

Proposed Zoning Ordinance & Map Amendments

NORTH WALES BOROUGH

300 School Street
North Wales, PA 19454



The Borough Planning Commission has been working with the Borough's planning consultant, Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC), to audit the zoning ordinance and prepare amendments thereto since November of 2021. The goal of this project is to implement priority actions from *North Wales Borough 2040*, the Borough's 2018 comprehensive plan, by creating a regulatory environment that promotes the community's land use and economic development objectives.

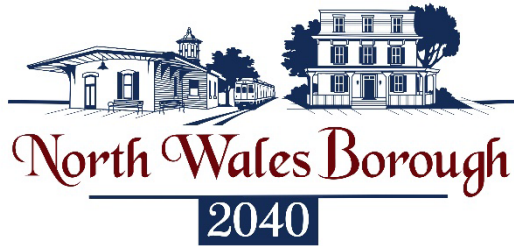
This informational document is intended to help property owners, business owners, residents, developers, and the general public understand the proposed updates to the zoning ordinance and the new zoning map.

Where to Find More Information

1. **Visit the StoryMap.** The information provided in this document is also available in a user-friendly, interactive website: <https://arcg.is/18aLWn>
2. **Review the draft ordinance.** The full draft and supporting documents are available on the Borough [website](#).
3. **Contact us.** This document should have the answers to most general questions, however specific questions may be directed to Tim Konetchy, MCPC Community Planner, at timothy.konetchy@montgomerycountypa.gov
4. **Public Presentation.** The Borough Planning Commission is offering a public presentation at Borough Hall on May 3rd starting at 7 PM. Questions and answers will follow the presentation.
5. **Public Hearing.** Borough Council will schedule a public hearing prior to voting on the ordinance amendments. Public notice will be published within 30 days of the hearing, plus it will be advertised on the [Borough website](#).

Contents

1. *North Wales Borough 2040* Implementation Actions, page 2-3
2. Proposed Zoning Map Changes, pages 4-5
3. Zoning District Changes, pages 6-10
4. Regulation of Uses, Parking and Loading, Administration, and Wireless Communications Facilities, page 11



Implementation

The Zoning Ordinance audit and amendment process was informed by the recommendations of *North Wales Borough 2040*, the Borough's 2018 comprehensive plan. The many recommendations noted on this page were all fulfilled to some extent through the proposed ordinance amendments, though additional effort will always be required. The relative priority level of each primary recommendation is noted after each priority, with five stars (★) indicating the highest priorities. Some primary objectives also feature specific sub-recommendations/actions; these are noted as bulletpoints below the primary objective.

Housing and Neighborhood Character (pg. 63-64)

- ☑ Preserve the diverse range of housing types and building materials that represent different time periods and architectural styles that contribute to the historic identity of the residential community. ★★ ★★
 - ☑ Conduct a zoning audit to determine if existing zoning and SALDO ordinances adequately protect the scale and character of the residential areas. Adopt new zoning and SALDO language, as needed.
 - ☑ Incorporate “form-based zoning” and/or Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) principles into the Zoning Ordinance to protect neighborhood character.
- ☑ Meet housing needs of current and future residents by preserving housing stock and allowing for appropriate infill development. ★★ ★★ ★
 - ☑ Conduct a zoning audit to verify appropriate housing types and densities within each residential and mixed use district.
- ☑ Preserve significant institutional buildings and encourage their adaptive reuse. ★★ ★★ ★
- ☑ Promote revitalization and reinvestment in industrial use areas. ★★

Downtown North Wales (pg. 69-70)

- ☑ Encourage the establishment of a strong mix of retail, office, and residential uses within the Borough's commercial areas. Overall, the commercial zoning should reflect the priority to establish pedestrian-oriented uses and encourage development that is appropriate in each of the Borough's commercial zones. ★★ ★★ ★★
 - ☑ Consider amending the Transit Oriented Development (TOD) overlay district to update permitted uses and expand the boundary.

