements
- The LDC is “*What*” you must do, the DDM is “*How*” you do it.
- Purpose and Intent
 - Implement city’s policies regarding:
 - Aesthetic
 - Infrastructure
 - Minimum design standards (Engineering Specifications & Drawings)
 - Easier to enforce
- Engineered Drawings
 - The design drawings are meant for design professionals to copy these specs into their plans.

The discussion is about the introduction of the proposed Destin Design Manual (DDM) as part of a broader effort to streamline planning and engineering processes. The DDM will contain detailed design standards and specifications, which were traditionally included within the regulations, but are now being separated into a manual that is adopted through the regulations. This approach is part of a trend in the planning and engineering community to simplify and clarify regulatory processes.

The manual will include design drawings for various requirements, such as access radii in residential districts, enabling developers to easily copy these standards into their plans. This reduces back-and-forth communication and ensures compliance with city codes. In addition to design specifications, the manual will cover procedural elements like numbering, house addressing, and street naming conventions, which are not directly related to site or land development but are necessary for city operations.

The relationship between the LDC and the DDM is that the LDC specifies what must be done, while the DDM outlines how to do it. The manual is designed to reflect current standards and industry trends, including safety and fire codes, and consists of 52 to 53 drawings covering a wide range of elements from city signage to parking lot wheel stops. This comprehensive approach aims to provide clear, standardized guidance for development projects within the city.

What is in the Destin Design Manual ?

- A majority of the design specifications from the MMTDs
 - Section 7.09.00 – Special design criteria

- Section 7.09.03 – Design review requirements
- Elements of Article 12 for Landscape development
- Article 17 – Checklists
- Design Details (Engineering Specifications & Drawings)
- New Addressing & Street Naming System & Processes
- All Measurements (how to measure)

The design manual consolidates valuable design specifications from previous documents, particularly the MMTD (Multi-Modal Transportation District), and integrates good existing design practices. It includes specific details, such as landscape development standards and development checklists from Article 17, along with clear instructions for measurements like tree diameter at breast height (DBH), with illustrations for various scenarios like multi-trunk trees.

The design manual will be a standalone document, separate from the LDC, allowing for streamlined updates and modifications without multiple public hearings. This approach facilitates quicker adoption of changes through ordinances directly presented to the city council, though public input is not excluded. If necessary, relevant boards and public hearings will still be involved in the process, ensuring transparency and adherence to industry standards and best practices.

DISCUSSION

The discussion focused on the city's policies and practices regarding tree planting in areas near sidewalks and impervious spaces, with specific reference to street tree requirements and design details outlined in the design manual. It was confirmed that while there are specific guidelines, there is also flexibility for alternatives as long as they meet the minimum requirements specified in the LDC.

Councilmember Destin expressed concerns about the speed of the design process, emphasizing that staff should not circumvent the legislative process, which typically includes public participation and oversight by the LPA. This concern was echoed by other council members, who were apprehensive that the rapid adoption of design details without adequate public input could diminish community involvement. They emphasized the importance of committees and public interaction to ensure that the community is informed and engaged in the decision-making process, advocating for routing the review through the LPA to increase transparency and public engagement.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

In this segment of the meeting transcript, various city council members and staff discuss design details and regulatory issues related to urban planning, landscaping, and transportation within the city.

Mayor Wagner inquired about canopy coverage of tree vegetation over impermeable surfaces like asphalt, particularly regarding mature tree canopy measurements. The concern is to mitigate heat islands in the city by ensuring sufficient tree cover over such areas. Staff indicate

that while there are standards for minimum tree height and caliper, there is not a specific standard for mature canopy coverage over asphalt.

Discussion shifts to the landscaping section of the code, specifically article 6, and its impact on code enforcement related to yard maintenance. Staff mentioned that the city is working on adopting the International Property Maintenance Code, which would address yard upkeep and other issues in more detail.

Council members discuss lane width as a mechanism for speed calming, indicating a preference for narrower lanes over traditional speed bumps or stop signs. This is connected to a broader conversation about neighborhood safety and traffic management.

The council discusses integrating various regulatory codes, such as the LDC, the Code of Ordinances, and design manuals. There is a need to clearly distinguish between these documents to avoid confusion and ensure proper enforcement of the regulations. Several sections of the code, such as section 6.11 related to harbor development, are being reorganized for clarity and enforcement efficiency. The staff aims to highlight key regulations that were previously buried in the code.

Councilmember Bagby debates the use of palm trees in the city, with concerns raised about their prevalence and lack of canopy cover compared to native trees. He suggests limiting their use to 5% of the total required trees in certain areas, down from 80%.

There is a discussion on the effectiveness of roundabouts versus speed bumps and stop signs for traffic calming in residential areas. Some council members support roundabouts based on national safety data, while others remain skeptical, advocating for more proven methods like speed bumps.

The City Engineer provides an overview of the feedback process on the design manual details, which included input from local engineers, contractors, and public safety committees.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ms. Sandy Trammell, a Destin resident and Parks & Recreation Committee Chair, addressed several concerns and suggestions regarding the LDC. She emphasized the issue with homes built diagonally, resulting in cluttered front yards filled with multiple vehicles and construction trailers, which are not adequately regulated under the current code. She suggested that the definition of the front yard should be clarified as the area facing the street, regardless of the house's orientation.

Ms. Trammell also advocated for the reduction of palm trees, particularly non-native species like Sego Palms, which are harmful to dogs. She highlighted the need for better shade trees on sidewalks due to increasing temperatures, as palm trees do not provide sufficient cover. She proposed raising the minimum height for tree limbs over sidewalks from 10 to 15 feet for the safety of cyclists.

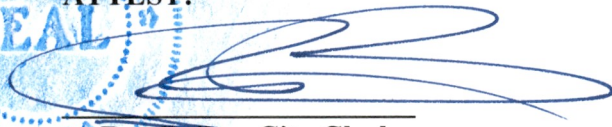
Sharing her recent experience in Louisiana, Ms. Trammell mentioned a traffic calming method involving rumble strips on a narrow road, which effectively controlled speed without the need for speed bumps. She suggested this could be a viable alternative for local roads.

Additionally, Ms. Trammell discussed the use of small roundabouts with trees for traffic calming in some residential areas and country clubs. Regarding water taxis, She clarified that the Harbor CRA Advisory Committee previously decided not to recommend mandating water taxi stops for developments unless they involved over 50% redevelopment or new construction.

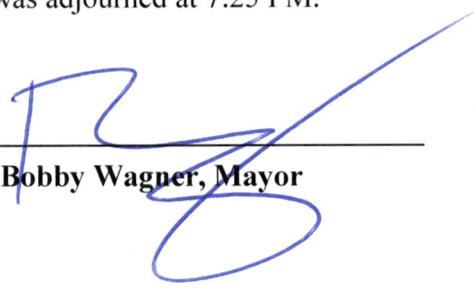
ADJOURNMENT

Having no further business at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 7:25 PM.

ATTEST:



Rey Bailey, City Clerk



Bobby Wagner, Mayor