City of Dublin

Community Planning and Development
5200 Emerald Parkway • Dublin, OH 43017
Phone: 614.410.4600

Memo

To: Members of the Planning & Zoning Commission

From: Jennifer M. Rauch, AICP, Director of Community Planning & Development

Date: November 6, 2026

Initiated By: Bassem Bitar, AICP, Deputy Director of Planning
Christopher Will, AICP, Senior Planner
Zachary Hounshell, Planner II
Rati Singh, Assoc. AIA, Planner II

Re: Metro Center Design Guidelines & Zoning Update – November 12, 2026

Summary
Following the September 17 Commission meeting on the development of design guidelines and a zoning framework to support a future areawide rezoning implementing the vision established in the Metro Center Revitalization Plan, staff conducted one-on-one interviews with Commissioners to clarify and further understand feedback and direction provided during the meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to summarize and validate feedback received through both the Commission meeting and subsequent individual meetings and present the project team's approach to incorporating that feedback into revisions to the design guidelines. Additionally, building on the high-level zoning roadmap previously shared with the Commission, the project team will present the proposed reorganization of the zoning framework, draft permitted use tables, and its approach to balancing uses within the mixed-use district. Feedback will be sought on these elements, followed by an update on next steps and key project milestones.

Background
Staff and Sasaki, the project consultant, provided an update to the Commission during the September 17 meeting on the development of draft design guidelines and a proposed zoning framework for a future areawide rezoning to implement the vision established in the Revitalization Plan. The design guidelines and zoning framework approach were developed through a series of City Council work sessions and stakeholder input meetings where the vision, design framework, and implementation strategy were refined. The primary purpose of the meeting was to review the draft design guidelines with the Commission, including their organization, intent, and approach to guiding the character and quality of future development within Metro Center, and to gather Commission feedback. Additionally, staff provided a preview of the zoning roadmap and an overview of how the design guidelines and future zoning requirements would work together with other City planning documents to guide and evaluate future development proposals. The meeting concluded with a summary of next steps and key project milestones.

Commission Feedback and Update Approach
During the September 17 meeting, the Commission provided a range of feedback to the project team regarding the draft design guidelines and zoning framework. Given the importance and scope of this work, staff conducted subsequent one-on-one interviews with Commission

members to clarify comments, further explore areas of concern, and obtain additional direction to guide revisions. The following sections summarize the feedback received during the Commission meeting and subsequent interviews and outlines the project team's approach to addressing areas identified for further refinement and improvement.

Support with Minor Refinements
The Commission expressed general support for the overall intent and direction of the proposed design guidelines, particularly the vision for establishing a distinct identity for future development in Metro Center that complements, rather than replicates, the character of Bridge Park and the Historic District. Commissioners also supported the graphic format and visual approach of the document, noting that the character area sections and associated recommendations were particularly successful in communicating the vision for different parts of the district. Additionally, the Commission expressed support for the sustainability-oriented language incorporated throughout the guidelines, emphasizing the importance of retaining aspirational concepts such as embodied energy and biophilic design as distinguishing features of Metro Center relative to other areas of Dublin. While generally supportive of these elements, the Commission identified opportunities to further refine and polish the character area content to improve clarity and consistency. In response, the project team will focus on refining and polishing these sections, improving clarity and consistency while maintaining the overall structure, approach, and intent of the current draft. No substantial changes to these elements are anticipated.

Areas Recommended for Broader Updates
The Commission expressed general support for several aspects of the draft design guidelines, while also identifying areas where more substantive refinement would strengthen the document. The primary areas identified for additional attention and the corresponding staff approach are summarized below.

Design Foundations, Goals, and Organization: The Commission expressed concern that the design foundations and goals were overly broad and lacked sufficient distinction, potentially allowing for varied interpretations of the intended design outcomes. Commissioners also noted that the document would benefit from a clearer hierarchy of priorities to help guide future reviewers in evaluating proposals and understanding where flexibility may be appropriate. In response, staff will clarify the relationship between the design foundations and goals, establish a more clearly defined hierarchy of design priorities, and reorganize the document to more closely integrate the design guidelines into Chapter 3 of the Revitalization Plan. Staff will also adopt a more traditional organizational structure to improve document navigation and promote consistency in interpretation, while maintaining the flexibility and design-intent-driven nature of the recommendations.

