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MEMORANDUM

TO: Duane Cherek, Planning Director, City of Janesville
Brian Schweigl, Senior Planner
City of Janesville Plan Commission

FROM: Craig Huebner, AICP

DATE: November 5, 2025

SUBJECT: Summary of Zoning Rewrite Materials for the November 2025 Plan Commission Meeting

The consultant team is continuing to draft various components of the City's new zoning code. Recognizing that the entire code is subject to change through multiple steps, each part of the code will be labeled as a "Discussion Draft" and dated for reference.

The draft of Article 6 (Development Standards) is ready for your consideration. To help with your review of Article 6, we have prepared a summary of the major themes and changes in the proposed development standards compared to the existing code.

Article 6: Development Standards – Article 6 specifies ten categories of design requirements applicable to new developments. This article consolidates all design standards in one place, using graphics, tables, and objective measurements to provide ease of understanding for each standard.

Administration: Most development standards will be administered by the Zoning Administrator and city staff. The Plan Commission may weigh in on development standards when there are special approvals (conditional uses, planned developments, special exceptions, etc.). When this happens, it would typically be because there are additional standards that need to be defined for a development that is not permitted by right, requiring the Plan Commission and City Council to weigh in on more subjective decisions as a legislative matter. While this happens frequently today, the proposed code (as drafted) should dramatically reduce the frequency of exceptions, variations, and deviations requiring the Plan Commission and City Council to weigh in on development standards.

Reducing special approvals: The current zoning code requires special approvals for a number of developments, such as requiring a conditional use permit for two-family homes in multiple districts and requiring a planned development for any development with more than one principal building per lot. Under the proposed code as drafted, there are pathways to allow these uses by-right when they comply with all the design standards in Article 6.

Market-based standards: The code has been updated to reflect market-based developments by permitting setbacks, densities, and architectural designs that are being built across the region. This includes permitting multiple principal buildings per lot, permitting a greater number of units per structure, and permitting modern construction materials and techniques that have emerged since the existing code was adopted.

Traditional development standards: The code has been updated to reduce the number of non-conforming properties across the city. For example, the minimum lot size in the current code makes dozens of traditional properties in older parts of the city nonconforming, requiring special approvals to redevelop. This acts as an administrative barrier to development. The new code reduces standards for minimum lot

size and setbacks where appropriate to make it less burdensome to redevelop existing lots near the city center. Limited, low-intensity commercial uses have also been permitted in some residential districts to reflect historical development patterns, reducing rezoning requests for desirable neighborhood businesses. Traditionally, these sorts of proposals would be “spot-zoned,” which is considered bad zoning practice.

Divisions: Article 6 is divided into 10 divisions. All new developments will be reviewed under each of these 10 divisions. Each division is summarized below:

Division 1: Specific Land Use Standards – (See Table 6-1) The first of the ten divisions in Article 6 focuses on unique supplemental standards for each individual land use. Each land use corresponds to a land use in the Use Table (Table 5-1). Unless otherwise specified, the standards listed under each land use are required regardless of what zoning district it is proposed in (as long as it is allowed in that district.) This division includes the definition of each land use, standards for minimum parking requirements, and special requirements that are unique to each use (e.g. an assisted living center must have primary street access off of a major street as defined on the zoning map; an auto body shop must conduct all bodywork within an enclosed building; etc.)

What’s changed? Minimum parking requirements have been reduced for several land uses to better reflect best practices. Design standards have also been added to allow more housing options in existing neighborhoods while ensuring compatibility.

- Parking minimums have been reduced for several land uses including multifamily/mixed-use developments. The new standard is to require 1.5 spaces per unit rather than requiring increased parking (2 spaces) for larger units. The current practice disincentivizes the creation of larger units for families and makes housing more expensive. Parking minimums have also been significantly decreased for nursing homes and assisted living centers to less than half of what is required today to support affordable senior housing. Parking minimums have been reduced for office, services, and retail by about 30-40% less than the current standards. Daycare parking minimums have been reduced by over 50%. Land uses in the Downtown (CC) district are not required to provide off-street parking.
- The new code shifts away from limiting two-family development based on the proportion of two-family in a neighborhood to requiring that it be designed in a way that is compatible with single-family surroundings including requiring driveways and garages to be designed similarly, requiring ground-level entries for side-by-side units, and requiring entryway design features, enhanced architectural treatment, and landscaping. These requirements don’t cost much to implement, but they go a long way towards ensuring that new development is attractive. This will allow significantly more opportunities for infill development with duplex than is currently permitted. For anything higher-density, full architectural review is required.
- Several new land uses have been added including new housing types (townhomes, accessory dwelling units, live/work dwellings, etc.). As drafted, Accessory Dwelling Units would require one parking space. Even more housing types are included in Article 8 – Alternative Development Options.

