
Planning commission

Study Session

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

Members absent: Matt Eckholm

Staff present: Laura Chamberlain, Gary Morrison

Overview and Scope

Mr. Morrison stated the primary objectives of Zoning Code Update Phase 2:

- Reorganize the zoning ordinance into the format established in Phase 1
- Review and consolidate residential zoning districts
- Revise the zoning map accordingly
- Revamp various regulations as needed.

The intent is not to introduce significant policy changes, but rather to re-format and consolidate existing regulations. He cautioned that introducing topics requiring substantial analysis or study should be separate future amendments.

Mr. Morrison noted that the public hearing date has not been set, as staff is awaiting clean draft copies from the consultant. Once the draft is posted to the city website, outreach meetings will be scheduled and promoted. The scheduling of the public hearing will depend on the outcome of those outreach meetings.

Mr. Morrison also informed the commission that there may be a Zoning Code Update - Phase 3. Its purpose would be to allow the new ordinance to be lived in for a year, identify any necessary tweaks, and better adapt the code to its electronic format. A grant application is being pursued to fund Phase 3.

Mr. Morrison acknowledged two letters in the agenda packet:

- Letter from the Environment and Sustainability Commission supporting the current draft and recommending continued discussion on reducing parking requirements
- Letter submitted by Commissioner Hyman summarizing her comments and concerns, particularly on parking and related matters

Principal and Accessory Use Tables

Mr. Morrison introduced the principal use table, a new addition to the ordinance continuing the structure established in Phase 1. The table organizes all non-neighborhood zoning districts—Mixed Use (MU), Business (B1), Industrial (I), and Parks—across the top, with uses listed along the left column. Uses are designated as Permitted (P), Permitted with Standards (PS), or Conditional (C). A new category of "apartment mixed use" was introduced for residential development in mixed use districts, requiring non-residential uses on the ground floor with residential above.

Official minutes

Planning commission study session

April 8, 2026

Mr. Morrison noted that hospitals, which are being rezoned from N4 to Mixed Use 3, present a classification issue since they would not function as mixed use buildings in the traditional sense.

Discussion arose regarding in-vehicle service uses. Ms. Chamberlain clarified that in-vehicle service has been removed from the principal use table entirely and appears only on the accessory use table, requiring a conditional use permit in MU2, MU3, and B1 districts. This would effectively prevent standalone drive-through-only establishments from operating in most districts. Commissioner Hyman raised the question of whether businesses could be required to accommodate bicycle users at drive-through windows. It was noted this would be a broader ordinance-level question.

Regarding the visual distinction between the principal and accessory use tables, commissioners suggested adding a brief explanatory note or subtitle beneath each table's heading to clarify which type of use it covers to help readers quickly identify which table they are reading. Mr. Morrison noted that the digital version of the ordinance would facilitate navigation through locked headers and hyperlinks.

Article 8 – Development Standards

Mr. Morrison introduced the eight divisions of Article 8 - Development Standards: Performance Standards, Pedestrian Access, Vehicular Off-Street Access/Parking/Loading, Landscaping, Fences, Architectural Design, Outdoor Lighting, and Signs, followed by a section on Grading, Filling, Land Reclamation, and Mining.

Division 1 – Performance Standards

A Commissioner Weber suggested adding a purpose paragraph to the Performance Standards division, consistent with the other divisions in Article 8 which each contain one. There was also brief discussion about whether "Performance Standards" was the most intuitive title for the section.

Division 2 – Pedestrian Access

Commissioner Divecha raised a concern about Section 36-223(C), which states that sidewalks shall be provided on all sides of a lot abutting a public or private street. She noted that the Wells Roadside project was approved without a sidewalk on one side. Mr. Morrison said that the Engineering Department determines if a sidewalk is feasible at a site and if not, we collect cash in lieu. For this particular property, the Engineering Department determined that a sidewalk along the service road was not warranted. Ms. Chamberlain suggested adding qualifying language such as "unless otherwise approved by the city engineer".

In the purpose section's reference to the comprehensive plan goal, Commissioner Hyman proposed replacing the phrase "adequately consider" with stronger language such as "prioritize," with respect to pedestrian, bicycle, and other non-motorized transportation needs. Mr. Morrison noted the comment for follow-up.

Division 3 – Vehicular Off-Street Access, Parking, and Loading

A commissioner Hyman observed that while the stated purpose of the parking regulations is to prevent congestion, the abundance of free parking is itself a driver of congestion. Discussion

Official minutes

Planning commission study session

April 8, 2026

centered on whether the language should be reframed. Ms. Chamberlain suggested changing "prevent" to "reduce" as a modest improvement. No final language change was agreed upon but the comment was noted. Commissioner Hyman also suggested replacing "reduce hardcover" with "reduce impervious surface" for consistency with standard planning terminology.

Responding to a question on Section C which encourages shared driveways, Mr. Morrison explained that while the city can require a property owner to consolidate their own access points, it cannot compel one property owner to accept traffic from an adjacent property.

