

BEMIDJI PLANNING BOARD REGULAR MEETING AGENDA

Monday, September 14, 2026

**Council Chambers
City Hall – 317 4th Street NW
5:30 PM**



CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MINUTES

- 1) August 10, 2026 Planning Board Meeting Minutes

VISITORS WITH BUSINESS BEFORE THIS BOARD – NOT ON AGENDA

Public Comment – Please give your name, address, and state your concern/comment. Visitors may share their concerns with the Planning Board on any issue, which is not already on the agenda. Each person will have 3 minutes to speak. The Chair reserves the right to limit an individual's presentation if it becomes redundant, repetitive, irrelevant, or overly argumentative. The Chair may also limit the number of individual presentations on any issue to accommodate the scheduled agenda items. COMMENTS WILL BE TAKEN UNDER ADVISEMENT BY THE PLANNING BOARD.

BUSINESS

- 2) Interim Ordinance Authorizing a Study & Imposing a Moratorium on Data Centers
- 3) Discussion on Development Code Update

STAFF REPORTS

- 4) Director's Report
- 5) Site Analyst and Enforcement Report

UPCOMING MEETINGS

- 6) *TUESDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2026* Planning Board Meeting

ADJOURN

PLANNING BOARD PROCEEDINGS BEMIDJI, MINNESOTA Regular Meeting – August 10, 2026

Pursuant to due call and notice, a regular meeting of the Planning Board of the City of Bemidji, Beltrami County, Minnesota, was held at 5:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers of City Hall.

Upon roll call, the following board members were declared present: **Prince, Fiskevold Gould, Peterson, Dickinson, Rivera, Eaton**. Absent: **Thayer**.

Staff Present: **Planning Director Jamin Carlson, Assistant Planning Director Melissa Fahrenbruch, Compliance Inspector & Site Analyst David Wielenberg, Administrative Assistant Ainslee Krause**.

Others Present: **Troy Gilchrist, Town Law Center PLLP (via Webex), Charles Biberg, Russ Schramm, Erika Bailey-Johnson**.

AMENDMENTS TO AGENDA

Chair Eaton called for any amendments to the agenda. Motion by **Rivera**, second by **Peterson**, to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

MINUTES

The following minutes were presented for approval:

Planning Board Meeting: **July 13, 2026**

Motion by **Prince**, second by **Dickinson**, approving minutes as presented. Motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

CITIZENS WITH BUSINESS NOT ON AGENDA

- Charles Biberg, 1109 Beltrami Ave NW, addressed the board and expressed concern over variances in residential and commercial settings and the cost associated. Biberg noted that city planning ordinances have not been updated since 2018 and encouraged the board to respond to community needs and prioritize updating the ordinances.

BUSINESS

CONSIDER ORDINANCE AMENDING THE ZONING MAP ADOPTED IN CHAPTER 28 OF THE BEMIDJI CITY CODE (REZONE) AND CONCEPT PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT (PUD) REQUEST – PARCEL 80.01191.00 – SACRED BUNDLE LLC

Carlson presented the planning case request: Erika Bailey-Johnson representing Sacred Bundle Inc, is requesting a Land Use Map Amendment (Rezone) from R-4 Moderate Density Residential to R-6 Multiple Family Zoning District and a Concept Planned Unit Development (PUD) to develop a multi-phase mixed use project to include in the first phase on the main level public computer lab, meeting spaces, community space, and offices. In the second phase, the basement level may have a commercial kitchen and workshops. On the second floor, they will convert old classrooms into apartments. The subject property is located at 815 Beltrami Ave NW (PIN 800119100) in the City of Bemidji.

The Planning Commission and staff recommend approval of the Ordinance amending the Zoning Map (Rezone) and the Concept Planned Unit Development (PUD), with the conditions and findings of fact presented in the packet.

Board members made the following comments regarding the request:

- Fiskevold Gould addressed no questions and expressed support for the project.
- Peterson had no questions.

DRAFT

- Rivera requested clarification on the commission's concerns regarding this use. Fahrenbruch addressed that the use is similar to a community center with community education type offerings as opposed to a K-12 education center. Fahrenbruch addressed that the school district put a stipulation on the deed that it cannot be a school.
- Rivera expressed support for the project.
- Prince requested clarification on the rationale of the one vote against. Fahrenbruch addressed that the commissioner stated that he believed it was a school.
- Prince expressed support.
- Dickinson inquired if the property is taxable. Fahrenbruch confirmed yes. Dickinson inquired if the programming and space will be available for all. Fahrenbruch confirmed yes.
- Eaton expressed support for the project.

Motion by **Prince**, second by **Dickinson**, to approve **Ordinance 2026-238** for a Land Use Map Amendment (Rezone) for parcel 80.01191.00 with the findings of fact as presented. Motion carried by the following voice vote: Ayes: **Prince, Fiskevold Gould, Peterson, Dickinson, Rivera, Eaton**. Nays: **None**.

Motion by **Peterson**, second by **Rivera**, to approve a Concept Planned Unit Development for parcel 80.01191.00 as presented. Motion carried by the following voice vote: Ayes: **Prince, Fiskevold Gould, Peterson, Dickinson, Rivera, Eaton**. Nays: **None**.

CONSIDER RESOLUTION FOR CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT – 80.03026.00 – NATIONAL BANK OF COMMERCE

Fahrenbruch presented the planning case request: Russ Schramm of HTG Architects, representing the National Bank of Commerce, is requesting Conditional Use Permits to remodel and build an addition to the existing Bank or Financial Institution and to remove more than 40% of the existing high-quality significant trees on the site. The subject property is located at 1260 Paul Bunyan Dr NW (PIN: 800302600) in the City of Bemidji. The property is in the B-2 General Commercial District and the HWY 197 Overlay.

The Planning Commission and staff recommend approval of the Conditional Use Permit requests, with the conditions and findings of fact presented in the packet.

Board members made the following comments regarding the request:

- Dickinson inquired if the situation with the neighboring property has been resolved. Fahrenbruch addressed that the applicant and neighbor are in conversation.
- Dickinson inquired whether this facility would replace the downtown location. Fahrenbruch addressed that staff do not believe so.
- Prince inquired about if MnDOT had approved the ingress/egress on the proposed site plan. Fahrenbruch confirmed yes.
- Rivera inquired about amending the condition to be more specific. Carlson noted that the City does not involve themselves with private easements.
- Gilchrist identified that there are civil remedies if there are unresolved issues with the easement.
- Rivera requested clarification on plan for trees. Fahrenbruch clarified the guidance provided in the ordinance.
- Peterson had no questions and expressed support.
- Fiskevold Gould had no questions.
- Eaton had no questions.