Division 2: Dimensional and Related Standards – (See Table 6-2) This division specifies and defines all the dimensional standards related to the size, bulk, and density of a new development. There are 17 dimensional standards for residential districts and 19 dimensional standards for

nonresidential districts. Each dimensional standard is specified in Table 6-2 where each row specifies the required standard for each column corresponding to zoning districts. Each row for a dimensional standard includes a cross-reference to the definition of the standard in Article 6, Division 2. (e.g. The lot area, minimum in the R-1 district is specified as 5,000 square feet plus 3,000 square feet for each dwelling unit over 2. The cross reference is made to §46-1502, which provides more detail about how lot area is measured.) In most cases, a developer only needs to reference Table 6-2 to understand how to comply with the dimensional standards, but when questions arise, the rest of Division 2 provides added specificity without overcomplicating the basic standards. Most standards are accompanied by a graphic to help illustrate the details of how each standard is defined more clearly.

What's changed? Several dimensional standards have been reduced to allow for more efficient, right-sized development and decrease construction costs.

- Minimum lot sizes have been decreased in residential districts, and additional lot area is not required to build duplex whereas today an additional 400-3,000 sq. ft. is required to build a duplex compared to a single-family home.
- Minimum lot widths have been reduced from 70 to 50 feet in the R-1 district to allow for the creation of more lots within a subdivision or to divide especially wide lots more easily to facilitate infill development. Additional provisions are included to allow 40-foot wide lots in areas with alleys or existing narrow lots.
- Minimum residential setbacks have been reduced to allow buildings to be built 20 feet from the street instead of 25. Side yard setbacks have been simplified and reduced from 8 to 6 feet, but they still increase based on building height like current requirements. Building fire codes also still apply.
- Multiple principal buildings per lot are proposed to be permitted whereas now it requires a planned development. This allows developments with multiple buildings that otherwise conform to all requirements to be built without lengthy approval processes. This type of development is often proposed for workforce housing and should significantly streamline that process because it removes the need to perform a land division or subdivision when building multiple buildings.

Division 3: Engineering and Environmental Standards – This division specifies a limited number of engineering-related standards that are typically reviewed by the City Engineer. They are included in Division 3 to make an applicant aware of them and often make reference to other chapters in the Municipal Code that are not directly involved in planning and zoning approvals, but rather tend to be addressed once a land use and site design is already entitled. A limited number of specific standards to be addressed during planning and zoning reviews such as protecting vision triangles and requiring traffic impact analysis are specified here.

What's changed? Only minor administrative changes have been proposed.

Division 4: Performance Standards – Similarly to Division 3, Division 4 specifies a number of standards related to preventing hazards and nuisance-like effects such as odor, pollution, fires, glare, vibration, and noise. They are included in Division 4 to make an applicant aware of them and often make reference to other chapters in the Municipal Code that are not directly involved in planning and zoning approvals. These standards are specified here so that developments are

aware that they are continuously responsible for meeting these requirements during the construction and operation of their proposed land uses.

What's changed? Only minor administrative changes have been proposed.

Division 5: Site Design Standards – This division only applies to land uses requiring a site plan review as specified in the Use Table (Table 5-1). (i.e. most principal land uses except for single- and two-family dwellings which have their own, abbreviated site design standards specified in Article 6, Division 1) This division largely focuses on the placement of buildings, land uses, driveways, and parking within a site plan. The site design standards ensure orderly development patterns that promote efficient circulation, curb appeal, accessibility, etc.

What's changed? Most standards have remained the same or similar to existing standards, but additional provisions have been created to reduce the visibility of parking areas and enhance walkability by creating greater specificity about how buildings meet the street frontage.

