

# Sunset Hills Proposed Revisions to the Zoning & Subdivision Ordinances

## 1 – General

No proposed revisions.

## 2 – General Provisions

No proposed revisions.

## 3 – District Regulations

Based on discussions with staff and nonconformities analysis, it is recommended that the City's six residential districts be consolidated to four. The new consolidated districts minimize opportunities for subdivision and maintain the character of existing neighborhoods. Additionally, those residential neighborhoods that are currently designated as planned unit developments were folded into the most appropriate of the four proposed districts, based on which district standards best reflected the exiting planned unit development. Existing planned developments are proposed to be shown on the zoning map as an overlay and would continue to be governed by their respective ordinance; however, if a planned development were to be eliminated for any reason, the underlying zoning would take effect.

Currently, the City's commercial areas are primarily designated as planned unit developments, as there is only one as-of-right commercial district included in the code. To accommodate commercial and office development of varying types going forward, the existing commercial and office land uses were designated into one of three commercial districts - local commercial, general commercial, and professional office districts. Like the residential planned developments, existing planned developments are proposed to be shown on the zoning map as an overlay and would continue to be governed by their respective ordinance; however, if a planned development were to be eliminated for any reason, the underlying zoning would take effect.

It is proposed that the new commercial and office districts be assigned to all existing commercial and office space as well as the vacant parcels along Gravois Road between the Meramec River and I-270, including the Nolan property. These vacant parcels are currently designated R-1, the lowest density residential district. Since these parcels are directly adjacent to the light industrial district, it has been proposed that these parcels be reassigned to the general commercial district to prevent the development of incompatible land uses. Industrial uses are designated for the L1: Light Industrial District.

## 4 – Development Standards

### Off-Street Parking, Loading, and Stacking Requirements

Currently, subsection 6.3-5 includes a table detailing the dimensional standards of parking spaces. This table is cumbersome and difficult to navigate and was therefore revised. The new table (4.1.7) includes modernized standards in a more user-friendly format.

Currently, subsection 6.5 includes a table detailing the required amount of off-street parking and loading. Like the dimensional standards table, this table is cumbersome and difficult to navigate, and was therefore revised. In addition to reorganizing the table to group uses by category, the uses in the new table (4.1.13) were collapsed,

new uses were added, and parking requirements were amended to eliminate, where possible, employee and user-based requirements.

Currently, required stacking spaces are included in the schedule of off-street parking requirements. These requirements were taken out of the new table and included in subsection 4.1.15. These requirements were revised to reflect modern best practices.

### **Landscape and Screening Requirements**

Currently, subsection 5.13, Landscape and Screening Requirements, includes separate subsections for screening between non-residential and residential zoning districts and landscaping of off-street parking areas. These subsections were combined into subsection 4.2.2, Required Landscape and Screening Elements. This new subsection details four areas, building foundation, parking lot exterior, parking lot interior, and transition. These areas have specific landscape requirements that, if adopted, would result in an increase in the amount of landscaping and screening throughout the City.

### **Fence Requirements**

Currently, subsection 5.14, Fence Regulations, allows for any fence material other than barbed or razor wire. This was revised in proposed subsection 4.3.2.4 to additionally prohibit wire and chain link fencing material.

### **Other Subsections**

No other major changes are proposed to the remaining subsections. All subsections were revised for plain-English, clarity, and consistency.

## **5 – Use Provisions**

Specific use standards were pulled from the conditional use provisions section for educational uses, hospitals, libraries, and motor vehicle uses. Traffic study requirements were added to the use provisions for motor vehicles uses per Ordinance No. 2109. Additional use provisions are proposed for car washes, cemeteries, hotels and motels, temporary portable outdoor storage units, and drive through facilities.

## **6 – Signs**

The sign ordinance was amended to comply with the 2016 Supreme Court decision in the Reed vs. the Town of Gilbert, Arizona case. This decision made it unlawful for municipalities to base sign regulations on their content. Therefore, all sign regulations that would require the City to read to the sign in order to enforce them such as real estate signs, professional name plates, or political posters have been eliminated.

