

DRAFT NEW ZONING CODE OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

In the spring of 2024, the City of Waukesha began the process of updating its Zoning Code. The City's goal for the project is to modernize regulations, create a more user-friendly document, and ensure that the updated Code serves as an effective tool for implementing Waukesha's 2024 Comprehensive Plan. The draft also introduces new supplemental use standards, enhanced landscaping requirements, refined building and development standards, and updated sign regulations to help maintain community character and strengthen the City's visual identity.

ZONING PROCESS

The new Zoning Code is being developed through a collaborative process involving City staff, joint working sessions with the Plan Commission and Common Council, and engagement with local stakeholders. The project began in spring 2024 and is anticipated to be completed in spring 2026.

PROJECT TIMELINE

- **Project Initiation** – Launched the update process and established goals.
- **Community Engagement** – Gathered community input through an online community questionnaire and a community workshop.
- **Current Zoning Code Analysis and Preliminary Recommendations** – Analyzed the current Code against the community vision in the Comprehensive Plan and modern best practices to prepare recommendations.
- **Drafting Standards and Procedures** – Prepared draft Code updates and presented them to the Plan Commission and Common Council during joint working sessions to receive feedback.
- **Finalizing the Code** – Refined the draft based on review and feedback.
- **Adoption** – Public Open House and presentation of the Final Draft to the Plan Commission, followed by a public hearing and presentation of the final Code to the Common Council for adoption.
- **Subdivision Standards** – Subdivision standards are currently being developed and will be added to the proposed Zoning Code at a later date.



UPDATES TO RESIDENTIAL DISTRICTS

RN-1, RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD-1 DISTRICT

- Supports single-family detached homes on larger lots
- Preserves the character of low-density, suburban neighborhoods
- Allows limited density increases in select areas
- Supports accessory dwelling units (ADUs) where appropriate
- Ensures new development is compatible with surrounding homes

RN-2, RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD-2 DISTRICT

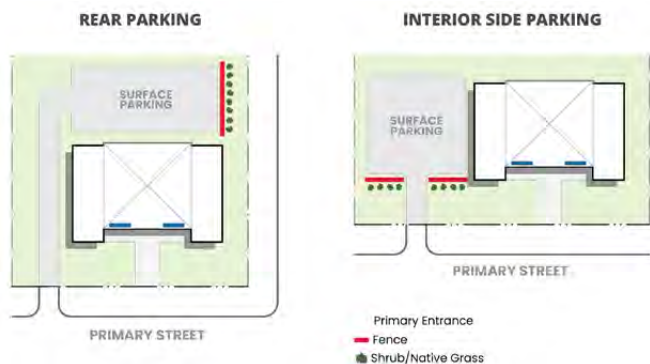
- Supports moderate-density and missing middle residential development
- Maintains the established character and scale of neighborhoods
- Provides a range of housing options to meet diverse community needs
- Generally intended for smaller lots and buildings with up to 4 units

RN-3, RESIDENTIAL-3 NEIGHBORHOOD DISTRICT

- Supports a wide range of residential development types
- Allows relatively high-density development
- Provides diverse housing options for households of different incomes, ages, and needs
- Encourages housing that integrates well with the surrounding environment
- Generally intended for areas near the downtown core, transit options, or as a transition between lower- and higher-intensity uses

RN-4, RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD-4 DISTRICT

- Supports new and existing larger multi-unit developments
- Provides buffers and transitions between commercial areas, major streets, and lower-density neighborhoods
- Encourages a range of higher-density housing types and building configurations
- Promotes development that is compatible with surrounding residential contexts
- Allows gradual transitions in density between commercial areas and lower-density housing

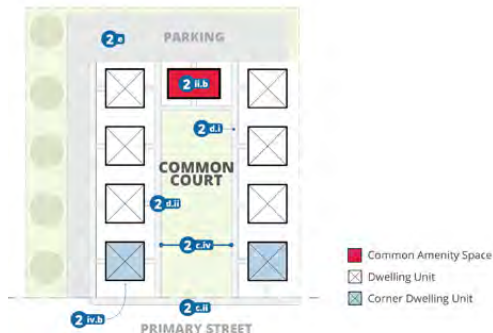


Triplex-Quadplex

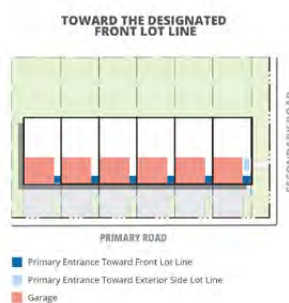
THE DUPLEX DESIGN REFLECTS THE FORM AND ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS OF NEIGHBORING RESIDENTS



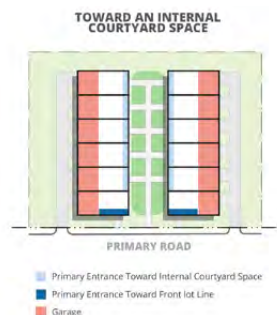
Duplex



Cottage Home/Tiny Home Court



Rowhouse, Front Lot



Rowhouse, Clusters

UPDATES TO COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS

MU, MIXED-USE COMMERCIAL DISTRICT

- Supports a mix of residential, retail, and service uses
- Encourages a range of residential development types (see separate use table for details)
- Promotes small-scale activity centers with ground-floor commercial and residential above or nearby
- Fosters walkable, pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods
- Aims to create vibrant, accessible areas well-connected to surrounding communities

