



NOTICE OF AGENDA

PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

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

Forest Lake City Center – Council Chambers
Forest Lake, Minnesota

January 14, 2026 – 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 December 10, 2025

**Planning Commission may remove any item from the consent agenda for specific consideration.*
7. Regular Agenda (Action Items)
 - a. Public Hearing: Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment to establish a buffer between properties approved for cannabis uses and residential properties. (Case File No. PZ25-1396)
8. Discussion
 - a. BOOST Initiative – Code Update Discussion
9. Updates
10. Adjourn

*A quorum of the City Council is possible at all Board and Commission Meetings



Planning Commission

Regular Meeting

~ Minutes ~

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

Wednesday, December 10, 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	Present	
Susan Young	Commission Vice-Chair	Present	
Martin Heumann	Planning Commissioner	Present	
Don Stehler	Planning Commissioner	Absent	
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 Heumann made a Motion to Approve the Agenda as presented.
Motion seconded by Commissioner Wagner. Motion carried 6-0.

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.*

6. Consent Agenda Considerations (Action Items)*

- ~~a. Approve Planning Commission Meeting Minutes from November 12, 2025~~
- b. Revised Resolution No. 12-10-25-01 – Johnsen Variance, 780 Woodland Dr**

Motion: Commissioner Young made a Motion to Approve Consent Agenda Item 6.b.
Motion seconded by Commissioner Aplikowski. Motion carried 5-0-1 (Girard abstained).

a. Approve Planning Commission Meeting Minutes from November 12, 2025

Commissioner Aplikowski stated he would like to modify a comment on the bottom of page seven.
He stated he would like to change the final comment to “Commissioner Aplikowski expressed



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concern about continuing to approve higher density development while the Met Council is expected to increase required units per acre in the upcoming comprehensive plan update. He stated that allowing the Met Council to dictate lot sizes and density does a disservice to the City. His comments were made in response to a prior public statement suggesting that non-compliance with Met Council expectations could result in restricted sewer service.” He said the extra content reflected what he said.

Motion: Commissioner Young made a Motion to Approve Consent Agenda Item 6.a. as amended. Motion seconded by Commissioner Wagner. Motion carried 5-0-1 (Girard abstained).

7. Regular Agenda (Action Items)

a. Public Hearing: Zoning Text Amendment for Wireless Communication Towers – Hosanna Lutheran Church – 9300 Scandia Trail N

Chair Girard stated that he had been involved with this application as a representative from Hosanna Lutheran Church. He had no financial outlook with this application. He asked if anyone would like him to step down.

Assistant Community Development Director Gilmore reviewed the zoning text amendment for the wireless communication towers. He stated the discussion was about the broad zoning changes for the community. He provided an overview of the applicant’s proposed code changes and noted that the applicant requested to allow wireless towers in a single-family district on parcels that contain institutional uses.

Commissioner Young said when she read the proposed code changes, she was very unhappy. She appreciated the work of the staff to recognize that these are residential areas, and the City-wide changes would be hugely damaging to residential areas and the livability and enjoyment.

Commissioner Stender asked about the engineered fall zone. Assistant Community Development Director Gilmore responded that the engineered fall zone would provide an engineering level to show that if the tower collapsed, it would collapse in a specific location. He said this instance was discussing property lines. He stated that the engineered fall zone exists in other municipalities.

Commissioner Young commented that there were increased wind speeds, so she was not concerned about the collapse, but about wind damage and sending material vertically.

Commissioner Aplikowski asked about the current code. Assistant Community Development Director Gilmore answered that the setbacks were two times the tower height and two times the tower height from the residential dwelling and one times the tower height from the property line.



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Commissioner Young asked about the origin of the residential property, specifically about something falling on someone’s structures. She asked about the specific requirements for residential properties. Assistant Community Development Director Gilmore responded that it would include the accessory uses associated with it.

Assistant Community Development Director Gilmore said the structural use they had was limiting this by institutional use. He said that the future land use maps and the designated usage and planning guidance do not dictate the land. He discussed long-term interpretation problems every time a parcel is reguided. He said it was not a stable or enforceable framework. He stated that they could allow towers as a conditional use in the single-family district and noted that other residential districts allow towers. He commented that the staff proposed to maintain all the tower performance standards. He said that the standards serve real needs, such as neighborhood protection, life safety, and visual character maintenance. He mentioned that the map showed everything over ten acres that exists in any single-family district. He said that the parcel could be ten acres, and staff would be in favor of a lot consolidation, but that was not before the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Young asked about the blue, red, and purple dots. Assistant Community Development Director Gilmore answered that they were the current towers in Forest Lake as of 2021.

Commissioner Young mentioned that there was one from 92-93 that was not on the map.

Assistant Community Development Director Gilmore said that the tower might be a benefit to the public to support the location.

Commissioner Heumann asked why they needed ten acres. Assistant Community Development Director Wittman answered that it was a code requirement to allow for a buffer for the tower. He stated that ten acres provided space for the fall requirements and buffered it from other parcels visually and life-safety requirements.

Commissioner Young stated that she had a tower near her, and it would be difficult to put it on 2.5 acres.

Commissioner Heumann asked if this went through and if they would modify the ten-acre ones to 2.5 acres. Assistant Community Development Director Gilmore answered that they were discussing adding it to single-family and making it two and a half acres. He said that the caveat of institutional use made it difficult.

Commissioner Wagner asked if the neighbors were made aware of the potential building site. Assistant Community Development Director Gilmore responded that all documentation went out for public comment within 350 feet of the site.



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Community Development Director Wittman clarified that City-wide amendments do not require specific neighborhood notice. She said that City-wide amendments were posted on the website and newspaper. A hearing notice would go out if it needed a CUP were needed to everyone within a certain radius of the parcel.

Chair Girard invited the applicant to comment.

