



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS DRAFT ZONING CODE 2025

In 2022, the Village Board authorized the drafting of a new zoning code. The current Zoning Code was adopted in 1988. There are many uses today that simply were not in existence when the current code was written.

The Board and staff discussed the need to modernize land use regulations in the village to acknowledge new uses, streamline processes, use common language, minimize barriers to development and address critical challenges of our day. This new code must consider both the land use needs of today and also provide sufficient flexibility to remain relevant in the future.

What are some of the modern challenges? Housing shortage, reduced retail space needs, empty office buildings, oversupply of parking, and affordability.

### **Why is the Village considering different housing types?**

There are two primary reasons - housing shortage and affordability.

The United States has a deficit of 4.7 million homes nationally. The primary contributors to this shortage are underbuilding, smaller household size and growth in households, longer life expectancies, high interest rates, lack of equity funding for new home development, and increased construction costs. New home construction has not and is not keeping pace with household growth. Economists project the shortage to continue into the 2030s, even with increased construction. Addressing this shortage requires a concerted, multifaceted approach to increase housing supply and affordability, including more efficient use of land and government policy.

According to the American Community Survey, more than 75% of senior households live alone or with one other person, yet 60% of these households live in homes with at least three bedrooms. These homes are not only too big but 50% of them were built prior to 1980 and require serious renovation or do not meet the accessibility needs of the occupants. With a housing shortage, these seniors are forced to stay in homes that no longer meet their needs because there are an insufficient number of smaller housing types available. Only 10% of the country's housing units are ready to accommodate older people, as most homes have entry way steps, only upstairs bedrooms and bathrooms and inaccessible bathrooms.

In Northbrook 58.5 % of homeowners are 1-2 person households. Of homeowners, 22% earn less than \$75,000 per year or less and 25.6 % are cost burdened paying 30% or more of their income on housing. For the housing stock in Northbrook 59% were built 1979 or earlier.

In Northbrook, 80% of households who rent are 1-2 person households. Of renters earning \$75,000 or less per year 46% are cost burdened paying 30% or more of their income on housing. If you want to address housing affordability, it is necessary to increase housing options, reduce regulations, and welcome developers to expand housing types, and allow diverse housing types by right.

The Village is largely developed with few remaining undeveloped or underdeveloped parcels. To accommodate the needs of its current population and projected growth, Northbrook will need to focus on infill development and conversion of Retail and Office to Residential. Two strategies for infill development are two-unit dwellings, i.e., duplexes, and cottage courts.

### **How will updating the Zoning Code help?**

Increasing housing supply to meet the needs of current and projected populations will improve quality of life and well-being in the Village. Policymakers need to change zoning regulations to allow for multigenerational and intergenerational housing, as well as backyard accessory dwelling units and ease the way for more homes to get built, particularly at the affordable end of the market.

Housing typologies such as duplexes and cottage court developments are two possible options. The development of these housing types will not solve affordability challenges on their own, but they will provide additional housing options and add needed supply.

*Data source: the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Urban Institute, Harvard University*

### **Additional Information on Duplex units:**

#### **Q: Will duplexes be allowed on all single-family residential properties in Northbrook in the new Zoning Code?**

A: No. Duplexes will only be allowed in the R-5 Single Family Residential District, which consists of approximately 2,286 properties out of the 11,367 total single-family lots or 20% of the total housing stock within the village. Of those 2,286 lots in the R-5 district, 346 lots have already had new homes constructed in the last 25 years and are unlikely to be redeveloped again in the next 25 years. Therefore, there is something less than 16% of the housing stock that is eligible to be redeveloped as a duplex.

Over the last ten years, the average number of new homes built per year within the Village is 33, and in the last 5 years, the average number of new homes built per year has dropped to 23. If the addition of duplex units in R-5, caught on and 15% of the new homes built annually were duplex units, the village might see 2-4 units per year. This change if approved will not bring about major change or impact on the R-5 district.

#### **Q: Why is the village considering allowing duplex units in the R-5 single family zone?**

A: In the village 86.6% of the housing stock is single-family owner-occupied homes and only 1.2% duplex units. The Village has heard from existing residents that they want to downsize, and they want kids who grew up here to be able to afford to choose to live in Northbrook as adults. However, the village lacks sufficient housing types like smaller homes, duplex, triplex, quadplex, condos, and apartments. There are very few housing types that are 1000 sq. ft. -1800 sq. ft. The larger the structure – the greater the cost to build, heat, cool, power, and maintain. The Village wants housing choice and recognizes that people need different housing options that align with the different times of their lives. In addition, this zoning code is designed to serve the community for the next 30 years. Based on current housing trends, the next generation is demanding smaller units, rental by choice, low or no maintenance housing options, and housing that supports easy career mobility.

