



NOTICE OF AGENDA

PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

[City of Forest Lake - Link to Meeting Livestream](#)

Forest Lake City Center – Council Chambers
Forest Lake, Minnesota

December 10, 2025 – 6:00 PM

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
3. Pledge of Allegiance
4. Approve the Agenda (Action)
5. Open Forum - Citizen Petitions, Requests and Concerns: Please sign in at the front table. *The Open Forum is available for residents to express personal opinions for any item of business. Please limit your comments to three (3) minutes.*
6. Consent Agenda Considerations (Action Items)*
 - a. Approve Minutes from Regular Meeting of November 12, 2025
 - b. Revised Resolution No. 12-10-25-01 – Johnsen Variance, 780 Woodland Dr

**Planning Commission may remove any item from the consent agenda for specific consideration.*
7. Regular Agenda (Action Items)
 - a. PUBLIC HEARING – Zoning Text Amendment for Wireless Communication Towers – Hosanna Lutheran Church – 9300 Scandia Trail N
8. Discussion
 - a. Code Amendments
9. Updates
10. Adjourn



Planning Commission

Regular Meeting

~ Minutes ~

1408 Lake Street South
Forest Lake, MN 55025
www.ci.forest-lake.mn.us

Wednesday, November 12, 2025

6:00 PM

City Center - Council Chamber

[City of Forest Lake - Livestream and Recorded Meetings](#)

1. Call to Order

The Meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m.

2. Roll Call

| Attendee Name | Title | Status | Arrived |
|-----------------|-----------------------|---------|--------------------|
| Paul Girard | Commission Chair | Absent | |
| Susan Young | Commission Vice-Chair | Present | |
| Martin Heumann | Planning Commissioner | Present | Arrived at 6:04 PM |
| Don Stehler | Planning Commissioner | Present | |
| Andy Aplikowski | Planning Commissioner | Present | |
| Jesse Wagner | Planning Commissioner | Present | |
| Tim Stender | Planning Commissioner | Present | |

3. Pledge of Allegiance

4. Approve the Agenda

No comments on the Agenda.

Motion: Commissioner Stehler made a Motion to Approve the Agenda as presented.

Motion seconded by Commissioner Wagner. Motion carried 5-0.

5. Open Forum – Citizens Petitions, Requests, and Concerns

*The Open Forum is available for residents to express personal opinions for any item of business.
Please limit your comments to three (3) minutes.*

None.

6. Consent Agenda Considerations (Action Items)*

a. Approve Planning Commission Meeting Minutes from October 8, 2025

~~b. Approve Planning Commission Meeting Minutes from October 22, 2025~~

Comments: Commissioner Stender requested to move item 6.b. to the regular agenda.

Motion: Commissioner Stehler made a Motion to Approve Consent Agenda Item 6.a.

Motion seconded by Commissioner Stender. Motion carried 6-0.

b. Approve Planning Commission Meeting Minutes from October 22, 2025



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Motion: Commissioner Aplikowski made a Motion to Approve the Planning Commission Meeting Minutes from October 22, 2025.

Motion seconded by Commissioner Stehler. Motion carried 5-0-1 (Stender abstained).

7. Regular Agenda (Action Items)

a. Public Hearing: Variance to allow for Garage at 780 Woodland Dr – Jim Johnsen

Assistant Community Development Director Gilmore reviewed the variance request submitted by Jim Johnsen to relocate a detached garage from an adjacent parcel to a principal lot. He summarized the existing conditions of the lot and garage, the proposed location, and the variance evaluation.

Commissioner Aplikowski asked if the intent was to split the lot after. Assistant Community Development Director Gilmore confirmed that the intent was to consolidate the lot.

Commissioner Stehler asked if that could be a part of the condition. Community Development Director Wittman said that they could make that a part of the condition if they determined it was a reasonable condition of approval.

Acting Chair Young said that lot 776 encroached on the unaddressed parcel. She noted that it would be difficult to build anything without significant variances. She said that they would like to reduce the variances and the impervious surfaces.

Public Hearing was opened at 6:12 p.m.

James Johnsen, 780 Woodland Drive, provided a history of the property location. He noted that his intent was to move the garage to the other side, where it should be, and he had the intent to rent out the property. He said he did not want to currently split the lot because he expressed concerns about increasing the tax burden. He hoped to split the lot in the future.

Commissioner Aplikowski confirmed that he owned 776 and 780. Mr. Johnsen confirmed this information.

Public Hearing was closed at 6:15 p.m.

Commissioner Stehler recommended that the subdivision of the lot happens to meet the impervious surface requirements.

Commissioner Wagner voiced agreement, as not combining the lot was a financial decision rather than to make it conform.



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Mr. Johnsen expressed concerns with splitting the lot currently because of the burden of the taxes and his future ownership.

Commissioner Stehler noted that the land value should not change, so the tax burden should not change.

Acting Chair Young suggested adding a comment that the unaddressed lot had to be split between the two properties and not be sold as-is.

Assistant Community Development Director Gilmore noted that the unaddressed lot could be added to 780.

Acting Chair Young asked if 776 did not meet the side setback. Community Development Director Wittman answered that it was a non-conforming property and was not a part of the decision tonight.

Acting Chair Young asked who owned the unnumbered lot. Community Development Director Wittman responded that all three parcels were independent and owned by Mr. Johnsen.

Commissioner Stehler suggested the applicant reapply with the three lots divided into two lots.

Acting Chair Young voiced concerns about making the applicant reapply due to the additional fee costs.

Community Development Director Wittman suggested stronger requirements for the future, such as before releasing the building permit.