Blair Ransom, Buel Consulting, 1061 Idaho Avenue, St. Paul, said this specific tower is for a tripod church steeple. He said it would basically be incorporated into the church and would not be a free-standing tower. They asked for fall zone setbacks because when you are looking to achieve a certain amount of height, the fall zone setback can really limit you. He said that there were a lot of single-family properties here, and the fall zone would be in the middle of the parking lot. He discussed break points when stress is put on the tower and said that the tower would break at certain points and collapse on itself. He said that they could combine the lot, so it would be acceptable. He said that the fall zone setback was the main setback they would like relief from.

Public Hearing was opened at 6:24 p.m.

No comments.

Public Hearing was closed at 6:25 p.m.

Commissioner Heumann said he talked about the crush and if they do experiments on actual equipment to see how the tower breaks down. Mr. Ransom answered that he did not know the specific empirical tests, so he could not answer.

Commissioner Aplikowski asked if there was anything in the City's goals to provide more cellular coverage. Community Development Director Wittman answered that she did not recall a strategic plan or adopted plan by the City. She stated that they had been approached about the potential of a tower in the Kulenkamp Park, but they wanted to see coverage maps to show that it would be an asset to the community. She stated that they had coverage maps to show that there was significantly less coverage north and south of the lake and east of Highway 61. She stated the coverage varied. The institutional properties in purple east of the lake would have coverage benefits.

Commissioner Young said it would be interesting to get something like Scandia, where they are installing fiber in rural areas.



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Commissioner Aplikowski said he would prefer a comprehensive strategy rather than a piecemeal approach.

Commissioner Young asked about section JJ, Paragraph 2, Section N, which addressed the tower height. She said that there might be other stuff on a ten-acre lot. She asked for clarification about the definition of residential dwelling. Assistant Community Development Gilmore answered that the tower could be as close to anything you own on the property, but had to be two times the height from anything your neighbor owns and one times the height from the property line. He said they were trying to prevent it from hitting something owned by another property owner.

Commissioner Young said that a residential dwelling included an accessory building. Community Development Director Wittman suggested that they could make sure the language included dwellings and accessory buildings.

Commissioner Young stated that a piece in the higher winds could sail, and she would appreciate the two-and-a-half times.

Commissioner Heumann asked if this was a new tower or existing technology. Mr. Ransom answered that it would be the newest tower.

Commissioner Heumann asked if they were looking to expand towers in Forest Lake. Mr. Ransom responded that the engineers have a huge database and pick out certain locations for the towers to go. He stated that towers were a huge capital investment. He stated that the persuasiveness would not increase tomorrow, because there would not be tenants for fifty towers. The cell phone networks wanted to limit towers because of the capital investment costs.

Commissioner Heumann asked if other carriers could use the tower. Mr. Ransom responded that other carriers could use the tower. They try to maximize height to allow for additional carriers. He said they wanted to find the balance of having high enough towers to decrease the need for more towers.

Commissioner Wagner asked if the City required insurance on the towers. Community Development Director Wittman answered that the zoning code did not include that language. She said the consideration for the City is whether they would allow the use.

Motion: Commissioner Young made a Motion to recommend the Adoption of the zoning text amendment as presented this evening, with the consideration by staff of the further definition of residential dwelling.

Motion seconded by Commissioner Wagner.



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Community Development Director Wittman clarified that it was the proposal from the staff and asked for clarification on the dwelling. She said they could perhaps tighten the definition to better define the residential dwelling and its accessory building in JJ2N.

Commissioner Aplikowski said if they merged the lots, they could just do a conditional use permit. Assistant Community Development Director Gilmore answered that they would have to add the single-family zoning to the current code.

Community Development Director Wittman said it would be a single-family zoned parcel of ten acres or greater. She said that they were trying to ensure they were not getting into a pickle later and wanted to reserve future residential development uses.

Commissioner Aplikowski said that smaller lots were dangerous because he did not want to block a resident’s future view.

Commissioner Heumann asked about what kind of coverage the tower would provide. Mr. Ransom said they would bring in propagation maps to show what it would cover, but they want better coverage on the lake and the residential area on the south side.

Commissioner Heumann asked when it would be implemented. Mr. Random responded that it would be mid-to-late summer.

Amended Motion: Commissioner Young made a Motion to Amend to clarify the adoption of the proposal from the staff and clarification on paragraph JJ2N to clearly define the residential dwelling and accessory buildings.

Motion seconded by Commissioner Wagner. Motion carried 5-0-1 (Girard abstained).

8. Discussion

a. Code Amendments

Assistant Community Development Director Gilmore reviewed the BOOST Initiative to modernize today’s City Code for tomorrow’s community. He summarized the four core goals of the BOOST Initiative to improve clarity and readability, strengthen internal consistency, enhance administrative efficiency, and support predictable development review. He explained why an update was needed and how BOOST would work.

Chair Girard asked if this came from a firm or would be completed in-house. Community Development Director Wittman answered that they had engaged with services with MSA Consulting Services, who helped them look at the analysis of the code. She said that MSA took the code and developed a new architecture, so now it was easier to see the gaps and overlaps. She stated that the



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first phase of the contract with MSA had been completed, and now they had City staff who could work on the process. She reviewed the goals for the first four months, and she thought that they could have all processes and procedures updated and modernized, then they would look at the low-hanging fruit from the third phase and address the uses and standards in the code, and simplify them. She commented that they could give more focus on the BOOST initiative now and in October of next year. She said it likely would not be done in a year, because they would start conversations about the 2050 Comprehensive Plan, which would impact the City Code.

Commissioner Heumann asked if volunteers could help with the process. Community Development Director Wittman answered that the first subset would be staff coming to the Planning Commission for feedback and then moving to the City Council. She stated that the first phase of the BOOST work would look at operations, so they likely did not need committee work initially, but they could have committee work to discuss small things and signs, and shoreland.

Commissioner Young asked if they were planning on a technical or narrative structure. Assistant Community Development Director Gilmore answered that they wanted user-friendly, deliberative, focused approaches.

Commissioner Young asked if they were looking at technical language in the code or narrative language. Assistant Community Development Director Gilmore answered that they wanted it to be understandable for the average person.