DC, DOWNTOWN COMMERCIAL DISTRICT

- Enhances downtown as a hub for commercial, cultural, entertainment, and residential activities
- Encourages vertical mixed-use development to support a vibrant City core
- Buildings located along property lines to create street enclosure and a pedestrian-friendly environment
- Promotes active ground-floor spaces with residential or other uses above
- Designed to serve both pedestrians and motorists while remaining compatible with the surrounding urban context

GC, GENERAL COMMERCIAL DISTRICT

- Supports a mix of retail, office, and service uses
- Encourages a variety of shopping and professional offices
- Maintains compatibility with nearby residential areas
- Promotes pedestrian accessibility and integration with surroundings
- Ensures development blends with neighborhood character

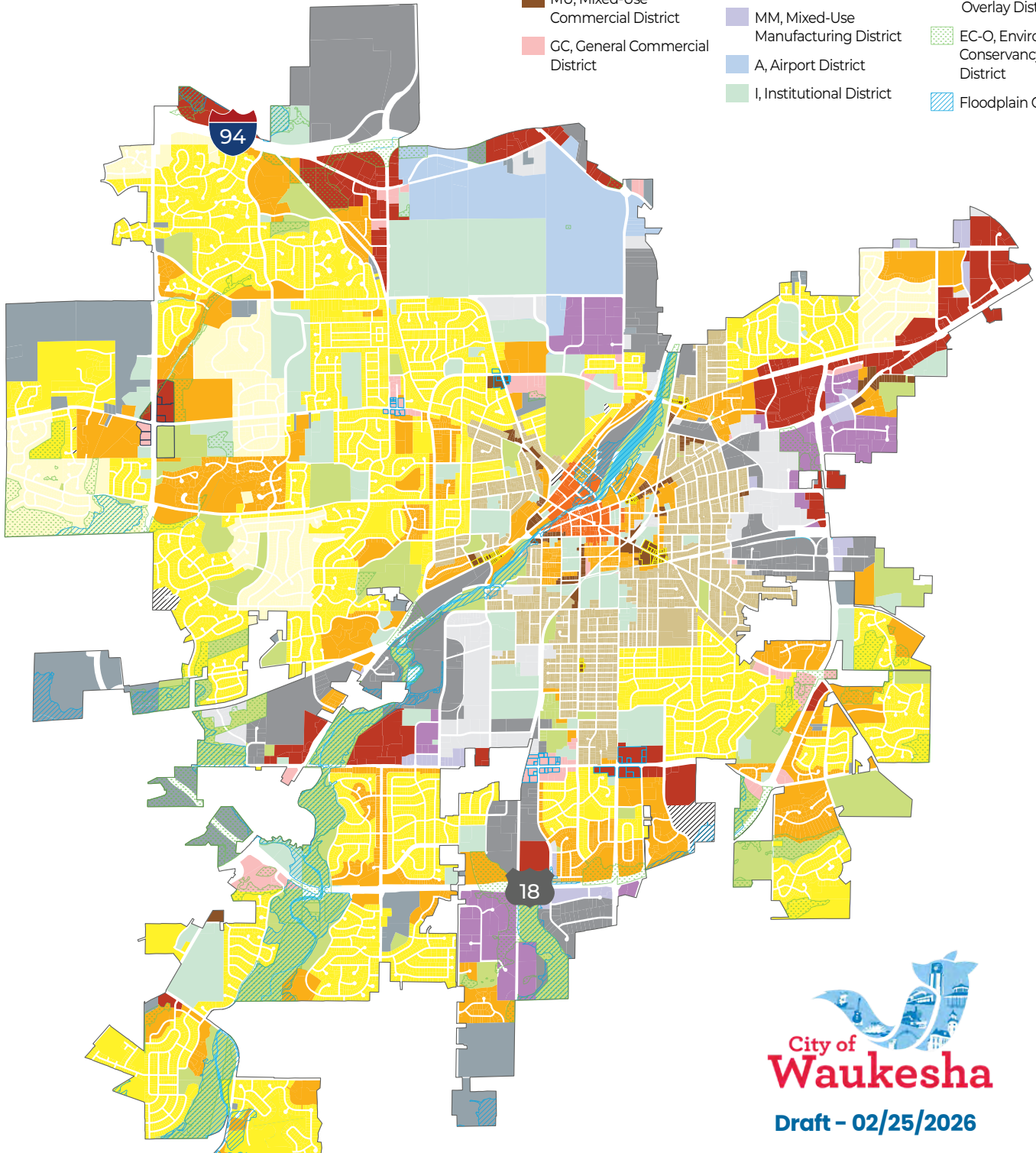
CC, CORRIDOR COMMERCIAL DISTRICT

- Supports businesses and offices along major highways and throughways
- Focuses on uses that serve highway traffic needs
- Maintains compatibility with surrounding neighborhoods
- Encourages lower-intensity development compared to other business districts
- Allows multi-unit uses where appropriate

