
Planning commission meeting and study session

The St. Louis Park Planning Commission is meeting in person at St. Louis Park City Hall, 5005 Minnetonka Blvd. Members of the public can attend and watch the planning commission meeting in person. The meeting will not be broadcast or video recorded.

Visit bit.ly/slppcagendas to view the agenda and reports.

You can provide comment on agenda items in person at the meeting or by emailing your comments to info@stlouispark.org by noon the day of the meeting. Comments must be related to an item on the meeting agenda.

Agenda

PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

1. Call to order – roll call
2. Approval of minutes – January 21, 2026 (regular meeting and study session)
3. Hearing
4. Other Business
 - 4a. Work Plan vote
5. Communications
6. Adjournment

PLANNING COMMISSION STUDY SESSION

1. Vision 4.0 presentation
2. Zoning code update, phase 2

Future scheduled meeting/event dates:

April 8, 2026 – planning commission regular meeting*

April 15, 2026 – planning commission regular meeting

May 6, 2026 – planning commission regular meeting

May 20, 2026 – planning commission regular meeting

* meeting held on April 8, 2026 because of Passover.

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1. Call to order – 6:00 p.m.

Roll Call

Members present: Jim Beneke, Mia Divecha (arrived at 6:02 p.m.), Matt Eckholm, John Flanagan, Sylvie Hyman, Sarah Strain, Tom Weber

Members absent: Tess Machalek

Staff present: Katelyn Champoux, Laura Chamberlain

Guest: Ian Thomas, resident
Sheldon Berg, DJR Architects

2. Approval of Minutes – January 7, 2026.

It was moved by Commissioner Eckholm, seconded by Commissioner Weber to approve the January 7, 2026 minutes. The motion passed 7-0.

3. Hearing

- 3a. Title:** Park Community Church conditional use permit
Location: 6805 Minnetonka Blvd.
Applicant: Park Community Church
Case No: 25-08-CUP

Ms. Champoux, associate planner, presented the Park Community Church conditional use permit application for 6805 Minnetonka Boulevard. Staff recommended reopening the public hearing (continued from Jan. 7, 2026), taking public testimony, and then recommending approval of the conditional use permit to allow a religious institution with a parking requirement reduction of 13 spaces at 6805 Minnetonka Blvd.

The property contains a 29,000 square foot church building and a 1,600 square foot parish house in the N-2 zoning district. The proposal includes interior renovation of the sanctuary and community spaces, a 500 square foot expansion on the south side, and replacing existing pavement on the north and west sides with green space.

The project would remove two access points on Minnetonka Boulevard and add significant landscaping, including 30 trees and 172 shrubs while preserving existing trees. The project would reduce impervious surface coverage from approximately 75% to 59%.

Ms. Champoux detailed the parking requirements, noting that after applying a 15% transit reduction, 98 spaces would be required. The church proposed 60 off-street spaces with potential for 12 additional spaces through proof of parking, plus 13 street parking spaces, for a total of 85 spaces. She noted the zoning code allows for parking requirement revisions through

a conditional use permit, and staff supported the 13-space reduction based on the adjacent community center having ample parking and an informal shared parking arrangement with the church.

The project would include electric vehicle charging infrastructure with 4 spaces served by chargers and 28 spaces with conduit for future chargers, plus 12 bike parking spaces.

A neighborhood meeting was held on Dec. 3, 2025 at Park Community Church. One resident attended and shared concerns about street parking and how the city calculates its parking requirements but did not oppose the project.

Chair Flanagan reopened the public hearing. Mr. Ian Thomas, a resident, spoke in support of the project, praising the conversion of impervious surface to green space and the parking reduction. He suggested that churches know their parking needs and street parking is a public resource. He also encouraged the commission to consider eliminating all parking mandates, as other cities have done, noting benefits for sustainability, health, safety, and affordable housing.

Chair Flanagan closed the public hearing.

Commissioner Divecha appreciated the green space additions and improved driveway access that prioritizes pedestrians on Minnetonka Blvd. Commissioner Weber thanked the guests for attending and participating in the meeting. Commissioner Eckholm commended the applicant for embracing the city's 2040 plan rather than seeking variances. Chair Flanagan noted the safety improvements from removing access points on Minnetonka Boulevard and redirecting traffic to side streets.

It was moved by Commissioner Beneke, seconded by Commissioner Hyman, to approve the Park Community Church conditional use permit. The motion passed 7-0.

3b. Title: Parkway on 5 preliminary and final plat, and variance

Location: 5430 Minnetonka Blvd.

Applicant: Sela Investments, Ltd., LLP

Case No: 25-10-S, 25-11-VAR

Ms. Champoux presented the Parkway on 5 application for 5430 Minnetonka Boulevard. Staff recommended approval of rescinding previous approvals on the site, approval of the preliminary and final plat, and approval of a variance to allow an 11-foot front yard setback instead of the required 25 feet for the underground parking portion.

Ms. Champoux explained the property was rezoned to N-2 zoning district, which allows various housing types. The project would include:

- A mix of units: 4 alcoves, 21 one-bedroom, and 9 two-bedroom units
- 52 off-street parking spaces (38 underground, 14 surface). Zoning code requires 33 parking spaces. The applicant proposes more than the required spaces due to the parking restrictions along the site on Minnetonka Blvd. and Vernon Avenue S.

- A public trail east of the property connecting Minnetonka Boulevard to Utica Avenue South
- Landscaping exceeding code requirements with 57 trees and 365 shrubs
- 42 bike parking spaces

The variance request was specifically for the underground parking portion, as the above-ground structure would meet the 25-foot setback requirement. A copy of the variance narrative from the applicant was provided to the commissioners since it was not in the agenda packet and it is included as "Attachment 1". Ms. Champoux explained the practical difficulties include the site's 10-foot elevation change and the desire to comply with the city's shadow ordinance while minimizing impacts on neighboring properties.

The project team held a neighborhood meeting on Jan. 7, 2026 and approximately 14 people attended. Attendees shared their comments and questions about topics such as outdoor lighting, parking and site access. Another resident comment was received after the agenda packet was created. A copy of the resident's comments in opposition was provided to the planning commissioners before the meeting and is included as "Attachment 2".

Chair Flanagan opened the public hearing. Mr. Sheldon Berg from DJR Architecture represented the project. He explained that site contamination from the previous gas station would be addressed during construction, with contaminated soil being removed and clean fill brought in. Mr. Berg noted that the owner included extra parking due to the lack of on-street parking options nearby and wanted to be a good neighbor by ensuring residents and guests would not need to park in the surrounding neighborhood.

