

PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA

Regular Meeting

April 8, 2026 at 6:00 PM



- 1) **CALL TO ORDER**
- 2) **ROLL CALL**
- 3) **PUBLIC COMMENT** Persons addressing the board are required to give their name and address for the record when called upon by the Chair. Members of the public shall be limited to speaking for a maximum of three (3) minutes.
- 4) **DISCUSSION TOPICS**
 - A. ZONING ORDINANCE UPDATES
- 5) **ADJOURNMENT**

ITEM: 4.A

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT



TO: HONORABLE COMMISSION MEMBERS
FROM: Marcia Strange, Director of Community Development
DATE: April 8, 2026
SUBJECT: ZONING ORDINANCE UPDATES

We are updating our Zoning Ordinance to align with the goals and vision of our completed Community Master Plan. This update will help guide future development, protect neighborhood character, and ensure our zoning regulations support the community's priorities for growth, housing, sustainability, and quality of life.

This Work Session will serve as our first conversation where honest feedback is appreciated and will guide our next steps.

We have been working with our consultant, Progressive, on some possible updates to the Zoning Ordinance. Jason Ball will be presenting some points of discussion for the Planning Commission to consider.

1. Address Staff Identified Issues
 - Uses Outside the City
 - Lot Coverage
 - RV Storage

2. Simplify Development Review Process
 - Special Land Uses
 - Administrative Site Plan Reviews

We look forward to this first step in the review of our Zoning Ordinances. Additional ordinance updates will be brought to the group for similar discussion and consideration.

RECOMMENDATION:

PROGRESSIVE
COMPANIES



ZONING CODE UPDATES

City of Marshall

OVERALL GOALS

Right Now:

1. Address Staff Identified Issues
2. Simplify Development Review Process

Coming Soon...