PROPOSED ZONING MAP

Proposed Zoning Districts

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| T, Temporary Zoning District | DC, Downtown Commercial District | P, Park District |
| RN-1, Residential Neighborhood District 1 | CC, Corridor Commercial District | PUD-O, Planned Unit Development Overlay District |
| RN-2, Residential Neighborhood District 2 | LM, Light Manufacturing District | NN-O, Neighborhood Node Overlay District |
| RN-3, Residential Neighborhood District 3 | GM, General Manufacturing District | SMUN-O, Suburban Mixed-Use Node Overlay District |
| RN-4, Residential Neighborhood District 4 | OM, Office and Manufacturing Park District | RCN-O, Regional Commercial Node Overlay District |
| MU, Mixed-Use Commercial District | MM, Mixed-Use Manufacturing District | EC-O, Environmental Conservancy Overlay District |
| GC, General Commercial District | A, Airport District | Floodplain Overlay |
| | I, Institutional District | |



COMMERCIAL NODE OVERLAY

The Community Node Overlay regulates how key intersections and commercial areas develop and redevelop across the City. It supports:

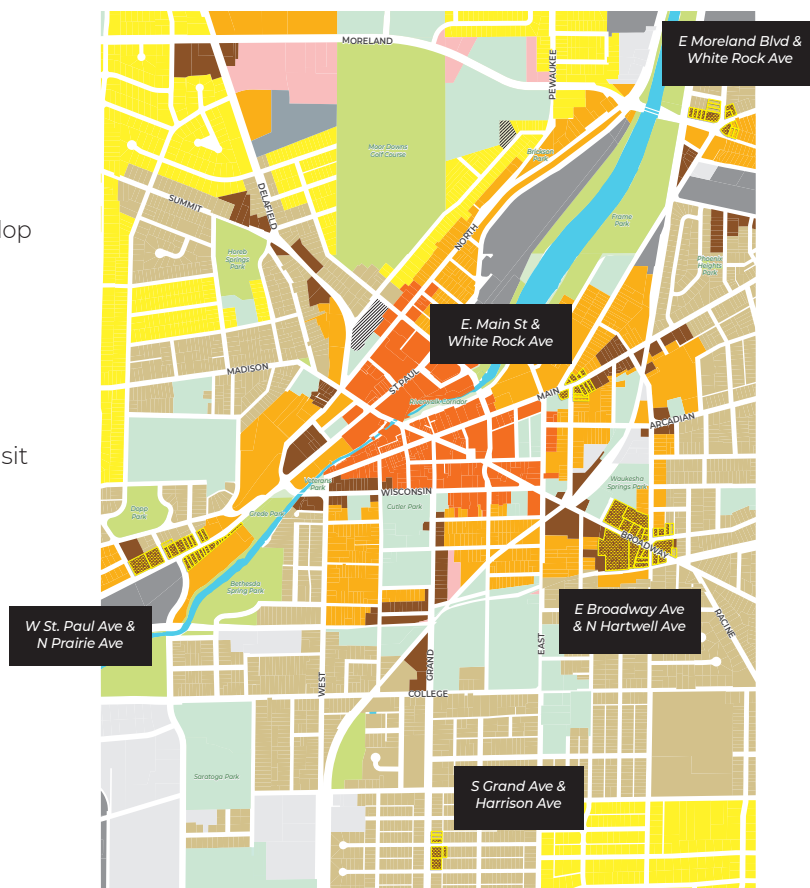
- Walkable, mixed-use centers
- Local retail, restaurants, and services
- Housing integrated with commercial uses
- Attractive, high-quality building design
- Better access for cars, bikes, pedestrians, and transit

The overlay applies to properties shown on the Official Zoning Map and works in addition to the base zoning district.

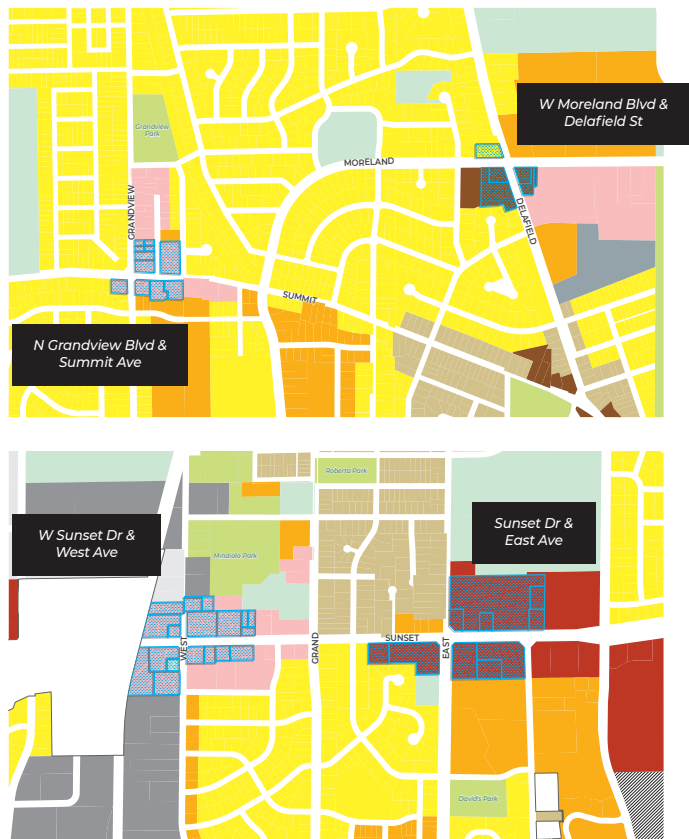
There are three (3) types of Community Nodes:

- Neighborhood Node (NN-O)
- Suburban Mixed-Use Node (SMUN-O)
- Regional Commercial Node (RCN-O)

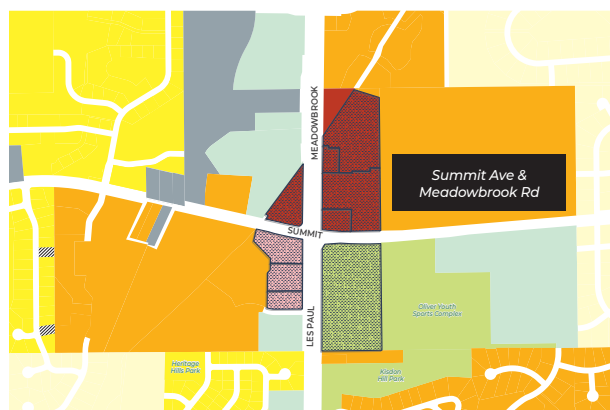
Neighborhood Node (NN-O)



Suburban Mixed-Use Node (SMUN-O)



Regional Commercial Node (RCN-O)



DIVERSIFY HOUSING TYPES

Single-Family Detached

RN-1, RN-2,
RN-3, RN-4, MU



Cottage Home/ Tiny Home Court

RN-1, RN-2,
RN-3, RN-4



Duplex Side-by-side

RN-2, RN-3,
RN-4, MU



Duplex Stacked

RN-2, RN-3,
RN-4, MU



Triplex

RN-2, RN-3, RN-4



Quadplex

RN-2, RN-3, RN-4



Rowhome

RN-2, RN-3,
RN-4, MU



Mobile Home Park

RN-3, RN-4



Multi-Unit 5-8 Units

RN-3, RN-4,
MU, GC



Multi-unit More than 8 Units

RN-4, DC,
GC, CC



Multi-Unit Above Ground Floor Only

MU, DC, GC



Multi-unit Rear Ground-Floor

MU, DC, GC



Live-Work Unit

RN-3, RN-4,
MU, DC, GC



Multi-unit Building Complex

RN-4



USE STANDARDS

Allowed uses are now consolidated in three clear and easy to use tables: Principal Uses, Accessory Uses, and Temporary Uses. Each table identifies whether a use is a Permitted or Conditional Use, whether there are supplemental standards for the use, or if the use is not allowed in a district.

Principal Uses are grouped by categories: Residential, Public and Institutional, Commercial, and Industrial and Automotive. This allows a user to quickly find the use they would like more information about.

PRINCIPAL USES TABLE

The following shall be used in the interpretation of Table 22.03.03(A).

- **P = Permitted Uses.** Uses shall be allowed principal uses subject to all applicable regulations of this Zoning and Subdivision Code.
- **C = Conditional Uses.** Uses shall require approval as a Conditional Use as detailed in Section 22.11.08 prior to establishment.
- **Blank = Prohibited Uses.** A blank space in the table indicates that a use is prohibited.

Table 22.03.03 Permitted Uses in Residential Districts					
Permitted Uses	Supplemental Standards	RN-1	RN-2	RN-3	RN-4
Residential					
Child Day Care Home					
Community Living Arrangement 8 or fewer residents	22.03.04(A)(1)	P	P	P	P
Community Living Arrangement 9 or more residents	22.03.04(A)(1)			C	C
Dwelling, Cottage Home/ Tiny Home Court	22.03.04(A)(2)	P	P	P	P
Dwelling, Duplex; Side-by-side	22.03.04(A)(3)		P	P	P
Dwelling, Duplex; Stacked	22.03.04(A)(3)		P	P	P
Dwelling, Live-Work Unit	22.03.04(A)(4)			C	P
Dwelling, Mobile Home Park	22.03.04(A)(5)			P	P
Dwelling, Multi-Unit Building Complex	22.03.04(A)(6)				P
Dwelling, Multi-Unit, above ground floor only					
Dwelling, Multi-Unit, more than 8 units	22.03.04(A)(7)				P
Dwelling, Multi-unit, Rear Ground-Floor	22.03.04(A)(8)				
Dwelling, Multi-Unit, 5-8 units	22.03.04(A)(9)			P	P
Dwelling, Quadplex	22.03.04(A)(12)		P	P	P
*Dwelling, Rowhome	22.03.04(A)(10)		P	P	P
Dwelling, Single-Family, Detached	22.03.04(A)(11)	P	P	P	P
Dwelling, Triplex	22.03.04(A)(12)		P	P	P
Foster Family Home		P	P	P	P
Public and Institutional					
College/University			C	C	C
Nursing Home				P	P
Parks and playgrounds		P	P	P	P
Place of Worship		C	C	C	C
Post Office					
Schools K-12	22.03.04(B)(4)	C	C	C	

ACCESSORY USES TABLE

The following shall be used in the interpretation of Table 22.03.05(A).