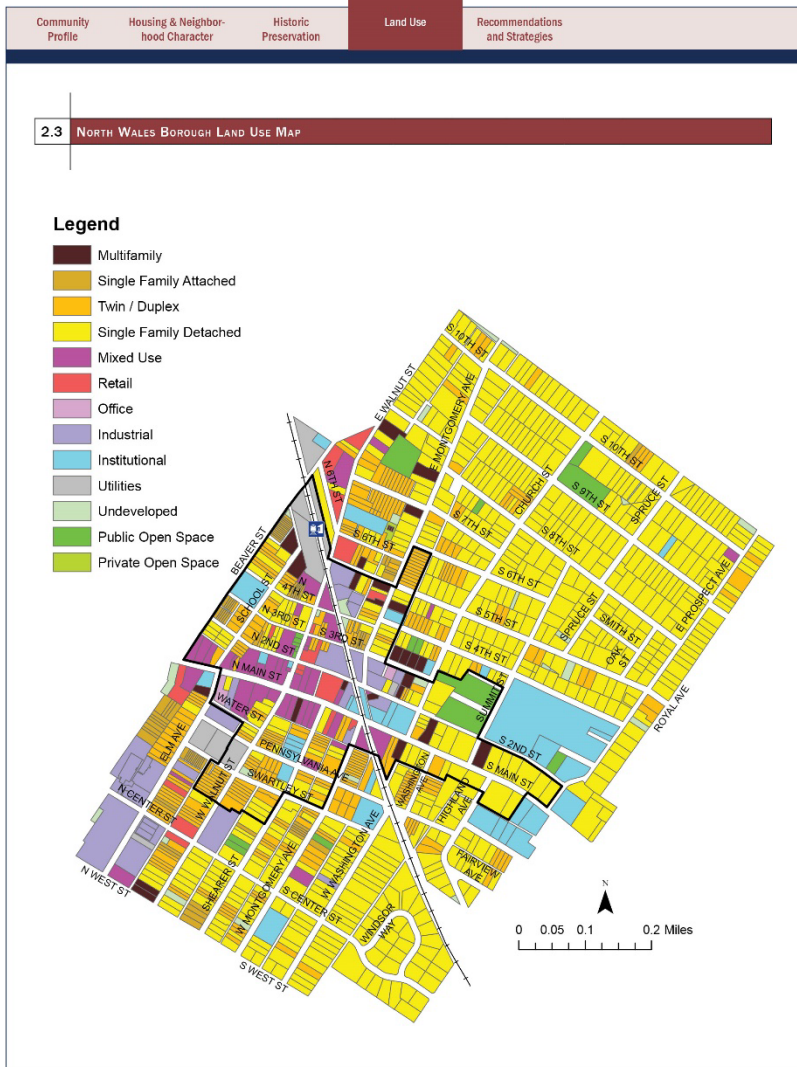
Revitalization, Peacemaking and Beautification (pgs. 69-70)

- ☑ Highlight place-based assets through promotion and advertisement of the numerous events and amenities the Borough has to offer. ★★
 - ☑ Write new zoning and/or SALDO language to permit outdoor dining.

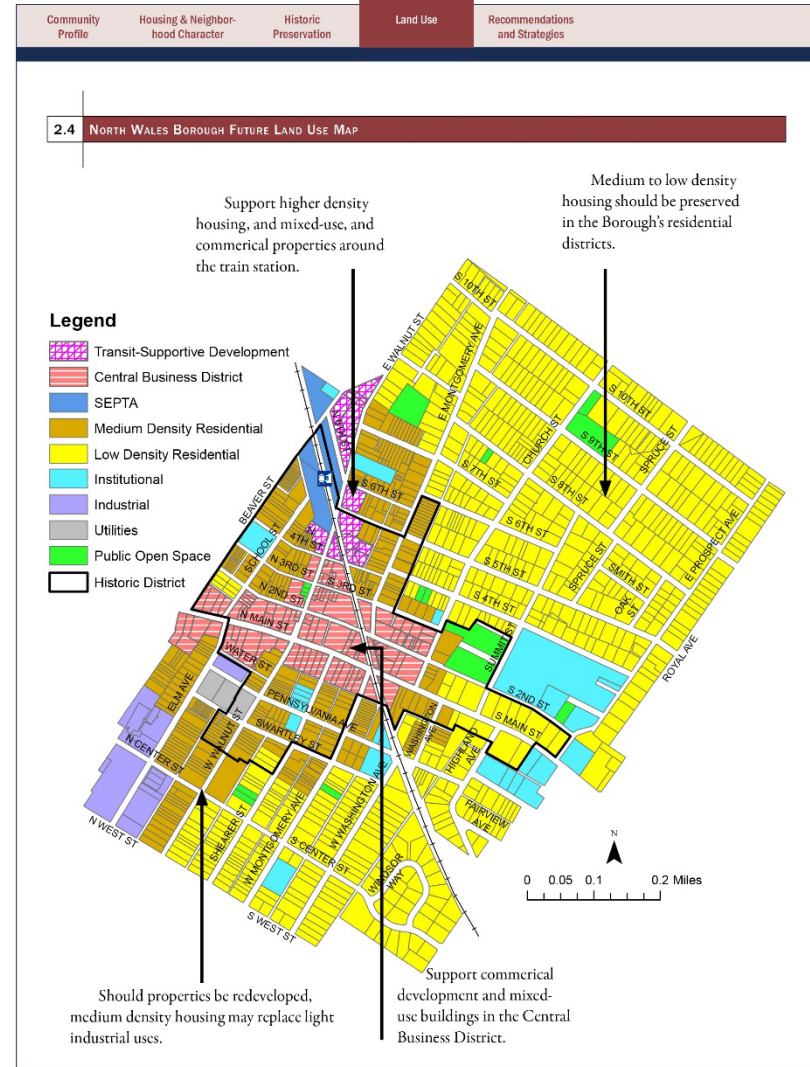
Infrastructure and Utilities (pg. 77-78)