Motion by **Peterson**, second by **Rivera**, to approve **Resolution 2026-XX** for the Conditional Use Permits, with the conditions and findings of fact as presented. Motion carried by the following voice vote: Ayes: **Prince, Fiskevold Gould, Peterson, Dickinson, Rivera, Eaton**. Nays: **None**.

DISCUSSION ON DATA CENTERS

Fahrenbruch addressed the board and presented information on data centers. Fahrenbruch proposed staff recommendation to place a moratorium on data centers to give staff the time to research and write an ordinance regulating said data centers.

Board members made the following comments:

- Fiskevold Gould addressed hearing concerns from residents and noted Bemidji's location as the first city on the Mississippi River. Fiskevold Gould addressed concerns over water pollution, referencing Oregon. Fiskevold Gould expressed great support for a moratorium.
- Peterson addressed concerns heard from residents and expressed support for the moratorium.
- Rivera expressed support for a moratorium and research. Rivera requested that staff share information found regarding data centers. Fahrenbruch confirmed that staff would pass along what info they are able to.
- Prince expressed support for a moratorium, however addressed concern over encumbering development. Prince expressed support for a specific and precise moratorium. Prince identified that the news reports that Bemidji was being looked at as a potential site for a data center were found to be incorrect.
- Dickinson expressed concern over preventing development of something that already exists in Bemidji. Dickinson and Fahrenbruch discussed sizes of data centers. Dickinson expressed that he was not in support of a moratorium.
- Eaton expressed concern over a data center's consumption of resources. Eaton expressed support for a moratorium.
- Carlson specified that staff could write a moratorium that could be brought before the board at their next meeting.
- Chair Eaton confirmed consensus from the board for staff to proceed with bringing a draft moratorium before the board at their next meeting.

DISCUSSION ON DEVELOPMENT CODE

Carlson addressed the board and discussed a development code update.

Board members made the following comments:

- Dickinson expressed support for moving forward with a development code update.
- Prince inquired if staff has a list of priorities from encounters with citizens that could be presented so the board could provide feedback. Carlson addressed that a list can be brought before the board.
- Prince addressed support for discussing and prioritizing specific topics.
- Rivera addressed support for hearing from staff. Rivera inquired about utilizing feedback from the Comprehensive Plan update. Carlson addressed that staff has not received feedback yet. Rivera suggested reviewing what has often come before the board and requested reviewing the reasoning behind the ordinances. Rivera addressed reviewing treatment facilities/mental and chemical health facilities and the restrictions in place for those uses.
- Peterson addressed support for having a discussion and reviewing staff's priorities and comparing that with input from the Chamber.
- Fiskevold Gould addressed support for moving forward and expressed support for seeing staff's priorities. Fiskevold Gould expressed support for reviewing the development code relating to housing and looking at allowing duplexes. Fiskevold Gould expressed support for opening up housing opportunities.
- Eaton expressed concern over staff having enough time. Eaton inquired if a motion is needed or if consensus is sufficient.
- Gilchrist addressed that consensus from the board is sufficient.
- Eaton noted the consensus from the board is for staff to bring information to the next meeting.

STAFF REPORTS

Director's Report

Carlson presented the Director's Report.

Board members had the following comments:

- Members discussed.

Site Analyst & Enforcement Report

Wielenberg presented the Site Analyst & Enforcement Report.

Board members had the following comments:

- Members discussed.
- Prince inquired about abandonment fees. Staff addressed that this discussion topic would need to go before the council.
- Fiskevold Gould expressed support for having a conversation about abandonment fees.

UPCOMING BOARD MEETINGS

- Monday, September 14, 2026 5:30 p.m. Planning Board Meeting

ADJOURN

There being no further business, motion by **Fiskevold Gould**, second by **Peterson**, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at **6:27 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

Ainslee Krause

Planning & Building Administrative Assistant

PB Minutes approved and attested by: _____
Planning Board Representative

**CITY OF BEMIDJI
MINNESOTA
ORDINANCE NO. _____, 3RD SERIES**

**AN INTERIM ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING A
STUDY AND IMPOSING A MORATORIUM ON DATA CENTERS**

THE CITY OF BEMIDJI DOES ORDAIN:

SECTION 1: Purpose and Intent. The purpose and intent of this interim ordinance ("Ordinance") is to impose, pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, section 462.355, subdivision 4, a moratorium within the jurisdictional boundaries of the City on the establishment or expansion of data centers during the period of this Ordinance to protect the planning process and the health, safety, and welfare of the City's residents.

SECTION 2: Legislative Findings. The Planning Board hereby finds and determines as follows:

- (a) The City of Bemidji has adopted zoning regulations in Chapter 28 of the Bemidji City Code ("Development Code") pursuant to its authority under Minnesota Statutes, sections 462.351 to 462.364 and the City Charter;
- (b) Minnesota Statutes, section 462.355, subdivision 4 authorizes the Planning Board to adopt interim ordinances to regulate, restrict, or prohibit any use, development, or subdivision within the City;
- (c) A great deal of questions and concerns have recently been raised regarding data centers and their impacts on the communities in which they are located;
- (d) The City has limited experience with data centers and determines it is in the best interests of the City and its residents to study data centers as a use, specifically examine how they are currently regulated under the Development Code, and to develop a report that contains any recommended amendments to the Development Code regarding data centers;
- (e) In order to protect the planning process and the health, safety, and welfare of those living and working within the City, the Planning Board determines it is in the best interests of the City to enact a moratorium on the establishment and expansion of data centers to allow sufficient time to conduct the study and then, if needed, to draft and adopt amendments to the Development Code on data centers as may be needed;

SECTION 3. Definitions. For the purposes of this Ordinance, the following terms shall have the meaning given them in this Section. If a term is not defined in this Section, it shall have the meaning given it in the Zoning Ordinance.

- (a) Data Center. "Data center" means a facility containing at least 10,000 square feet (in a single building or in a series of buildings on a property) that is designed or used for the storage, management, and processing of digital data via the interconnection and operation of information technology and network telecommunications equipment, including all related facilities and infrastructure for backup electricity generation, power

distribution, environmental control, cooling, security, and other associated utility infrastructure. The term is to be interpreted broadly to include all facilities that may serve as, or may reasonably be converted to, a data center. The term also includes cryptocurrency mining facilities containing at least 10,000 square feet. The term shall not include information technology equipment or facilities that are accessory and subordinate to another lawful principal use on the property.