Motion: Commissioner Stehler made a Motion to recommend Approval of Resolution 11-12-25-01 with an additional condition that the three lots be combined into two lots prior to the release of the building permit.

Assistant Community Development Director Gilmore suggested that they deny the variance request for the impervious surface because of the conditions that would resolve the issue.

Community Development Director Wittman suggested the approval of Resolution 11-12-25-01 with an approval of the setback variance, deny the impervious surface variance, with the conditions outlined by staff and the Planning Commission tonight, and direct staff to bring a new resolution back.

Acting Chair Young summarized the action.



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Amended Motion: Commissioner Stehler made a Motion to Amend the approval of Resolution 11-12-25-01 with an approval of the setback variance, deny the impervious surface variance, with the conditions outlined by staff and the Planning Commission tonight, and direct staff to bring a new resolution back.

Motion seconded by Commissioner Aplikowski. Motion carried 5-0.

Community Development Director Wittman clarified the information for the resident.

b. Public Hearing: Interim Use Permit for Forest Lake Cannabis at 1467 Lake St S, Suite 200

Assistant Community Development Director Gilmore reviewed the Interim Use Permit submitted for Forest Lake Cannabis. He summarized the purpose of an interim use permit. He summarized the site and use details and noted that the key issue with the applicant was applying for the microbusiness license, which triggers a 250-foot residential buffer. He provided an overview of the recommendation options: either a denial or a conditional approval.

Acting Chair Young said the building had four different business opportunities, including a physical therapy office. She said she accounted for 18 parking spaces for employees, and 15 parking spaces in the front, plus three handicap spaces for customers. She said there may be enough employee parking in the back if the other two spaces remain vacant. She did not know if six spaces in the front would be sufficient for this specific business.

Community Development Director Wittman reviewed the challenges with multi-tenant buildings in a multi-use district. She noted that the parking was defined when the building was established, so there was difficulty with denying on the basis that there is no parking, because it limits the use of the structure.

Commissioner Stehler noted that the parking was a problem for the building owner if he could not rent the additional spaces.

Acting Chair Young said that his priority was not to rent the space and not to be concerned about parking.

Commissioner Heumann asked if it was a stop-and-go or a stop-and-browse type of shop. Community Development Director Wittman answered that she could not answer the question.

Commissioner Aplikowski expressed concerns about approving a business that would do cultivation in a residential space. Community Development Director Wittman noted that cultivation was not planned for the site.



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Commissioner Aplikowski asked if that would bring about legal challenges if they were licensed by the State of Minnesota. Community Development Director Wittman answered that they were licensed by the State for a microbusiness license with a retail endorsement.

Commissioner Aplikowski asked to see the breakdown of the square footage.

Jamie White, 5054 93rd Avenue North, Brooklyn Park, introduced herself as the consultant.

Matt License, 17870 Jaguar Circle, Lakeville, introduced himself as the legal counsel.

Jeff Kressler, 4213 W 125th Street, Savage, introduced himself as the applicant.

Ms. White read a statement about the location. She noted that they had no plans to do cultivation. She noted that the applicant was pre-approved for a microbusiness license, and they were unable to switch their license. She requested strict conditions that the Planning Commission approve the Interim Use Permit with a condition that they only utilize the retail component at this location.

Commissioner Aplikowski asked how much traffic they anticipated daily. Ms. White answered that they planned to have seven employees, and they would like plenty of traffic, but had no estimate of how many customers they would attract.

Public Hearing was opened at 6:48 p.m.

Assistant Community Development Director Gilmore noted that they received an email from the business itself that was included in the record.

Public Hearing was closed at 6:50 p.m.

Commissioner Stehler asked about issues of enforcement with cultivation in the future. Community Development Director Wittman answered that the State had an understanding with the microbusiness license with the retail endorsements that the City could revoke the license immediately and require them to rectify the matter.

Commissioner Stender noted that it would be difficult for the City to determine if they were not producing marijuana in the backroom. Assistant Community Development Director Gilmore answered that the City could complete surprise inspections annually.

Community Development Director Wittman said if they were doing cultivation, they would have to notify the Office of Cannabis Management immediately, and the local registration would be revoked.



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Commissioner Aplikowski expressed concerns about whether the State licensed the business for manufacturing. He asked if they were required to approve two dispensaries. Community Development Director Wittman answered that the dispensaries would be capped at three. She said that no local registrations had been submitted.

Community Development Director Wittman said they tried to highlight the type of uses and appropriate zoning uses. She noted that the higher intensity uses were not meant to be near residential areas.

Acting Chair Young expressed concerns that they had to have at least two dispensaries. She asked if they had any information from the City Attorney about the type of license so the Planning Commission could restrict it to only retail. Community Development Director Wittman answered that this information was not in writing from the Legal Council.

Commissioner Stehler asked if the Interim Use Permit was terminated after five years. Community Development Director Wittman answered that it was automatically terminated after five years.

Commissioner Heumann asked if the 250 feet was for all businesses. Community Development Director Wittman answered that it was the license type in the State.

Commissioner Heumann asked if liquor businesses had similar requirements. Community Development Director Wittman answered that there was a wide range of uses in the license type.

Acting Chair Young confirmed that they limited liquor licenses. Community Development Director Wittman answered that she did not have an answer.

Commissioner Heumann noted the presentation was well researched and presented.

Motion: Commissioner Stender made a Motion to recommend Approval of a conditional use of an interim use permit to the City Council on the condition that the final license type and use meet all City Code requirements and approval standards, in addition to the thirteen conditions listed in the staff report.