Regarding pedestrian access within parking areas, Commissioner Divecha expressed strong support for requiring pedestrian connections between parking areas and building entrances, and that driveways not be used as designated pedestrian routes. She asked whether language could be strengthened to require direct, segregated pedestrian access from the public street to the building (even if from the back), so that a pedestrian would not need to go through a parking lot. Discussion continued if a "driveway crossing" is just painting lines or a different type of material (concrete versus asphalt).

Commissioner Strain sought clarification on Section 36-227 provision 2, which provides that structures existing as of January 10, 2020, are deemed code-compliant with respect to parking. Ms. Chamberlain noted that the date should likely be updated to reflect the adoption date of the current ordinance. Mr. Morrison confirmed that fractional parking spaces are rounded (half a space is a space).

Parking Table. Ms. Chamberlain explained that the MU district minimums in the parking table are derived from the existing Walker Lake (MX2) district standards, which feature both a minimum and a maximum. It was suggested that a maximum column could be noted for grocery stores, liquor stores, etc. Ms. Chamberlain will add to the work plan a discussion of expanding to all districts. Also, requirements for Parks districts are not included in this work plan.

E-Bike Parking. Commissioner Hyman noted that the draft devotes significant attention to EV charging standards while e-bike parking receives comparatively little. Given the increasing prevalence of heavy e-bikes and cargo bikes that cannot easily use standard inverted-U racks or elevated parking infrastructure, commissioners suggested that the code should address surface accessibility (including ramps), appropriate rack types accommodating larger frames, and the possibility of allowing businesses to convert a vehicular parking space into a dedicated bicycle parking area. Ms. Chamberlain and Mr. Morrison agreed this could be considered.

Transit Proximity Reductions. Ms. Chamberlain summarized the current transit reduction framework: 30% within a quarter mile of LRT, 20% within a half mile of LRT, 15% within a quarter mile of high-frequency bus service, and 10% within a quarter mile of regular bus service. Mr. Morrison noted this represented a significant increase from the 10% flat reduction that existed prior to 2020, and that the reductions now apply to residential uses. Commissioners discussed whether these percentages should be increased further. There was a suggestion to increase each tier by five percentage points. Commissioner Weber suggested

from a code perspective treating LRT and high-frequency bus service as interchangeable. Ms. Chamberlain noted a meaningful distinction in that LRT is intended to operate 24 hours while high-frequency bus service does not. Commissioner Hyman raised the question of applying proximity reductions to bike trails. Further discussion of transit reductions was deferred to the parking work plan.

Division 4 – Landscaping

Commissioner Strain noted that Sections 36-240, C8, C9, C10 which describe rain gardens, bioretention, and xeriscaping, provide descriptive language but no corresponding credit, incentive, or nexus to any landscaping requirement. Mr. Morrison explained that these features were intentionally moved out of the alternative landscaping category to encourage them as standard landscaping rather than substitutes.

Regarding alternative landscaping options section 36-243, a commissioner asked how are these typically assessed? Ms. Chamberlain explained that staff and the consultant are working to standardize the process by which alternative compliance is evaluated (typically by comparing the cost equivalent of required plantings to investments in green roofs, public art, or similar improvements).

Division 5 – Fences

Ms. Chamberlain noted this is a new section. Previously, it was in various parts of the code.

Division 6 – Architectural Design

Mr. Morrison explained that the architectural standards section primarily consolidates existing regulations from various districts, including standards that were unique to the MX district. He noted that provisions regarding interior and exterior security grills and mesh, previously discussed, have not yet been incorporated into this draft. They are intended to be included, distinguishing between permanent security installations (which would be regulated under the design standards) and temporary closures during non-business hours (which would be treated differently).

Division 7 – Outdoor Lighting

No changes are proposed to the outdoor lighting section. The section was relocated into Article 8 without substantive modification.

Division 8 – Signs

Mr. Morrison and Ms. Chamberlain explained that the sign ordinance is undergoing a substantial rewrite to make them content neutral in compliance with First Amendment case law as interpreted by the Supreme Court. The court has held that sign regulations may address only the physical dimensions, materials, and placement of signs, not the content of the message. As a result, category-specific language (e.g., references to "garage sale signs" or "political signs") must be replaced with content-neutral standards. One proposed change is to expand the eligibility for rooftop screen signs, currently limited to buildings of eight stories or more and located in a PUD, to all buildings within the applicable district subject to the same standards. Mr. Morrison also noted that the Economic Development Authority has expressed interest in

Official minutes

Planning commission study session

April 8, 2026

formalizing the city's ability to display banners on light poles, which may be incorporated as an additional change.

Grading, Filling, Land Reclamation, Excavation and Mining

Mr. Morrison noted that this section will be replaced in its entirety with a simpler ordinance being developed by the engineering department.

Next Steps

The consensus was that an additional study session prior to public outreach was not necessary. Any remaining clarifications, in particular which items discussed are going into the work plan, could be communicated via email.

2. Adjournment – 7:55 p.m.

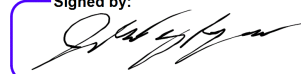
Signed by:



AD454125A089448...

Laura Chamberlain, liaison

Signed by:



11AA249F5F74496...

John Flanagan, chair member

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