In response to commissioner questions, Mr. Berg clarified that there would be a mix of secured indoor and outdoor bike parking, and that while there was technically only one 3-bedroom unit (labeled as a 2-bedroom plus den with a closet), the owner's experience suggested smaller units were easier to rent.

Chair Flanagan closed the meeting. After closing the public hearing, commissioners expressed support for the redevelopment of this vacant site, noting that an apartment building would generate less traffic than the previous gas station or potential commercial uses and the underground parking was an appropriate design choice for the location. Commissioners acknowledged that while the project did not include affordable units or many family-sized apartments, it is a good utilization of the site.

It was moved by Commissioner Hyman, seconded by Commissioner Eckholm to recommend rescinding previous approvals on the site, recommend approval of the preliminary and final plat, and recommend approval of a variance at 5430 Minnetonka Blvd. The motion passed 7-0.

5. Communications

Ms. Chamberlain noted that the final draft of the Vision 4.0 document was available on the city website.

Future scheduled meeting/event dates:

- February 4, 2026 – planning commission regular meeting
 - February 25, 2026 – planning commission regular meeting*
 - March 4, 2026 – planning commission regular meeting
 - March 25, 2026 – planning commission regular meeting**
- *meeting held on Feb. 25, 2026 since Ash Wednesday is Feb. 18, 2026.
**meeting held on March 25 since since Eid-a-Fitr potentially begins March 18.

6. Adjournment – 7:05 p.m.

Sean Walther, liaison

John Flanagan, chair member

These minutes were created with the assistance of a generative AI transcript service, then edited by a staff person.



December 8, 2025

Re: Variance Narrative for 5430 Minnetonka Boulevard

We are requesting a variance for the front yard setback on Minnetonka Boulevard from 25 feet standard to 16.1 feet on the east and 11 feet to the west due to the angle of Minnetonka Boulevard. The requested encroachment is completely underground and all above-ground components meet the 25'-0" setback with setbacks ranging from 25 feet on the east side to over 50 feet back on the west side of the lot. The requested underground setback variance is for a little over half of the overall length of the site frontage.

Findings:

1. The effect of the proposed variance upon the health, safety and welfare of the community.

Response: The proposed variance will have no effect on the surrounding health, safety and welfare of the community as the requested variance is completely underground and is topped with hardscape and plantings such that passersby would not be aware of the existence of the structure. In addition, the parking that constitutes the main reason for the variance request is due to no street parking being available on either Minnetonka Boulevard or Vernon Avenue adjacent to the parking.

2. The request is in harmony with the general purposes and intent of the zoning ordinance.

Response: The request is keeping in harmony with the intent of the zoning ordinance as all above ground setbacks are maintained for the project site. In addition, this reduces the amount of on-grade parking and additional impervious surface.

3. The request is consistent with the comprehensive plan.

Response: The request and planned use of the site is consistent with the comprehensive plan by keeping to the prescribed density of 30 units per acre limit on site. The project is proposing to accommodate the required parking below grade.

4. The applicant establishes that there are practical difficulties in complying with the zoning ordinance. This means that:

- a. The proposed use is permitted in the zoning district in which the land is located. A variance can be requested for dimensional items.

Response: The proposed use is permitted in the N-2 zoning district where the site is located.

- b. The plight of the landowner is due to circumstances unique to the property and not created by the landowner.

Response: The request is necessitated by the topography of the site and the fact project parking is not allowed on either of the projects two streets. Neither circumstance was created by the landowner. The topography of the site descends along Minnetonka Boulevard and Vernon Avenue to drop approximately 10 feet from the southeast corner to the north and west. This drop in topography exacerbates the challenges in relative height from a three-story building to the single-story structures to the north. In order to maintain the shadowing requirements in the zoning code, we have shifted the apartment building to the south to maintain this standard. In addition, as there is no street parking available on either street at this property and to reduce the impervious paving on site, we are locating the majority of the parking below grade resulting in a request for this variance.

c. The variance, if granted, will not alter the essential character of the locality.

Response: As the requested variance is completely underground, there will be no altering of the essential character of the street.

d. Economic considerations alone do not constitute practical difficulties.

Response: Economic considerations are not related to this request, as it is more costly to provide underground parking than relatively free parking on the neighboring streets.

e. Practical difficulties include inadequate access to direct sunlight for solar energy systems.

Response: The project building was pushed further south as a result of limiting the shadowing effects of the building on the neighboring buildings to the north.

5. There are circumstances unique to the shape, topography, water conditions or other physical conditions of the property.

Response: As stated above in item 4b, the topography of the site is the main consideration that caused the building to shift further south.

6. The granting of the variance is necessary for the preservation and enjoyment of a substantial property right.

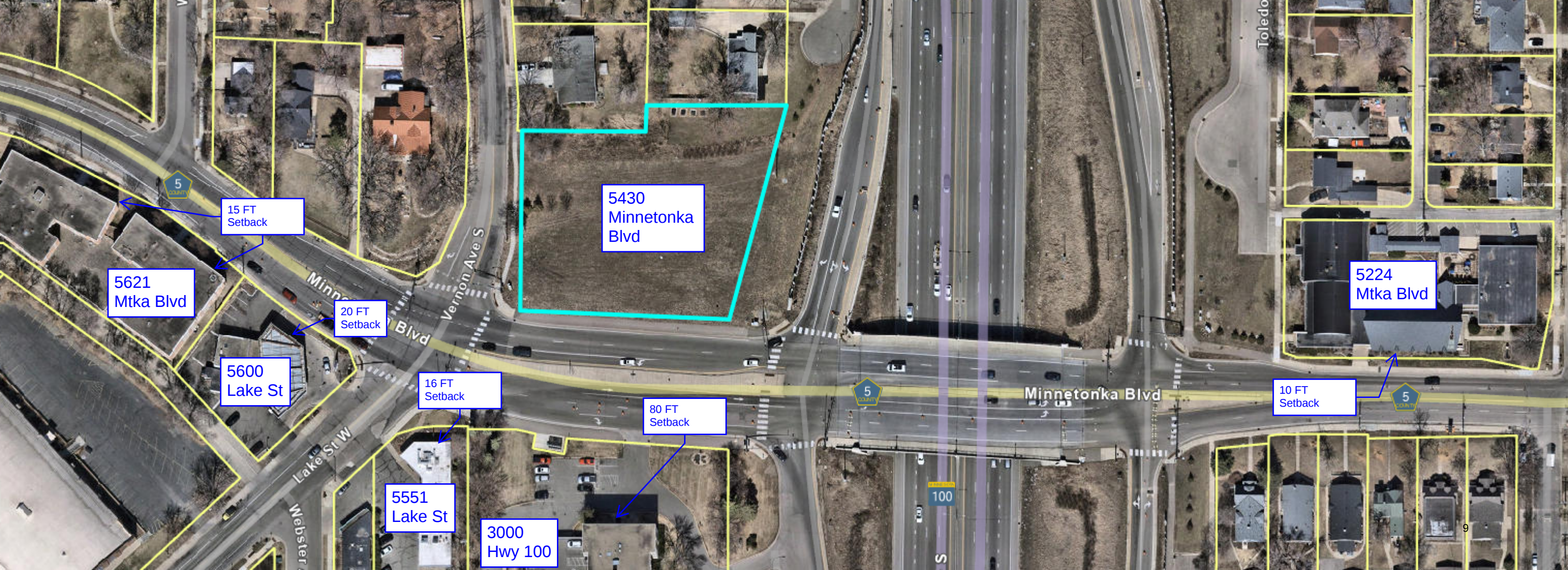
Response: The project is proposing an apartment building in keeping with the rights and limitations of the zoning code in all other respects. The variance merely allows the inclusion of additional interior parking for the future residents of the building.