Motion seconded by Commissioner Heumann. Motion carried 5-1 (Aplikowski voted against).

Acting Chair Young recommended that the City staff inform the City Council that there was a lack of clarity on the City's ability to enforce retail-only and shut down State-authorized use.



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Ms. White thanked the Planning Commission for their time. She provided clarity that even though the license type was a micro license, which allowed for cultivation, they would have to apply to the State and submit a plan to cultivate. They have not taken this step.

Commissioner Stender asked if they could manufacture elsewhere. Ms. White answered that retail licenses allow businesses to manufacture elsewhere and have five different businesses in the State of Minnesota. The micro license did not permit this, and the company only plans to have one business in the State of Minnesota.

8. Discussion

None.

9. Updates

Acting Chair Young asked about an update on the sales tax and public works facility. City Councilmember Larson answered that they would discuss the public works facility at the next City Council workshop, and the sales tax was still a process.

Michael Birchland voiced excitement to start as the Planner.

Assistant Community Development Director Gilmore voiced excitement for Mr. Birchland to start.

Community Development Director Wittman welcomed Mr. Birchland and the new building official, Jason Wagner. She noted that the City Council would discuss the Comprehensive Plan Amendment Process at the next City Council Workshop. The Metropolitan Council would provide information to Forest Lake on what they need to incorporate. She noted that the City Council was proactive in advocating for the difficulties in meeting the density requirements. She said that some of the high-level information should be online on Thursday.

Commissioner Stehler asked if Eden Prairie had to meet a similar density requirement and how they could get around the option. Community Development Director Wittman answered that each community had a classification.

Community Development Director Wittman said she would share the concerns about transportation.

Commissioner Aplikowski suggested slowing down development so as not to adhere to the Metropolitan Council.

Acting Chair Young said that the City Council workshops were open meetings.



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10.Adjourn

Motion: Commissioner Stehler made a Motion to Adjourn the meeting at 7:22 p.m.

Motion seconded by Commissioner Stender. Motion carried 6-0.

DATE: December 10, 2025

TO: Chair Girard and Planning Commissioners

STAFF ORIGINATOR: Steven Gilmore, Assistant Community Development Director

AGENDA ITEM: Updated Resolution for Variance Request: 780 Woodland Drive (Johnsen)

Purpose

The enclosed updated resolution reflects the Planning Commission's direction provided at the November meeting regarding Mr. Johnsen's variance request for 780 Woodland Drive. The revisions incorporate the Commission's conditions related to lot consolidation and clarify the disposition of the impervious surface variance.

Background and Commission Direction

At the prior meeting, the Commission discussed the applicant's request to relocate a detached garage onto the parcel containing the principal structure. Conversation centered on the relationship between the three parcels under common ownership (776, 780, and the unaddressed lot) and the resulting impervious surface and setback considerations. Commissioners noted that the impervious surface variance stemmed from the lot configuration rather than a hardship, and that combining the parcels would resolve nonconformities without requiring an impervious surface variance.

Following discussion, the Commission directed that:

1. **The three parcels must be combined into two lots prior to release of any building permit**, with the unaddressed parcel incorporated into 780 Woodland Drive or otherwise divided between the two properties as appropriate.
2. **The setback variance may be approved** as requested.
3. **The impervious surface variance should be denied**, as the required lot consolidation will eliminate the need for such relief.
4. Staff was directed to prepare a revised resolution incorporating these conditions and clarifications.

The amended motion recommending approval of the setback variance, denial of the impervious surface variance, and inclusion of the lot-consolidation requirement passed unanimously (5–0).

Action

Staff has updated the previously tabled Resolution 11-12-25-01, which is now renumbered as Resolution 12-10-25-01, to incorporate the Planning Commission's direction. The revised resolution is provided on the Consent Agenda for the Commission's approval.

**CITY OF FOREST LAKE
WASHINGTON COUNTY, MINNESOTA**

**PLANNING COMMISSION
RESOLUTION NO. 12-10-25-01**

**A RESOLUTION MEMORIALIZING PLANNING COMMISSION ACTIONS PERTAINING TO
VARIANCES REQUESTED AT 780 WOODLAND DRIVE**

WHEREAS, JAMES R. JOHNSEN (“Owner”) owns the real property located at 780 Woodland Drive, Forest Lake, Washington County, Minnesota, PID No. 09-032-21-31-0025 (the “Primary Property”) as legally described on Exhibit A, and the adjacent unaddressed real property identified as PID No. 09-032-21-31-0026 (the “Sending Property”) as legally described on Exhibit A; and

WHEREAS, applicant JAMES R. JOHNSEN (“Applicant”), submitted a complete application to the City of Forest Lake on September 16, 2025, requesting a 21’ front yard setback variance and an 5% impervious surface coverage variance increase to allow the relocation of an existing detached garage from the Sending Property to the Primary Property containing the principal dwelling (collectively, the “Variances”); and

WHEREAS, following publication and mailing of required notices, the Planning Commission held a duly noticed public hearing on November 12, 2025, at which all persons wishing to speak were provided an opportunity to be heard; and

WHEREAS, upon review of the request, the Planning Commission found that the front yard setback variance met the practical difficulty criteria contained in City Code §153.036(D)(1)(a–e), but also determined that the impervious surface variance appeared unnecessary if the Applicant proceeded with a lot line adjustment/lot consolidation that would combine portions of the Sending Property with the Primary Property, thereby bringing impervious surface coverage into conformance with the 30% Shoreland Overlay limit.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Planning Commission of the City of Forest Lake hereby denies an impervious surface coverage variance of 5%, allowing a total of 35% impervious surface coverage for the Primary Property.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Planning Commission of the City of Forest Lake hereby approves a front yard setback variance of 21.0 feet, allowing a 9.0-foot setback from the Primary Property’s front property line with the following conditions:

1. The Applicant shall complete a City-approved lot line adjustment/lot consolidation combining all or portions of PID 09-032-21-31-0026 with PID 09-032-21-31-0025 prior to issuance of any building permit for the relocated garage.
2. No construction or demolition shall occur before the issuance of the required City approvals and permitting.
3. The applicant or owner shall receive all necessary City, County, State, and Comfort Lake-Forest Lake Watershed District permits prior to starting any site work.