**Q: Do other surrounding communities allow duplex units in at least one single family zone?**

A: We asked our neighboring communities by conducting a survey through the Northwest Municipal Conference and the result was that 13 out of 22 or 59% of communities who responded allow duplexes (some allow tri-plex and quadplex units also) in at least one single family zone and 9 out of 22 allow them by right or 41%.

**Q: What are some of the communities who allow duplex units in at least one single family zone by right?**

A: Deerfield, Park Ridge, Highland Park, Wheeling, Libertyville, Mt. Prospect, Rolling Meadows, and Streamwood – to name a few.

**Q: How long have they been allowed and what differences from single family have been experienced?**

A: Some communities have allowed duplex units in single family zones since the 1950s.

Communities reported similar property values [1] unit which is a 3,000 square feet Single-family home has similar market value to a two-unit duplex with no notable increase or decrease in housing value for the surrounding single-family residents.

The surrounding communities who responded to the survey reported that traffic, property maintenance and emergency services calls were like those which are experienced in the single-family residences.

No communities reported being over-run by requests for duplex units; however, they have been added a few a year overtime (low or modest growth).

**Q: How do the parking requirements between a single-family home and a duplex compare?**

A: The parking requirements are the same for both single-family homes and duplex developments. Each must provide two off-street parking places per unit.

**Q: What does literature recommend regarding the development of duplex units?**

A: In short, if you want to address housing affordability, it is necessary to increase housing options, reduce regulations, and welcome developers to expand housing types, and allow diverse housing types by right. Eliminate or reduce single-family-only zones; allow more housing types and permit duplex and triplex units in all residential zones. Reduce lot size minimums; revisit structure size and encourage smaller structure sizes. Prioritize housing people over parking; reduce the amount of space you require for cars. Embrace ADUs; more density doesn't always mean bigger buildings. Allow missing middle housing everywhere.

**Q: Will Village emergency services be impacted?**

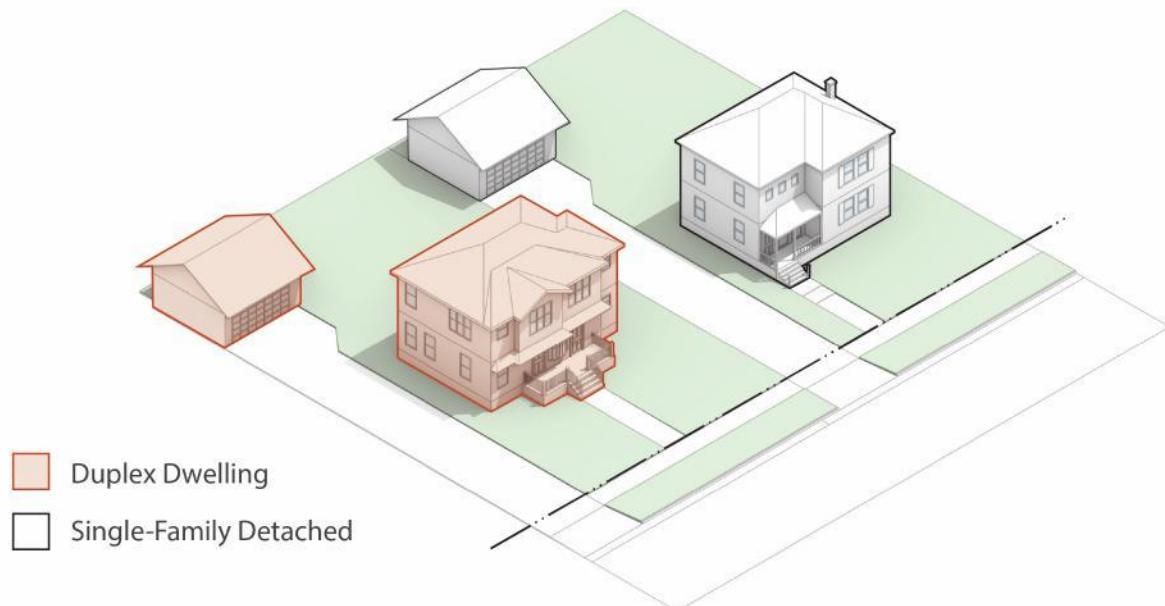
A: No. The structures are restricted to the same size as a new single-family structure which would result in the same amount of service responses and access to properties.