- **Permitted Uses (P).** Uses which are marked as “P” in the table shall be allowed accessory uses subject to all applicable regulations of this Code.
- **Conditional Uses (C).** Uses which are marked as “C” in the table shall require approval as a Conditional Use as detailed in Section 22.11.08 prior to establishment.
- **Prohibited Uses.** A blank space in the table indicates that a use is prohibited.
- **Uses Not Listed.** A use not specifically listed is prohibited unless it is determined that the use is a part of a general use type as described in Section 22.03.02(A).
- **Supplemental Standards.** If a use has supplemental standards, they are referenced in the Supplemental Standards column. Supplemental standards shall apply to the use, regardless of whether it is a permitted, or conditional use.
- **Overlay Districts.** Overlay districts are not included in Table 22.03.05(A). Uses and how they are allowed in overlay districts shall be as detailed below:

- **PUD - Planned Unit Development Overlay District.** Development in the PUD district shall be allowed in accordance with the planned unit development approval process in Section 22.11.11 and shall follow the uses permitted in the underlying base district, unless otherwise specified in this Code.
- **All Other Overlay Districts.** Development within all other overlay districts, including ECO, FWO, FSO, FFO, CN, and HPD shall generally be more restrictive than the underlying base district.

*Note:

- *RN-2 District: Rowhome buildings shall have no more than 4 dwelling units.*
- *Other Districts where Rowhomes are Permitted: Rowhome buildings shall have no more than 8 dwelling units.*

SIGN STANDARDS

The following key is to be used in the interpretation of Table 22.09.02.

- **Sign Types Requiring a Permit.** Sign types marked as “P” in the table shall be permitted subject to all applicable regulations of this Code and only once approved, as specified in Section 22.11.04.
- **Sign Types not Requiring a Permit.** Sign types marked as “A” in the table shall be allowed subject to all applicable regulations of this Code without the issuance of a Sign Permit.
- **Prohibited Sign Types.** A blank space in the table indicates that a sign type is prohibited in the respective district.

Table 22.09.02 Allowed Sign Types by District

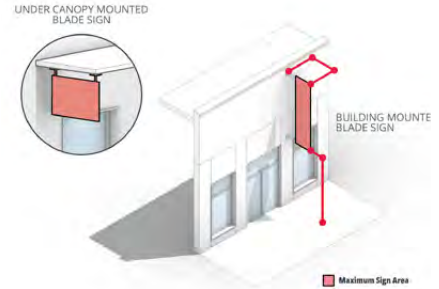
Sign Type	RN-1, RN-2	RN-3, RN-4	MU, DC	GC	CC	LM, GM	MM, OM	I	P	A
Permanent Building Signs										
Awning Sign [1]	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Blade Sign	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Bracket Mounted Sign	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Canopy Sign	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Wall Sign [1]	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Window Sign, Permanent [1]	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Marquee Sign			•							
Roof Sign				•	•	•	•			
Permanent Ground Signs										
Drive-Through Sign				•	•					
Billboard Sign						•	•			
Monument Sign [1]		•		•	•	•	•			
Electronic Display Sign				•	•	•	•		•	
Neighborhood Entry Sign [2]	•	•		•	•					
On-Site Circulation Safety Sign [1]	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Post Sign, Permanent [1]	•	•	•	•	•					
Pylon Sign					•			•		
Temporary Attached Signs										
Athletic Field Fence Sign [3]	○	○	○	•	○	○	○	○	○	○
Light Pole Banner Sign								○		
Wall-Mounted Banner Sign [1][4]	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Window Sign, Temporary [1]	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Temporary Freestanding Signs										
A-Frame/Sandwich Board Sign			○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Feather Sign				○	○	○	○			
Ground-Mounted Banner Sign [1][4]	○	○	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Post and Panel Sign [1][4]	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Post Sign, Temporary			○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Yard Sign [4][5]	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Notes

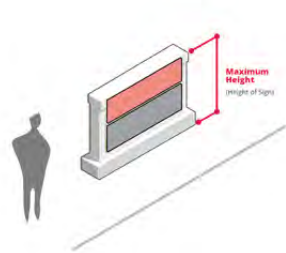
- [1] Sign shall be allowed for community living arrangement, foster family home, dwelling, multi-unit with four or more units, and nonresidential uses only.
- [2] Sign shall be allowed at the entrance of neighborhoods or subdivisions only.
- [3] Sign shall be allowed for public and institutional uses only.
- [4] Additional noncommercial temporary signs shall be permitted without numerical limitation, subject to a maximum total sign area of 25 square feet.
- [5] Sign shall be allowed for dwelling, single-family detached; dwelling, rowhome; dwelling, triplex/quadplex; and dwelling, duplex uses only.

*Note:

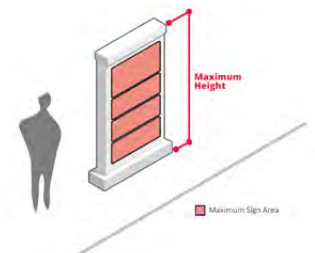
- Development projects which can't meet the standards of this section may request an exception from the Plan Commission.