1. Master Plan recommendations & alignment
2. User-friendliness



RIGHT NOW: ADDRESS ISSUES
IDENTIFIED BY STAFF

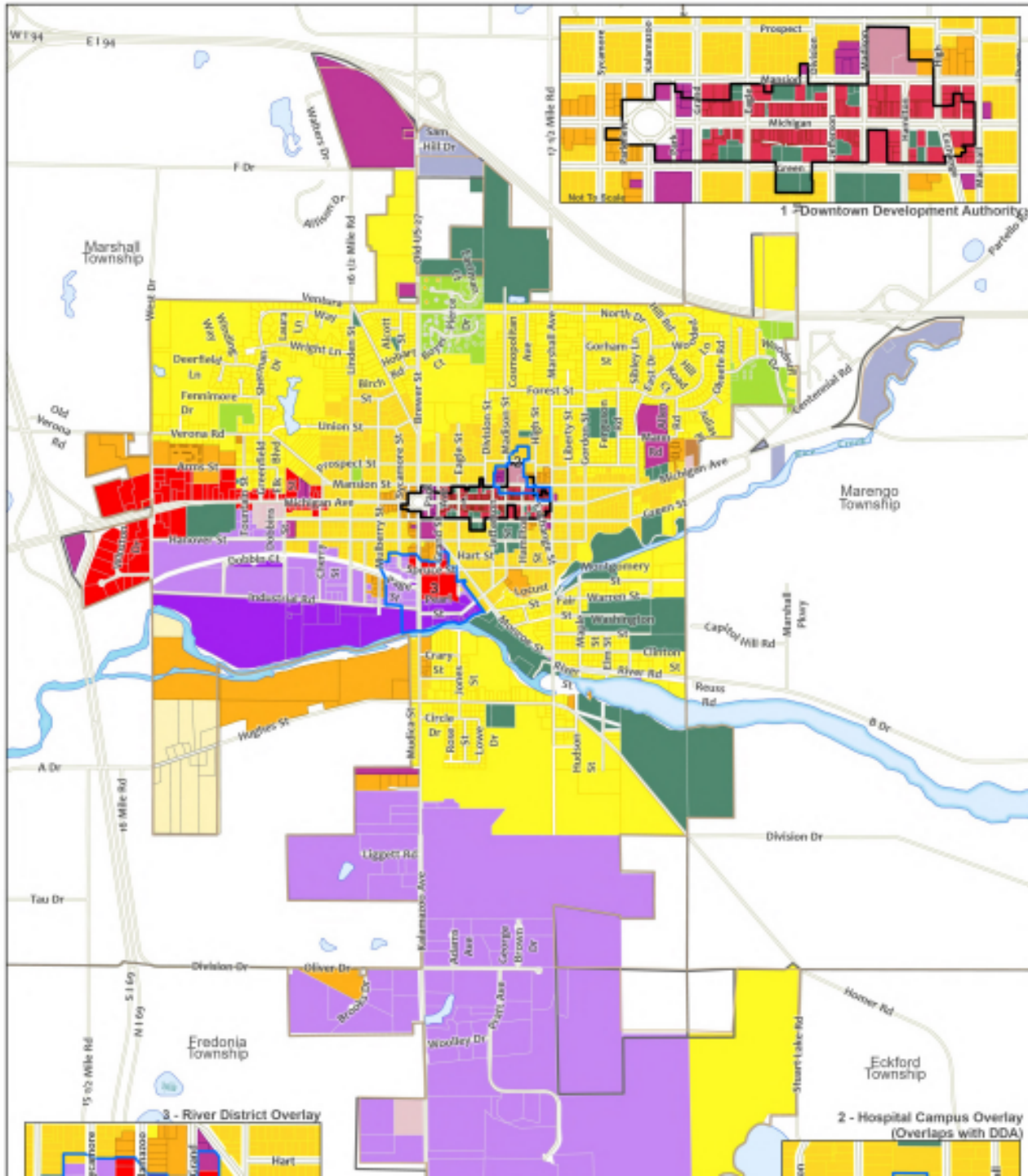
STAFF-IDENTIFIED ISSUES

1. How to address properties outside of the city, both for evaluation of potential conflicts between land uses and for future annexations.
2. Clarify calculation of lot coverage.
3. Amend recreational vehicle storage requirements in residential areas.

Uses outside of the City

Issues:

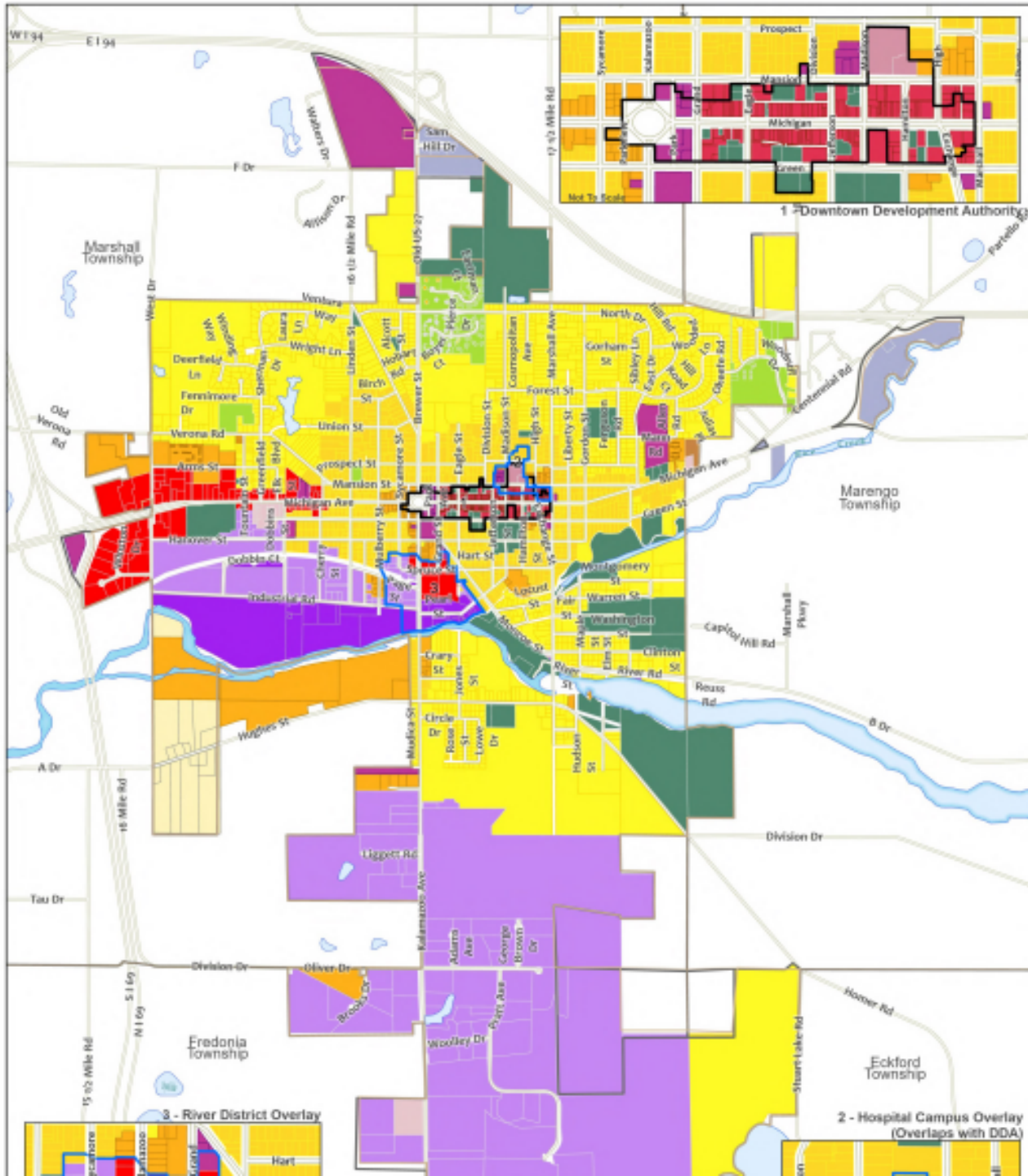
1. Required landscaping and screening applies to “Residential Districts and Uses”. Marshall and Marengo Township have large portions of their townships designated “Agricultural”.
2. When land is added to the city’s zoning jurisdiction, either by annexation or through a 425 agreement, there is no clear process for establishing a zoning district.



Uses outside of the City

Proposed Solutions:

- 1. Landscaping and Screening:** Provide language that treats agricultural land as residential and allows the zoning administrator to make a determination on use when necessary.
- 2. New Land Added:** When the property is added to the city, the zoning administrator determines if there is an equivalent city zoning district and assigns that district. If there is not an equivalent district, then assign the lowest-intensity district (R-1) and immediately initiate a rezoning to an appropriate district.

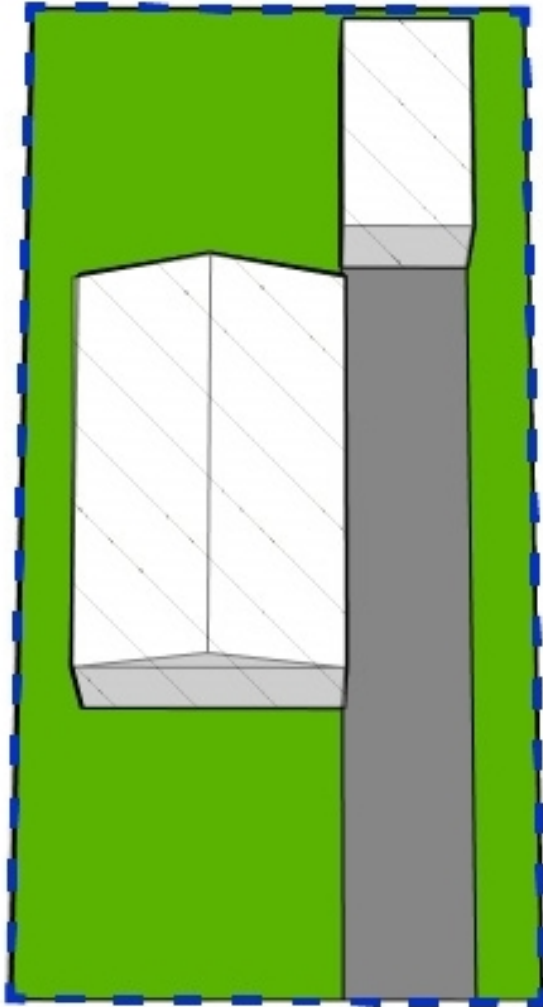


Lot Coverage

Issue:

The current definition of lot coverage appears very simple, but is consistently confusing for residents.