**Q: Can the Village utilities withstand inclusion of duplexes in the R-5 District?**

A: Yes. If a duplex is built to replace a single-family home, it is required to be built with the same restrictions as a single-family home to limit the setback from lot lines and height, as well as building footprint size on the lot and total allowed lot coverage. So the duplex would be no larger than a new single family home could be, resulting in the same amount of lot coverage for addressing stormwater runoff, and a similar number of plumbing fixtures as a new house would include (it is not uncommon for new homes to have two

laundry stations, 3+ bathrooms, a kitchen plus a generous wet bar or second kitchen) to handle water and sanitary services. The duplex could not be any larger than a newly constructed single-family home on the same lot which would result in the use of the same amount of electricity.

The images on the next page depict the setbacks, height, lot coverage, and building coverage requirements for a single-family structure or duplex in the R-5 District.



#### **Additional Information on Cottage Courts:**

**Q: Will cottage courts be allowed on all single-family residential properties in Northbrook in the new Zoning Code?**

A: No. Cottage Courts will only be allowed in the R-4 and R-5 Single Family Residential Districts, which consist of approximately 7,865 properties out of the 11,367 total single-family lots or 69% of the total housing stock within the village.

The R-5 District was originally proposed in the draft Zoning Code presented by staff at the July 15, 2025, and there was a public hearing whereupon members of the Plan Commission requested that the allowance be expanded to also include the R-4 Single Family Residential District. That proposed revision was presented at the August 19, 2025, Plan Commission public hearing.

**Q: Why is the village considering allowing cottage courts in the R-4 and R-5 single family zones?**

A: We have heard from existing residents that they want to downsize, and they want kids who grew up here to be able to afford to choose to live in Northbrook as adults. However, the village lacks sufficient housing types like smaller homes. There are very few housing types that are 1000 sq. ft. - 1800 sq. ft. The larger the structure – the greater the cost to build, heat, cool, power, and maintain. The Village wants housing choice and recognizes that people need different housing options that align with the different times of their lives. In addition, this zoning code is designed to serve the community for the next 30 years. Based on current housing trends, the next generation is demanding smaller units, rental by choice, low or no maintenance housing options, and housing that supports easy career mobility.

**Q: How much land is necessary for constructing a cottage court?**

A: While the zoning code bulk standards indicates a minimum lot area of 20,000 square feet, staff has put together an exhibit on a later page in this document indicating a need of over 40,000 square feet to build a cottage court development while meeting the zoning code standards and regulations.

**Q: Are there specific standards that a cottage court development must meet?**

A: Yes. The following is an excerpt from the proposed new Zoning Code outlining all the standards that would be required to be met for a cottage court to be constructed.

**1. Dwelling, Cottage Court.**

a. **Number of Cottage Courts.** A maximum of one cottage court shall be allowed per development site.

b. **Dwelling Unit Standards.**

i. **Dwelling Unit Lot Standards.** If the dwellings and cottage court buildings are located on individual lots, the following standards shall apply.

a) **Lot Area.** The minimum size of a dwelling, cottage court building lot shall be 2,500 square feet.

ii. **Size of Dwelling Units.**

a) A dwelling, cottage court building utilized as a dwelling shall have a maximum floor area of 1,800 square feet.

b) A dwelling, cottage court building utilized as a common amenity space shall have a maximum floor area of 4,000 square feet.

iii. **Number of Dwelling Units.**

a) A maximum of one dwelling unit shall be allowed per building in a dwelling, cottage court.

b) A dwelling, cottage court development site shall have a minimum of four buildings per site.

c) One of the allowed dwellings, cottage home court buildings may be utilized for common amenity space.

iv. **Building Orientation.**

a) Buildings shall be oriented with their main entrance facing the shared common court open space, except for corner buildings.

b) Corner buildings shall be oriented with their main entrance facing either the shared common court open space or the public right of way.

v. **Permanent Foundation Required.** Individual cottage court buildings shall be affixed to the ground with a permanent foundation.

c. **Common Court Open Space.**

i. Buildings in a dwelling-cottage court shall be arranged around a common court.

- ii. The common court shall be open to and visible from the public right of way.
- iii. The common court shall have a minimum area of 2,500 square feet.
- iv. The common court shall have a minimum width of 30 feet as measured from the interior of the pedestrian walkway.
- v. Required building setbacks do not count as common court open space.
- vi. A maximum of 30 percent of a common court open space may be used for stormwater management if designed as a rain garden or bioswale.

**d. Pedestrian Access.**

- i. A pedestrian walkway with a minimum width of five feet shall connect all buildings to the public right of way, common court open space, and parking areas.
- ii. The pedestrian walkway shall be setback a minimum of six feet from building entrances.

**e. Vehicle Access and Parking.**

- i. Parking and driveways shall be located to the rear of the buildings in a dwelling-cottage court.
- ii. Parking shall be accessed by an alley if an alley exists.
- iii. If no alley exists, parking shall be accessed by a single driveway.
- iv. The driveway shall be located either:
  - a) From the secondary street for a corner development site, or
  - b) To the interior side of the buildings on the development site.