- ☑ Provide for the appropriate regulation of renewable energy technologies. ★★ ★
 - ☑ Adopt a renewable energy ordinance with standards for the safe installation and use of solar and wind energy systems while minimizing any negative impacts on the community character and environment.

Existing and Future Land Use Maps from *North Wales Borough 2040*



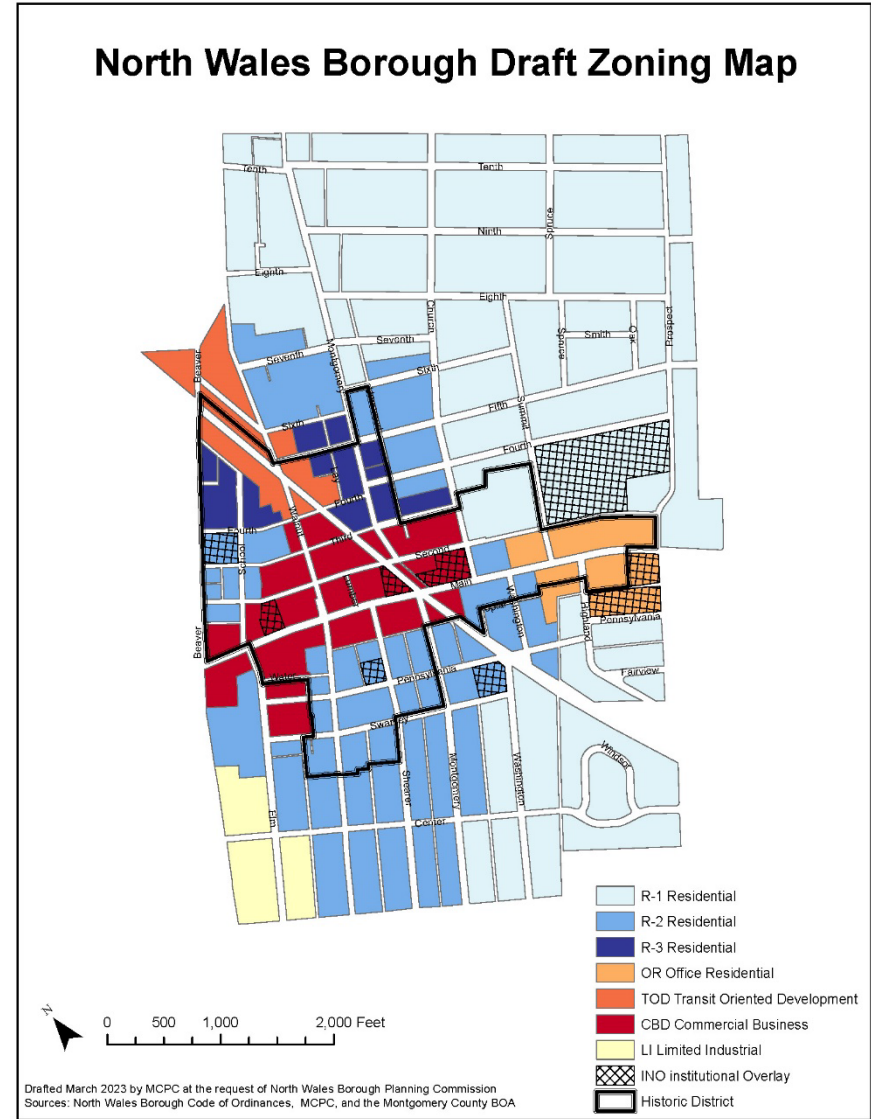
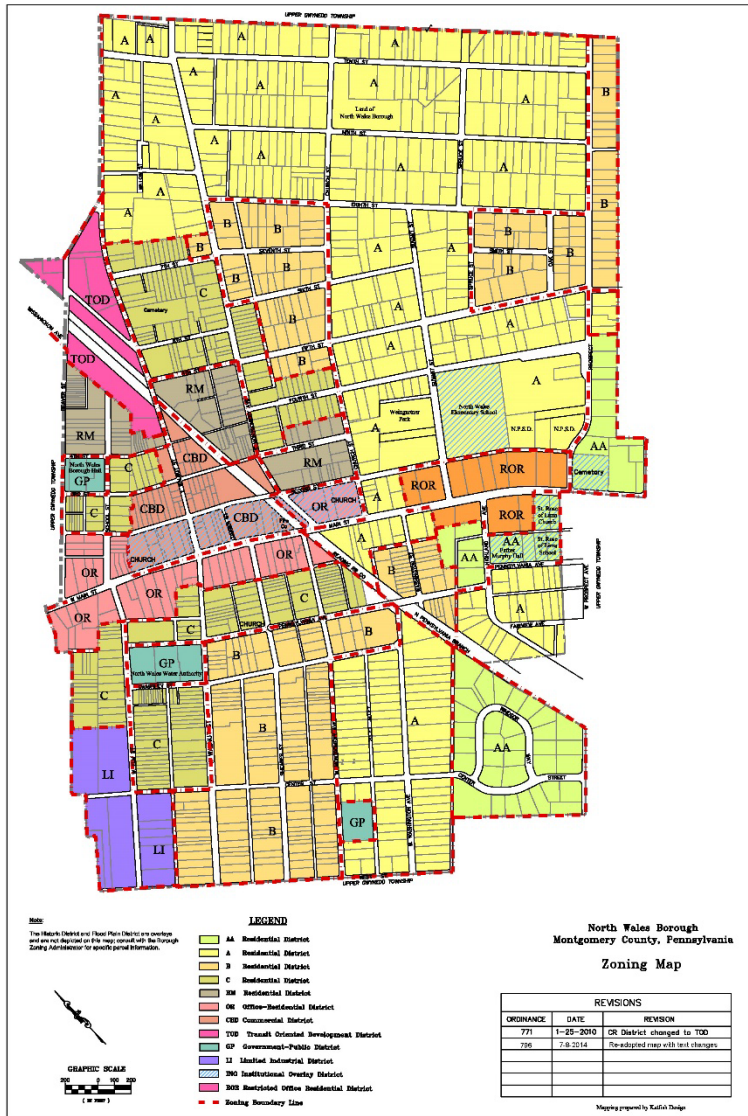
17 North Wales Borough 2040 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



www.northwalesborough.org 18

The proposed zoning map is based most directly on the Future Land Use Map from the comprehensive plan (right), but it also takes into account the existing mix of uses present on-the-ground in the Borough (left).

Existing vs. Proposed Zoning Maps



Several Districts have new, standardized names:

R-A, R-AA, R-B (consolidated) ⇨ R-1
 R-C ⇨ R-2 RM ⇨ R-3 ROR ⇨ OR

Discussion: Proposed Zoning Map Changes

Residential Zoning Districts

- The **R-1 Residential District** is a result of combining the R-AA, R-A, and R-B Residential Districts; all three of these districts have the same allowable uses, namely single-family detached homes, but differing dimensional standards. As discussed on page 6, the new R-1 Residential Districts makes use of context-based standards, those being standards that are based on existing conditions on the block. This new method will encourage new development to fit in with immediate neighbors and the neighborhood.
- The **R-2 Residential District** is the successor to the R-C Residential District, which has the same intent and allowable uses: single-family detached homes, twins, and duplexes. The proposed R-2 Residential District boundary represents a fairly substantial expansion of area within the borough where twins and duplexes would be permitted. The decision to expand this area came naturally, as it is estimated that there are over 100 twins and duplexes within the expansion areas that are within a zoning district that does not allow for such use (i.e., R-B). The proposed area of the R-2 Residential District would allow over 100 dwellings to become conforming uses, reducing headaches for homeowners.
- The **R-3 Residential District** is the successor to the RM Residential District, but with a slightly smaller area. The TOD Transit-Oriented Development District and Commercial Business District would absorb parts of the RM, which is recommended by the Future Land Use Map, but both districts continue to allow for multifamily use.