Specificity and Effectiveness of Design Guidelines: The Commission questioned whether some of the design guidelines were sufficiently specific to provide meaningful direction for evaluating future development proposals. Commissioners noted that additional detail would help clarify expectations, address potential gaps, and provide greater consistency in how the guidelines are interpreted and applied. In response, staff will expand and refine selected recommendations to address identified gaps, better communicate the intended design outcomes, and provide more

meaningful guidance for both applicants and future reviewers without introducing unnecessarily prescriptive standards.

Coordination of Imagery and Captions: The Commission noted that graphics, diagrams, precedent images, and captions could be better coordinated to reinforce the document's design intent and more clearly illustrate desired design outcomes. In response, staff will further curate the supporting imagery, refine captions and labels, and improve the coordination of visual elements throughout the document to create a more cohesive and effective presentation.

Background Studies

During the September 17 meeting, Commissioners requested additional background information on several technical elements that are typically evaluated as part of future development applications. To provide context, staff is highlighting four technical studies conducted as part of the Revitalization Plan, in addition to the urban design work and community and stakeholder engagement that informed the Plan. These studies evaluated market opportunities, stormwater management, utility capacity, and transportation infrastructure.

- Market Study: Identified opportunities to strengthen Metro Center's economic competitiveness by prioritizing high-quality dining and drinking establishments, experiential retail and entertainment, and a distinct sense of place and identity. Additional recommendations included introducing a mix of residential uses, with an emphasis on multifamily rental housing followed by for-sale opportunities and exploring creative office typologies.
- Stormwater Management Study: Evaluated existing stormwater conditions and strategies to relocate and update stormwater ponds to better support the district's redevelopment vision. The study established an implementation approach for future stormwater improvements. The City is advancing further study and design of Waterway Park and its associated stormwater infrastructure needs.
- Utility Capacity Study: Evaluated the capacity of existing water and sanitary sewer infrastructure to support future development and redevelopment within Metro Center.
- Transportation Study: Built upon previous work completed through Envision Dublin to evaluate key intersections and the proposed Metro-Blazer Connector and Metro-Shier Rings Connector overpass. The analysis confirmed that planned transportation improvements will help accommodate future development, improve traffic operations, and enhance connectivity throughout the city.

In addition to the recommendations and technical studies that informed the Revitalization Plan, other applicable City plans and policies will help guide the review of future development projects in Metro Center. This includes the Signature Trail Plan, adopted by City Council in December 2025, which establishes a bold vision for a new, iconic trail experience while providing a framework for its manageable implementation. The Plan identifies key elements such as trailhead locations, future expansions and regional connections, placemaking zones, materials, wayfinding, and digital integrations. Beyond its recreational function, the Signature Trail is envisioned as a landmark public space and vital active transportation corridor that will help shape Dublin's identity for decades to come. The Revitalization Plan and associated design guidelines will help ensure that future development in Metro Center is coordinated with and supports the vision and recommendations established in the Signature Trail Plan.

Zoning Roadmap

Zoning Overview

The MUR-1 Zoning Code is intended to implement the vision set forth in the Metro Center Revitalization Plan. The zoning code will include requirements for uses and specific development standards but is anticipated to include significantly less restrictive requirements compared to a district like Bridge Street. The zoning for MUR-1 is expected to supplement the guidance and recommendations of the Design Guidelines.

Zoning Code Structure Updates

Staff is proposing to update the structure and location of requirements for the MUR districts in sections 153.045-153.049. Those updates are shown below:

Existing	*Proposed*
153.045 – Purpose and Intent	153.045 – Purpose & Intent; Procedures
153.046 – Uses	153.046 – MUR-1 District
153.047 – Site Development Standards	153.047 – MUR-2 District (reserve)
153.048 – Review & Approval Procedures, Criteria	153.048 – MUR-3 District (reserve)
153.049 – N/A	153.049 – MUR-4 District

Given the different approaches to zoning requirements and design requirements in the MUR-1 and MUR-4 zoning district, staff decided to separate each zoning district to minimize confusion of the zoning structure. Section 153.049 will contain existing requirements for MUR-4 and no requirements will be modified as part of this restructuring. Section 153.045 is contain purpose and intent language applicable to the entire MUR area and will include review process requirements for all MUR districts. The review process is proposed to be the same for MUR-1 and MUR-4, which requires a Concept Plan and Final Development Plan for all new development projects in the MUR.