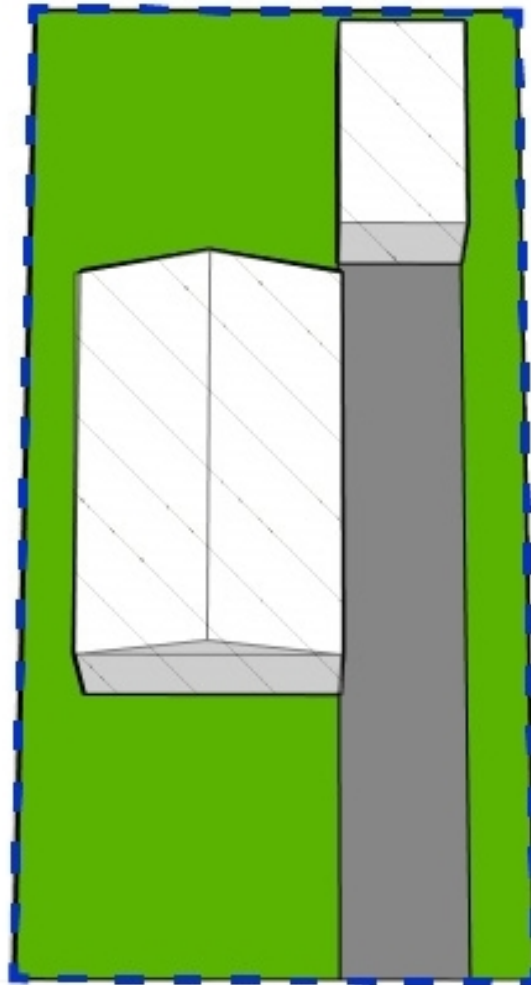
Lot Coverage. The part or percent of the lot occupied by buildings or structures, including accessory buildings or structures, and permanent swimming pools.



Lot Coverage

Solution:

1. Add illustrations to the code that illustrate lot coverage and clearly state that things like driveways, patios, and decks are not structures, and therefore not included in calculations.
2. Also consider whether *structures*, not *buildings* should be included in lot coverage (e.g., a swing set).
3. Consider requiring a minimum amount of green space.



Lot Size: 7,200 sqft

Lot Coverage: 2,000 sqft.

Green space: 4,000 sqft.

RV Storage

Issues:

Current regulations are significant and make for confusion and difficulty in enforcement. In particular:

- Restriction to rear yard storage only.
- Inclusion of RVs within lot coverage.
- Allowance for connecting to city utilities is problematic.
- Storage on vacant residential lots is likely problematic.
- Definition of various “unit types” is problematic and should be clarified (is a motor home different from a snow mobile?)



RV Storage



Solutions:

1. Permit parking in side yards.
2. Remove lot coverage standard.
3. Prohibit connection to city utilities.
4. Prohibit storage on vacant lots (no principal use).
5. Specify “unit types” and clarify the difference between large travel trailers and motor homes and recreational equipment like snowmobiles.



DEVELOPMENT REVIEW PROCESS

DEVELOPMENT REVIEW PROCESS CHALLENGES

- 1. Special Land Uses:** Review by City Council is an additional step that adds time and uncertainty to the process. Determine if there are uses that currently require a special land use that could just go through site plan review.
- 2. Administrative Site Plan Review:** Allowing site plans to be reviewed administratively would simplify the development process and remove non-discretionary decisions from Planning Commission. Determine if there are circumstances where site plan review can be completed by staff.



Special Land Use Review

Streamline Development
without Sacrificing Quality



MICHIGAN ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

What you will learn:

*The importance of auditing
your community's approval
process*

*The importance of adopting
requirements and standards
ahead of time*

Communities want high quality development. Developers want to develop quickly. There is a way forward that reconciles these seemingly opposing ends!

