



City of Waukesha
201 Delafield Street
Waukesha, WI 53188
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waukesha-wi.gov

City of Waukesha Cover Sheet

Committee: Plan Commission	Meeting Date: April 1, 2026
ID Number: ID#26-03204	Ordinance/Resolution Number: <i>(if applicable):</i>
Name of Submitter: Jennifer Andrews	Target Next Board/Council Meeting Date: April 21, 2026
Agenda Item Title: Zoning Code Update – Review and possible action on a proposal to replace City Ordinance Chapter 22 Zoning and Chapter 27 Signs and Outdoor Advertising, with a new, fully rewritten zoning ordinance.	

Issue Before the Board/Council: Final drafts of the proposed zoning ordinance for review and approval
Options & Alternatives: The Council could approve the zoning code as presented or make revisions to any portion of it.
Additional Details: The Plan Commission, the Common Council, the Planning Department, City Attorney's office, and other City staff, have been working since the beginning of 2024 on a full scale rewrite to the City's zoning ordinance. This rewrite is a continuation of a longer process which began with the update to the Comprehensive Plan, which was completed between 2021 and 2023. Consultants from Houseal Lavigne and Birchline Planning performed a comprehensive study of the existing zoning code, the Comprehensive Plan, and the City's needs, including an extensive public outreach process. They produced a detailed Recommendations Report, which was presented to the City in January of 2025. Over the course of 2025 they drafted the new code in sections and presented them to City staff, the Plan Commission, and the Council.

The drafts have gone through extensive review and revisions, and we feel that they are now ready for final review by the Plan Commission and Council, and a vote on adoption.

The revised code is fully reorganized, with the intention that it will be easier to understand and easier to use. It makes extensive use of tables and diagrams to aid in interpretation. Lists of Permitted and Conditional Uses have been consolidated and modernized. Objective design standards have been added for many use types. Approval processes and design standards have been updated and codified.

These objective standards and processes will provide more certainty for both developers and neighbors. They will reduce review times in many cases, particularly for smaller projects, and will encourage higher quality development proposals. Staff and the Plan Commission have worked hard to find a balance that will still allow Plan Commissioners and the public to have a say in cases where development will have an impact on its neighbors.

The project's other major goal is to re-orient the City's development focus toward redevelopment, particularly for residential development. To further that goal, the City's residential zoning districts have been significantly reorganized. The current code's granular density requirements have been removed, and the total number of residential districts has been reduced from nine to four. Setback and lot area requirements, which currently make most of the central city non-conforming, have been reduced to an amount that is consistent with the actual neighborhoods they cover. This will make additions and renovations easier for homeowners in those areas.

A wider variety of housing types will also be allowed throughout the City. Homeowners in all residential districts will be allowed to add accessory dwelling units to their properties. Many residential areas will also allow a variety of house-scale residential uses, such as duplexes, triplexes, rowhomes, and cottage courts. Larger scale residential development will continue to be primarily limited to arterial corridors and the central core of the City, but the objective design standards should make it easier to permit without resorting to the Planned Unit Development process.

The new ordinance will incorporate both the zoning code, Chapter 22 of the City Ordinances, and the Sign Code, currently Chapter 27, into a single, consolidated chapter. If this ordinance follows the typical Council process and receives final approval on May 5th, 2026, it will go into effect on September 1st, 2026. The delay will give time to update the City's review and approval procedures to reflect the new regulations. A revised Subdivision Ordinance will be proposed later this year, to be adopted as Section 22.08, replacing Chapter 23.



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What is the Strategic Plan Priority this item relates to:

People-Centered Development

What impact will this item have on the Strategic Plan Priority?

The new zoning ordinance will regulate all development throughout the City.

Financial Remarks:

The City has made a significant investment, including both staff time and consulting services, to bring the code drafts to this point. By encouraging redevelopment and higher quality development, staff believe the rewritten code will have a long-term positive impact on the City's tax base and overall financial outlook. However, no direct or immediate financial impact is expected.

Suggested Motion:

"I move to approve the proposed new Chapter 22 of City ordinances, replacing the existing Chapter 22 and Chapter 27 in their entireties, to go into effect on September 1st, 2026."

Reviewed By:

City Attorney Brian Running	Date Reviewed
City Administrator Anthony W. Brown	Date Reviewed