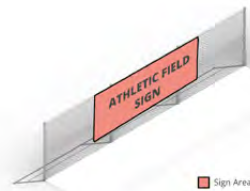
Blade Sign



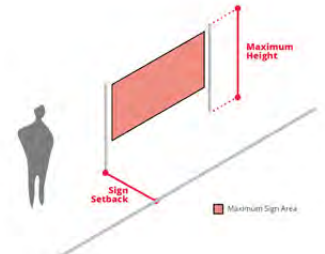
Grand Opening Decoration Sign



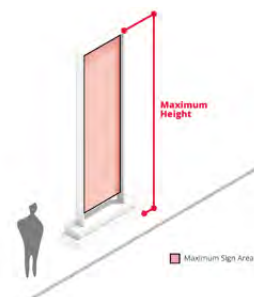
Multi-Tenant Monument Sign



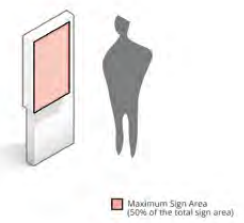
Athletic Field Fence Sign



Ground Monument Sign



Pylon Sign



Digital-Changing Signs

LANDSCAPE AND NATURAL RESOURCES STANDARDS

New standards and requirements for landscaping in Section 22.07 ensure that the City's current practices and requirements are clearly spelled out, providing much greater certainty for the community and much clearer direction to landowners. The new Section consolidates existing Sections 22.18 (landscaping) and 22.19 (woodland preservation) which provided general guidance rather than objective requirements.

The objective requirements in Section 22.07 provide standards for:

Landscaping quantity and 'zones' – All applications must provide a specific number of plant 'points', made up of trees, shrubs, forbs, and grasses. Stormwater 'rain gardens' and bioretention areas count towards the 'points' requirement. Preservation of mature trees is incentivized through the points system. Durable, hardy native plants are required; a list of recommended trees, suitable for thriving in Waukesha's climate, will be provided to landowners.

REQUIRED PLANTING ZONES

Landscaping must be distributed among parking lot interiors, parking lot perimeters, planted buffer and screening areas, building foundations, and street trees. The diagrams and requirements in Section 22.07 essentially codify what the City currently requires. The plant points requirements were reviewed with care to ensure these are suitable for typical development sites in Waukesha.

SCREENING AND BUFFERING TYPES

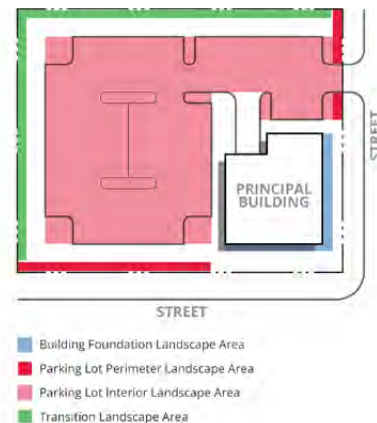
Guidance is provided on five planted buffer types that applicants can use to meet standards for buffering along sidewalks, roads, and property lines. The screen/buffer illustrations provide guidance to support attractive and effective buffer designs.

PROTECTION OF HIGH-VALUE TREES

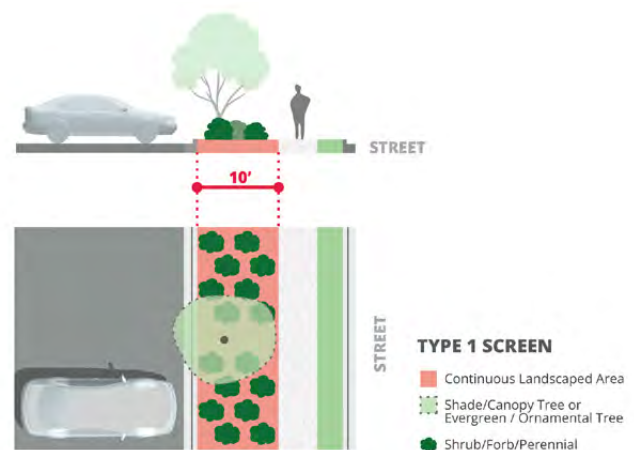
Section 22.07 adds more specific standards protecting mature trees. Tree removal permits will not be required on single-family and duplex properties, but for all other property types, trees are protected through (1) requirements for tree preservation fencing during development, (2) prohibitions on clear-cutting, and (3) review by Plan Commission for removal of large, protected trees, with clearer replacement formulas when protected trees are removed.

SURFACE WATER AND WETLAND BUFFERS

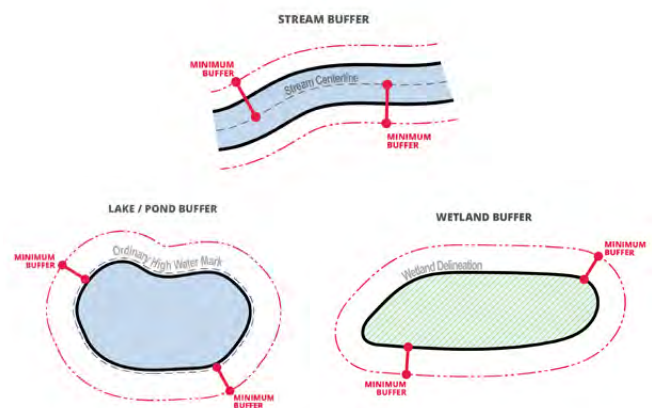
Surface water and wetland buffers: To combat flooding and stormwater pollution, any property seeking development approvals will need to establish a vegetated area along the edges of streams, ponds, and wetlands. While variances may be granted by the Plan Commission, implementing these buffers will lead, over time, to protection of water quality.