- (b) Development Code. “Development Code” means the most current enactment of Chapter 28 of the Code of Ordinances, City of Bemidji, Minnesota.
- (c) Ordinance. “Ordinance” means this interim ordinance authorizing a study and imposing a moratorium pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, section 462.355, subdivision 4.
- (d) Planning Board. “Planning Board” means the City of Bemidji Planning Board, established by the City Council.
- (e) City. “City” means the City of Bemidji, Minnesota.

SECTION 4. Study Authorized. City planning staff are hereby authorized and directed to conduct a study of data centers as a land use. The study shall include, but is not necessarily limited to, how data centers are currently regulated under the Development Code, consider the issues and impacts data centers have created for other communities and the regulations they have adopted to address them, and develop proposed language for any recommended amendments to the Development Code regarding Data Centers.

SECTION 5. Moratorium Imposed. A moratorium is hereby imposed to prohibit the establishment or construction of data centers within the City during the term of this Ordinance. During the period of this Ordinance, it shall be prohibited to establish or construct a data center within the City.

SECTION 6. Duration. This Ordinance shall remain in effect for 12 months from the date of its adoption but shall expire earlier upon either the effective date of an ordinance adopted by the Planning Board amending the Development Code regarding data centers, or upon the adoption of a resolution by the Planning Board expressly ending the moratorium.

SECTION 7. Penalty and Enforcement. Any person, firm, partnership, corporation, or other entity violating any provision of this interim ordinance shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction thereof, shall be subject to imprisonment for up to 90 days, a fine of up to \$1,000, or both, plus the costs of prosecution. Each day that a violation occurs shall be considered a separate offense. The City may enforce this interim ordinance through criminal prosecution or by undertaking such civil actions or proceedings, including injunctive relief, as it determines appropriate to prevent, restrain, correct, or abate any violation or threatened violation of this interim ordinance. The initiation of one type of enforcement action shall not preclude the City from instituting any other action or proceeding available to it under law to enforce this interim ordinance.

SECTION 8. Severability. Every section, provision and part of this Ordinance is declared severable from every other section, provision and part thereof. If any section, provision, or part of this Ordinance is held to be invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction, such judgment shall not invalidate any other section, provision, or part of this Ordinance.

SECTION 9. Effective Date. This Ordinance shall take effect immediately upon its adoption.

Yeas:

Nays:

Absent:

First Reading: August 27, 2026

Final Reading: September 14, 2026

Attest:

Approved:

Ainslee Krause, Administrative Assistant

Lynn Eaton, Planning Board Chair



PLANNING BOARD AGENDA ITEM

Meeting Date: Monday, September 14, 2026

Action Requested: Public Hearing for Temporary Interim Ordinance (Moratorium) on Data Center Development (10,000 Square Feet and larger) and Currency/Data Mining Facilities

Prepared By: Melissa Fahrenbruch, Assistant Planning Director

Reviewed By: Jamin Carlson, Planning Director

The City of Bemidji, like other cities, would like to research the establishment or expansion of data center planning process and the protection of health, safety, and welfare of the city's residents. Staff have received comments and concerns from the community and City commissions asking that we investigate the issue. The City is home to a local data facility at Paul Bunyan Communications providing off-site backup, storage, and primary or multi-site colocation space for regional businesses according to their website. This type is not the definition that is being considered under the moratorium. The data centers are the hyper or large-scale type over 10,000 Square Feet the moratorium is seeking to research and then add to the Ordinance.

At the August 10th, 2026, meeting, the Planning Board directed staff to draft a temporary Interim Ordinance (Moratorium) on Data Center Development of sizes larger than that of the current Paul Bunyan Communications Facility and Currency/Data Mining Facilities for one (1) year, to research this subject and provide suggested code regulations.

Planning Commission

Commission members made the following comments:

- Olderman requested clarification on the square footage referenced in the interim ordinance. Carlson clarified that the moratorium is for 10,000 square feet and up so as not to interfere with the current data centers operating within city limits.

Public Hearing opened at **5:36 PM**

- No comments.

Public Hearing closed at **5:37 PM**

Commission members made additional comments:

- Heinonen requested clarification that there are no current plans for data centers within the City of Bemidji, and this ordinance is being proposed so the city has something in place when and if the time comes and discussed the news articles circulating were found to be false. Carlson confirmed that this is correct.
- Meehlhause requested clarification from Gilchrist, city planning attorney.
- Gilchrist clarified that this will be the first reading of an ordinance.

RECOMMENDATION FOR APPROVAL

Approval is recommended based Legislative Findings.

Planning Commission held a Public Hearing for a temporary Interim Ordinance (Moratorium) on Data Center Development (10,000 Square Feet and larger) and Currency/Data Mining Facilities for one year and study how these uses would affect Bemidji's economy, water, energy, health and safety.

Motion by **Heinonen**, seconded by **Lemmer**, to recommend approval of the temporary Interim Ordinance (Moratorium) on Data Center Development (10,000 Square Feet and larger) and Currency/Data Mining Facilities with the findings of fact as presented in the packet.

Ayes: **Olderman, Meehlhause, McCoy, Lemmer, Heinonen.**

Nays: **None.**

Abstentions: **None.**

Motion carried unanimously.



PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM

Meeting Date: Thursday, August 27, 2026

Action Requested: Public Hearing for Temporary Interim Ordinance (Moratorium) on Data Center Development (10,000 Square Feet and larger) and Currency/Data Mining Facilities

Prepared By: Melissa Fahrenbruch, Assistant Planning Director

Reviewed By: Jamin Carlson, Planning Director

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Recommendation:

Hold a Public Hearing for a temporary Interim Ordinance (Moratorium) on Data Center Development (10,000 Square Feet and larger) and Currency/Data Mining Facilities for one year and study how these uses would affect Bemidji's economy, water, energy, health and safety.



PLANNING BOARD AGENDA ITEM

Meeting Date: Monday, September 14, 2026

Action Requested: Discussion for Process for a Full Ordinance Update

Prepared By: Melissa Fahrenbruch, Assistant Planning Director

Reviewed By: Jamin Carlson, Planning Director

The City of Bemidji's Planning & Zoning (Development Code) Ordinance requires updating. The Ordinance was transferred from the old Greater Bemidji Area Joint Planning Board (JPB) into the City without many changes due to time constraints. The last full Ordinance update was performed in 2018 under the JPB entity. Planning staff and other stakeholders see the need for a full update of the Ordinance that reflects the current and future needs of the City of Bemidji. The City Council directed staff to update the Comprehensive Plan first. The Comprehensive Plan is in the process of being updated through a contract with Headwaters Regional Development Commission (HRDC). Staff were asked at the Planning Board August 10th, 2026, meeting to bring a priority list of Development Code updates to the Planning Board on September 14th, 2026.