Nonresidential Districts

- The **CBD Commercial Business District** is proposed for expansion, as recommended by the Future Land Use Map and supported by the existing mix of uses within the expansion areas. The existing OR Office Residential designation along the west end of Main Street is proposed to be absorbed by the CBD; the OR designation has proven to be a barrier to prospective businesses due to the limited mix of permitted uses in the district.
- The *new* **OR Office Residential District** is a renaming of the ROR Restricted Office Residential District.
- The **TOD Transit-Oriented Development District** has been expanded to include 8 additional parcels, as recommended by the comprehensive plan.
- The boundary of the **LI Limited Industrial District** is unchanged.
- The **GP Government-Public District** has been removed, as its area and applicability was limited.
- The **INO Institutional Overlay District** boundaries have been changed so that the overlay is more targeted, with only important civic and institutional buildings being included. The new boundaries and district regulations work in concert to promote the continued use of these buildings in both their current use and, if conditions change, allowing for the controlled adaptive reuse of the subject buildings. More information can be found on page 10.

R-1 Residential District

Intent

The purpose of the R-1 Residential District is to apply compatible yet flexible zoning regulations to areas of the Borough that were historically developed for single-family detached dwellings on medium-sized lots. The regulations herein are intended to ensure that all new development in the R-1 Residential District is compatible with the existing neighborhood. This district is intended to preserve the unique character of these areas.

Overview

The R-1 Residential District is a result of combining the R-AA, R-A, and R-B Residential Districts; all three of these districts permit the same uses, namely single-family detached homes, but differing dimensional standards. In order to retain the existing pattern of development even as infill occurs, “context-based” standards are being employed for lot area and front setbacks. Using the proposed system, a new lot would be required to have a minimum area equal to or exceeding the mathematical average lot area on the block (or a minimum of 7,000 SF). Furthermore, the front setback has been changed to require a build-to range based on the setback of neighboring homes. For example, if the neighboring home to the right of the lot in question has a setback of 30 feet and the neighboring home to the left has a 20 foot setback, the front façade of the new home must be built between 20 feet (minimum) to 30 feet (maximum). In addition to the dimensional standard changes, the option for flag lots is proposed for removal. Flag lots, those being lots with a narrow access strip and the bulk of the lot setback from the road, are inconsistent with the character of the borough’s neighborhoods and are all but absent from the borough.

Permitted Uses

The permitted uses in the R-1 Residential District are substantially similar to those that are permitted in the existing R-AA, R-A, and R-B Residential Districts:

- Single-family detached homes as a principal use.
- Accessory uses associated with a single-family detached home, such as: accessory structures (e.g., sheds), no-impact home-based businesses, roof-mounted solar energy systems, and residential swimming pools.
- Accessory uses subject to special exception approval, including: accessory dwelling units, bed-and-breakfast homes, family childcare homes, and minor home-based businesses.

Proposed Dimensional Standards

	R-AA	R-A	R-B	R-1 (Proposed)
Min. lot area	12,000 SF	9,000 SF	7,000 SF	Average area of lots on the block; 7,000 SF min. 10,000 SF for special exception uses
Min. lot width	80 feet	60 feet	50 feet	50 feet
Front setback	40 feet	30 feet	30 feet	Minimum/maximum established by the setbacks of neighboring buildings to the left/right
Min. rear yard setback	25 feet			
Min. side yard setback	12.5 feet	12.5 feet	8 feet	8 feet
Max. building/ impervious coverage	25% / 50 %	25% / 50%	35% / 70%	25% / 40%
Max. building height	35 feet / 2.5 stories			

R-2 Residential District

Intent

The purpose of the R-2 Residential District is to apply compatible yet flexible zoning regulations to areas of the Borough that were historically developed for attached and detached one to two-family dwellings on small to medium-sized lots. The regulations herein are intended to ensure that all new development in the R-2 Residential District is compatible with the existing neighborhood. This district is intended to preserve the unique character of these areas.