Commissioner Young discussed the need to recognize the needs between MXR versus rural residential, so there would be consistencies, but they are different kinds of neighborhoods. She asked how they would determine which differences need to be there to keep the uniqueness of a zoning code and not duplicate areas. Assistant Community Development Director Gilmore answered they would utilize the expertise within the City. He said it would be done with primary stakeholders, such as the Planning Commission, who could give feedback to make sure the definitions were preserved.

Community Development Director Wittman said the first package of the BOOST initiative would focus on the gaps and overlaps in the City Code. She stated that the general public cannot navigate the City Code successfully. They were looking at the differences in the application of terms throughout the City Code.

Commissioner Young asked about the process inefficiency. She asked about the Planning Commission having a one-time shot at the draft. She stated it would be helpful for the Planning Commission to know about the City Council's input. She discussed the need to know about the policy goals before providing feedback on the draft language.



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Community Development Director Wittman answered that the schedule might be adjusted. They were confident in the three initial packages because they knew the direction from the City Council to clean up the code and make it easier to read. She said she would keep the suggestion in mind for the future.

Commissioner Young asked about the definition of predictable outcomes. Assistant Community Development Director Gilmore answered that a predictable outcome is when the development process is started, and the process is predictable. He said they wanted the process to be predictable, not the outcome.

Commissioner Young asked about the first three packages. Assistant Community Development Director Gilmore reviewed the three packages.

Commissioner Young said that some of the packages might need more than one review. She commented that the City Code was mashed up from when they were a township, so they had a lot of legacy.

Community Development Director Wittman said that they can look at the processes of the code and see that they did not have professional staff or building experts. She said they used to have twelve process steps and three interactions from a homeowner to get a fence permit. They fixed this problem. She said that in her time, she could clearly see where the roots are that they need to pay respect to while moving forward.

Chair Girard said that if the Planning Commission needed an extra meeting, they could request this. Assistant Community Development Director Gilmore said that they wanted to get this stuff done, ready for development season in April or May, but they can adjust the schedule as necessary. Commissioner Aplikowski said they could use AI to compare items and streamline and find what information is missing. He said they could use this information and compare it with other cities. Assistant Community Development Director Gilmore said that they would be using AI as a resource to compare their City Code with other cities.

Chair Girard asked about the ten peer cities. Community Development Director Wittman provided an example of the peer cities and noted that they look at these cities. She had ten to fifteen other cities that they looked at from a development perspective. She clarified that they would look at the other cities when they review the processes and procedures.

9. Updates

City Councilmember Larson discussed the proposal for Forest Lake Cannabis. He discussed the City Council's concerns about their ability to cultivate. He said they tabled the application, and the City



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would be amending their ordinances to better address cultivation. He stated that they landed at a 7.90 percent levy increase for the City budget. He reviewed how they would save money with the levy cuts.

Commissioner Heumann asked about eliminating a patrol sergeant. City Councilmember Larson answered that they were postponing the hiring of a patrol sergeant. They were not taking away a current position.

Community Development Director Wittman said they had a ten-year staffing plan. She said the police department got approved for two new officers and administrative support. She stated that they moved the building inspections department to the community development department. They have onboarded five new employees in six months, so she hopes they will make good improvements in 2026.

Chair Girard asked about January meetings. Assistant Community Development Director Gilmore said the Planning Commission would meet on January 7th.

Assistant Community Development Director Gilmore said they had vacant Planning Commission seat applications online.

Community Development Director Wittman noted that Commissioner Heumann would not reapply for his position. She hoped that Chair Girard would continue to serve. They would have at least one vacant seat.

Assistant Community Development Director Gilmore said they received two preliminary plats for McKinley Creek Estates and Hidden Creek South.

10. Adjourn

Motion: Commissioner Wagner made a Motion to Adjourn the meeting at 7:34 p.m.

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

STAFF REPORT



MEETING DATE: January 14, 2026

TO: Planning Commission

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

AGENDA ITEM: Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment – Cannabis Microbusiness Proximity Standards

INTRODUCTION:

The City of Forest Lake is considering a Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) to Chapter 153 of the City Code. The purpose of this amendment is to clarify how residential distance requirements apply to cannabis businesses operating under a State of Minnesota microbusiness license.

This amendment follows City review of a proposed cannabis retail Interim Use Permit (IUP). During that review, the City Council identified an inconsistency in the City Code.

The Council determined that the City's 250-foot separation requirement was intended to apply to higher-impact cannabis activities, such as cultivation and manufacturing. However, the current code applies the separation requirement based on the type of state license, not on the activities actually occurring on site.

As a result, the City Council tabled the IUP and directed staff to update the City Code before further consideration of the application.

ANALYSIS:

Existing Code Structure

Section 153.092(UU) of the City Code regulates cannabis businesses and includes a 250-foot separation requirement from residential zoning districts.

This separation is intended to reduce impacts such as odor, noise, delivery activity, and mechanical equipment near homes.

Under the current code, the separation requirement is triggered by the type of state cannabis license. Because a microbusiness license may allow cultivation or manufacturing, the separation applies even when a business proposes retail-only sales and no higher-impact activities occur on site.

Planning Commission and City Council Direction

During its review of the proposed cannabis retail IUP, the City Council acknowledged that the 250-foot separation standard was intended to apply to higher-impact activities, such as cultivation and manufacturing.

The Council also recognized that state cannabis license categories do not always reflect actual land-use impacts.

To address this issue, the City Council tabled the IUP and directed staff to amend Section 153.092(UU) to regulate cannabis uses based on on-site activities rather than license type, while retaining the 250-foot separation requirement for higher-impact activities.

Proposed Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment

The proposed Zoning Text Amendment updates Section 153.092(UU) to regulate cannabis uses based on the activities occurring on site rather than the state license held. Key elements of the amendment include:

1. Clear Definitions

The ordinance adds definitions for cannabis activities, including indoor cultivation, outdoor cultivation, manufacturing, and retail sales.

2. Activity-Based Separation Requirement

The 250-foot separation requirement applies only to higher-impact activities, such as cultivation and manufacturing. Retail-only cannabis operations are not subject to this separation requirement when no higher-impact activities occur on site.