The Planning Commission is tasked with gathering public input and making the recommendations to the Planning Board for any updating/changes to the Ordinance. Staff brought a priority list to the Planning Commission at their August 27th, 2026, meeting.

Planning Commission

Carlson addressed that the Planning Board gave direction to staff to discuss with the Planning Commission and bring back a list of priorities for a development code update... Carlson requested feedback from the Planning Commission on priorities for a full ordinance update.

Commission members made the following comments:

- Lemmer expressed concern over reducing lot sizes in the R4 zone and if that would be beneficial when neighborhoods are already built out, also expressed concerns over small houses being built and garages being larger than the houses and requested more information be brought forward on that.
- Lemmer inquired, in reference to changing zoning to allow for duplexes, if there are single family zones containing large enough lots to fit duplexes.
- Carlson addressed that many of the platted lots historically are 25 feet and will be 50 feet if two are added together which would in turn avoid the variance path.
- Lemmer raised concern over making sure that the lots where duplexes would be allowed are big enough.

- Lemmer requested clarification on how this would affect the shoreland overlay. Carlson addressed that those regulations are set by the state with limited flexibility. Carlson addressed the need to work with the DNR to call out specific sewer higher density zones in the shoreland.
- Olderman inquired if updating zoning would allow converting existing single-family homes into duplexes. Carlson specified that per the city building department, a structure must be brought up to today's building code if converting a single-family home to a duplex, which can be cost prohibitive. Carlson addressed that the majority of the R5 zones are already built out with single-family homes and do not appear to be changing.
- Meehlhause inquired about adding a square footage minimum for lot sizes regarding duplexes in the single-family zone. Carlson discussed the 40% maximum of impervious surface in most single-family zones and addressed researching to figure out what will work...for higher density in the shoreland zone.
- McCoy expressed support for the code update.
- Lemmer addressed front and rear yard setbacks and wanted to make sure attached garages don't encroach over the lot setbacks.
- Heinonen discussed item #6 regarding accessory dwelling units and inquired if any exist in the downtown or R4 areas. Carlson noted that there have been no accessory dwelling units that have gone through the Conditional Use Permit process and discussed the current requirement of a Conditional Use Permit if lot is smaller than two acres. Carlson discussed potentially changing the code to allow the use outright without the additional step of the conditional use permit. Carlson specified that accessory dwelling units as rentals are not currently allowed and discussed allowing them to be rentable, potentially if the principal dwelling unit is owner-occupied.
- Carlson addressed updating the sign regulations to follow national standards.
- Olderman inquired about accessory dwelling units as short term rentals. Carlson discussed and clarified that accessory dwelling units are not rentable under the current Ordinance.
- Meehlhause inquired about a timeline for the completion of the comprehensive plan. Carlson specified tentatively next month or the month after that.
- Carlson addressed counseling services (item #2), noted staff has permitted over a dozen of these locations and to his knowledge the planning office has received no complaints.
- Carlson discussed additionally "nodes", areas with businesses mixed into residential neighborhoods, walkable communities.
- Heinonen expressed concern over dispensing of medication and suggested reviewing those businesses at that point. Carlson noted that pharmacies and medical clinics are permitted outright and can dispense medication. Staff and members discussed.
- Lemmer expressed support for counseling clinics to be allowed.
- Lemmer addressed item #9 (zoning district realignment) should be reviewed first before updating individual ordinances.
- Meehlhause concurred. Meehlhause addressed zoning district realignment and reordering of the ordinances should be top priorities.
- Carlson reviewed and discussed performance standards.
- Meehlhause suggested breaking up performance standards. Meehlhause discussed the importance of reviewing the performance standards section due to staff receiving feedback from the public and developers.
- Meehlhause and staff discussed combining regulations, for example adding bed and breakfasts to the short-term rental section.
- Meehlhause requested clarification on the update process.
- Carlson noted that the last full code update took 9 months to complete and discussed forming different committees and holding work sessions.

- Lemmer requested additional clarification.
- Gilchrist discussed different processes for completing the full code update. Gilchrist noted that changes that are most pressing could potentially be reviewed and approved first and then the commission could review the rest of the code. Gilchrist addressed that the commission could review chapters individually or could wait and complete one massive ordinance update. Gilchrist addressed assisting other cities review sections at a time and then adopt a chapter or two at a time.
- McCoy inquired about how to handle when an application comes in relating to a particular pending change.
- Gilchrist addressed that the city must act on requests based on the ordinances currently in effect.
- Heinonen addressed in the past update, the Planning Commission held work sessions outside of regular meetings and suggested utilizing that process.
- Carlson requested direction from the commission on how to proceed with reviewing the code.
- Meehlhause expressed support for looking at item #2 counseling services, followed by zoning districts realignment (item #9), and then an article at a time with Article 10: Performance Standards being broken into sections.
- Meehlhause inquired as to what kind of timeline the Planning Board is expecting for this update.
- Lemmer expressed support for breaking down the performance standards.
- Heinonen and Carlson discussed scheduling additional meetings or work sessions.
- Carlson addressed that staff would bring the information discussed to the board for direction.

Recommendation:

Discussion as to the top ten (10) potential updates and whether to start with restructuring the development code and then work section by section or make changes to the needed listed items. Discussion on the process to proceed with possible steering committee.



PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM

Meeting Date: Thursday, August 27th, 2026

Action Requested: Discussion for Process for a Full Ordinance Update

Prepared By: Melissa Fahrenbruch, Assistant Planning Director

Reviewed By: Jamin Carlson, Planning Director

The City of Bemidji's Planning & Zoning (Development Code) Ordinance requires updating. The Ordinance was transferred from the old Greater Bemidji Area Joint Planning Board (JPB) into the City without many changes due to time constraints. The last full Ordinance update was performed in 2018 under the JPB entity. Planning staff and other stakeholders see the need for a full update of the Ordinance that reflects the current and future needs of the City of Bemidji. The City Council directed staff to update the Comprehensive Plan first. The Comprehensive Plan is in process of being updated through a contract with Headwaters Regional Development Commission (HRDC). Staff were asked at the Planning Board August 10th, 2026, meeting to bring a priority list of Development Code updates to the Planning Board on September 14th, 2026.

The Planning Commission is tasked with gathering public input and making the recommendations to the Planning Board for any updating/changes to the Ordinance.