Additionally, an option for a comprehensive sign plan has been proposed. A comprehensive sign plan would be an option for certain uses that are master planned, have multiple buildings on a lot, or are large in scale such as hospitals or regional retail shopping malls. A comprehensive sign plan would allow the applicant to request deviations from the sign ordinance for placement, quantity, and size. The Planning and Zoning Commission would be responsible for approving comprehensive sign plans and would base their decision on a set of evaluation criteria. Any deviations from the sign ordinance would be based on a maximum percent deviation prescribed in that section.

Further, the ordinance was reorganized to be more user friendly, with sign type and dimensional standards first, then sign permissions, comprehensive sign plans, exempt signs, prohibited signs, illegal signs, existing signs, general standards, construction specifications, and finally maintenance and inspection.

## 7 – Subdivisions

The majority of the subdivision ordinance has remained the same. However, several updates are proposed to help align this ordinance with the City's comprehensive plan. First, the maximum block length is proposed to be reduced from 1,500 feet to 800 feet in order to make any new subdivisions more walkable. Additionally, the use of a connectivity index is proposed to guide the layout of the streets in a subdivision. A connectivity index determines how connected a street network is based on the number of intersections (nodes) and block segments (links). A higher connectivity index reflects a greater number of block segments entering each intersection and thus a higher level of connectivity for the street network. Further, the stormwater standards and sanitary sewer standards were revised to better align with Metropolitan St. Louis Sewer District standards.

## 8 – Planned Developments

Currently planned developments are implemented as a zoning designation rather than an overlay or conditional use. According to city staff, Planned Development (PD) districts have been created on an ad hoc basis to facilitate development proposals in the city's commercial corridors. This approach is out of step with traditional zoning practices which establish a conceptual and regulatory land use framework, on both a citywide and district basis, which is then applied to individual site development proposals.

To address this issue, it is proposed that Section 4.10 of the existing zoning code be eliminated and replaced with Section 8. This proposed section of the code differs from the City's existing planned development process in many ways, as detailed below.

- Section 8 would address planned developments as overlays instead of separate use districts. As an overlay, existing planned developments continue to be governed by their respective ordinance but would now have an underlying zoning district to revert back to if for some reason the ordinance were to be eliminated. New planned developments would be required to ask for relief, through site development allowances, from the underlying zoning. This approach provides the City with a basis for measuring the amount of flexibility given to developers.
- Site development allowances, i.e. deviations or relief from the underlying zoning provisions, would be considered based on information provided by the developer detailing each such site development allowance and demonstrating how each would be compatible with surrounding development, is in furtherance of the stated objectives of Section 8, and is necessary for proper development of the site.
- Elected and appointed officials would review planned development proposals against 10 standards of review detailed in Section 8.2, including alignment with all relevant City planning documents, as well as modification standards included in Section 8.2.1. The modification standards are a framework by which the City would test the quality of amenities, benefits to the community, and design and desirability of a proposal.
- The procedures by which a planned development proposal would be considered by the City would be streamlined, making the process more efficient for Sunset Hills and more cost effective for developers. Changes include mandatory pre-filing conferences with City staff, mandatory preapplication meetings with surrounding neighbors, and a single plat submittal rather than a preliminary and final plat.

## 9 – Conditional Use Permits

The procedures by which the City reviews conditional use permit applications is not proposed to be changed. Proposed revisions to this section include:

- Revising the required number of site plans submitted as a part of the application for a conditional use from 20 copies to the requested number of copies,

- Clarifying the language pertaining to protests to conditional use permits,
- Removing section 7.3.2 Standards from this section and moving it to the Use Provisions section, and
- Revising the provisions related to failure to commence construction or operation to reflect the proposed Planned Development requirements.

## **10 – Administration and Enforcement**

The only proposed revision to this section includes extending the time period from 60 days to 90 days for which any person found violating the provisions of the zoning ordinance would have to comply after having been served with an order to remove such violation.

## **11 – Appeals and Variances**

No proposed changes.

## **12 – Non-Conforming Situations**

The only proposed revision to this section includes defining a six month time period for a nonconforming use to be considered discontinued.

## **13 – Amendments**

The only proposed revisions to this section include clarifying the pertaining to protests to amendments and revising the number of required site plans submitted as a part of the application for an amendment from 20 copies to the requested number of copies.

## **14 – Public Notices**

No proposed changes.