3. Continued Performance Standards

Existing standards for odor control, exterior storage, and screening of mechanical equipment and trash areas remain in effect for all cannabis businesses.

4. Improved Clarity

Regulating by activity improves clarity, simplifies enforcement, and better aligns zoning standards with actual land-use impacts.

Policy Consistency

The proposed amendment implements the policy direction provided by the City Council.

The amendment does not expand where cannabis cultivation or manufacturing may occur and does not reduce protections for residential neighborhoods.

Specifically, the amendment:

- Implements prior City Council direction;
- Regulates cannabis uses based on on-site activities;
- Maintains existing separation requirements for higher-impact uses; and

- Preserves the City's ability to regulate land-use impacts while recognizing state licensing categories.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission:

1. Hold a duly noticed public hearing on the proposed Zoning Text Amendment; and
2. Recommend approval of the amendment to Section 153.092(UU) of the City Code, finding that the amendment:
 - Implements City Council direction;
 - Maintains protections for residential areas; and
 - Provides clear, enforceable, activity-based zoning standards.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Proposed 153.092(UU) Cannabis Zoning Text Amendment

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

ORDINANCE NO. _____

**AN ORDINANCE AMENDING TITLE XV, CHAPTER 153, SECTION 153.092 (UU), PERTAINING
TO CANNABIS BUSINESSES**

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

Section 1. 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:

(UU) *Cannabis businesses.*

Definitions. Unless otherwise noted in this section, words, terms, and phrases found in the definitions of M.S. § 342.01, or as amended, apply unless otherwise noted or except where the context clearly indicates a different meaning. In addition, the following definitions apply:

CANNABIS ACTIVITIES.

INDOOR CULTIVATION. Any activity involving the indoor planting, growing, harvesting, drying, curing, grading, or trimming of cannabis plants, cannabis flower, hemp plants, or hemp plant parts.

MANUFACTURING. To compound, blend, extract, infuse, or otherwise make or prepare a cannabis product. Manufacturing includes the processes of extraction, infusion, packaging or repackaging, and labeling or relabeling of cannabis products.

OUTDOOR CULTIVATION. Any activity involving the outdoor planting, growing, harvesting, drying, curing, grading, or trimming of cannabis plants, cannabis flower, hemp plants, or hemp plant parts.

RETAIL SALES. A business with a license or endorsement authorizing the retail sale of any of the following products: immature cannabis plants and seedlings, cannabis flower, cannabis products, lower-potency hemp edibles, and hemp-derived consumer products.

CANNABIS BUSINESS. Any of the following licensed as defined and identified in M.S. Ch. 342.

1. Cannabis microbusiness;
2. Cannabis mezzobusiness;
3. Cannabis cultivator;
4. Cannabis manufacturer;
5. Cannabis retailer;

- 6. Cannabis wholesaler;
- 7. Cannabis transporter;
- 8. Cannabis testing facility;
- 9. Cannabis event organizer;
- 10. Cannabis delivery service; and
- 11. Medical cannabis combination business.

(1) *Distance restrictions.*

- (c) **All Cultivation, Manufacturing, and Distribution Uses must be setback a minimum of 250 feet from a residential zoning district or residential use as measured from the cannabis business property line to the property line of the nearest residential zoning district or residential use.**

(9) *Performance standards.*

- (c) **No exterior storage is allowed, including storage of products in semis, trailers, or shipping containers that are parked outside of an enclosed building.**
- (d) **All mechanical, odor suppression equipment and trash enclosures must be screened and approved as part of a site plan approval.**

~~(10) Cultivation, manufacturing, microbusiness, mezzobusiness, transporter, wholesale (if products stored onsite). Must comply with the following additional performance standards:~~

- ~~(a) All buildings must be setback a minimum of 250 feet from a residential zoning district or residential use as measured from the cannabis business property line to the property line of the nearest residential zoning district or residential use.~~
- ~~(b) No exterior storage is allowed, including storage of products in semis, trailers, or shipping containers that are parked outside of an enclosed building.~~
- ~~(c) All mechanical, odor suppression equipment and trash enclosures must be screened and approved as part of a site plan approval.~~

(10)(11) Low-potency hemp edibles on-site consumption. On-site consumption of low-potency hemp edibles shall be limited to businesses with a valid on-sale liquor license.

(11)(12) Cannabis businesses zoning districts. The following chart is to show where cannabis businesses are allowed within the city's zoning districts:

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

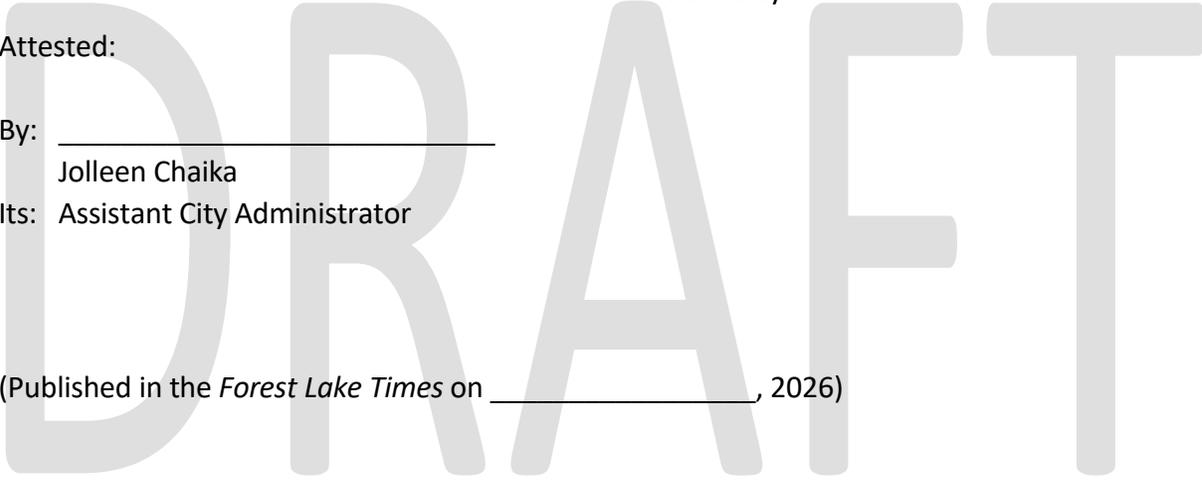
Attested:

By: _____

Jolleen Chaika

Its: Assistant City Administrator

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





Date: January 14, 2026
To: Chair Girard and Planning Commissioners
From: Steven Gilmore, Assistant Community Development Director
Re: BOOST Initiative – Directional Update

BOTTOM LINE UP FRONT

Staff is requesting Planning Commission feedback and direction on two major components of the BOOST Initiative currently under development. These components are intended to improve clarity, predictability, and efficiency in how the zoning code is applied, while keeping public review focused on policy-level decisions.