Overview

The R-2 Residential District is a renamed and, as discussed on pages 4-5, expanded R-C Residential District. The district permits the same mix of low-density residential uses, including single-family detached homes, twins, and duplexes. The new boundary includes over 100 twins and duplexes that are currently categorized as nonconforming uses due to the fact that they are located within the R-B District which does not allow for such uses. The expanded area is more consistent with the established mix of uses throughout the neighborhoods of the district.

The dimensional standards of the R-2 Residential District are crafted in a way that encourages lots occupied by twins and duplexes to be developed similarly to single-family detached homes, in part by using context-based standards like the R-1. Ideally, a duplex or a pair of twins would appear substantially similar to a lot occupied by a single-family detached home. This seamless integration promotes the retention of the established pattern of development.

Permitted Uses

The permitted uses of the R-2 are substantially similar to that of the R-C:

- Single-family detached homes, twins, and duplexes as a principal use.
- Accessory uses associated with a dwelling, such as: accessory structures (e.g., sheds), no-impact home-based businesses, roof-mounted solar energy systems, refuse collection facilities (dumpster enclosures), and residential swimming pools.
- Accessory uses subject to special exception approval, including: accessory dwelling units, bed-and-breakfast homes, family childcare homes, and minor home-based businesses.

Proposed Dimensional Standards

	R-C	R-2 (Proposed)
Min. lot area	Single-family detached: 7,000 SF Other: 3,500 SF (per unit)	Mathematical average area of lots occupied by the same category of use on the block; 3,500 and 7,000 SF minimums remain in place; 10,000 for special exception uses
Min. lot width	Single-family detached: 40 feet Twin: 25 feet Duplex: 50 feet	Single-family detached: 40 feet Duplex: 40 feet Twin: 20 feet
Front setback	20 feet	Minimum/maximum established by the setbacks of neighboring buildings to the left/right
Min. rear yard setback	25 feet	
Min. side yard setback	8 feet; zero (0) feet shall be provided where buildings on separate lots share a party wall	
Max. building/impervious coverage	35% / 70%	35% / 50%
Max. building height	35 feet/ 2.5 stories	

R-3 Residential District

Intent

The intent of the R-3 Residential District is to provide for a wide range of housing options and limited mix of low-impact commercial uses within close proximity to the North Wales Train Station and the Commercial Business District. The regulations herein aim to encourage a mix of medium to high-density housing options in a variety of styles and in a manner that complements the character of the existing community and built environment. In an R-3 Residential District, the following regulations shall apply.

Overview

As currently written, the RM District relies upon “pyramidal zoning” wherein all uses in the R-C District are permitted in the RM when in compliance with the regulations of the R-C District. This ends up being confusing for the user, as one must review two district chapters and discern which regulations apply. To address this issue, the R-3 expressly permits the uses of the R-2 and includes all associated dimensional standards within the R-3 district chapter. A few other notable changes include the addition of limited mixed-use as a special exception use (see below), the addition of certain design standards (e.g., buildings must be oriented towards the street), and the consolidation of a few multifamily uses into one defined use with standards in Article IV, Use Regulations.

Permitted Uses

The uses permitted within the R-3 Residential District include:

- Townhouses, single-family detached homes, twins, duplexes, and multifamily residential development.
- Mixed-uses, limited to residential units alongside an office, studio, or a personal care business, are now permitted by special exception. These may only be established on corner lots or in a single-family detached home as adaptive reuse. A maximum of 25% of the gross floor area of the building may be devoted to the nonresidential use.
- Accessory uses associated with a dwelling, such as: accessory structures (e.g., sheds), no-impact home-based businesses, roof-mounted solar energy systems, refuse collection facilities (dumpster enclosures), and residential swimming pools.
- Accessory uses subject to special exception approval, including: accessory dwelling units, bed-and-breakfast homes, family childcare homes, and minor home-based businesses.

Proposed Dimensional Standards

	Use B-1: Single-Family Attached Dwelling (Townhouse)	Use B-2: Single Family Detached Dwelling	Use B-3: Single-Family Semi-Detached Dwelling (Twin)	Use B-4: Two- Family Detached Dwelling (Duplex)	Use B-6: Multifamily Residential	Special exceptions and all other uses
Min. lot area	2,000 ft ²	5,000 ft ²	3,000 ft ²	5,000 ft ²	2,000 ft ² per unit; min. 8,000 ft ²	10,000 ft ²
Min. lot width	20 feet	40 feet	20 feet	50 feet	100 feet	100 feet
Front build-to line	Minimum: 10 feet Maximum: 30 feet					
Min. rear yard setback	25 feet					
Min. side yard setback	10 feet*	8 feet	8 feet*	8 feet	15 feet	15 feet
Max. building/ impervious coverage	45% / 60%					
Max. building height	40 feet (3 stories max.)					