4. The applicant shall provide the City with a certificate of survey and revised detailed site plans with the building permit for City approval. These plans are to ensure the relocated garage and supporting improvements are installed and graded as to not negatively affect the neighbor's properties.
5. The applicant shall provide the City with a driveway permit and right-of-way permit for City approval.

ADOPTED by the Planning Commission of the City of Forest Lake this 10th day of December, 2025.

CITY OF FOREST LAKE

By: _____
Paul Girard, Planning Commission Chair

Attest: _____
Jolleen Chaika
City Clerk

RESOLUTION NO. 12-10-25-01
EXHIBIT A

Primary Property Address:

780 Woodland Dr, Forest Lake MN.

Property Legal Description:

SUBDIVISION NAME - WOODLAND PARK LOT 9 BLOCK 1 SUBDIVISIONCD 33745

PID: 09-032-21-31-0025

Property to be Split:

UNADDRESSED, Forest Lake MN.

Property Legal Description:

SUBDIVISION NAME - WOODLAND PARK LOT 10 BLOCK 1 SUBDIVISIONCD 33745

PID: 09-032-21-31-0026

Secondary Property Address:

776 Woodland Dr, Forest Lake MN

Property Legal Description:

SUBDIVISION NAME - WOODLAND PARK LOT 11 BLOCK 1 SUBDIVISIONCD 33745

PID: 09-032-21-31-0027



STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: December 10, 2025

TO: City of Forest Lake Planning Commission

STAFF ORIGINATOR: Madison Richard, Consultant City Planner
Nathan Fuerst, Consultant City Planner

AGENDA ITEM: Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment – Towers

INTRODUCTION:

The applicant, Buell Consulting, Inc., has requested a Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment to permit wireless towers in the Single-Family (SF) Residential Zoning District and make applicable changes to the associated performance standards.

The amendment is being brought forward to permit a future application for a new AT&T cell tower, camouflaged as a bell tower structure, at Hosanna Lutheran Church, located at 9300 Scandia Trail N (PIDs 2403221220005 and 2303221110014). Any applications or proposals at Hosanna Lutheran Church will require the property owner and/or applicant to obtain the required entitlements and permits.

The Planning Commission will hold a public hearing and provide a recommendation to the City Council who will make a final determination on the request. A project narrative submitted by the Applicant is appended to this report.

ANALYSIS:

Proposal

The applicant has proposed the following general revisions to the Forest Lake Zoning Code, which are further explained in their narrative:

- Amend the Comprehensive Use Table to permit towers as an accessory use to institutional use in the SF (Single Family) district with a Conditional Use Permit (CUP)
- Amend Section 153.092 (JJ) to:
 - Reduce the minimum lot area for towers located in residential districts from 10 acres to 2.5 acres, if accessory to institutional use.
 - Reduce tower setback requirements from lot lines, adjacent residential dwellings, and to establish a property line setback defined as a “fall zone” to be substantiated by an engineering letter.
 - Eliminate restrictions for towers located within 1-mile of an existing tower.
 - Increase the permitted height of towers to a maximum of 125-feet.

Conditional Use Permits

A Conditional Use Permit (CUP) is a land use the city permits in a zoning district only when the proposal meets certain performance standards. Approvals for CUPs do not expire and run indefinitely with the land. The applicant is requesting Towers be permitted with a CUP in the Single-Family (SF) Residential Zoning District, with associated performance standards for those uses with Future Land Use guidance of Public/Institutional.

As there is no institutional zoning district, some institutional uses (schools, public buildings, churches, etc.) may be on land zoned Single-Family Residential. Towers are permitted in the following residential districts with the following entitlements:

- Conservancy (C) and Agriculture (A) Districts – CUP
- Rural Residential (RR) District – Accessory Use with a CUP
- Mixed Single-Family Residential (MXR-1) District – Interim Use Permit (IUP)

Staff are supportive of the request to add the Single Family (SF) district to the list of districts where a tower can be permitted. Considering that districts with both lower and higher levels of residential density permit towers (with conditions), staff feel the same is appropriate for the SF district.

Performance Standards

Acres

The applicant is requesting that the minimum lot size for towers in residential districts be reduced to 2.5 acres to match the standard applied in commercial and industrial zones. Staff recommend retaining the existing 10-acre minimum for towers in residential zones, consistent with standards for agricultural and residentially zoned properties and maintaining an appropriate buffer from nearby homes. The applicant owns two adjoining parcels totaling approximately 11.33 acres, and staff would support a lot consolidation to meet the current 10-acre requirement, avoiding the need to reduce the standard. Reducing the threshold to 2.5 acres for this request could create unintended precedent for tower placement on significantly smaller residential lots.

Setbacks

The applicant has requested a reduction in setbacks for towers by “reducing the minimum setback from residential dwellings to the tower’s height”. Additionally, the applicant is requesting the property line setback be defined as within the “fall zone” that may be less than the tower height, so long it can be substantiated by an engineer confirming the tower would collapse within property lines.