7. The granting of the variance will not impair light and air to the surrounding properties, unreasonably increase congestion, increase the danger of fire, or endanger public safety.

Response: The project is in keeping in all other respects to the zoning and existing conditions around the site and actually surpasses the setbacks of several other nearby buildings on Minnetonka Boulevard including: 5224 Minnetonka (10 feet setback), 5551 Lake Street (16 feet setback), 5621 Minnetonka Boulevard (15 feet setback) [See attached]. The variance will also give more breathing room to the duplex and single-family building neighbors to the north, so does not constitute an impairment to the light and air, or increase the risk of fire or endanger public safety. In fact, the project will be cleaning up contaminated soils on the site during project construction.

8. The granting of the variance will not merely serve as a convenience but is necessary to alleviate a practical difficulty.

Response: The request does alleviate a practical difficulty due to the topography of the site and the lack of street parking available on the adjacent streets. The granting of the variance will just allow the project to provide the off-street parking necessary to the project.



5430
Minnetonka
Blvd

5224
Mtka Blvd

5621
Mtka Blvd

5600
Lake St

5551
Lake St

3000
Hwy 100

15 FT
Setback

20 FT
Setback

16 FT
Setback

80 FT
Setback

10 FT
Setback



Outlook

Parkway On 5 Project Opposition - Katelyn Champoux - Outlook

Parkway On 5 Project Opposition

From Rob Theisen [REDACTED] >**Date** Wed 1/21/2026 2:47 PM**To** Katelyn Champoux <kchampoux@stlouisparkmn.gov>

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear City of St. Louis Park Officials,

I am writing to formally express my opposition to the proposed apartment complex planned for the end of my street.

My primary concern is traffic safety. The location of this development would significantly obstruct visibility at the end of the street, creating hazardous conditions for residents, pedestrians, and drivers. Reduced sightlines in an already constrained area increase the risk of accidents and make it more difficult to safely enter and exit the roadway.

In addition, the development will inevitably lead to increased traffic on a street that was not designed to accommodate higher volumes of vehicles. Additional daily traffic from residents, visitors, delivery vehicles, and service providers will negatively impact safety, congestion, and overall neighborhood livability.

I am also concerned about the impact of construction itself. Extended construction activity will bring heavy equipment, noise, dust, and temporary street obstructions, further worsening traffic flow and creating ongoing disruptions for nearby residents.

I respectfully ask the City to reconsider this project as currently proposed, or at minimum conduct a thorough traffic and safety analysis that fully accounts for visibility issues, traffic volume increases, and construction impacts on the surrounding neighborhood.

Thank you for your time and for considering the concerns of residents who will be directly affected by this development. I appreciate the City's commitment to responsible planning and public safety.

Sincerely,
Rob Theisen

Planning commission

Study Session

Members present: Jim Beneke, Mia Divecha, Matt Eckholm, John Flanagan, Sarah Strain, Tom Weber, Sylvie Hyman,

Members absent: Tess Machalek

Staff present: Laura Chamberlain, Gary Morrison

Ms. Chamberlain presented information on parking standards as part of the Zoning Code Update - phase 2. She provided historical context about parking minimums in zoning codes, noting that zoning regulations and automobile use proliferated simultaneously in the United States. Traditionally, cities required on-site parking for peak demand, which has led to significant over-parking, particularly for commercial uses.

Ms. Chamberlain outlined St. Louis Park's parking standards history:

- First parking minimums were established in 1959
- Major code overhaul in 1976 generally increased parking requirements
- Transit reduction allowances were added in the 1990s
- Complete repeal and replacement of parking section in 2007, which expanded transit reductions and added bike parking requirements
- In 2019, reduced parking requirements were established for the historic Walker Lake area and EV standards were added
- Most recent major update was in 2021

Ms. Chamberlain noted the costs associated with parking, including land use impacts, contribution to urban heat island effect, water quality issues from impervious surfaces, decreased walkability, and financial costs for construction and maintenance. She explained that excess parking induces demand, correlating with increased vehicle miles traveled, congestion, and emissions.

Alternatives to parking minimums were presented in two categories:

1. Alternatives that reduce on-site parking (utilizing more on-street parking, centralized public parking lots, and shared parking)
2. Alternatives that reduce overall parking demand (robust transit/bicycle/pedestrian networks, ride sharing, and travel demand management plans)

Ms. Chamberlain also discussed challenges to implementing these alternatives, including limited space for on-street parking, shifting costs to the public sector, enforcement needs, snow removal complications, and public perception issues. She noted that the city is taking measures to make transportation networks more robust, but driving will likely remain a primary transportation mode in the near- to mid-term future.

The presentation also covered how technology and changing culture impact parking considerations, including car stacking garages, autonomous vehicles, micro-mobility options, and remote work patterns. Ms. Chamberlain referenced the 2040 Comprehensive Plan, which touches on parking in relation to climate and environment, land use, and transportation.