District Intent

The Metro Center District, based on the vision of the Revitalization Plan, is intended to evolve from a predominantly single-use office park into a vibrant, walkable, and connected mixed-use neighborhood that supports Dublin's long-term economic, environmental, and community objectives. The district's role as a center for innovation and employment should remain a primary function of the area while introducing complementary residential, retail, commercial, and recreational uses. A coordinated network of streets, trails, parks, plazas, waterways, and green infrastructure should create a distinct sense of place, improve mobility and ecological performance, and provide inviting spaces for workers, residents, and visitors. Development within the district should be flexible enough to respond to changing market conditions while adhering to a cohesive urban design framework that prioritizes high-quality architecture, active public spaces, multimodal connectivity, sustainability, and integration with surrounding neighborhoods.

MUR-1 Subareas

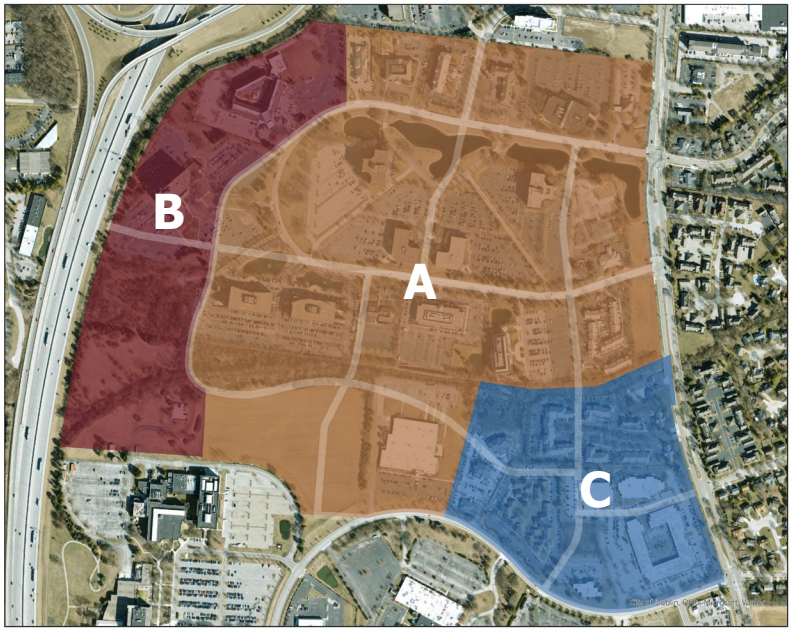
For the purposes of assuring uses and development expectations are in alignment with the recommendations of the Metro Center Revitalization Plan and Dublin Corporate Area Plan, the MUR-1 district is proposed to be split into 3 subareas. These subareas were chosen based on

the character areas established in the Design Guidelines, but are only to be used when considering zoning requirements for uses and development standards.

Subarea A: Intended to support a flexible mix of commercial, residential, civic, and community uses within a walkable environment, with development organized around and connected to key open spaces, including Waterway Park and Cosgray Ditch. Buildings should engage public streets and open spaces, incorporate active ground-floor uses, and allow for both horizontal and vertical mixed-use development. Built form should be balanced with open space and natural systems through pedestrian and bicycle connections, green linkages, resilient landscapes, habitat, and sustainable stormwater management, while supporting public spaces, incremental investment, and a vibrant identity for Metro Center.

Subarea B: Intended to establish a distinctive green edge along I-270 that balances a natural landscape setting with a prominent commercial employment presence. The subarea supports office and complementary commercial uses that create a defined gateway presence, with development integrating high-quality architecture, landscape elements, and strategic design features to express a contemporary identity and establish a distinctive western gateway into Metro Center.