***Zero (0) feet shall be provided where buildings on separate lots share a party wall.**

Note: Existing RM District standards may be accessed [here](#)

OR Office Residential District

Intent

The intent of the Office Residential District (OR) is to allow for limited, small-scale office and nonresidential uses within a historically residential section of Main Street. The regulations herein are intended to:

- A. Permit low-impact, small-scale and owner-occupied professional and business offices and a small variety of other low-impact nonresidential uses within existing residential buildings.*
- B. Encourage the continued use of existing buildings, which were originally constructed as residences, and discourage the demolition of such.*
- C. Encourage the preservation of the residential character of the district.*
- D. Limit the impact of nonresidential development on existing residences by requiring a residential character, limiting the scale of buildings, controlling the location of parking areas, and requiring buffer landscaping.*

Overview & Permitted Uses

Aside from renaming the ROR Restricted Office Residential to OR Office Residential District, made possible by the dissolution of the current OR district, the largest proposed change to the district relates to the expanded list of uses permitted by special exception and the associated requirements. The primary permitted use in the district are single-family detached homes and places of worship.

Uses permitted via special exception include libraries, museums, community centers, artist studios, funeral homes, professional or business offices, and mixed uses, and are only permitted when the following conditions are met:

- The use must preserve, utilize, and maintain the existing principal building. This requirement aims to incentivize the retention of existing buildings by allowing for new uses in adaptive reuse projects.
- Existing buildings may be expanded by no more than 25% of the gross floor area, plus additions are subject to certain design requirements.
- A landscape buffer is required if the use abuts a residential use.
- No more than two (2) dwelling units may be established within the building. The goal of this requirement is to minimize internal alterations to historically single-family homes.

Because redevelopment is deemphasized and adaptive reuse is promoted within this district, the dimensional standards are less of a factor for reuse and remain virtually untouched with the proposed updates.

CBD, TOD, and LI Zoning District Edits

The CBD Commercial Business District, TOD Transit Oriented Development District and LI Limited Industrial District did not receive substantial alterations aside from the significant changes to the mix of permitted uses and the relocation of use-specific standards to Article IV, Use Regulations. Due to the renaming and rework of permitted uses across the board, it is encouraged that interested parties study the [proposed Permitted Use Matrix](#) to the adopted [Schedule of Permitted Uses](#).

INO Institutional Overlay District

Intent

The existing civic and institutional buildings within the Borough of North Wales are integral to the built environment and are part of the essential fabric of the community by virtue of their architectural prominence and their longevity. In order to keep these important buildings in character with their original intended use, the intent of the Institutional Overlay District is to:

- A. *Recognize and promote the preservation of existing civic and institutional buildings by permitting their continued operation, alteration or expansion, and limited change of use to those uses which are most in-line with the original intended use.*
- B. *Provide suitable areas within the Borough to accommodate community service and institutional uses.*
- C. *To conditionally allow for educational institutions and residential care facilities on existing institutional properties and within existing institutional buildings, while ensuring the continued compatibility with adjacent uses and minimizing any adverse impacts on the surrounding community.*

Overview

As indicated in the intent of the district, the INO Institutional Overlay District promotes the retention and reuse of important civic and institutional buildings. When comparing the proposed boundary to the existing boundary, it is immediately clear that the district boundaries are more targeted: the area on Main Street between St. Luke’s Church and the North Penn Volunteer Fire Company was removed in favor of specific properties (buildings). The properties in the district include: North Wales Borough Hall, North Wales Elementary School (ca. 1927), North Penn Volunteer Fire Company, St. Luke’s Church (ca. 1909), North Wales Baptist Church (ca. 1861), St. Peter’s Lutheran Church (ca. 1869), St. Rose of Lima Church (ca. 1966) and its campus, and the North Wales Library.