Recommendation:

Discussion as to the top ten (10) potential updates and whether to start with restructuring the development code and then work section by section or make changes to the needed listed items. Discussion on the process to proceed with possible steering committee.

City of Bemidji
Planning and Zoning “Development Code”
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Yellow highlight – New

Yellow Highlight with Strike through – To
be removed

Section #'s in red – need to be renumber

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Sec. 28-414 - Special Provisions for Development in Sensitive Areas

Sec. 28-415 - Special Provisions for Trunk Highway 197 Overlay

Sec. 28-417 – Special Provisions for Closed Landfill Overlay District (CL)

Sec. 28-413 - Special Provisions for Manufactured Home Park Standards

Sec. 28-202 - Special Provisions for Accessory Buildings in Manufactured Housing Parks

Sec. 28-201 - Special Provisions for Accessory Structures and Uses

Sec. 28-204 - Special Provisions for Accessory Dwelling Units

Sec. 28-418 - Special Provisions for Transitional Housing, Homeless Shelters, and Warming Centers

Sec. 28-430 - Special Provisions for Home and Community-Based Services

Sec. 28-412 - Special Provisions for Type II and Type III Home Occupations

Sec. 28-419 - Special Provisions for Bed and Breakfast Establishments

Sec. 28-420 - Special Provisions for Short Term Rentals

Sec. 28-429 - Special Provisions for Cannabis Zoning and Land Use

Sec. 28-426 - Special Provisions for Adult Entertainment

Sec. 28-428 - Special Provisions for Outdoor Shooting Ranges

Sec. 28-203 - Special Provisions for Accessory Recreational Facilities

Sec. 28-424 - Special Provisions for Mining and Extractive Uses

Sec. 28-425 - Special Provisions for Asphalt Plants & Processing Facilities

Sec. 28-362 - Special Provisions for Agricultural Uses in Shoreland Overlay

Sec. 28-363 - Special provisions for Forest Management in Shoreland Overlay

Secs. 28-83 – 28-120 – Reserved.

Article VII – Shoreland Regulations

Sec. 28-351 - Scope and Classification of Public Waters

Sec. 28-XXX - Definitions

Sec. 28-352 - Bulk-Lot Density and Lot Sizes

Sec. 28-354 - Design Criteria for Structures

Sec. 28-355 - Nonconforming Structures Substandard in Shoreland Overlay District

Sec. 28-356 - Deck Additions to Nonconforming Structures in Shoreland

Sec. 28-357 - Significant Historic and Cultural Sites

Sec. 28-358 - Steep Slopes

Sec. 28-358 - Bluff Impact Zones

Sec. 28-359 - Vegetative Alterations

Sec. 28-360 - Topographic Alterations/Grading and Filling

Sec. 28-361 - Placement and Design of Roads, Driveways and Parking Areas

Sec. 28-364 - Standards for Commercial, Industrial, Public, & Semipublic Uses

Sec. 28-365 - Storm Water Management

Sec. 28-369 - Controlled Access & Recreation Lots

Secs. 28-370 – 28-400 – Reserved

Article VIII – Performance Standards

Sec. 28-401 – Purpose

Sec. 28-XXX - Definitions

Sec. 28-402 - Exterior Storage and Outdoor Display of Merchandise

Sec. 28-404 - Fences

Sec. 28-405 – Screening (Move trash enclosure from 28-402)

Sec. 28-406 - Landscaping Requirements

Sec. 28-407 - Tree Preservation

Sec. 28-408 – Lighting

Sec. 28-403 - Sight Visibility Triangle

Sec. 28-409 - Off-Street Parking, Loading & Surfacing Standards

Sec. 28-410 - Non-Motorized Transportation

Sec. 28-411 - Temporary Uses or Structures

Sec. 28-421 - Farm Animals

Sec. 28-422 - Towers and Antennas

Sec. 28-423 - Solar Energy Systems

Secs. 28-432 – 28-470 – Reserved

Article IX – Sign Regulations

Sec. 28-241 - Purpose and Intent

Sec. 28-242 – Scope

Sec. 28-243 - General Provisions

Sec. 28-XXX - Definitions

Sec. 28-244 - Prohibited Signs

Sec. 28-245 - Nonconforming Signs

Sec. 28-246 - Permits Required

Sec. 28-247 - Signs Not Requiring Permits

Sec. 28-248 - Sign Standards

Sec. 28-249 - Signs Permitted in the (C) Conservation District

Sec. **28-250** - Signs Permitted in the R-1, R-2, R-3, R-4, R-5, R-6 & MH Districts

Sec. **28-251** - Signs Permitted in the LC & LD Districts

Sec. **28-252** - Signs Permitted in the (B-1) & (B-2) Low Density & General Commercial Districts

Sec. **28-257** - Additional Provisions in the Trunk Highway 197 Overlay District

Sec. **28-253** - Signs Permitted in the (UR) Urban Renaissance District

Sec. **28-254** - Signs Permitted in the O/M & U Districts

Sec. **28-255** - Signs Permitted in the I-1 & I-2 Districts

Sec. **28-256** - Additional sign standards

Sec. **28-258** - Dynamic Displays

Sec. **28-259** - Special Event Signs

Sec. **28-260** - Enforcement

Sec. **28-261** - Appeal

Secs. **28-262 – 28-300** – Reserved

List of Ordinance Changes:

1. Reorder the code
2. Counseling services should be a permitted or allowed use, same as medical clinics in same zones
3. Reduce lot sizes in the R-4 to 50' widths, look at reducing lot sizes in others, Reduce front and rear yard setbacks in residential.
4. Allow duplexes in the single-family zones (for lots or areas that are large enough as this will need to be looked at more closely).
5. Fix the shoreland regarding density on sewerred lots to name one of the few issues.
6. Accessory Dwelling units (rentable?).
7. Sign regulation
8. Performance Standards
9. Zoning districts realignment (combine similar zones) (services/no services).
10. Update definitions.



The railroad corridor with the grass in place. Photo Credit: Planning Dept.