Ms. Chamberlain presented three options for how to proceed:

1. Pursue parking minimums through the Zoning Code Update - phase 2 process (which would delay other aspects of the update)
2. Add the topic to the 2026 Planning Commission work plan while proceeding with the current Zoning Code Update draft
3. Establish policy framework through the 2050 Comprehensive Plan (staff recommendation)

Commissioner Hyman advocated for adding the topic to the 2026 work plan without delaying Phase 2, expressing that parking minimums are a barrier to the future vision of the city. She noted specific concerns about current requirements, such as requiring two parking spaces for a single-bedroom duplex.

Commissioner Eckholm expressed caution about eliminating all parking requirements, noting concerns about potential spillover effects in neighborhoods and the importance of making gradual changes that build public support. He cited an example of a development near light rail that resulted in a surface lot because of insufficient planning.

Commissioner Divecha suggested the possibility of researching what market-based minimums might look like in cities without requirements, noting that the risk is in preventing bad developments rather than typical ones. She supported a gradual approach while building alternative transportation infrastructure.

Commissioner Hyman emphasized that eliminating parking requirements would benefit those who cannot drive (approximately one-third of Americans) and make housing more affordable. She argued that the costs of requiring parking are ultimately passed on to customers, renters, and homeowners.

The Commission reached consensus on adding the topic to the 2026 work plan without delaying the current phase 2 update. They discussed framing their work as preparation for the 2050 Comprehensive Plan process, with the goal of developing recommendations based on research and analysis rather than immediately drafting a new ordinance.

Mr. Morrison noted the possibility of increasing the current transit reduction (currently 30% for light rail transit areas) as a potential middle-ground approach. Ms. Strain supported establishing the policy framework in the 2050 Comprehensive Plan, noting that having the Walker Lake District as a test case would provide useful data.

The Commission generally agreed to focus their 2026 work on studying parking requirements thoroughly to inform the Comprehensive Plan process rather than immediately drafting changes to the zoning code.

2. Adjournment – 8:23 p.m.

Sean Walther, liaison

John Flanagan, chair member

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4.a. Updated 2026 work plan

Executive summary

Title: Updated 2026 work plan

Recommended action: Motion to approve the 2026 work plan for the planning commission and board of zoning appeals

Summary: The city council requires boards and commissions to annually establish a work plan, voted on by the board or commission, that is submitted to the city council. On January 7, 2026, the planning commission voted to approve the 2026 work plan, which had previously been discussed with the city council.

On January 21, the planning commission held a study session to discuss parking standards in relation to the zoning code update. Commissioner Hymen requested that the topic of parking minimums be added to the commission's work plan. After the study session, commissioners directed staff to draft an additional item for the work plan concerning parking minimums. Attached is the proposed updated work plan with item six focusing on the study of parking minimums.

The planning commission is asked to review the updated work plan and vote to approve. If approved, it will then go to the city council for final approval.

Supporting documents: 2026 work plan

Prepared by: Laura Chamberlain, senior planner

Reviewed by: Jennifer Monson, planning and economic development manager

2026 work plan | planning commission and board of zoning appeals

1	Initiative name: Planning and zoning application review		
	Initiative type: ☒ Staff support (review project, policy or program and provide feedback) ☐ Independent research project ☒ Gather community feedback ☐ Lead community event	Initiative origin: ☒ Applicant-initiated ☐ Staff-initiated ☐ Commission-initiated ☐ Council-initiated Legally required (e.g. response to Legislative changes or Judicial decisions)? ☐ Yes ☒ No	Commissioner lead(s) name(s): All commissioners/board members If joint commission initiative, list other board or commission: Is this an established work group? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ N/A
	Initiative description: Review planning and zoning applications from third parties to the city; hold public hearings to help inform commission recommendations, and BOZA and council decisions.		
	Strategic Priority: ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☒ 3 ☐ 4 ☒ 5 ☐ N/A		
	Deliverable: ☒ Research report ☒ Summary of community input ☐ Other ☐ N/A		
	Target completion date: Ongoing		
	<i>This section to be completed by staff:</i>		
	Council request (if applicable): ☐ Review and comment or reply ☐ Review and decide ☒ Informational only – no response needed		
	Budget required: n/a, application fees generally cover city direct costs		
	Staff support required: plan review, neighborhood meeting support, staff reports, recommendations		
Liaison comments: Due to statutory requirements that the city respond to formal applications within 60 days, the volume and effort involved in this initiative is a primary responsibility and impacts the progress on other initiatives list in the work plan.			

2	Initiative name: Broaden participation		
	Initiative type: ☒ Staff support (review project, policy or program and provide feedback) ☐ Independent research project ☐ Gather community feedback ☐ Lead community event	Initiative origin: ☐ Applicant-initiated ☐ Staff-initiated ☒ Commission-initiated ☐ Council-initiated Legally required (e.g. response to Legislative changes or Judicial decisions)? ☐ Yes ☒ No	Commissioner lead(s) name(s): All commissioners/board members If joint commission initiative, list other board or commission: Is this an established work group? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ N/A
	Initiative description: Identify strategies to broaden, and reduce barriers to, public participation.		
	Strategic Priority: ☒ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☒ 5 ☒ N/A		
	Deliverable: ☐ Research report ☐ Summary of community input ☒ Other ☐ N/A		
	Target completion date: Ongoing		
	<i>This section to be completed by staff:</i>		
	Council request (if applicable): ☒ Review and comment or reply ☐ Review and decide ☐ Informational only – no response needed		
	Budget required: not to brainstorm ideas; but to implement ideas may require resources, yes.		
	Staff support required: TBD, but most likely, yes.		
Liaison comments: • Have a joint meeting with other commission(s) on topic of shared interest/responsibility. • Hold a planning commission meeting at an off-site location to foster community relationships. (e.g. study sessions with topics of general interest, development project tours, etc.) • Help recruit community members with diverse experiences to apply for vacancies on boards and commissions, task forces, committees, or other volunteer opportunities.			