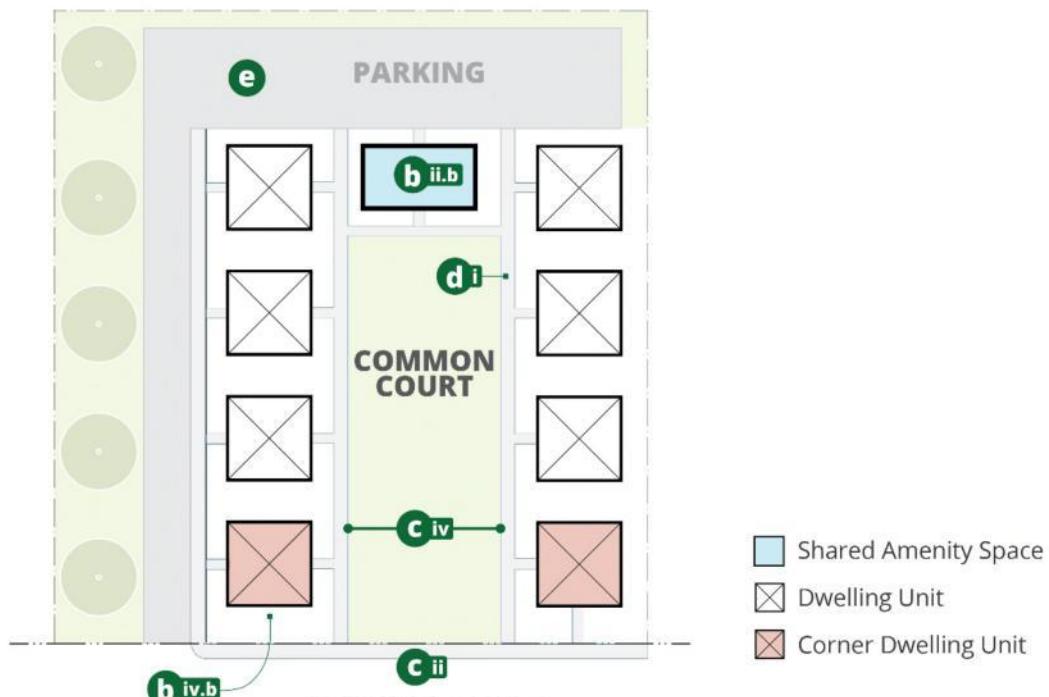


Figure 1 Dwelling, Cottage Court

**Q: How do the parking requirements compare between a single-family home and a cottage court?**

A: The parking requirement for a cottage court is 1.5 spaces per unit, while the parking requirement for a single-family home is 2 spaces per unit.

Table 3-103: Single Family Residential Districts Dimensional Standards

1 = Single Family Detached	R-1		R-2		R-3		R-4		R-5		
2 = Duplex	1	3	1	3	1	3	1	3	1	2	3
3 = All Other Uses	1	3	1	3	1	3	1	3	1	2	3
<b>Lot Standards (Minimum)</b>											
Lot Area, Interior Lot (sq ft)	50,000	50,000	30,000	30,000	20,000	20,000	10,000	20,000	7,000	7,000	20,000
Lot Area, Corner Lot (sq ft)	50,000	50,000	30,000	30,000	20,000	20,000	11,000	20,000	8,000	8,000	20,000
Lot Width, Interior Lot (ft)	175	175	125	125	100	100	65	110	50	50	110
Lot Width, Corner Lot (ft)	175	175	125	125	110	110	80	110	65	65	110
<b>Building Setbacks</b>											
Front, Minimum (ft)	60	60	40	40	35	35	30	30	25	25	25
Corner Side, Minimum (ft)	60	60	40	40	35	35	30	30	25	25	25
Interior Side, Minimum (ft)	40	20 (1)	12	20 (1)	10	20 (1)	9	9 (1)	6	6	6 (1)
Rear, Minimum (ft)	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40
<b>Building Standards</b>											
Height, Maximum (ft)	40	40	35	35	35	35	35	35	30	30	35
Height, Maximum (stories)	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	2
Lot Coverage, Maximum (%)	50	70	50	70	50	70	50	70	50	50	70
Building Coverage, Maximum (%)	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35
<b>Notes</b>											
(1) A minimum of 40 feet shall be required when adjacent to a single-family detached residential use.											
(2) Buildings purpose built for Place of Worship uses may have a maximum height of 55 feet and may include spires and minarets with a maximum height of 70 feet.											