Landscape Zones



Parking Lot Screening



Surface Water and Wetland Buffers

**Note:*

- Development projects which can't meet the standards of this section may request an exception from the Plan Commission.

BUILDING DESIGN STANDARDS

FAÇADE DESIGN AND ARTICULATION

Façade design and articulation standards help to break up large walls into architecturally distinct sections or bays, providing visual interest and improving character.

ROOF DESIGN OVERVIEW

Roof design standards require roofline articulation by distinctions in roof pitch, such as through the use gables, dormers, shed dormers, flat roofs, or towers, that are visually apparent from the ground, variation in roof materials, such as on roof accent elements, and variation of at least two feet in building section height.

EXTERIOR BUILDING CLADDING MATERIALS

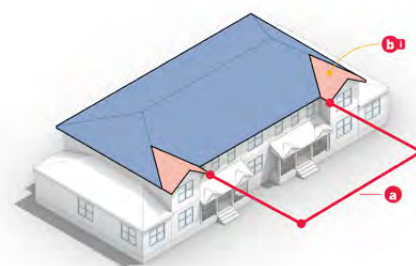
The exterior building cladding materials establish a minimum required and maximum allowed amount of specific materials like Solid brick, Natural and manufactured stone, stucco, and architectural metal panels. The requirements vary by district and ensure high quality and long lasting materials are used in a manner that is consistent with the district.

BUILDING ENTRYWAY DESIGN

Building entryway design standards ensure that a building's primary entrance is architecturally defined and pedestrian oriented. A menu of building entryway design types is provided including canopy/ roof overhang, portico, plaza, pedestrian arcade, landscape forecourt, courtyard, recessed entrance, and mosaic surround.



Façade Design and Articulation



Roof Design



Glazing shall not be included in the façade material calculations

Exterior Building Cladding Materials



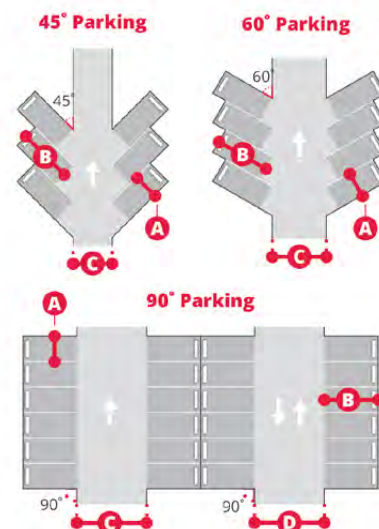
Building Entryway Design - Plaza

*Note:

- Development projects which can't meet the standards of this section may request an exception from the Plan Commission.

PARKING AND ACCESS

- Updates are proposed to the amount and design of vehicle and bicycle parking required size and number of parking stalls required for several uses.
- Bicycle parking is required for all multi-unit, mixed-use, and non-residential developments.
- Short-term bicycle parking is typically intended for non-residential uses.
- Long-term bicycle parking is typically intended for multi-unit residential uses.

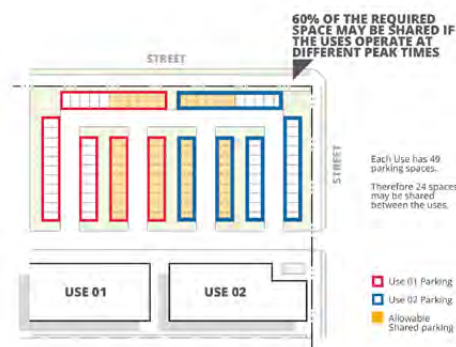


Vehicle Parking Dimensions

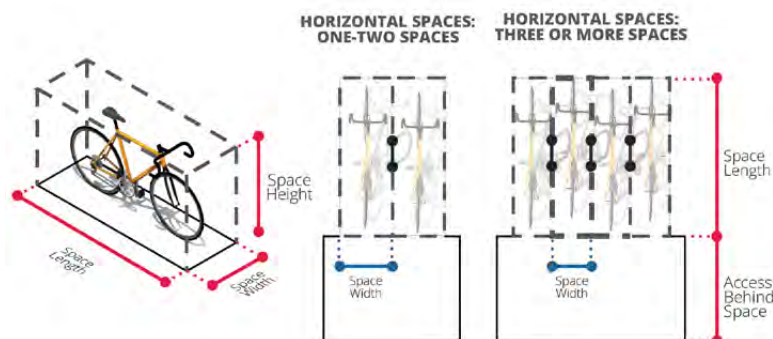


Driveway Setback

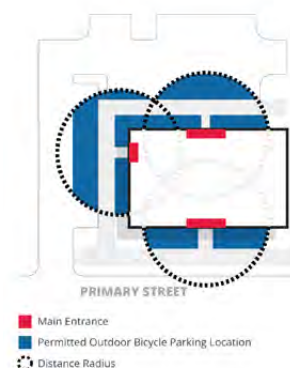
Driveway Width



Joint Use Parking



Bike Facility



Bike Parking Location

**Note:*

- Development projects which can't meet the standards of this section may request an exception from the Plan Commission.