3	Initiative name: Implement light rail station plans (Arrive + Thrive)		
	Initiative type: ☒ Staff support (review project, policy or program and provide feedback) ☐ Independent research project ☐ Gather community feedback ☐ Lead community event	Initiative origin: ☐ Applicant-initiated ☐ Staff-initiated ☐ Commission-initiated ☒ Council-initiated Legally required (e.g. response to Legislative changes or Judicial decisions)? ☐ Yes ☒ No	Commissioner lead(s) name(s): All commissioners/board members If joint commission initiative, list other board or commission: Is this an established work group? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ N/A
	Initiative description: Launch Arrive + Thrive online implementation tracker.		
	Strategic Priority: ☐ 1 ☒ 2 ☒ 3 ☒ 4 ☒ 5 ☐ N/A		
	Deliverable: ☒ Research report ☐ Summary of community input ☐ Other ☒ N/A		
	Target completion date: Q1 2026		
	<i>This section to be completed by staff:</i>		
	Council request (if applicable): ☐ Review and comment or reply ☐ Review and decide ☒ Informational only – no response needed		
	Budget required: Plan was/is budgeted in community development department planning studies. Implementation steps may be folded into future budgeting.		
	Staff support required: Yes. GIS staff are creating the online tracker and staff will need to maintain and update the tracker as more elements of Arrive + Thrive are implemented.		
Liaison comments: The planning commission and council approved the plan in 2025. The plan includes implementation steps that may need to be incorporated into existing commission initiatives and future work plans.			

4	Initiative name: Zoning code update – phase 2		
	Initiative type: ☒ Staff support (review project, policy or program and provide feedback) ☐ Independent research project ☒ Gather community feedback ☐ Lead community event	Initiative origin: ☐ Applicant-initiated ☐ Staff-initiated ☐ Commission-initiated ☒ Council-initiated Legally required (e.g. response to Legislative changes or Judicial decisions)? ☐ Yes ☒ No	Commissioner lead(s) name(s): All commissioners If joint commission initiative, list other board or commission: Is this an established work group? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ N/A
	Initiative description: Hold public hearing and make recommendation regarding changes to the zoning map and non-residential district and performance zoning standards to better reflect the city's strategic priorities. This includes, but is not limited to, expansion of mixed use districts and creation of a high-density mixed use district for transit oriented development areas near rail stations.		
	Strategic Priority: ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☒ 3 ☐ 4 ☒ 5 ☐ N/A		
	Deliverable: ☒ Research report ☒ Summary of community input ☐ Other ☐ N/A		
	Target completion date: Q1 2026		
	<i>This section to be completed by staff:</i>		
	Council request (if applicable): ☐ Review and comment or reply ☒ Review and decide ☐ Informational only – no response needed		
	Budget required: yes, budgeted in community development budget for planning studies		
	Staff support required: Yes		
Liaison comments: Staff and the planning commission made a was an extensive effort to complete this phase of the zoning code update within one year of phase 1 adoption. Remaining tasks to adopt and smooth implementation will also require staff resources beyond adoption and throughout the year.			

5	Initiative name: 2050 Comprehensive Plan		
	Initiative type: ☒ Staff support (review project, policy or program and provide feedback) ☐ Independent research project ☒ Gather community feedback ☐ Lead community event	Initiative origin: ☐ Applicant-initiated ☐ Staff-initiated ☐ Commission-initiated ☒ Council-initiated Legally required (e.g. response to Legislative changes or Judicial decisions)? ☒ Yes ☐ No	Commissioner lead(s) name(s): All commissioners If joint commission initiative, list other board or commission: Is this an established work group? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ N/A
	Initiative description: Kick off to the 2-year comprehensive planning process. The planning commission will provide guidance on how new strategic priorities resulting from Vision 4.0 should frame the comprehensive plan. Efforts in 2026 involve establishing a framework for the planning process, creating a community engagement plan for the planning process, and beginning to analyze existing conditions of the city.		
	Strategic Priority: ☒ 1 ☒ 2 ☒ 3 ☒ 4 ☒ 5 ☐ N/A		
	Deliverable: ☒ Research report ☒ Summary of community input ☐ Other ☒ N/A		
	Target completion date: Adoption by end of 2028		
	<i>This section to be completed by staff:</i>		
	Council request (if applicable): ☒ Review and comment or reply ☒ Review and decide ☐ Informational only – no response needed		
	Budget required: Yes. Included in community development dept. planning studies budget – other departments should have dedicated budget and/or staff time set aside for data/research required for their topics within the comprehensive plan.		
	Staff support required: Yes – community development staff will lead the planning effort, but input from other departments will be required.		
Liaison comments: As a multi-year effort, the focus in 2026 will be getting elements together, and preparing for robust community engagement and plan drafting in 2027.			

6	Initiative name: Parking discussions		
	Initiative type: ☒ Staff support (review project, policy or program and provide feedback) ☒ Independent research project ☒ Gather community feedback ☐ Lead community event	Initiative origin: ☐ Applicant-initiated ☐ Staff-initiated ☒ Commission-initiated ☐ Council-initiated Legally required (e.g. response to Legislative changes or Judicial decisions)? ☐ Yes ☒ No	Commissioner lead(s) name(s): All commissioners If joint commission initiative, list other board or commission: Is this an established work group? ☐ Yes ☒ No ☐ N/A
	Initiative description: Through the work on Phase 2 of the zoning code update, the planning commission identified the need for deeper analysis regarding the topic of parking minimums within the zoning code. The planning commission wants to learn more about the impacts of parking minimums, explore opportunities to remove parking minimums from more of the city or reduce the parking requirements for individual land uses. Through this research and discussion, the planning commission hopes to identify policy recommendations and frame next steps to present to the city council.		
	Strategic Priority: ☐ 1 ☒ 2 ☒ 3 ☒ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ N/A		
	Deliverable: ☒ Research report ☐ Summary of community input ☐ Other ☐ N/A		
	Target completion date: December 2026		
	<i>This section to be completed by staff:</i>		
	Council request (if applicable): ☒ Review and comment or reply ☒ Review and decide ☐ Informational only – no response needed		
	Budget required: Yes. This topic was identified by the planning commission and has not been included in community development dept. planning studies budget. The scope of this study has not been finalized, but will depend on staff time to undertake.		
	Staff support required: Yes		
Liaison comments: The planning commission and staff propose several parking reforms in the zoning code update phase 2 language; staff presented this approach to the city council in October 2025 and received positive feedback. The purpose of this work is to allow the planning commission to delve more deeply into this specific topic and potentially recommend future policy changes.			