Code presently requires to be set back twice the tower height to any residential dwelling (excluding the site the tower would be located) or a minimum of the tower height from any property line. City Code Section 153.092(JJ)(2)(f) requires approval and certification from a

registered professional engineer that the tower complies with a manufacturer's specifications but does not exempt the applicant from meeting the required setbacks.

Staff are not supportive of a reduction in tower setbacks from a property boundary, the present ordinance language attempts to ensure that no impacts be created to adjacent properties in a manner that can be consistently applied. While a lot line setback is consistent across other local municipalities' regulations, the City should consider whether to be less restrictive on requiring that tower height be doubled to a residential dwelling.

Proximity

The applicant is requesting an amendment to the City's proximity standards between communication apparatus', stating "a more effective approach requires alternative site analysis" for determining a need.

Staff are not supportive of this amendment, as the distance between towers ensures there is not an excess of towers in one area that may create potential negative impacts on adjoining properties. Moreover, because the proposed tower (regardless of its placement on the applicant's property) fully complies with the existing 1-mile separation standard, this amendment is unnecessary and has no bearing on the current request. The City could consider, in the future, whether to remove or limit the distance between towers based on the height of each tower, rather than a general 1-mile distance requirement.

Height

The applicant is requesting the City establish a maximum height for towers in the Single-Family Residential District of 125 feet for towers that can accommodate a second additional user. As currently approved in the Rural Residential District, the maximum height of towers is 100 feet, with 15 additional feet permitted for apparatus attached to the tower or structure.

Staff are not supportive of this amendment, as the maximum height of 100 feet ensures there are limited potential negative impacts on adjoining properties. The City could consider whether to increase the maximum height of the tower, for those towers that can accommodate multiple users, rather than the general 100-foot height requirement which does not make exceptions for additional users.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommend moving forward only with the amendments needed to allow towers as a conditional use in the Single-Family (SF) District on parcels that meet the existing 10-acre minimum. Other requested changes may not be necessary for consideration of a tower on this site and could have broader implications for residential districts. For this reason, staff suggest retaining the current 10-acre lot size requirement, maintaining existing setback standards, keeping the one-mile tower separation requirement, and continuing to apply the 100-foot maximum tower height. These approaches would align the SF District with the City's established

residential tower framework without introducing modifications that extend beyond the needs of the present request.

Findings of Fact

Section 153.037 of the Forest Lake City Code indicates “the Planning Commission recommendation and City Council decision on any zoning amendment, whether text or map amendment, is a matter of legislative discretion that is not controlled by any particular standard. However, in making their recommendation and decision, the Planning Commission and City Council shall consider the following standards...”

Comprehensive Plan

- The consistency of the proposed amendment with the Comprehensive Plan.
- Whether the proposed amendment provides a more workable way to achieve the intent and purposes of this [Zoning Code] chapter and the Comprehensive Plan.

The Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment is not in conflict with the Comprehensive Plan. Wireless towers are not mentioned throughout the plan, but this proposal will provide the opportunity for improved connectivity options for residents and visitors to Forest Lake.

Zoning Code

- The consistency of the proposed amendment with the intent and general regulations of this [Zoning Code] chapter.
- The extent to which the proposed amendment is consistent with the overall structure and organization of this [Zoning Code] chapter.
- Whether the proposed amendment corrects an error or omission, adds clarification to existing requirements, or reflects a change in policy.
- The extent to which the proposed amendment creates nonconformities.

If approved, the amendment would extend the existing ability to construct towers on parcels of at least 10 acres, currently permitted in other residential zoning districts, to properties zoned Single-Family (SF). This change would align the SF District with the standards already applied elsewhere in the City’s residential zoning framework and would clarify that towers may be considered on qualifying 10-acre parcels within the district without creating new or expanded allowances beyond those that already exist.

General Public Benefit

- That the proposed amendment will benefit the residents of the City as a whole, and not just the applicant, property owner(s), neighbors of any property under consideration, or other special interest groups, and the extent to which the proposed use would be in the public interest.
- The relative gain to the public, as compared to the hardship imposed upon the applicant.

The benefit of this amendment is not limited to the original applicant. In addition to potential advantages for existing or future tower owners and operators, it could be said that the general public may also benefit through opportunities for improved connectivity, enhanced service reliability, and broader coverage. Increased telecommunications capacity could, in turn, support public safety, economic activity, and overall quality of life.

Recommended Decision and Conditions

Planning Commission Discussion and Recommendation

The Planning Commission will hold a public hearing, which has been duly noticed, on this matter on December 10, 2025. Any public testimony provided at the public hearing will be summarized verbally to the City Council. The Planning Commission will provide a recommendation to the City Council on the Zoning Ordinance Amendment.

Staff have prepared a draft ordinance reflecting the level of code changes considered appropriate for City consideration at this time. Based on the discussion and findings presented, staff recommend that the **Planning Commission forward a recommendation of approval to the City Council regarding the proposed amendments outlined in:**

1. **Ordinance No. XX, an ordinance amending Title XV, Chapter 153, Sections 153.065, 153.069 and 153.092.**

Any pertinent information from the Planning Commission's discussion will be conveyed to the City Council by staff, both in written materials and through the staff presentation.

ATTACHMENTS:

Application
Single-Family Residential Zoning Map
DRAFT Ordinance – Zoning Ordinance Amendment



SENT VIA EMAIL

October 10, 2025

Madison Richard
City of Forest Lake
1408 Lake Street South
Forest Lake, MN 55025

RE: AT&T Mobility / Text Amendment / Hosanna Lutheran Church / Site Name: Old Log Cabin

Dear Ms. Richard,

Buell Consulting, Inc., on behalf of AT&T Mobility, respectfully submits this request for approval of a text amendment to §153.096(JJ) of the City of Forest Lake's zoning ordinance regarding wireless communication facilities.