- (1) Expanded administrative authority for low-impact zoning actions, and
- (2) A clearer distinction between Minor and Major Amendments

This report is informational only. No ordinance adoption or recommendation is requested at this time.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to:

- Clearly explain what staff has been working on so far
- Show specific examples of proposed zoning code changes
- Highlight where staff is proposing meaningful process changes
- Confirm that staff’s direction aligns with Planning Commission expectations before drafting final ordinance language

This report is intended as a checkpoint to support understanding and discussion, so adjustments can be made early in the process. Staff is seeking feedback on whether the direction shown aligns with the Planning Commission’s expectations before formal ordinance drafting begins.

BACKGROUND

BOOST (Building Our Ordinances for Streamlined Tomorrow) is a zoning code improvement effort focused on:

- Making the code easier to read and use
- Reducing unnecessary steps for small or technical changes
- Keeping public hearings and Commission review focused on issues that affect policy, neighbors, or long-term community outcomes



BOOST is not intended to reduce transparency or public involvement for major land use decisions, but rather to better match the level of review to the scale and impact of a proposal.

WHAT STAFF IS FOCUSING ON RIGHT NOW

At this stage of BOOST, staff is focusing on how decisions are made, not what is allowed.

Specifically:

- Who makes certain decisions (staff vs. Planning Commission vs. City Council)
- Which changes are minor and technical, and which are major and policy-driven

Currently, staff is not proposing changes to what land uses are allowed, but instead how review authority and decision-making processes are structured.

EXPANDED ADMINISTRATIVE AUTHORITY

Current Issue

Under the current zoning code:

- Many small or technical changes require Planning Commission review
- This can slow down projects and require Planning Commission review for items with little or no public impact.

Proposed Direction (Conceptual)

Staff is proposing to clearly allow administrative approval for changes that:

- Do not increase density or intensity
- Do not change how a site is used
- Do not create new impacts to neighbors

Public hearings and Commission review would remain required for policy-level decisions.

This approach is intended to reduce over-review of minor items while preserving the Planning Commission’s role in policy-level and higher-impact decisions.

Example – Site Plan Amendments (153.038)

Topic	Current Code (Simplified)	Proposed Direction
Minor building shifts	Often requires Planning Commission review	Administrative approval if standards are still met
Parking layout changes	Discretionary review	Administrative approval if parking counts and access remain compliant
Dumpster or mechanical relocation	Case-by-case	Administrative approval

What would stay with the Planning Commission:

- New land uses



- Variances
- Conditional and Interim Use Permits
- Changes that increase impacts or intensity

Example – Suggested Code Concept

Administrative Approval.

The Community Development Director, or designee, may approve minor site plan changes that do not increase density, change land use, or reduce required setbacks, parking, or landscaping.

Peer City Best Practice: Stillwater, White Bear Lake, Hastings

These cities reserve Planning Commission time for policy decision rather than technical corrections.

MAJOR VS MINOR AMENDMENTS

Current Issue

Today, the code:

- Does not clearly define what is a minor amendment versus a major amendment
- Results in similar review processes for very different levels of impact

Proposed Direction (Conceptual)

Staff is developing clear, objective criteria so everyone knows:

- What can be handled administratively
- What requires Planning Commission and City Council review

Clear criteria are intended to help applicants, neighbors, and decision-makers understand the review process early and reduce confusion later in the process.

Example – Minor Amendments (Administrative)

Minor amendments would generally include changes that:

- Are small in scale
- Do not change allowed uses
- Do not increase density or building height
- Do not affect neighboring properties

Examples:

- Small lot line adjustments that meet all zoning standards
- Minor site layout changes
- Corrections to approved plans

Example – Major Amendments (Public Review)

Major amendments would include changes that:

- Increase density or intensity
- Change allowed uses



- Modify zoning district boundaries
- Raise policy questions

Examples:

- Rezoning requests
- Text amendments that change use permissions
- Large increases in building height or units

Example – Suggested Code Concept

- **Minor Amendment.**

A minor amendment is a change that does not alter the use of the property, increase density or intensity, or create new impacts.

- **Major Amendment.**

A major amendment is a change that affects land use policy, permitted uses, density, or community impacts and requires public review.

Why This Matters

Clear definitions and review thresholds:

- Improve transparency
- Reduce confusion for applicants and neighbors
- Help ensure public hearings are focused on issues that matter most to the community and the Planning Commission

WHAT STAFF IS NOT ADDRESSING YET

To avoid confusion, staff notes that the following items are intentionally being addressed later in the BOOST process:

- Streamlining and making more user-friendly the city's application processes
- Comprehensive definition cleanup and reorganization

This work is ongoing and will be presented as a complete package later in the process to avoid piecemeal changes and ensure consistency.

KEY QUESTIONS FOR THE PLANNING COMMISSION

Staff is requesting feedback on the following questions to confirm that the BOOST Initiative is moving in the right direction before draft ordinance language is prepared:

1. Administrative Authority
 - Is the Commission comfortable allowing staff to approve clearly defined, low-impact changes?
2. Minor vs. Major Amendments
 - Are these categories clear and appropriate?
 - Are there types of changes the Commission believes should always require public review?



3. Overall Direction

- Is staff focused on the right problems?
- Are there areas the Commission would like staff to emphasize more or less?

