



MEMORANDUM

Town of Nags Head

Planning & Development Department

To: Planning Board
From: Michael Zehner, Director of Planning & Development
Kelly Wyatt, Deputy Director of Planning & Development
Date: October 15, 2020
Subject: Consideration of a Text Amendment Concerning the "Furniture Store" Use

OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND

At the October 7, 2020 Board of Commissioners meeting, Commissioner Fuller raised an interest in having a clearer definition for the Furniture Store use as contained in the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO). Currently, the definition of Furniture is as follows:

Furniture store means an establishment that sells goods and/or movable objects, intended to support various human activities such as seating, eating, and sleeping, for furnishing or improving housing units that make a room or other area ready for occupancy.

Commissioner Fuller suggested that the definition be something to the effect of, "a furniture store is a retail store that sells furniture to the general public; the structure may have incidental storage to the principal business." Commissioner Fuller indicated that he believed the current definition to be too liberal, and that he would like it better defined; he requested that the Board agree to allow Staff to develop such an amendment and bring it to the Board as quickly as possible. There were no objections to this request, and the Mayor indicated that Staff was "so directed."

In addition to the definition of Furniture Store, there is also a definition for Furniture Showroom, as follows, which may be relevant for the Planning Board to consider:

Furniture showroom means a retail establishment that utilizes large, open floor areas to display furniture or mattresses.

While Furniture Store is listed as a permitted use (only within the C-2 zoning district), Furniture Showroom is not specifically listed or otherwise referenced as being prohibited. From a parking standpoint, these uses or areas of a use are treated differently, with Furniture Stores being included along with all other General Retail uses (requiring one parking space for each 250 square feet of gross floor area, plus 1 parking space for each employee, but no less than 2 employee parking spaces for each retail unit or establishment), and Furniture Showrooms having a specific parking requirement of 1 (one) parking space for each 500 square feet of gross floor area.

A distinction between a Furniture Store and Furniture Showroom was discussed during the development of the UDO. It is understood that there was a consideration to establishing a distinction between a retail store that may sell furniture, and a Furniture Store that commonly includes a Furniture Showroom. Staff is of the opinion that this distinction, or lack thereof, may be important to clarify at this time.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

The Town's Comprehensive Plan contains no specific policies pertaining to Furniture Stores.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Should the Board wish to consider a text amendment specifically responding to the direction of the Board of Commissioners, Staff would recommend the following changes to the definition of Furniture Store:

Furniture store means ~~an~~ a retail establishment that primarily sells, to the general public, furniture goods and/or movable objects, intended to support various human activities such as seating sitting, eating, and sleeping;; the establishment may also sell home furnishings or related goods incidental to the sale of furniture for furnishing or improving housing units that make a room or other area ready for occupancy. Storage area and the storage of furniture "on-hand" or "in-stock" for same-day transactions is commonly limited.

As noted under Overview and Background, should the Board wish to consider addressing the separate terms and definitions for Furniture Store and Furniture Showroom, Staff would recommend deleting both terms and definitions, and adopting a new term and definition, as follows:

Furniture store/showroom means a retail establishment that primarily sells, to the general public, furniture intended to support various human activities such as sitting, eating, and sleeping; the establishment may also sell home furnishings or related goods incidental to the sale of furniture. Furniture available for purchase is commonly displayed in large, open areas, and is not available "on-hand" or "in-stock" for same-day transactions, with limited storage of inventory.

In addition, under this alternative approach, Staff would recommend that:

- the Furniture Store use as included in Sections 6.6 (Table of Uses), 7.32.2., and 10.37.1.3. be changed to Furniture Store/Showroom; and
- that Table 10-2, Required Parking by Use, be amended by deleting Furniture Showroom as a separate use and Furniture Store from the list of General Retail uses, and that Furniture Store/Showroom be added as a use with the following required parking:

- One (1) parking space for each 500 square feet of gross floor dedicated to open display area of furniture, and one (1) parking space for each 250 square feet of gross floor for all other areas of the establishment; additionally, one (1) parking space shall be provided for each employee, with no less than two (2) employee parking spaces for each establishment.