The purpose of this proposed amendment is to update zoning provisions to accommodate the construction of a new AT&T cell tower, to be camouflaged as a church steeple, at Hosanna Lutheran Church, as well as on other institutional properties which may be necessary to provide adequate wireless communication services in the future.

Site Address: 9300 Scandia Trail North, Forest Lake, MN 55025

PID: 24.032.21.22.0005 / 23.032.21.11.0014

A text amendment is required as cell towers are not currently recognized as permitted, conditional, or interim uses within the Single-Family Residential District (SF) where the subject property is located. This also precludes the possibility of a variance under current zoning regulations.

The proposed cell tower is intended to improve AT&T wireless service coverage for residents and visitors in the lake area, as well as the surrounding residential and commercial districts. In addition to standard voice, text, and home internet services, this infrastructure will also support AT&T's FirstNet program for first responders. Reliable wireless connectivity is essential for safety on the lake, as mobile phones are often the

sole means of contacting emergency services for many boaters. Following an assessment of several potential sites, AT&T has identified the Hosanna Lutheran Church parcel as the only suitable location for this project.

The requested text amendment would permit cell towers as a conditional use within SF districts containing institutional uses, such as churches or city-owned properties whose primary function is non-residential despite their location in an SF district. Additionally, new requirements would ensure that cell towers are designed to blend with their surroundings through stealth or camouflage measures.

Furthermore, revisions to the following performance standards in §153.096(JJ) are proposed as part of the amendment:

2) Performance standards for all towers.

- (b) On any parcel of land zoned for agricultural or residential purposes, the minimum lot size for construction of a tower shall be 10 acres. On a vacant parcel of land zoned for commercial/industrial purposes, the minimum lot size is 2.5 acres. On a parcel of land on which a principal use exists, a tower shall be considered an accessory use and a smaller parcel of land may be leased, provided all standards contained in this chapter can be met.

We propose institutional uses within residentially zoned districts be subject to the 2.5 acre minimum. Many institutional parcels are less than 10 acres in size and thus the larger minimum would be unnecessarily restrictive. Limiting allowable locations for cell towers to institutional uses addresses concerns regarding placement of freestanding towers in single or multi-family residential lots.

- (n) The tower shall be located twice the tower height to any residential dwelling other than the dwelling on the parcel on which the tower is to be located or a minimum of the tower height from any property line. However, towers must meet the setback in the zoning district they are located in if the setback is greater than the height of the tower.

We recommend reducing the minimum setback from residential dwellings to the tower's height. Institutional sites such as Hosanna Church typically feature large buildings and



parking areas. This often means the only available space is near parcel boundaries where meeting the double-height setback requirement is not possible.

Additionally, we request that the property line setback for towers be defined as the “fall zone,” substantiated by an engineering letter confirming the tower will collapse within the property lines. This requirement appears in subsection 2(c) but warrants clarification to specify both the setback and burden of proof.

6) *Additional standards for communication apparatus.*

- (b) No tower shall be over 200 feet in height or within 1 mile of another tower, regardless of municipal boundaries.

Current wireless technology necessitates closer proximity to users, making large separation distances obsolete for determining necessity. A more effective approach requires alternative site analysis per subsection 4(2)(c). Height restrictions may also result in the need for multiple towers within a 1-mile radius. These changes would apply solely to future uses within the City, as the Hosanna site is outside the present separation range.

Thank you in advance for considering our application. Should you have questions or require further details, please contact me via email or telephone at your convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Blair Ransom", written in a cursive style.

Blair Ransom

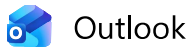
Site Development Agent o/b/o AT&T Mobility