ATTACHMENTS

Attachments 1 and 2 are provided to illustrate the conceptual direction staff is exploring under the BOOST Initiative. These attachments are intended to support discussion and feedback and do not represent final ordinance language or adopted policy.

- 1) Code Comparison Examples – Existing Code Language vs Proposed Direction
- 2) Potential Graphic & Process Illustration Examples



ATTACHMENT 1: Code Comparison Examples – Existing Code Language vs Proposed Direction

➤ **153.001 General Provisions Title**

Existing Section:

This chapter may be known, cited, and referred to as the “Forest Lake Zoning Ordinance,” except as referred to herein where it may be known as “this chapter.”

Proposed Section:

This chapter may be known, cited, and referred to as the “Forest Lake Zoning Ordinance,” except as referred to herein where it may be known as “this chapter.”

- (A) How to use this chapter. This chapter explains how land may be used and developed within the city and outlines the steps for reviewing zoning and development applications. It is organized to help residents, property owners, and applicants understand what standards apply to a property and what approvals may be required.
- (1) Applicants are encouraged to contact city staff early to discuss proposals, confirm applicable requirements, and identify required approvals before submitting an application.
 - (2) This chapter is intended to provide clear, predictable development review processes. Where possible, applications shall be reviewed and acted upon administratively to minimize unnecessary procedural steps, public hearings, or delays, consistent with adopted standards and the Comprehensive Plan.
 - (3) A summary of common application types, review authorities, and required approvals may be provided by the city to assist applicants in understanding the development review process.

Staff Explanation: Staff notes that this section reflects the intentional addition of language to better clarify expectations for the public.

➤ **153.034 (D)(1) Conditional Use Permit Procedures**

Existing Section:

- (a) The impact of the proposed use on the health, safety, and general welfare of the occupants of the surrounding lands;
- (b) Existing and anticipated traffic conditions, including parking facilities on adjacent streets and lands;
- (c) The effect of the proposed use on public utilities;
- (d) The effect of the proposed use on property values and scenic views in the surrounding area;
- (e) The effect of the proposed use on the Comprehensive Plan;
- (f) The ability of the proposed use to meet the standards of this chapter;



- (g) The results of a market feasibility study, if requested by the city, when the purpose for which the conditional use is being requested relies on a business market for its success;
- (h) The effects of the proposed use on ground water, surface water, and air quality; and
- (i) Whether the proposed use is allowed with a CUP in the zoning district in which it is proposed.

Proposed Section:

- (a) Impacts on public health, safety, and general welfare;
- (b) Traffic, parking, and access conditions;
- (c) Impacts on public utilities and services;
- (d) Compatibility with surrounding land uses and development patterns;
- (e) Compliance with applicable standards of this chapter;
- (f) Environmental impacts, including water and air quality;
- (g) Whether the use is listed as a conditional use in the applicable zoning district; and
- (h) A market feasibility study may be required only when reasonably necessary to evaluate a request that relies on market demand for its operation.

Staff Explanation: Staff notes that this section reflects a simplification of language to improve clarity and readability.

➤ **153.035 Interim Use Permits**

Existing Section:

- (A) Purpose and intent. The purpose and intent of allowing interim uses is:
 - (1) To allow a use for a brief period of time until a permanent location is obtained or while the permanent location is under construction.
 - (2) To allow a use that is presently judged acceptable by the city but that with anticipated development or redevelopment will not be acceptable in the future or will be replaced in the future by a permitted or conditional use allowed within the respective district.
 - (3) To allow a use which is reflective of anticipated long-range change to an area and which is in compliance with the Comprehensive Plan provided that said use maintains harmony and compatibility with surrounding uses and is in keeping with the architectural character and design standards of existing uses and development.
 - (4) To allow cannabis-related uses within the city while preserving the ability to modify appropriate zoning locations to conform with additional future regulation and guidance from the Office of Cannabis Management, and potential future City Code provisions that will be informed by the future education and experiences learned by the city.

Proposed Section:

- (A) Purpose. Interim use permits (IUPs) allow temporary uses that are appropriate for a limited period of time or until future development occurs.



Interim use permits are intended to provide temporary flexibility without establishing vested or permanent land use rights.

Staff Explanation: Staff notes that this example simplifies the process by removing long and confusing language. Staff also plans to use graphics to help explain processes and specific language encouraging applicants to contact staff if they are unsure which process applies.

➤ **153.038(B) Site Plan Review**

Existing Section:

- (A) Exemptions from review. The following uses shall be exempted from the site plan review requirements:
- (1) Agricultural uses in the AP, C, A, and RR Districts;
 - (2) Single-family detached and two-family dwellings; and
 - (3) Single-family attached dwellings approved by Planned Unit Development and/or subdivision unless otherwise required by the city.

Proposed Section:

- (A) Exemptions from review. The following uses shall be exempted from the site plan review requirements:
- (1) Agricultural uses in the AP, C, A, and RR Districts;
 - (2) Single-family detached and two-family dwellings; and
 - (3) Single-family attached dwellings approved by Planned Unit Development and/or subdivision unless otherwise required by the city.
 - (4) Minor exterior building modifications and site improvements that do not affect building footprint, parking layout, access, drainage, or required landscaping, as determined by the Community Development Director, or designee.**

Staff Explanation: Staff notes that this section shows the City is working to simplify the review process and avoid unnecessary steps for applicants.