Initiative Origin Definitions

- Applicant-initiated – Project initiated by 3rd party (statutory boards)
- Staff-initiated – Project initiated by staff liaison or other city staff
- Commission-initiated – Project initiated by the board or commission
- Council-initiated – Project tasked to a board or commission by the city council

Strategic Priorities

1. St. Louis Park is committed to being a leader in racial equity and inclusion in order to create a more just and inclusive community for all.
2. St. Louis Park is committed to continue to lead in environmental stewardship.
3. St. Louis Park is committed to providing a broad range of housing and neighborhood oriented development.
4. St. Louis Park is committed to providing a variety of options for people to make their way around the city comfortably, safely and reliably.
5. St. Louis Park is committed to creating opportunities to build social capital through community engagement

Modifications

- Work plans may be modified, to add or delete items, in one of three ways:
- Work plans can be modified by mutual agreement during a joint work session.
- If immediate approval is important, the board or commission can work with their staff liaison to present a modified work plan for city council approval at a council meeting.
- The city council can direct a change to the work plan at their discretion.

Future ideas

Initiatives that are being considered by the board or commission but not proposed in the annual work plan. Council approval is needed if the board or commission decides they would like to amend a work plan.

Initiative	Comments
Water conservation and water recycling	Explore ways to encourage reduced water use, capture and reuse of storm water, and protect ground water resources.
Housing analysis	Explore setting policy targets for different housing types in the city based on present inventory and unmet demand and promote homeownership opportunities as well as inclusionary housing goals.

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1. Vision 4.0 presentation

Recommended action: No action is being requested.

Policy consideration: There is no policy consideration at this time.

Summary: The community engagement phase of the Vision 4.0 process ran from March through September 2025. During that period, staff and consultants implemented a wide range of strategies to gather meaningful input from residents and community members. These efforts included an ambassador cohort, a community committee, mobile and static engagement activities, virtual outreach and facilitated conversations. Together, these approaches provided diverse opportunities for residents to share perspectives and shape the visioning process.

Staff and the consultant team delivered the final report to the city council on [December 8, 2025](#). The report outlined the engagement methods used, presented community profile data on who participated, highlighted key themes and feedback, and provided data-driven recommendations to inform the city council's strategic priorities. Staff will share the same presentation with planning commission that city council received.

Following the acceptance of the final report, the city council transitioned to establishing the city's strategic priorities for the next decade. The council participated in a series of facilitated discussions beginning in January 2026, including a dedicated strategic priority-setting retreat in late February and a discussion planned for March 23, 2026. These sessions were designed to move from community insights to official alignment, ensuring that the council reaches consensus on a clear, supported set of priorities.

The drafted strategic priorities directly integrate the core themes identified during community engagement. Formal adoption of these new strategic priorities is planned for April 2026, which will initiate the development of a comprehensive strategic plan targeted for completion by July 2026. This plan will translate the high-level priorities into measurable goals and specific tactics to guide city operations and policy discussions through 2035.

The city intends to imbue what we have learned from Vision 4.0 and the council's strategic priorities into the city's comprehensive plan update, which gets underway in 2026 and will conclude in 2028.

Supporting documents: None.

Prepared by: Sean Walther, deputy community development director

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2 Zoning Code Update - phase 2

Recommended Action: No action at this time. Staff will present an update on specific topics.

Background: Over the past year, staff has been working with HKGi, the city's planning consultant, to draft the Articles proposed in the Zoning Code Update – Phase 2 (ZCU-2). The second phase focuses on the following articles:

1. Article I – Introductory Provisions. Explains how to use and interpret the zoning ordinance.
2. Article II - General Zoning Provisions. Establishes districts and includes provisions that apply to all districts.
3. Article IV – Non-Neighborhood Base Districts. The Mixed-Use, Business, Industrial, and Park and Open Space districts reside here.
4. Article V – Planned Unit Developments (PUDs). There are currently 26 PUDs regulated by this Article.
5. Article VI – Overlay Districts. Establishes the Travel Demand Management, Floodplain, and Historic Walker Lake overlay districts.
6. Article VII – Use Specific Standards. Details the standards (conditions) associated with the uses allowed in each district.
7. Article VIII – Development Standards. Regulations pertaining to standards such as parking, lighting, landscaping, signage, and architecture.
8. Article IX – Procedures. Establishes procedures for submittal and review of applications.
9. Article X – Definitions. All definitions have been consolidated into this article.

Article III was the subject of the Zoning Code Update-Phase 1 (ZCU-1), which was completed in 2025. It covers the Neighborhood Zoning Districts.

The primary objectives of the ZCU-2 are to:

1. Reorganize the zoning ordinance to match the format established in the ZCU-1. This will make the ordinance easier to read, use, and transition to an electronic version.
2. Review and consolidate the non-residential zoning districts as needed. The current districts have been in place for many decades and need to be reviewed for consistency with today's needs, including the introduction of light-rail.
3. Revise the zoning map to reflect the proposed changes to the zoning districts.
4. Update various regulations as needed.

Discussion: HKGi has completed the preliminary draft of all articles covered by the ZCU-2, except VII and VIII.

At the March 25, 2026 meeting, staff will present the following drafts for discussion:

1. Building dimension tables
2. Height and density bonus triggers
3. Variance process
4. Historic Walker Lake Overlay District
5. Window screen/security shutters

Articles VII and VIII will be discussed at the April 8, 2026 planning commission study session meeting.

Prepared by: Gary Morrison, zoning administrator

Reviewed by: Jennifer Monson, Planning & Economic Development Manager

Attachments:

- Draft non-neighborhood district dimension tables
- Draft variance process
- Draft Historic Walker Lake Overlay District

Table 36-XXX(x). Lot Size and Density Standards

District		Lot width minimum (ft)	Net lot area minimum (sq ft)	Density minimum (dwelling units per acre)	Density maximum (dwelling units per acre)	Density bonus maximum (dwelling units per acre)
Mixed Use	MU-1	None	None	None	30 (P)	None
	MU-2			18	50 (P)	75 (C)
	MU-3			50	75 (P)	125 (C)
Commercial I	B-1			None	30 (P)	50 (C)
Industrial	I-1			N/A	N/A	N/A
	I-2			N/A	N/A	N/A
Parks and Open Space	POS			N/A	N/A	N/A