**City of Bemidji
Planning Board
Submitted by
Jamin Carlson,
Planning Director**



**City of Bemidji
317 4th St NW
Bemidji, MN 56601
(218) 759-3582**

Planning & Zoning News

Congratulate Melissa Fahrenbruch on becoming a CERTified Community Energy Ambassador! We are excited



to see the positive impact it will have on the City of Bemidji. As a Community Energy Ambassador, she's part of a growing network of Minnesotans helping their communities access clean energy opportunities. Melissa completed a week's worth of sessions to accomplish her certification. We appreciate the dedication and hard work she put in to achieve this goal. Through the Ambassadors program, she can continue to:

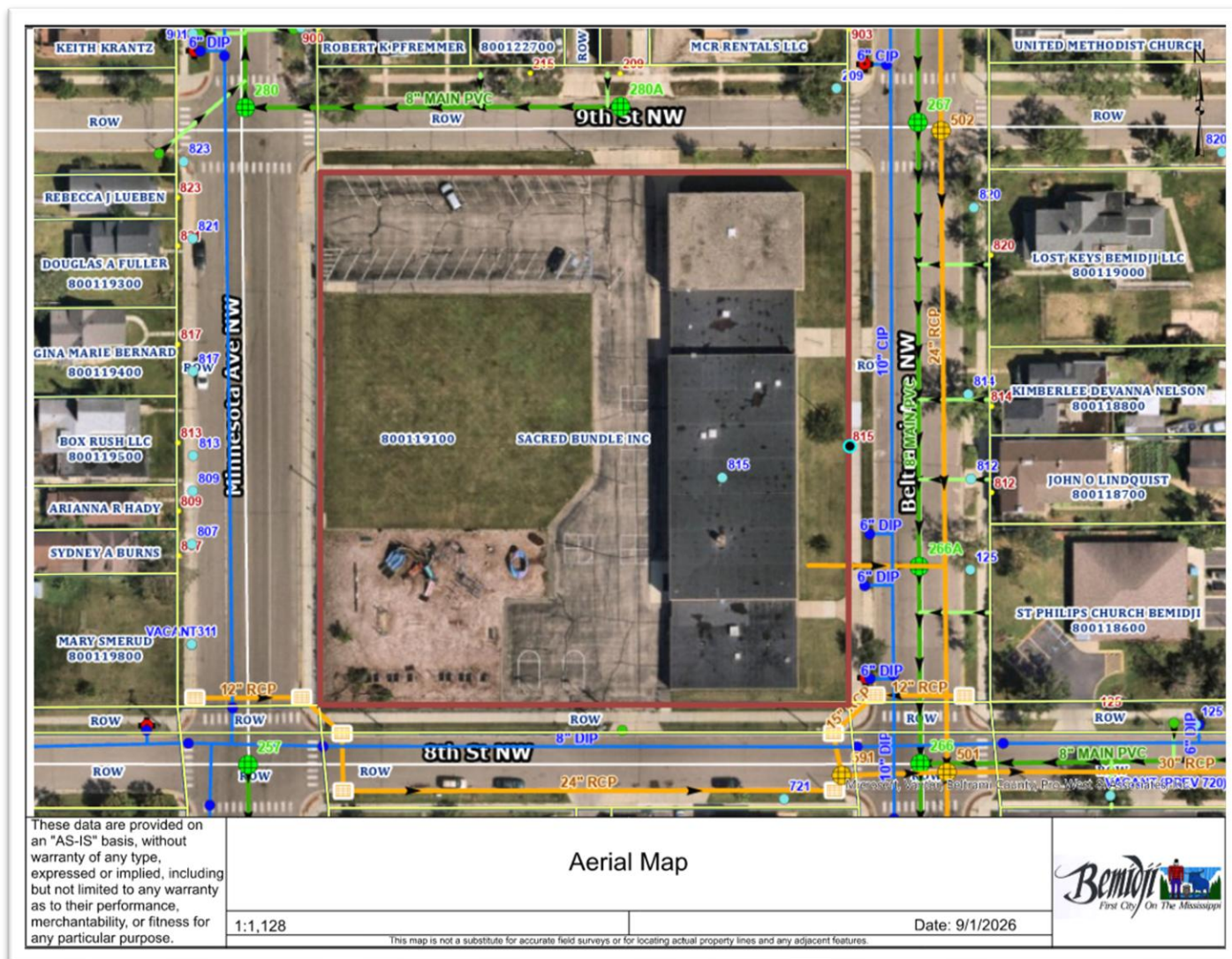
- **Learn** about clean energy technologies and programs, as well as engagement practices.
- **Connect** with other Ambassadors, with CERTs staff, and, most importantly, with the Bemidji community.
- **Get projects done!** It starts with imagining what's possible and building community around the idea. Then identify resources and do the project. Finally, tell the story, because that

helps others imagine their own clean energy projects! She'll receive invitations to webinars and other learning opportunities, as well as to virtual and in-person networking events. CERTs will share new informational resources and emerging clean energy opportunities. CERTs will encourage her to continue to engage the community on clean energy. There are lots of opportunities for clean energy projects for residents, businesses, schools, local governments, and other organizations.

Once again, congratulations, and we thank Melissa for becoming a CERTified Community Energy Ambassador.

Upcoming Planning Cases September/October

SUB-2026-0004: - Erika Bailey-Johnson, representing Sacred Bundle Inc., is requesting approval for a Prelim/Final Planned Unit Development (PUD) through a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) to develop a multi-phase mixed use project. The first phase on the main level may include a public computer lab, meeting spaces, community space, a winter farmer's market, a mental health office, Wilderness Academy and childcare center. In the second phase, the basement level may have a commercial kitchen, retail and/or restaurant and workshops area, and on the second floor, old classrooms will be converted into apartments. The third phase would expand the community's offerings, and the Wilderness Academy could offer environmental education. The subject property is located at 815 Beltrami Ave NW (PIN 800119100) in the City of Bemidji.



Permit/License Activity Items	Totals (Issued since 1/1/2026)
Planning Cases (Variances, CUPs, IUPs, Rezones, PUDs, & Plats)	17
Sign Permits	39
Lot Combinations/Realignments/Divisions Permits	13
Environmental Alteration Permits (Tree/Shoreland)	5
Temporary Storage Containers/Semi-Trailer Permits	13
Animals/Home Occupation/Fence/Land Use Permits	37
Site Plans Reviews/ Zoning Verification Letters	64
PERMIT/LICENSE ACTIVITY * As of September 9th, 2026	188

Additional Pictures of the Railroad Corridor





IMPORTANT NOTICE

- The Planning Board meeting scheduled for Monday, September 14th, 2026, at 5:30 p.m. will be held at City Hall Council Chambers.
- The Planning Commission meeting scheduled for Thursday, September 24th, 2026, at 5:30 p.m. will be held at City Hall Council Chambers

September 2026

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
30	31	1	2	3	4	5
6	7 Labor Day Office Closed	8	9	10	11	12
13	14 Board	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24 Commission	25	26
27	28	29	30	1	2	3