For a developer, time is money, but so are materials and design revisions. Creating a predictable development review process can expedite the proposal through to approval AND assure that municipal policies and codes are honored.

For a community, proper due process and public engagement take time. From legally required public hearings to meaningful citizen input on a new development, transparency in governance should be a priority.

But where does development review get stuck? Where can efficiencies be introduced for a smoother process?

One likely sticking point is the public meeting. Does that mean that development should happen in a smoke-filled, closed-door back room? No. But it means that the community must do its homework ahead of time to figure out what kind of development is acceptable and desirable. This means having a lot of meetings and discussions with staff, the commission, the legislative body and the public to hash out what everyone wants to see in the community. Use, density, landscaping, screening, building materials all need to be figured out

Issues:

- Special land use review is a typical *administrative* function of the Planning Commission.
- When the *legislative* body completes an administrative function, opportunity for confusion is significantly greater.
- The extra level of review creates longer timelines and increases the level of uncertainty.
- The Joint Planning Commission operates as the Planning Commission in 425 areas.



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Solutions:

1. Review use tables to determine if it is appropriate to shift some uses to permitted versus Special Land Use (e.g., bank drive throughs).
2. Review Special Land Use and Site Plan Review standards (Section 6.2.10) to simplify review and approval processes.

B-2 Local Business District

A. INTENT

The B-2 (Local Business) district provides for a mix of commercial and office uses potentially in one building. It provides for a transition between the Professional Office Service and Neighborhood Commercial district. This is accomplished by limiting the size of the building and type of uses that are allowed in the more intense business districts and by screening them from the residential uses or districts. These uses are better served by being located on a secondary or major thoroughfare.

User Note: For uses listed in **bold blue**, refer to Article 4, or click on use, for use-specific standards

B. PRINCIPAL PERMITTED USES

- i. General office (up to 5,000 sq ft)
- ii. Medical and dental offices and clinics^{ca}
- iii. **Business service establishments** § 4.21
- iv. **Commercial greenhouses, nurseries^{ca}, and garden centers^{ca}** § 4.16
- v. Pick-up/drop-off dry cleaners and coin laundromats
- vi. **Gas station, including those combined with convenience stores, but excluding automobile service stations** § 4.17
- vii. Convenience stores
- viii. Studios or schools for arts and crafts, photography, music or dancing
- ix. Pubs, taverns, bars, cocktail lounges, and nightclubs
- x. Health clubs^{ca}
- xi. **Personal service establishments** § 4.18
- xii. Newspaper offices and publishers, and copy centers
- xiii. **Restaurants^{ca} (excluding drive-in restaurants and those with drive-through facilities)** § 4.19
- xiv. Pool/video arcades
- xv. **Retail establishments** § 4.20
- xvi. Veterinary clinics, indoor only
- xvii. **Mixed-use development^{ca}** § 4.23

B. PRINCIPAL PERMITTED USES (continued)

- xxv. **Electric vehicle charging stations, level 1 ,2 & 3^{ca}** § 4.50
- xxvi. **Mobile food vending^{ca}** § 4.51
- xxvii. **Accessory structures and uses^{ca}** customarily incidental to the above permitted uses § 4.15

C. SPECIAL LAND USES

- i. **Restaurant with accessory drive-through facilities^{ca}** § 4.14
- ii. **Plant materials nursery^{ca}** § 4.25
- iii. **Veterinary hospitals and clinics^{ca} with outdoor pens, boarding, or other similar uses** § 4.22
- iv. **Adult- and sexually-oriented businesses^{ca}** § 4.26
- v. Wholesale stores up to a maximum of 60,000 square feet usable floor area.
- vi. **Accessory structures and uses^{ca}** customarily incidental to the above permitted uses § 4.15