With regard to the Planning Board's review and action, Staff recommends consideration of the following UDO provisions:

3.5.3. Action by the Planning Board.

3.5.3.1. Every proposed amendment, UDO text amendment or zoning map amendment, shall be referred to the Planning Board for its recommendation and report. The Board of Commissioners is not bound by the recommendations, if any, of the Planning Board.

3.5.3.2. Prior to the consideration by the Board of Commissioners of a proposed UDO text amendment or zoning map amendment, the Planning Board shall advise and comment on whether the proposed amendment is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. The Planning Board shall provide a written recommendation, certified by the UDO Administrator, to the Board of Commissioners that addresses plan consistency and other matters as deemed appropriate by the Planning Board, but a comment by the Planning Board that a proposed amendment is inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan shall not preclude consideration or approval of the proposed amendment by the Board of Commissioners.

3.5.3.3. Members of the Planning Board shall not vote on recommendations regarding any UDO text amendment or zoning map amendment where the outcome of the mater being considered is reasonably likely to have a direct, substantial, and readily identifiable financial impact on the member.

It may also be helpful to the Planning Board to review the following provisions regarding action by the Board of Commissioners:

3.5.4. Action by the Board of Commissioners.

Action upon an UDO text amendment or zoning map amendment, including the scheduling of a public hearing, will be at the discretion of the Board of Commissioners.

3.5.4.1. Before an item is placed on the consent agenda to schedule a public hearing, the Planning Board's recommendation on each proposed amendment must be received by the Board of Commissioners. If no recommendation is received from the Planning Board within 30 days from the date when submitted to the Planning Board, the petitioner may take the proposal to the Board of Commissioners without a recommendation from the Planning Board. However, the Planning Board may request the Board of

Commissioners to delay final action on the amendment until such time as the Planning Board can present its recommendations. No such limitations shall apply to applications or requests submitted by Town staff or any Town Board.

3.5.4.2. After receiving a recommendation from the Planning Board on a proposed amendment, the Board of Commissioners may proceed to vote on the proposed ordinance, refer it to a committee for further study, or take any other action consistent with its usual rules of procedure.

3.5.4.3. The Board of Commissioners is not required to take final action on a proposed amendment within any specific period of time. Final action on an UDO text amendment or zoning map amendment submitted by third parties will be taken within a reasonable time. Final action taken within 90 days of the public hearing before the Board of Commissioners shall be presumptively reasonable.

3.5.4.4. No member of the Board of Commissioners shall vote on any zoning map amendment or UDO text amendment where the outcome of the matter being considered is reasonably likely to have a direct, substantial and readily identifiable financial impact.

3.5.4.5. Prior to adopting or rejecting any UDO text and/or map amendment, the Board of Commissioners shall adopt one of the following statements which shall not be subject to judicial review.

3.5.4.5.1. A statement approving the amendment and describing its consistency with the adopted Comprehensive Plan and explaining why the action taken is reasonable and in the public interest.

3.5.4.5.2. A statement rejecting the amendment and describing its inconsistency with the adopted Comprehensive Plan and explaining why the action taken is reasonable and in the public interest.

3.5.4.5.3. A statement approving the amendment and containing at least all of the following:

3.5.4.5.3.1. A declaration that the approval is also deemed an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan. The Board of Commissioners shall not require any additional request or application for amendment to the Comprehensive Plan.

3.5.4.5.3.2. An explanation of the change in conditions the Board of Commissioners took into account in amending the UDO to meet the development needs of the community.

3.5.4.5.3.3. Why the action was reasonable and in the public interest.

3.5.4.6. In deciding whether to adopt a proposed amendment to this UDO, the central issue before the Board of Commissioners is whether the proposed amendment advances the public health, safety, or welfare. When considering proposed map amendments:

3.5.4.6.1. The Board of Commissioners shall consider the entire range of permitted uses in the requested classification.