October 2026

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
27	28	29	30	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12 Indigenous Day	13 Board	14	15	16 Boss's Day	17
18	19	20	21	22 Commission	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31



Planning & Zoning Department

Site Analyst & Enforcement Activities for August 2026

Development Projects City Commercial

- **7 Brew Bemidji (Paul Bunyan Dr NW)** – Landscape survivability will be reviewed after parking addition is complete. Utility As-Builts and final wrap up remain. A site plan review has been requested for the parking lot expansion project.
- **AirCorps Aviation (Mahnomen Dr)** Building addition. Construction complete. Required frontage trees still need to be planted.
- **AirCorps Aviation (Airport Lot G)** All plans have been approved, and the Development Agreement was signed July 6, 2026. Construction underway.
- **AT&T Tower (Bardwell Dr NW)** Site plan review completed. Construction appears complete. Landscape survivability reviewed 8/4/2026. One required tree is dead, and ground cover has not been adequately established. DA review will be issued.
- **Battery Warehouse Inc. (Gillette Dr)** Construction complete and the businesses are open. Landscape survivability was reviewed 8/4/2026. All required trees look good. Vegetative ground cover has not been established. DA review has been issued.
- **Beltrami County Adult Corrections Center (Pioneer St SE)** Under construction.
- **Bemidji Marine (Laurel Dr NW)** Site plan review submitted for new storage building. Construction completed. Paving and landscaping still need to be completed.
- **Bemidji Storage (Carr Lake Rd)** Reopened; DA was signed and amended for developer's timeline. Amended timeline had a Spring 2025 start date and a Spring 2026 completion date. Trees were removed from site in October 2025; no further work has been completed to date. Amended DA is now expired.
- **Blue Ox Moving (Washington Ave S)** Parking lot redevelopment and owner is close to starting project. Site plan review approved 4/13/2026. Site prep underway 9/8/2026.
- **Border States (Cooperative Ct)** Construction completed, business open. Landscape survivability reviewed 8/4/2026. Waiting on Utility As-Builts.
- **Chipotle (Paul Bunyan Dr NW)** Property has been purchased, and the developers have been working with MNDOT regarding the shared access.
- **Dale Schmidt Agency (Washington Ave S)** Project reviewed on 8/4/2026. All conditions of site plan review not yet met.
- **Glass Doctor (24th St NW)** Construction complete, business open. Landscaping remains to be completed. Paving and striping complete.
- **Gracewin Cooperative** – Developer granted a 12-month extension to achieve the required pre-sales (13 have been secured and they need 18 to start construction) before starting construction. If the necessary pre-sales are not achieved in a reasonable time, they will explore other options with the site.
- **Hanson Contracting Shop (Irvine Ave NW)** Project reviewed 7/17/2026. Paving, striping, and required curbing complete. Trees look good. Vegetative cover lacking on a portion of the lot. DA review issued and landscaping will be reviewed again on or after 10/1/2026.



Planning & Zoning Department

Site Analyst & Enforcement Activities for August 2026

- **Les Schwab Tire Centers (Paul Bunyan Dr)** Site Plan Review complete. Development Agreement signed and construction is underway.
- **North Central Door (Re-branded Garaga) (Carr Lake Rd)** Construction of the warehouse expansion project has been completed, with landscape survivability reviewed Summer/Fall 2026. The polystyrene expansion project has been permitted with the development agreement signed July 1, 2026, and construction is underway.
- **Peterson Sheet Metal (Bemidji Ave N)** Contractor shop. Site Plan Review completed. Construction complete. DA review will be completed.
- **People's Church (America Ave NW)** – Planning action and DA reviewed 7/22/2026. The DA was extended following owner's request to allow more time to complete landscaping and trash enclosure. Landscape work was underway 9/8/2026.
- **Pizza Ranch (Paul Bunyan Dr)** Landscape survivability reviewed 8/4/2026. Vegetative cover has come in to meet the minimum coverage requirements. Four of the required trees have not survived and will need to be replaced. A planning action review will be issued.
- **Rohde Feed & Garden (Washington Ave S)** Plan review complete, DA signed. Construction underway.
- **Skips (Paul Bunyan Dr)** Settlement agreement finalized and was forwarded to City Council for approval. Trees were noted to have been planted on 8/5/2026. On-going survivability is required and will be reviewed in August 2027.
- **Tamarack Woods (Ridgeway Ave)** Site Plan Review underway. Demolition of existing structure to begin later this fall.
- **Voyageur Expeditionary High School (Bemidji Ave)** Site plan review is completed. Requires a State Building Permit. Construction underway.
- **Westridge Redevelopment (Paul Bunyan Dr)** Construction is complete, and all of the businesses are now open. Site plan for the parking lot compliance has been completed and work is underway.