Sample Use Table



**Streamline Development
without Sacrificing Quality**



**MICHIGAN ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**

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Special Land Use Review

Section 6.2.10 Standards

- A. The proposed use shall be in accordance with the City Master Plan and the intent and purpose of this subchapter.
- B. A documented and immediate need exists for the proposed use within the community.
- C. The use is compatible with adjacent uses and the existing or intended character of the surrounding neighborhood, and will not have an adverse impact upon or interfere with the development, use or enjoyment of adjacent properties, or the orderly development of the neighborhood.
- D. The proposed use shall be designed, constructed, operated and maintained so as to be compatible with the use of adjacent lands.
- E. The proposed use shall be compatible with the natural environment.
- F. The proposed use shall be adequately served by essential public facilities and services, such as highways, streets, police and fire protection, drainage structures, refuse disposal, water and sewage facilities and schools.
- G. The proposed use shall not involve activities, processes, materials and equipment or conditions of operation that will be detrimental to public health, safety and welfare by reason of excessive production of traffic, noise, smoke, fumes, glare or unreasonable or offensive odors.

Administrative Site Plan Review

Issues:

- All site plan review approvals happen at the Planning Commission, even when there are no discretionary standards to be discussed.
- Site plan review can be a “yes or no” function regarding ordinance standards, not a discretionary review.
- Site plan review standards in section 6.3.12 include a fair amount of discretion and duplicate standards in other sections of the ordinance.



Administrative Site Plan Review

Solutions:

1. Determine if some site plan reviews are appropriate for administrative approval.
 - Permitted commercial uses in commercial districts?
 - Permitted residential uses (e.g., multi-family)
2. Create more clarity for when a site plan amendment can be approved administratively.
3. Review site plan review standards to make them less discretionary and duplicative. (Section 6.3.12)



Site Plan Review Standards (Today)

- A. **Adequacy of information.** The site plan information is complete, accurate, and in an understandable form that accurately depicts and describes the proposed development.
- B. **Site appearance and preservation.** The **site layout promotes the normal and orderly development of surrounding lots**, and the development layout preserves, to the extent feasible, the site's natural, cultural, and historical features, such as but not limited to significant buildings, wetlands, topography, and woodlands.
- C. **Pedestrian access.** Existing and proposed sidewalks or pedestrian pathways connect to existing and planned public sidewalks and pathways in the area, and comply with applicable barrier-free access standards.
- D. **Vehicular circulation.** Drives, streets, parking, site access and other vehicle-related elements are designed to minimize traffic conflicts on adjacent streets, and to promote safe and efficient traffic circulation.
- E. **Parking and loading.** Off-street parking lots and loading areas are arranged and located to accommodate the intensity of proposed uses, minimize conflicts with adjacent uses, and promote shared-use of common facilities where feasible.
- F. **Building composition.** Building design and architecture are **harmonious with the surrounding neighborhood** with regard to scale, mass, proportion, and materials.
- G. **Screening.** **Adequate screening elements** have been provided to buffer or separate unlike or conflicting land uses, and to screen off-street parking, mechanical appurtenances, loading and unloading areas and storage areas from abutting residential districts and street rights-of-way.
- H. **Exterior lighting.** All exterior lighting fixtures are designed and arranged to minimize glare and light trespass, prevent vision impairments, and maximize security.
- I. **Impact upon public services.** The impact upon public services (including utilities, streets, police and fire protection, emergency access, and public sidewalks and pathways) will not exceed the existing or planned capacity of such services



City of Marshall

MASTER PLAN 2025



Adopted 9-15-25

Coming Soon...


Master Plan:

- Evaluate opportunities to align zoning districts with future land use classifications.
 - 9 FLU classifications & 17 Zoning Districts
- Address map inconsistencies (Brooks Industrial Park)
- Evaluate Master Plan recommendations
 - Increased housing options in various districts.
 - Design requirements to maintain historic integrity.
 - Natural features protection.
 - Evaluate industrial districts.
 - Requirements for connectivity and complete streets.

Coming Soon...

User-Friendliness

- Reduce duplication of information across multiple articles/sections.
- Address new/evolving uses directly (e.g., data centers, battery energy storage, clarify solar energy regulations)
- Remove food trucks from zoning regulations
- Sign ordinance tweaks



City of Marshall Zoning Ordinance

Amended through July 27, 2024



THANK YOU

We welcome your feedback,
insights and inquiries.