ATTACHMENT 2: Potential Graphic & Process Illustration Examples

EXAMPLE 1 – BEST PRACTICE – WHITE BEAR LAKE ZONING ORDINANCE PROCESS



EXAMPLE 2 – RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS

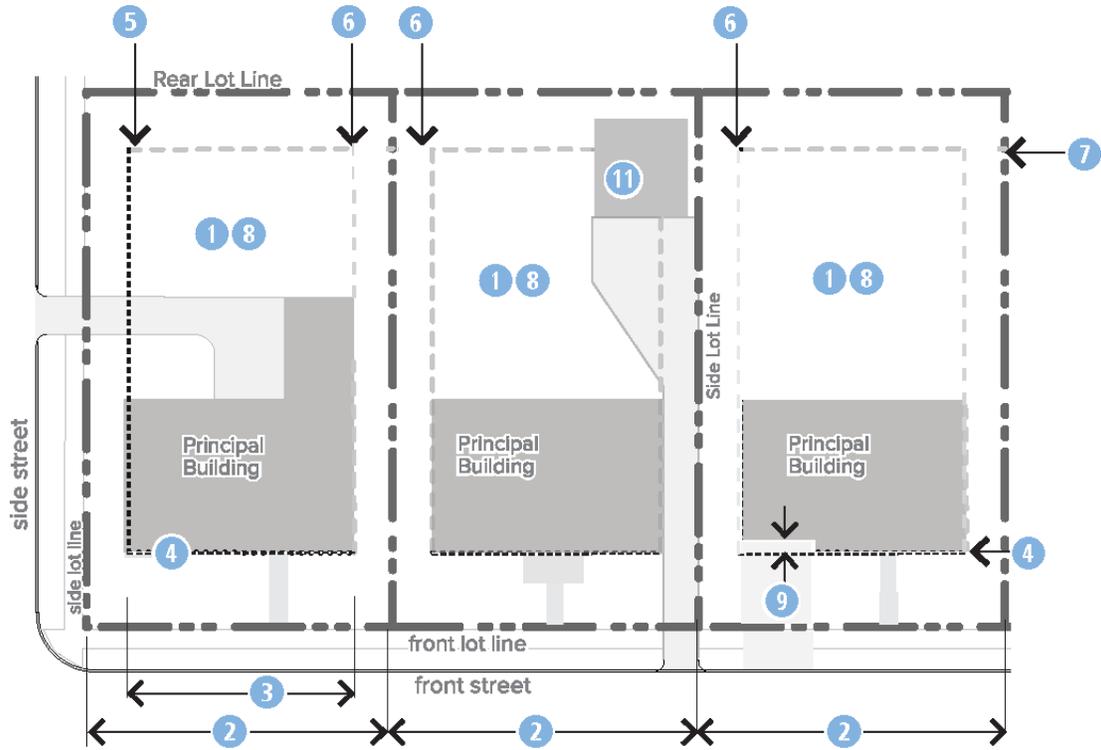


Figure 1302.050-A. Detached House Building Siting

KEY

- Potential Building Footprint
- Parking Location
- Lot Line
- Building Setback Line

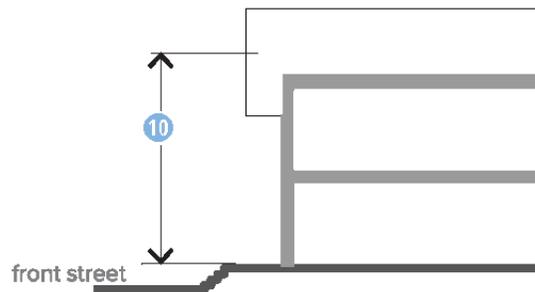


Figure 1302.050-B. Detached House Building Height

Chapter 1302 Residential Zones

1302.050 Detached House

		ZONES			Additional/ References
		R-3	R-4	R-5	
1302.050.3. BUILDING SITING. See Figure 1302.050-A					
1	Lot Area, minimum	6000 s.f.	7,000 s.f.	5,500 s.f.	See Chapter 1501 for Shoreland Management Ordinance.
2	Lot Width, minimum	45 ft.	60 ft.	40 ft.	
3	Building Width, minimum	22 ft.	22 ft.	22 ft.	
4	Front Street Setback, minimum	25 ft.	30 ft.	25 ft.	See 1314.010.6 for measuring. Street setback averaging applies. See 1314.010.6 for allowed encroachments into setbacks.
5	Side Street Setback, minimum	15 ft.	20 ft.	10 ft.	
6	Side Setback, minimum	10 ft., except 5 ft. for an attached garage	10 ft., except 5 ft. for an attached garage	min. 5 ft., 18 ft. total both sides	
7	Rear Setback, minimum	30 ft.	30 ft.	30 ft.	See 1314.010.7 for measuring.
8	Impervious Coverage, maximum	50%	50%	50%	
9	Attached Garage, maximum size	No more than the footprint of the principal structure or 1,000 s.f., whichever is less.			
	Allowed Garage Door Location, facade	Rear, street-side, or side; Front when min. 10 ft. behind principal structure front facade and max. 35% of front facade	Any	Rear, street-side, or side	
1302.050.4. HEIGHT. See Figure 1302.050-B					
10	Principal Building Height, maximum	35 ft. except 30 ft. east of Hwy. 61 on lots 51 feet in width or less.	35 ft.	35 ft.	See 1314.010.10 and 1314.010.12 for measuring heights.
1302.050.5. ACCESSORY STRUCTURES. See Figure 1302.050-A					
See Chapter 1306 for additional accessory buildings and structures regulations.					
	Number of Accessory Structures, maximum	3	3	3	
	Size of Accessory Structures, maximum				
	Any Single Structure	800 s.f.	800 s.f.	800 s.f.	
	Total Footprint of All Structures for Lots 10,000 s.f. or less	1,000 s.f.	1,000 s.f.	1,000 s.f.	
	Additional s.f. for Each Additional 10,000 s.f. in Lot Size	+400 s.f.	+400 s.f.	+400 s.f.	
	Maximum on Any Lot	2,000 s.f.	2,000 s.f.	2,000 s.f.	
	Accessory Structure Height, maximum	1.5 stories	1.5 stories	1.5 stories	
11	Accessory Structure Location	Rear yard only	Rear yard only	Rear yard only	
	Street Setback, minimum	No closer than the principal structure.			
	Side & Rear Setback, minimum	20 ft. for detached garage door facing alley; 5 ft. for other accessory buildings			
1302.050.6. FRONT FACADE. See Figure 1302.050-A					
	Transparency	15% per story	-	-	