Proposed Location
Hosanna Lutheran Church



Christ Lutheran Church
Eagan, MN





Re: Hosanna Text Amendment

From Blair Ransom

Date Thu 11/20/2025 1:30 PM

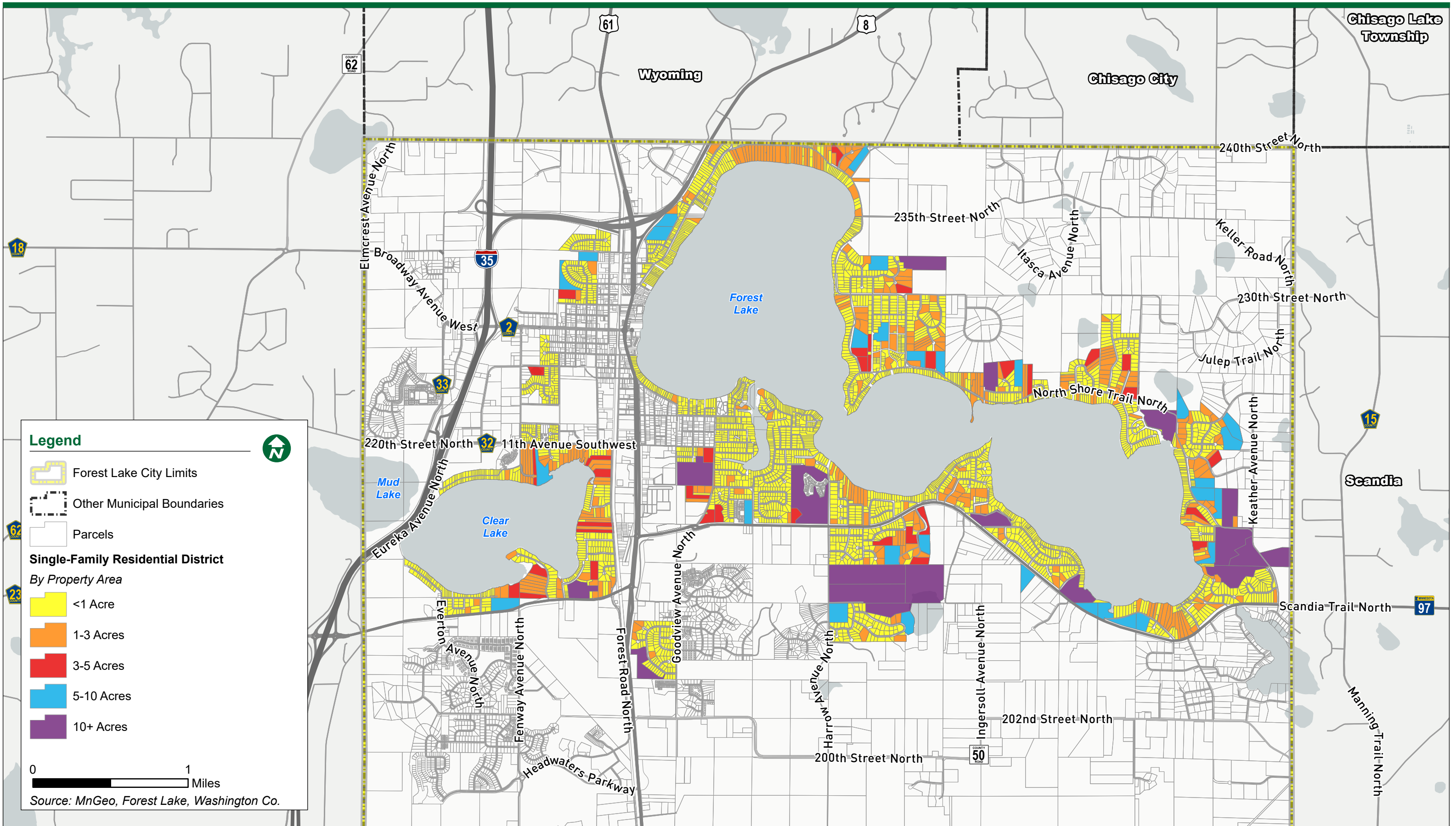
To Madison Richard

Cc Dawn Bugge

Hi Madison - AT&T RF would like a 100' antenna centerline, which would mean a tower around 110'-115', depending on the final stealth design. If you think it won't be approved without the 100' rural residential height limitation, perhaps consider adding 25' if the tower is designed for another carrier. A 125' height limit will help attract a second carrier which avoids multiple towers.

Regards,

Blair Ransom



**CITY OF FOREST LAKE
WASHINGTON COUNTY, MINNESOTA
ORDINANCE NO. ____**

**AN ORDINANCE AMENDING TITLE XV, CHAPTER 153, SECTION 153.065, SECTION 153.069
AND 153.092, PERTAINING TO WIRELESS COMMUNICATION TOWERS**

THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF FOREST LAKE ORDAINS AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. Amendment. Title XV, Chapter 153, Section 153.065 COMPREHENSIVE USE TABLE of the Forest Lake City Code is hereby amended by allowing Towers – Accessory, and Towers – Permitted, through a Conditional Use Permit.

Section 2. Amendment. Title XV, Chapter 153, Section 153.069 SINGLE-FAMILY (SF) RESIDENTIAL DISTRICTS of the Forest Lake City Code is hereby amended by adding **bold and underline** are proposed additions to the code and deleting the ~~strikeout~~ language as follows:

- (E) Conditional uses. Subject to applicable provisions of this chapter, the following are conditional uses in the SF District (requires a conditional use permit based upon procedures set forth in and regulated by § 153.034).
- 2. Accessory uses.
 - (d) Tower (see § 153.092).**

Section 3. Amendment. Title XV, Chapter 153, Section 153.092 STANDARDS FOR USES of the Forest Lake City Code is hereby amended by adding **bold and underline** are proposed additions to the code and deleting the ~~strikeout~~ language as follows:

- (JJ) Towers
 - (2) Performance standards for all towers.
 - (n) The tower shall be located **a minimum of** twice the tower height to any residential dwelling other than the dwelling on the parcel on which the tower is to be located or **setback** a minimum **distance** of the tower height from any property line. However, towers must meet the setback in the zoning district they are located in if the setback is greater than the height of the tower.
 - (5) Tower standards by districts. Towers are regulated differently depending on the zoning district in which the property is located. The following are the standards in each district:
 - (a) Agriculture, Conservancy, **and** Agricultural Preserve Overlay, ~~and MXR-1~~ districts.

- (b) Rural residential, Single-family residential, and MXR-1 districts.

Section 4. Summary Publication. Pursuant to Minnesota Statutes Section 412.191, in the case of a lengthy ordinance, a summary may be published. While a copy of the entire ordinance is available without cost at the office of the City Clerk, the following summary is approved by the City Council and shall be published in lieu of publishing the entire ordinance:

This is an amendment of the City's Ordinance to permit towers in the Single-Family Residential District with a Condition Use Permit, and to establish associated performance standards for towers.

Section 5. Effective Date. This Ordinance shall be in full force and effect upon its adoption and publication as provided by law.

Passed in regular session of the City Council on the _____ day of _____, 2026.