Division 6: Architectural Standards – This division only applies to land uses requiring architectural review as specified in the Use Table (Table 5-1). (i.e. most principal land uses involving buildings except for single- and two-family dwellings which have their own, abbreviated architectural standards specified in Article 6, Division 1). This division focuses on the aesthetic design of buildings including their scale, proportion, roof, fenestration, materials, colors, and mechanical equipment. This division also include a new section on specific requirements for limited commercial uses in residential zoning districts limiting their impacts on surrounding residences. The consultant team is working with staff to add additional objective standards that will be incorporated in a future draft.

What's changed? Architectural standards have largely remained the same but have been made more objective and measurable so they can be more easily administered. For example, limitations on building height have been made more specific. Specific proportions of building materials, windows, and other details have been quantified whereas the existing code requires enhanced design without specifying how much is needed. One notable change is that new parking lots and parking lot expansions would be required to ensure that 1 in 20 spaces is electric-vehicle (EV) capable (i.e. able to install an EV charger in the future). §46-1810

Division 7: Parking, Loading and Access – This division specifies the standards for the design, layout, placement, and orientation of parking lots, driveways, drive-throughs, and their associated elements. This division does not include specific parking requirements for land uses which are specified in Article 6, Division 1 in Table 6-1 with other use-specific standards, but it does make reference to that division.

- What's changed? Most changes to parking are included in Division 1 and related to parking quantities. The remaining standards relating to design don't deviate much from what is required today. Most changes relate to discouraging or restricting large parking areas in the front yard of commercial and multifamily buildings, instead placing parking in side and rear yards where possible. Parking maximums have been added for business and industrial uses to not exceed 15% of the minimum requirement without demonstrating additional spaces are needed. Shared parking is incentivized but not required. Parking lot screening requirements

have also been made stricter, applying to all parking lots within 25 feet of a street or residential lot line. Today's requirement only applies to lots within 5 feet.

Division 8: Landscaping and Buffers – This division specifies the landscaping for new developments. The landscaping standards require five elements of landscaping in new developments:

- **Zoning Buffers:** Buffers are a strip of landscaping required along a property line. The required buffer is specified in the table on page 6-44 and is based on the level of incompatibility between two zoning districts. Scenarios for when buffers are required are described under §46-1912. There are four types of buffers that vary based on intensity, and each buffer includes multiple options for providing the buffer. The options vary in width, density of plantings required, and whether a fence or berm is required. This provides significant flexibility in how to achieve the landscaping requirements.
- **Street Frontage Landscaping:** Street frontage landscaping is required whenever a new development, building expansion, or parking area expansion includes frontage along a street.
- **Building Foundation Landscaping:** Landscaping is required along the base of new buildings within 20 feet of the building perimeter.
- **Pavement Landscaping:** Any paved area (parking lot, sidewalks, plazas, etc.) is required to include landscaping within 15 feet of the paved area.
- **Parking Lot Screening:** Parking areas must be screened if they are within 25 feet of a public street or residential lot line. There are four options for screening that vary in width, fencing requirements, and density of required plantings.

What's changed? The proposed landscaping standards add significant flexibility for achieving landscaping requirements compared to the current code. The current code requires a one-size-fits-all buffer between zoning districts regardless of the intensity of uses, and street frontage landscaping is limited to requiring street trees. The new standards provide several options for achieving the minimum required landscaping and increases requirements for more drastic changes between land uses. Minimal changes have been proposed to foundation landscaping and pavement landscaping. The parking lot screening requirements have been increased from current requirements to apply to lots within 25 feet of a street or residential lot line, compared to 5 feet currently.

Division 9: Outdoor Lighting – This division includes a number of limitations and requirements for outdoor lighting to reduce light trespass onto adjacent properties and ensure that lighting fixtures are designed and located in reasonable locations on a lot. Table 6-19 specifies the exact amounts that light fixtures, brightness, color temperature, and time of day are limited based on the type of land use.

What's new? Only minor administrative changes have been proposed.

Division 10: Signs – This division has not been drafted, but will regulate the design and placement of signs in a content-neutral manner consistent with State and Federal limitations on sign regulations.