EXAMPLE 3 – GRAPHIC ZONING USE TABLE

Table 1305-1 Principal Use Table

	Mixed-Use Zones								Residential Zones					Special Zones				Use-Specific Regulations	
	MX-D	MX-C	MX-S	GX-D	GX-C	GX-A	GX-N	RX-C	RX-N	R-1	R-2a-c	R-3	R-4	R-5	BP	IX	I		P1
RESIDENTIAL																			
Household Living																			
1 dwelling unit	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	-	-	-	-	-
2 dwelling units	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	-	-	●	-	●	-	-	-	-	-
3–6 dwelling units	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	-	-	-	-	●	-	-	-	-	-
7+ dwelling units	●	●	●	●	●	●	-	●	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Manufactured Home Park	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	○	○	-	-	○	-	○	-	-	-	-	-
Sacred Community	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	-	-	-	-	○
Group Living (except as below)																			
Residential Facility, Small	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	-	-	-	-	-
Residential Facility, Large	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	-	-	-	-	-
COMMERCIAL																			
Adult Establishment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	○	-	-
Animal Boarding	-	-	○	-	○	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	●	●	●	-	-
Consumer Service	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	●	●	●	-	●
Day Care, Small	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	-	-	-	●	●
Day Care, Large	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	-	-	-	-	-	●	●	-	-	-
Entertainment Venue, Large	-	●	●	-	●	●	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	○	●
Funeral & Mortuary Service	-	-	-	●	-	-	●	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	●	●	-	-	-
Lodging	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	●	●	-	-	-
Marina	-	○	-	-	○	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	●
Office	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	●	●	●	-	-
Pawnshop or Precious Metal Dealer	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Retail & Entertainment																			
Eating and Drinking Place (except as below)	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Brewer Tap Room	○	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	○	○	-	-	-
Brewpub	○	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	○	○	-	-	-
Micro-distillery	○	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	○	○	-	-	-
Entertainment, General	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	●	●	-	-	-
Retail Sales (except as below)	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	●	-	-	-
Retail Sales, Large-Format	-	●	●	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	●	-	-	-
Liquor, Off-Sale	○	●	●	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Tobacco Products Shop	-	-	●	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Self-Service Storage																			
Vehicle Sales, Service & Storage)																			
Car Wash	-	-	○	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fueling Station	-	-	○	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	○	○	-	-
Vehicle Sales & Rental, Personal	-	-	○	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	○	-	-	-
Vehicle Repair & Maintenance, Minor	-	-	○	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	○	-	-	-
Vehicle Repair & Maintenance, Major	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	○	○	○	-	-

KEY: ● = Permitted ○ = Permitted in Upper Stories Only ● = Limited to No More than 25% of Footprint ○ = Requires Conditional Use Approval - = Prohibited

Table 1305-1 Principal Use Table

	Mixed-Use Zones								Residential Zones					Special Zones				Use-Specific Regulations		
	MX-D	MX-C	MX-S	GX-D	GX-C	GX-A	GX-N	RX-C	RX-N	R-1	R-2a-c	R-3	R-4	R-5	BP	IX	I		P1	P2
Vehicle Towing Service	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	○	○	-	-	1305.040.13
MANUFACTURING & INDUSTRY																				
Manufacturing, Artisan	●	●	●	○	○	●	○	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	●	●	●	-	-	
Manufacturing, Limited	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	●	●	●	-	-	
High-Impact Industry	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	○	-	-	
Storage & Distribution																				
Indoor	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	●	●	●	-	-	1305.050.4
Outdoor	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	○	○	○	-	-	1305.050.4
CIVIC & INSTITUTIONAL																				
College	○	○	○	●	●	●	●	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	●	●	-	-	●	
Community Assembly	-	●	●	●	●	●	-	○	○	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	○	●	
Cultural Facility	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	●	●	-	●	●	
Detention or Correctional Facility	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	○	
Hospital	-	-	-	○	○	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	●	●	-	-	●	
Parks and Open Space	-	-	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
School	○	○	○	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	
Utilities & Services, Minor	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1305.060.8
Utilities & Services, Major	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	1305.060.8
OTHER																				
Billboard	-	-	○	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	○	○	○	1305.070.1
Cannabis and Hemp-Related Businesses																				
Cannabis Cultivator	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	○	-	-	1305.070.2
Cannabis Delivery Service	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	○	○	○	-	-	1305.070.2
Cannabis Event	-	-	○	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1305.070.2
Cannabis Event Organizer	-	-	○	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	○	○	○	-	-	1305.070.2
Cannabis Manufacturer	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	○	-	-	1305.070.2
Cannabis Mezzobusiness	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	○	-	-	1305.070.2
Cannabis Microbusiness	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	○	-	-	1305.070.2
Cannabis Testing Facility	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	○	○	○	-	-	1305.070.2
Cannabis Transporter	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	○	○	○	-	-	1305.070.2
Cannabis Wholesaler	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	○	○	○	-	-	1305.070.2
Dispensary	-	-	○	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1305.070.2
Lower-Potency Hemp Edible Manufacturer	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	○	○	○	-	-	1305.070.2
Lower-Potency Hemp Edible Retailer	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1305.070.2
Medical Cannabis Combination Business	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	○	-	-	1305.070.2
Wireless Communication Antennas & Towers	Allowed only on the city's municipal antenna site except as specified in 1305.070.3																		1305.070.1	

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EXAMPLE 4 – REVIEW/DECISION-MAKING PROCEDURES SUMMARY

Table 1311-1 Procedures Summary

PROCEDURE	ZA	PC	CC
Site Plan	○	○	●
Administrative Adjustment	●	—	—
Zoning Variance	○	○	●
Conditional Use Permit	○	○	●
Interim Use Permit	○	○	●
Comprehensive Plan Amendment	○	○	●
Zoning Map Amendment	○	○	●
Zoning Code Text Amendment	○	○	●
Planned Unit Development			
Development Plan	○	○	●
Site Plan	●	—	—
Appeal of Staff Decision	○	○	●
Site Alteration Permit	●	—	—
Reasonable Accommodation	●	—	—

Table notes:

○ = review and recommendation

● = final decision

ZA = zoning administrator

PC = planning commission

CC = city council

EXAMPLE 5 – SIMPLE PROCESS DIAGRAM