CITY OF FOREST LAKE

By: _____

Blake Roberts

Its: Mayor

Attested:

By: _____

Jolleen Chaika

Its: Assistant City Administrator

(Published in the *Forest Lake Times* on _____, 2026)

STAFF REPORT



MEETING DATE: December 10, 2025

TO: Chair Paul Girard and Planning Commissioners

STAFF ORIGINATOR: Steven Gilmore, Assistant Community Development Director
Michael Birchland, City Planner

AGENDA ITEM: City of Forest Lake Better Ordinances and Ongoing Streamlined Transformation (BOOST) Initiative Framework Summary

INTRODUCTION:

The purpose of this memo is to introduce the Planning Commission to the City's BOOST Initiative to modernize today's City Code for tomorrow's community. The BOOST Initiative aims to update selected portions of the City Code Land Usage regulations. Over the next few months, staff will bring forward a sequence of amendment packages intended to improve clarity, eliminate redundancies, and ensure the code reflects current practices and expectations. This memo outlines the goals of the project, the approach staff will be using, and what the Commission can expect in upcoming meetings.

ANALYSIS:

Background

Over time, incremental adjustments to the City's zoning and subdivision regulations have resulted in inconsistencies, overlapping procedures, and sections that no longer align seamlessly with one another. While the code remains functional, these issues can make the application and development review processes more complex than necessary for applicants, staff, and decision-makers. Recognizing this, staff is undertaking a focused review to modernize the organization of select code sections, strengthen internal consistency, and improve the usability of key administrative processes.

Objectives of the Initiative

- Improve clarity and readability.
- Strengthen internal consistency.
- Enhance administrative efficiency.
- Support predictable development review.

Key Themes and Opportunities

The following matrix summarizes the major themes staff has identified as opportunities for improvement within the Land Usage portions of the City Code. These observations reflect patterns seen across multiple applications, internal workflow challenges, and common points of confusion raised development partners and Forest Lake residents and businesses. This matrix is intentionally high-level and will help guide the structure of the amendment packages.

| Theme | Observation | Opportunity |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|
| Clarity & Readability | Sections vary widely in tone, structure, and detail. Older sections are narrative; newer ones are technical. This creates friction for users who must jump between them. | Rewrite for consistency, modern formatting, and clearer expectations. |
| Internal Alignment | Some procedural steps appear in multiple locations with slightly different interpretations. Related processes do not always follow the same sequence or terminology. | Align cross-references, streamline sequences, ensure terminology matches across chapters. |
| Usability & Navigation | Applicants frequently request clarification where certain requirements are stated. Key steps are not always grouped logically. | Reorganize content to follow the natural flow of an application from start to finish. |
| Redundancy | Certain requirements (e.g., plan components, noticing expectations) are repeated in multiple sections, sometimes with different wording. | Consolidate repeated standards and eliminate unnecessary duplication. |
| Outdated Language | Portions of the code refer to processes or terminology that the City no longer uses, which creates confusion and requires staff correction. | Remove obsolete references and ensure language reflects current practice. |
| Process Efficiency | Some steps include extra layers of review that are not legally required and do not add meaningful value. | Simplify steps, remove dated expectations, and improve turnaround time. |
| User Experience | Applicants, consultants, and property owners often struggle to understand where they are in the review process or what comes next. | Create a clearer, more intuitive structure that supports predictable outcomes. |

Approach and Structure

Staff will present the Planning Commission with a series of amendment packages over the next several months. Each package will focus on a logically grouped portion of the code and will be reviewed in phases that include an overview, a discussion draft, and a final recommendation. This structure ensures the Commission has adequate time to review proposed changes and provide direction before draft ordinance language is finalized.

Upcoming Deliverables

Before the next Planning Commission meeting, staff will prepare a structured outline of Amendment Package 1, an overview of themes and organizational improvements, draft redlines, and preliminary draft language for initial discussion. Subsequent packages will follow every two to three weeks, aligned with the Planning Commission and City Council meeting cycles. A copy of the tentative timeline of this first BOOST Initiative effort, is attached for Planning Commission Review.

RECOMMENDATION:

This BOOST Initiative presents an opportunity to strengthen and streamline the City's development review framework, improve internal consistency, and ensure the code continues to support efficient and predictable decision-making. Staff looks forward to working closely with the Planning Commission throughout this process.

ATTACHMENTS:

BOOST Initiative Draft Schedule/Strategy

BOOST Initiative – Packages 1-3 Draft Code Update Schedule/Strategy

Note: All dates are draft and will be revised as meeting schedules are confirmed.

| Date | Body | Purpose |
|-------|-------------------------|--|
| 12/10 | Planning Commission | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to initiative • Overview of scope, objectives • Presentation of high-level themes |
| 1/14 | Planning Commission | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Package 1 – PC Discussion Draft Review |
| 1/26 | City Council (Optional) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Package 1 – Informational Update and Opportunity for Input |
| 2/11 | Planning Commission | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Package 1 – Public Hearing • Package 1 – City Council Recommendation • Package 2 – Discussion Draft Review |
| 2/23 | City Council | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Package 1 – Consideration of Ordinance Adoption • Package 2 – Informational Update and Opportunity for Input |
| 3/11 | Planning Commission | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Package 2 – Public Hearing • Package 2 – City Council Recommendation • Package 3 – Discussion Draft Review |
| 3/23 | City Council | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Package 2 – Consideration of Ordinance Adoption • Package 3 – Informational Update and Opportunity for Input |
| 4/8 | Planning Commission | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Package 3 – Public Hearing • Package 3 – City Council Recommendation |
| 4/27 | City Council | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Package 3 – Consideration of Ordinance Adoption |