Voyageur Expeditionary High School construction site, August 31, 2026

Development Projects City Residential

- **Amundson (Sherman Dr)** Site plan review approved 5/30/2025. Exterior construction complete, needs landscaping.
- **Beyond Builders (2nd St SE)** Construction complete, needs landscaping.
- **BI-CAP (Scott Ave)** Site plan approved 5/28/2025, construction underway.
- **Bader-Dickson (Birchmont Dr)** Site plan review completed 6/9/2025, construction is completed. Will review landscaping in coming weeks.
- **Beberg (Bemidji Ave N)** Site plan review for new duplex completed 6/9/2026, construction underway.
- **Carlson (Fern St NW)** Site plan review was completed 12/6/2024 – owners have placed project on hold.
- **Fletcher (Birchmont Dr NE)** Site plan review completed for new house construction 10/9/2024. Construction is ongoing.
- **Fredrick (White Birch Ave NE)** Site plan review submitted 8/5/2026.
- **Fuller (Irving Beach Dr SW)** Site plan review for single-family home submitted 8/26/2026.
- **Guest (15th St NW)** Site plan for single family home approved 6/22/2026, construction underway.
- **Habitat for Humanity (26th St NW)** Site plan approved 5/30/2025. Construction is complete, needs landscaping.
- **Habitat for Humanity (19th St NW)** Site plan approved 5/29/2025. Construction underway.
- **Habitat for Humanity (Lincoln Ave SE)** Site plan for single family home approved 6/17/2026, construction is underway.
- **Habitat for Humanity (Lake Ave SE)** site plan for single family home approved 7/22/2026, construction underway.
- **Hill Crest Manor (Irving Ave NW) Garage/Shop** – Site Plan Review complete 6/4/2024. There was no movement on this project in 2025 or 2026. Site plan review has expired. **CLOSED**
- **Jasko (S Lake Irving Dr SW)** There has been no movement on this project in two years. Site plan review has expired. **CLOSED**
- **JCD Property LLC (Lake Ave NE)** New home build. Site plan approved 4/1/2026.
- **Kimble (Scott Ave SE)** Site plan review done 6/21/2022. Building Permit issued. Construction is ongoing.
- **Kopang (Moonlight Ln)** Site plan approved 6/4/2025. Construction completed, needs landscaping.
- **Maxwell (Irvine Ave – Unit 23)** Site plan for single family home approved 5/3/2026, construction underway.
- **Motz (Balsam Rd)** Site plan for single family home approved 1/12/2026.
- **Mountain View Meadows 6 Plex #2 (Moonlight Lane SW)** Site plan review complete 4/30/2025, exterior construction complete, interior work is ongoing. Landscaping will be reviewed Summer/Fall 2026.
- **Mrazek (Jefferson Ave SW)** Site plan review for single family home completed 10/2/2025.
- **North Star Neighbors (Beartooth Ave SW)** Site plan review for single-family home submitted 8/12/2026.
- **Puddle Duck Properties – Lot 10, Block 2 (Moonlight Ln SW)** Construction complete, needs landscaping.
- **Puddle Duck Properties, Block 2, Lot 8 (Beartooth Ave SW)** Exterior construction complete, needs landscaping.
- **Puddle Duck Properties, Block 3, Lot 1 (Beartooth Ave SW)** Exterior construction complete, needs landscaping.
- **Puddle Duck Properties (Shaw), Block 3, Lot 8 (Beartooth Ave SW)** Construction complete, needs landscaping.
- **R2M2 LLC (Florence Ln NW)** New home build, site plan review approved 7/7/2025. Construction underway.
- **Ricke (Elliot Rd NE)** Site plan review for a single-family home completed.
- **Tesch (Lake Ave NE)** New home build. Site plan approved 2/19/2026, construction underway.

Site Analyst & Enforcement Activities for August 2026

- **Weiher (Irvine Ave NW)** Site plan review complete, construction underway.
- **Wiebolt (Elliot Rd NE)** Site plan review completed 10/9/2024. Exterior construction completed, landscape survivability to be reviewed Summer 2026.



Habitat for Humanity house - Lake Ave SE, September 8, 2026.

Significant Enforcement Issues

- o Multiple complaints have been received about individuals loitering on streets, sidewalks, and private property in the vicinity of People's Church. Police were notified at the time and citations were issued.



Loitering and public indecency - Ninth St NW, August 15, 2026

- o Complaints from neighbors regarding a human activity site on private property on Irvine Ave NW was received in late August. The property owner was informed and the issue corrected.

Site Analyst & Enforcement Activities for August 2026

- Parks Department informed Planning staff of a human activity site in the woods north of North Country Park. The owner of this property was also informed of the issue, but no response has been received.



Human activity site, north of North Country Park, Sept. 3, 2026.

- Staff have been working to complete reviews of development agreements and planning actions to verify completion of attached conditions. Most projects reviewed will require some follow-up before the projects can be closed.



Peterson Sheet Metal Aug. 31, 2026. Construction appears complete. DA will be reviewed to verify completion of the project.



Site Analyst & Enforcement Activities for August 2026

Summary of Enforcement Actions

Enforcement - Total Open Cases - August 2026			
By Ward	Residential Districts	Non-Residential	Totals
Ward 1	13	5	18
Ward 2	2	15	17
Ward 3	6	3	9
Ward 4	12	25	37
Ward 5	14	5	19
Total	47	53	100

As of 9/9/2026

Totals for August 2026 Enforcement	
Closed 2026 YTD	City
January Residential	3
January Non-Residential	7
February Residential	2
February Non-Residential	8
March Residential	5
March Non-Residential	7
April Residential	8
April Non-Residential	4
May Residential	14
May Non-Residential	4
June Residential	9
June Non-Residential	2
July Residential	6
July Non-Residential	1
August Residential	11
August Non-Residential	2
September Residential	0
September Non-Residential	0
October Residential	0
October Non-Residential	0
November Residential	0
November Non-Residential	0
December Residential	0
December Non-Residential	0
Total Closed Cases 2026	93
As of 9/9/2026	

Site Analyst & Enforcement Activities for August 2026

Enforcement Totals by Code - August 2026		
Enforcement Items by Code	Open	Closed
Residential R-1 through R-6		
28-81 - Allowed, Permitted, Conditional, and Interim Uses	2	0
28-355 - Non-Conforming Structures in Shoreland	0	0
28-359 - Vegetative Alterations	1	0
28-360 - Topographic Alterations - Shoreland	0	0
28-402 - Exterior Storage & Outdoor Display of Merchandise	27	1
28-403 - Sight Visibility Triangle	1	0
28-404 - Fences	4	0
28-406 - Landscaping Requirements	2	0
28-408 - Lighting	0	0
28-409 - Off-Street Parking, Loading & Surfacing Standards	3	0
28-411 - Temporary Uses or Structures	3	1
28-421 - Farm Animals	1	0
28-523 - Land Use, Building & Admin Permits	1	0
28-524 - CUP Violation	1	0
28-528 - Nuisance	1	0
Total Residential Cases	47	2
Commercial, Industrial, U, UR, OM, LC, LD, & MH		
28-81 - Allowed, Permitted, Conditional, and Interim Uses	1	0
28-244 - Prohibited Signs	2	0
28-245 - Nonconforming Signs	1	0
28-246 - Sign Permit Required	1	0
28-251 - Signs Permitted in LC & LD Districts	1	0
28-253 - Signs Permitted in the (UR) Urban Renaissance	0	0
28-252 - Sign Allowed in B-1 & B-2 Commercial Districts	0	0
28-258 - Dynamic Displays	5	0
28-402 - Exterior Storage & Outdoor Display of Merchandise	15	6
28-403 - Sight Visibility Triangle	0	0
28-404 - Fences	1	1
28-405 - Screening	1	0
28-406 - Landscaping Requirements	4	1
28-407 - Tree Preservation	1	0
28-408 - Lighting	1	0
28-409 - Off-Street Parking, Loading & Surfacing Standards	6	1
28-411 - Temporary Uses or Structures	10	2
28-413 - Manufactured Home Park Standards	1	0
28-523 - Land Use, Building, & Other Administrative Permits	1	0
28-524 - Conditional Use or Interim Permits	1	0
28-528 - General Nuisance	0	0
Total Non- Residential Cases	53	11
Total Cases	100	13

As of 9/9/2026