Table 36-XXX(x). Building Placement Standards

District		Front yard minimum (feet)	Front yard maximum (feet)	Lot line coverage minimum (%)	Side yard abutting street minimum (feet)	Side yard abutting street maximum (feet)	Side yard interior minimum (feet)	Rear yard minimum (feet)	Distance between buildings, minimum (feet)	Perimeter yard minimum (feet)
Mixed Use	MU-1	10	15	Primary frontage: 80% Secondary frontage: 50%	5	20	None	20 feet except where an alley exists it can be reduced to ten feet	Townhouses; 15 feet; Apartments: 1/2 the building height	Same minimum yard as required in the N district for side and rear property lines adjacent to N-1 or N-2 zoned and used districts
	MU-2	10	15	Primary frontage: 80% Secondary frontage: 50%	10	20	None		Townhouses; 15 feet; Apartments: 1/2 the building height	15 feet for side and rear property lines adjacent to N-1 or N-2 zoned and used districts
	MU-3	10	15	Primary frontage: 80% Secondary frontage: 50%	10	20	None		Townhouses; 15 feet; Apartments: 1/2 the building height	15 feet for side and rear property lines adjacent to N-1 or N-2 zoned and used districts
Commercial	B-1	10	20	None	5	None	None		Townhouses; 15 feet; Apartments: 1/2 the building height	15 feet for side and rear property lines adjacent to N-1 or N-2 zoned and used districts
Industrial	I-1	10	20	None	20	None	20 ft.; no yard required for railroad loading facility if abutting railroad trackage	None	None	50 feet for side and rear property lines adjacent to non-industrial zoned and used districts
	I-2	10	20	None	20	None	10 ft.; no yard required for railroad loading facility if abutting railroad trackage	None	None	100 feet for side and rear property lines adjacent to non-industrial zoned and used districts
Parks and Open Space	POS	Each standard shall match the requirement for the adjacent properties. If the adjacent properties are in two or more zoning districts, then the most restrictive requirement applies.								

Table 36-XXX(x). Building Size and Coverage Standards

District		Building height, minimum	Building height, maximum	Ground story height, minimum & maximum	Upper stories height, minimum & maximum	Building length, maximum (feet)	Impervious surface coverage, maximum (%)
Mixed Use	MU-1	None	3 stories	12 feet minimum; 20 feet maximum	10 feet minimum; 15 feet maximum	200	80%
	MU-2	2 stories or 20 feet, whichever is less	6 stories or 75 feet, whichever is less (P) 9 stories or 115 feet, whichever is less (C)	12 feet minimum; 20 feet maximum	10 feet minimum; 15 feet maximum	200	80%
	MU-3	2 stories or 20 feet, whichever is less	6 stories or 75 feet, whichever is less (P) 12 stories or 150 feet, whichever is less (C)	12 feet minimum; 20 feet maximum	10 feet minimum; 15 feet maximum	200	80%
Commercial	B-1	None	6 stories or 75 feet, whichever is less (P) 9 stories or 115 feet, whichever is less (C)	None	None	None	85%
Industrial	I-1	None	6 stories or 75 ft. whichever is less	None	None	None	75%
	I-2	None	6 stories or 75 ft. whichever is less	None	None	None	75%

Table 36-XXX(x). Architectural Design Standards

District		Upper stories setback	Primary street frontage non-residential use minimum	Building entrances	Transparency minimum, ground story (%)	Transparency minimum, upper stories (%)
Mixed Use	MU-1	None	75%; first 30 ft. behind building facade	A primary entrance is required on the building's primary street frontage Each business shall have a direct and primary access facing the street frontage or an interior arcade.	Primary frontage: 50% Secondary frontage: 20%	Primary frontage: 20% Secondary frontage: 20%
	MU-2	For side and rear property lines adjacent to N-1 or N-2 districts, the portion of the building above 40 feet shall be stepped back from the side and rear property lines a minimum of 10 feet	75%; first 30 ft. behind building facade	A primary entrance is required on the building's primary street frontage Each business shall have a direct and primary access facing the street frontage or an interior arcade.	Primary frontage: 50% Secondary frontage: 20%	Primary frontage: 20% Secondary frontage: 20%
	MU-3	For side and rear property lines adjacent to N-1 or N-2 districts, the portion of the building above 40 feet shall be stepped back from the side and rear property lines a minimum of 10 feet	75%; first 30 ft. behind building facade	A primary entrance is required on the building's primary street frontage Each business shall have a direct and primary access facing the street frontage or an interior arcade.	Primary frontage: 50% Secondary frontage: 20%	Primary frontage: 20% Secondary frontage: 20%
Commercial	B-1	For side and rear property lines adjacent to N-1 or N-2 districts, the portion of the building above 40 feet shall be stepped back from the side and rear property lines a minimum of 10 feet	None	A primary entrance is required on the building's primary street frontage Each business shall have a direct and primary access facing the street frontage or an interior arcade.	Primary frontage: 50% Secondary frontage: 20%	Primary frontage: 20% Secondary frontage: 20%
Industrial	I-1	None	None	None	None	None
	I-2	None	None	None	None	None
Parks and Open Space	POS	Each standard shall match the requirement for the adjacent properties. If the adjacent properties are in two or more zoning district, then the more restrictive requirement applies.				

Sec. 36-428. Variances.

- (a) Purpose. A variance is a modification or variation of the provisions of this zoning code as applied to a specific piece of property. A variance may be granted when strict enforcement of the provisions of the zoning code would cause practical difficulties to the property owner, and when it can be demonstrated that such action will be in keeping with the spirit and intent of the code.
- (b) Standards and provisions. While reviewing a variance application, the city shall consider the strict application of the provisions of this chapter and the requirements of all applicable state law.
 - (1) Variances are not permitted for:
 - a. Any land use that is not allowed under the zoning ordinance for property in the zone where the affected person's land is located.
 - b. Floor elevations lower than the flood protection elevation in the floodplain district.
 - (2) The city may grant variances upon consideration of the following:
 - a. The effect of the proposed variance upon the health, safety, and welfare of the community.
 - b. The request is in harmony with the general purposes and intent of the ordinance and,
 - c. The request is consistent with the comprehensive plan.
 - d. The applicant for the variance establishes that there are practical difficulties in complying with the zoning ordinance. "Practical difficulties," as used in connection with the granting of a variance, means that:
 - 1. The property owner proposes to use the property for a land use permitted in the zoning district in which the land is located. A variance can be requested for dimensional items required in the zoning ordinance, including but not limited to setbacks and height limitations.
 - 2. The plight of the landowner is due to circumstances unique to the property not created by the landowner; and,
 - 3. The variance, if granted, will not alter the essential character of the locality.
 - 4. Economic considerations alone do not constitute practical difficulties.
 - 5. Practical difficulties include inadequate access to direct sunlight for solar energy systems.
 - e. There are circumstances unique to the property including the shape, topography, water conditions, or other physical conditions; and,