Permitted Uses

As an overlay, the district allows for uses specific to the overlay in addition to uses that would be permitted by the underlying zoning district. The district allows for places of worship as well as libraries, museums and community centers upon issuance of a zoning permit. Educational institutions and residential care facilities, which are not permitted by underlying zoning districts, are permitted by conditional when the following standards are met (paraphrased):

- The applicant must provide an architectural elevation or rendering of the proposed alterations to the building with the application for conditional use.
- The principal buildings must be retained and preserved. Furthermore, the owner must guarantee the permanent preservation of the building through a legal agreement such as a façade easement.
- New buildings (not additions) may not be utilized for conditional uses.
- Additions may be utilized for conditional uses, but they are limited in area and have specific design standards.
- Outdoor lighting must be at the pedestrian scale, with a maximum lamppost height of 15 feet, and must be designed to mitigate light trespass.
- Landscape screen buffers are required when abutting a residential use.

Proposed Dimensional Standards

	Existing	Permitted Uses (Proposed)	Conditional Uses (Proposed)
Min. lot area	One acre	25,000 square feet	One acre
Min. lot width	50 feet at frontage; 200 feet at building setback line	75 feet	150 feet
Front setback	50 feet	Based on underlying zoning district standards	
Min. rear yard setback	50 feet	30 feet	50 feet
Min. side yard setback	50 feet	30 feet	50 feet
Max. building/ Impervious coverage	30%/65%	25%/ 50%	30%/60%
Max. Building Height	35 feet	40 feet (3 stories max.)	

Regulation of Uses

At the most basic level, zoning can be boiled down to setting “what” use is allowed “where” within a community. Figuring that out should be a straightforward process for the average user so, in that spirit, all uses permitted throughout the borough have been reviewed and reorganized into standardized use categories. Each of these “new” use categories are defined in Article IV, Use Regulations. In addition to a definition and description of each use, Article IV also prescribes any supplemental regulations attached each use (see the example below). To complement this, all permitted uses are reflected in a [borough-wide use matrix](#) that notes each use, where it is allowed, and the type of approval (zoning permit, special exception, conditional use, or prohibited).

Example use regulation:

Use D-7: Mixed Use. A building which contains both residential dwelling unit(s) and at least one nonresidential use. The following additional standards shall be satisfied:

- (a) Dwelling units shall not be located within the ground floor of any mixed use building. This shall not preclude incidental pedestrian entrances on the ground floor that lead to a dwelling elsewhere in the building.*
- (b) Regardless of the number of residential dwelling units proposed, the use regulations for Use B-6: Multifamily Development as set forth in § 208-18B(6) shall apply to all mixed use buildings.*
- (c) Only those uses which are expressly permitted in the applicable zoning district shall be permitted in a mixed use building. The applicable use regulations for said use(s) shall be complied with.*

Parking & Loading

Parking and loading is another integral piece of the zoning ordinance. Due to its importance, the parking and loading regulations are now housed within their own article, **Article XV, Parking and Loading**. This new article includes:

- **§ 208-61, General standards for parking areas**, sets the design requirements for parking areas.
- **§ 208-62, Minimum parking requirements by land use**, prescribes the minimum parking requirements for all land use categories. The minimum parking requirement for each use has been reviewed and assigned new values based on industry best practices and calibrated for the borough setting.
 - o Example: the parking requirement for retail businesses has been lowered from 5.5 spaces per 1,000 square feet (one space per 181 SF) to one space per 250 square feet.
- **§ 208-63, Parking reduction options**, provides a handful of options for applicants to lessen their parking requirement under certain circumstances. The reduction options includes provisions to allow the counting of legal on-street parking spaces as part of the total parking provided (though on-street parking remains public), the reduction of parking requirements for existing nonresidential buildings (promoting adaptive reuse), and encouraging the use of shared parking areas for uses with different peak parking demand periods.
- **§ 208-64, Off-street loading**, sets the minimum requirements and design standards for loading facilities.

Administrative Edits

- **Article XIX, Nonconforming Uses, Lots, Buildings, and Structures**, has been substantially edited so that the standards are more clear and concise.
- **Article XX, Administration**, has been reorganized, plus the zoning officer duties and conditional use process sections have been expanded with additional detail.

Wireless Communications Facilities

Article XVII, Wireless Communications Facilities, has been replaced entirely. The new article aligns with recent Federal and State statutes related to wireless communications facilities and, in particular, small wireless facilities. It is anticipated that small wireless facilities, which must meet a quite narrow definition set by state law, will be the principal form of wireless technology deployed in dense areas such as the borough.