

# City of Oronoco

Home of Downtown Oronoco Gold Rush



## **MEMORANDUM**

TO: Honorable Mayor, Council Members  
FROM: Jason Baker, City Administrator  
DATE: February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2026  
RE: February 19<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>, 2026 Zoning Codes Workshops

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### **Purpose**

These workshops provide the city council with an overview of the City’s Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance and outlines a structured two-day workshop schedule to guide Council review and discussion. The intent is to ensure shared understanding of the ordinance framework, identify policy-level decision points, and confirm Council direction for future administration and amendments.

### **High-Level Overview**

The City of Oronoco Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance serves as the primary legal framework governing land use, development standards, and subdivision activity within the city. It is comprehensive in scope, aligned with Minnesota Statutes and the City’s Comprehensive Plan, and structured to balance predictability for property owners with discretion for elected officials and staff.

At a policy level, the ordinance:

- Establishes clear authority and procedures for land-use decisions, including enforcement and timelines.
- Defines permitted, accessory, and conditional uses by zoning district.
- Relies on performance and design standards to mitigate impacts rather than relying solely on prohibitions.
- Addresses modern land-use issues such as accessory dwelling units, renewable energy systems, cannabis-related uses, and flexible development models.
- Ensures new development contributes appropriately to public infrastructure through subdivision and platting standards.

The ordinance is already strong and defensible; however, Council review is valuable to confirm policy intent, identify areas for clarification or modernization, and ensure alignment with current community priorities.

### **Summary of Major Ordinance Components (Excluding Shoreland & Floodplain)**

#### **1. Title, Purpose, and Comprehensive Plan Relationship**

Sets the legal authority and policy foundation for zoning decisions, explicitly tying implementation to the City’s Comprehensive Plan to promote orderly development in the city.

#### **2. Rules and Definitions**

Provides extensive definitions and interpretation rules that reduce ambiguity and legal risk. This section is critical to consistent enforcement and includes modern land-use language.

#### **3. General Provisions**

Applies zoning citywide, establishes minimum standards, clarifies treatment of nonconforming uses and structures, and confirms that uses not expressly permitted are prohibited.

#### **4. Administration and Enforcement**

Centralizes zoning administration with the City Administrator/Zoning Administrator, outlines enforcement authority, and incorporates Minnesota's 60-Day Rule for land-use decisions.

#### **5. Zoning District Framework and Use Table**

Establishes zoning districts, adopts the official zoning map, and provides a master use table that outlines where uses are permitted by right versus requiring conditional approval.

#### **6. Residential Districts (R-1 and R-2)**

Defines low- and medium-density residential development standards, prioritizing neighborhood compatibility while allowing limited flexibility through conditional and accessory uses.

#### **7. Business Districts (B-1 and B-2)**

Addresses neighborhood-scale and highway-oriented commercial development with an emphasis on architectural standards, screening, and site design.

#### **8. Industrial District (M-1)**

Provides for light industrial and manufacturing uses with detailed operational and design standards to mitigate impacts on surrounding properties.

#### **9. Development Flex District (DF)**

Allows for innovative or mixed-use development through a planned approach, with defined criteria, review procedures, and standards, including accessory dwelling units.

#### **10. Performance Standards**

Establishes citywide standards for lighting, parking, landscaping, fencing, tree preservation, solar energy systems, accessory structures, and related site elements.

#### **11. Subdivision and Platting Regulations**

Governs land division, required public improvements, design standards, park dedication, and development agreements to ensure orderly growth and infrastructure coordination.

### **Two-Day Council Workshop Schedule (Excluding Shoreland & Floodplain)**

#### **DAY 1 (2 HOURS): Governance Framework & Residential Policy**

##### **-Orientation & Council Role**

- What zoning does and does not regulate
- Council vs. staff vs. Planning & Zoning Commission roles
- How Council decisions set precedent

##### **Council focus:**

- ✓ Level of discretion Council wants to retain
- ✓ Predictability vs. flexibility in residential areas

##### **-Purpose, Authority & Administration**

- Purpose and Comprehensive Plan alignment
- General provisions and nonconforming uses
- Administration, enforcement, and the 60-Day Rule

##### **Council focus:**

- ✓ Comfort with enforcement authority
- ✓ Treatment of existing nonconformities

##### **-Zoning Framework & Use Table**

- Permitted vs. conditional vs. accessory uses
- "Uses not listed = prohibited" policy choice
- When Council is required to act

##### **Council focus:**

- ✓ Where discretion is appropriate
- ✓ Where by-right development is preferred

### **-Residential Districts: R-1 & R-2**

- Intent of low- and medium-density districts
- Density, housing types, and neighborhood compatibility
- Accessory uses and ADUs
- Common residential CUPs and variances

#### **Council focus:**

- ✓ Housing diversity vs. neighborhood protection
- ✓ ADU comfort level and limitations
- ✓ Whether district intents still reflect community expectations

### **-Residential Wrap-Up**

- Key policy takeaways
- Items needing follow-up or clarification

## **DAY 2 (2 HOURS): Commercial, Flex Development & Implementation**

### **-Recap of Residential Themes**

#### **-Commercial Districts: B-1 & B-2**

- Neighborhood commercial vs. highway commercial intent
- Design standards, screening, and aesthetics
- Outdoor storage, display, and operational impacts

#### **Council focus:**

- ✓ Desired commercial character
- ✓ Corridor appearance vs. business flexibility
- ✓ Areas where design standards may be too strict or too loose

#### **-Industrial District (M-1)**

- Role of M-1 in economic development
- Impact mitigation tools (screening, loading, storage)
- Compatibility with adjacent uses

#### **Council focus:**

- ✓ Economic development priorities
- ✓ Buffering expectations

#### **-Development Flex (DF) & Conditional Tools**

- DF district purpose and safeguards
- CUPs vs. rezonings
- Variances and precedent management

#### **Council focus:**

- ✓ Comfort with negotiated development
- ✓ Expectations for consistency and transparency

#### **-Citywide Performance Standards**

- Parking, lighting, landscaping
- Accessory structures and solar energy
- Standards as impact-mitigation tools

**Council focus:**

- ✓ Aesthetic control vs. property rights
- ✓ Need for clearer or simpler standards

**-Subdivision Policy & Next Steps**

- Infrastructure, park dedication, development contracts
- Long-term fiscal and maintenance implications
- Council direction on:
  - Targeted amendments
  - Housekeeping updates
  - Future comprehensive rewrite

Sincerely,

*Jason Baker*

City Administrator