- f. The granting of the variance is necessary for the preservation and enjoyment of a substantial property right of the applicant; and,
 - g. The granting of the variance will not impair an adequate supply of light and air to the adjacent property, unreasonably increase the congestion in the public streets, increase the danger of fire, or endanger public safety; and,
 - h. The granting of the variance will not merely serve as a convenience to the applicant but is necessary to alleviate a practical difficulty.
- (3) The city may impose conditions in the granting of variances. A condition must be directly related and must bear a rough proportionality to the impact created by the variance.
- (4) Variances shall be granted for earth sheltered construction as defined in section 216C.06, subdivision 14, when in harmony with the ordinance.
- (5) Variances involving a floodway, flood fringe and floodplain. If the application for a variance involves property within a floodway, flood fringe and floodplain district, a copy of all decisions granting variances shall be forwarded by mail to the Commissioner of Natural Resources within 10 days of such action. In determining whether the property owner is proposing to use the property in a reasonable manner, the following additional variance criteria of the Federal Emergency Management Agency must also be satisfied:
 - a. Variances shall not be issued by a community within any designated regulatory floodway if any increase in flood levels during the base flood discharge would result.
 - b. Variances shall only be issued by a community upon
 - 1. a showing of good and sufficient cause,
 - 2. a determination that failure to grant the variance would result in exceptional hardship to the applicant, and
 - 3. a determination that the granting of a variance will not result in increased flood heights, additional threats to public safety, extraordinary public expense, create nuisances, cause fraud on or victimization of the public, or conflict with existing local laws or ordinances.
 - c. Variances shall only be issued upon a determination that the variance is the minimum necessary, considering the flood hazard, to afford relief.
 - d. No variance shall allow a lower degree of flood protection than the Regulatory Flood Protection Elevation.
 - e. Flood insurance notice and record keeping. The zoning administrator shall notify the applicant for a variance that:

1. The issuance of a variance to construct a structure below the base flood level will result in increased premium rates for flood insurance up to amounts as high as \$25 for \$100 of insurance coverage and
 2. Such construction below the 100-year or regional flood level increases risks to life and property. Such notification shall be maintained with a record of all variance actions. A community shall maintain a record of all variance actions, including justification for their issuance, and report such variances issued in its annual or biennial report submitted to the Administrator of the National Flood Insurance Program.
- (c) **Process.** A request for a variance shall be considered by the board of zoning appeals. The city council, however, will act as the board of zoning appeals for variance requests made in conjunction with a conditional use permit or subdivision. In such cases, the planning commission shall hold the public hearing on the variance request, review the variance request along with the conditional use permit or subdivision process, and report its findings and recommendations to the city council.
- (1) **Applications.** All applications for variances shall be initiated by, or with the written consent of, the owners of the property. A complete application shall consist of:
- a. An application and fee payment.
 - b. A written explanation of the request addressing the variance criteria in sections (b), (c) and (d) above.
 - c. A survey of the property showing all property lines, existing and proposed structures, and easements.
 - d. A dimensioned plan showing the floor plan and elevations for all existing and proposed structures.
 - e. A map or plat showing the lands proposed for variance and all lands adjacent to the subject property and the names and addresses of the owners of the lands in the area as they appear on the records of the county auditor or other appropriate records.
 - f. Any other materials required by the city.
- (2) **Notice.** After receipt of a complete application, the city shall set a date for a public meeting before the board of zoning appeals for the variance request within 45 days after the application is received by the city. Notices for the public meeting shall be mailed to the following:
- a. Properties immediately adjacent to the subject site.
 - b. The zoning administrator shall submit by mail to the Commissioner of Natural Resources a copy of the application for proposed variances(s) occurring within a floodway, flood fringe or floodplain district sufficiently in advance so that the commissioner will receive at least 10 days' notice of the meeting.

- (3) Public meeting. The public meeting shall be held after notice has been given. The board of zoning appeals shall hear arguments for and against the proposed variance and it may continue the meeting if it is reasonably required.
- (4) Appeal to the city council. Residents and property owners within the city may appeal the decision of the board of zoning appeals to the city council. The appeal must be in writing and must be filed with the city clerk within 10 days after the date of the board of zoning appeals' decision. The required fee shall be paid to the city treasurer when the appeal request is filed. When an appeal is received by the city, the applicant will be notified of the date and time the city council will hear the appeal. No appeal will be heard until the city has notified all properties adjacent to the subject property of the date scheduled for the appeal hearing. If no appeal is made within the 10-day period, the decision of the board of zoning appeals shall be final. If an appeal is taken from the decision of the board of zoning appeals, the city council shall hear the appeal within 30 days of the filing of the appeal unless that period is extended with consent of the appellant. The city council may reverse a decision of the board of zoning appeals by an affirmative vote of the majority of its full membership. The city council shall render a decision within 30 days concluding the appeal hearing. A decision of the board of zoning appeals shall not become effective until the end of the appeal period has expired. If an appeal is filed before the end of the appeal period, the decision of the board of zoning appeals shall not become effective until the city council has rendered a decision on the appeal.
- (5) Any person who is denied a variance by the board of zoning appeals or whose appeal is denied by the city council may not reapply for the same variance within 24 months from the denial date unless the physical conditions of the property or land in question have changed. A change in the physical conditions would include, but is not limited to, a division or combination of the land or a taking of part of the land for public purpose.

DIVISION 3. HISTORIC WALKER LAKE OVERLAY DISTRICT

Sec. 36-198. Purpose

- (a) The Historic Walker Lake (HWL) overlay district is established to promote investment and infill development that preserves and protects the unique character of the Historic Walker Lake area.
- (b) The boundaries of the HWL overlay district shall be the area shown on the official zoning map.

Sec 36-199. Development Standards

- (a) No minimum and maximum number of parking spaces are required in the HWL overlay district.
- (b) Parking lots and ramps as a principal use shall be owned by the City.
- (c) Freestanding signs, monument and pylon, are prohibited.

Sec. 36-200. Design Guidelines

- (a) The design of lots, uses, and buildings in the HWL overlay district shall substantially conform with the design guidelines established in the Historic Walker Lake Area Design Guidelines, adopted by the City Council on December 11, 2020.