Subarea C: Forms the southern edge of the Metro Center District and provides a transition to adjacent residential neighborhoods. The subarea is intended to accommodate small-scale commercial and institutional uses while reinforcing Metro Center's employment focus. Development in the subarea should enhance the district's walkability, multimodal connectivity, landscaping, and green infrastructure while reinforcing its role as an employment district.



Subarea Map

Permitted Uses

The table below identifies the proposed permitted, conditional, accessory, and temporary uses, as well as those subject to use-specific standards, for each subarea.

MUR-1 Permitted Uses DRAFT				
P = Permitted *C = Conditional* *S = Size Limited* *T = Time Limited*	Subarea A	Subarea B	Subarea C	Use-Specific Standards
Residential Permitted Uses				
Dwelling, Multi-Family	P	C		Y
Civic/Public/Institutional Permitted Uses				
Community Center		C	P	Y
Educational Facility	P	P		
Govermnet Services, Safety	C	C	C	
Library, Museum, Gallery	P		P	Y
Park or Open Space	P	P	P	
Commercial Permitted Uses				
Bank	P	P	P	Y
Conference Center	P	P		
Eating and Drinking	P	P		Y
Entertainment/Recreation, Indoor	P			Y
Exercise and Fitness	P			Y
Hotel	P	P		
Office, General	P	P	P	
Office, Medical	P	P	P	
Parking, Structure	P	P	P	
Personal, Repair & Rental Services	P	P	P	Y
Professional/Technical Training	P	P	P	
Research & Development	P	P	P	
Retail, General	P	P	P	Y
Skilled Nursing, Rehabilitation, home for the Aging, and Nursing Home	P	P	C	
Wireless Communications	Refer to Chapter 99 of the Dublin Code of Ordinances			
Accessory and Temporary Permitted Uses				
ATM, Walk-Up	P	P	P	
Bicycle Facilities	P	P	P	Y
Community Activity and Special Events	T	T	T	Y
Construction Trailer/Office	T	T	T	Y
Eating & Drinking	P	P	P	
Entertainment/Recreation, Indoor	P	P	P	
Essential Utility Services	P	P	P	
Exercise and Fitness	P	P	P	
Farmers Market	P	P	P	
Outdoor Dining and Seating	P	P	P	Y
Outdoor Display or Seasonal Sales	T	T	T	Y
Parking, Structure	P	P	P	
Parking, Surface	C	P	P	
Renewable Energy Equipment	P	P	P	Y
Retail or Personal Services	P	P	P	
Swimming Pool	P	P		
Transportation, Transit Stop	P	P	P	
Vehicle Charging Station	P	P	P	Y
Wireless Communications	Refer to Chapter 99 of the Dublin Code of Ordinances			

Approach to Balancing Uses in a Mixed-Use District

While the district seeks to welcome new residential development to help transform Metro Center into a more vibrant, connected neighborhood, the Revitalization Plan also emphasizes maintaining the district's competitiveness and reinvigoration as a regional employment center and supporting the City's continued economic development. This requires retaining employment-generating uses within the district. To balance these objectives, the proposed approach would require a portion of the employment-generating space displaced by residential redevelopment to be replaced within the new employment-related development. This requirement would apply only when a non-residential site is redeveloped for residential use. The specific approach and requirements for replacement are still being developed. In addition, the design guidelines would include recommendations for ground-floor commercial uses and active edges to further shape the character and function of new development.

Next Steps

Following the PZC meeting, the project team will incorporate Commission feedback into the design guidelines and zoning framework to prepare complete drafts, while continuing engagement with property owners, neighbors, and other stakeholders. Staff will return to the Commission with updates for further review and feedback, followed by a request for a recommendation. Following the Commission's recommendation, City Council will review the design guidelines, Code amendments, and rezoning and make the final determinations.

Recommendation

Staff recommends the Commission provide feedback on the following discussion topics:

1) Are the proposed guideline updates responsive to previous feedback from the Commission?
2) Does the Commission have changes or considerations to the draft permitted uses?
3) Does the Commission have feedback regarding the approach to balancing non-residential and residential uses?
4) Other considerations for the design guidelines or zoning?