ADMINISTRATION AND PROCEDURES

SITE PLAN AND ARCHITECTURE REVIEW (SPAR)

- Ensures new commercial and multi-unit residential projects comply with the Zoning Code and other City ordinances
- Aligns projects with the City of Waukesha Comprehensive Plan
- Approval required before construction or building permits
- Only projects which meet all applicable design standards and which are not adjacent to lesser-zoned residential areas will be approved through Administrative SPAR.



PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT (PUD)

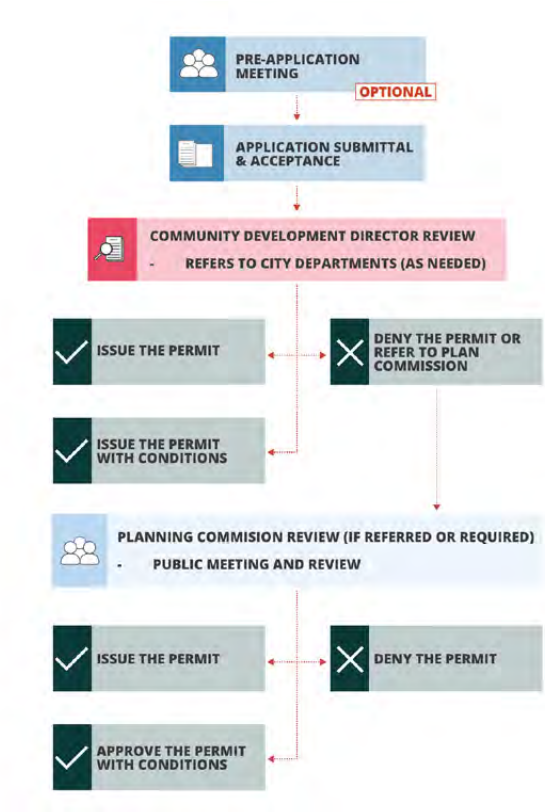
- Provides flexibility from standard zoning to allow innovative site design, creative building layouts, mixed-use or unique development, and higher-quality projects
- Projects must offer greater public value in exchange for flexibility



ADMINISTRATION AND PROCEDURES

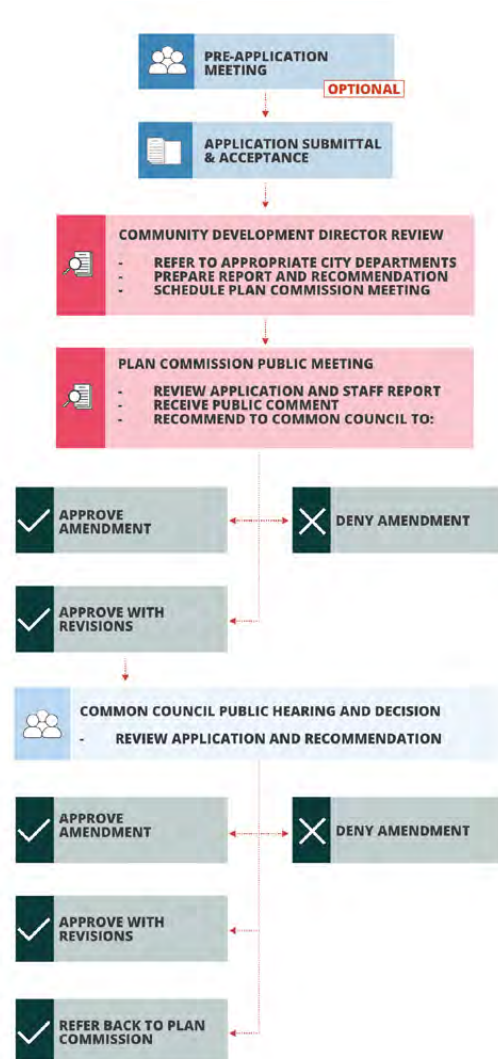
TEMPORARY USE PERMIT, BUILDING, AND OCCUPANCY PERMITS (NON-SPAR REVIEW)

- 1-2 unit residential
- Change of use applications
- Temporary uses
- Must comply with all applicable Zoning Code requirements
- Refer to Building Permit and Occupancy Permit sections for additional compliance requirements



ZONING CODE TEXT AMENDMENTS

- Updates or changes the rules and standards in the Zoning Code
- Keeps regulations aligned with the Comprehensive Plan and City policies
- Improves clarity, usability, and compatibility of development
- Applies Citywide, not to individual properties



STAY INVOLVED



Use the QR Code above or visit the link below to review the draft New Zoning Code document in more detail and send your feedback to the City.

hla.fyi/WaukeshaZoningUpdate



CONTACT

City of Waukesha | 201 Delafield St.
Waukesha, WI 53188
Community Development

Senior Planner

Charlie Griffith, AICP

(262) 524-3529 | cgriffith@waukesha-wi.gov