



CITY OF ST. JOSEPH

www.cityofstjoseph.com

**St. Joseph City Council Work Session
February 17, 2026
5:00 PM**

1. 2026 Street & Utility Improvement Project Discussion
2. Regulation of Ebikes
3. Rural Residential Zoning District

“A safe and welcoming community valuing open communication and civic trust while maintaining the enduring spirit of small-town life.”

75 Callaway Street East | Saint Joseph, Minnesota 56374
Email: cityoffices@cityofstjoseph.com | Phone: 320.363.7201 | Fax 320.363.0342



STAFF MEMO

Prepared by: Community Development	Meeting Date: Feb. 17th	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent Agenda Item <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Regular Agenda Item	Agenda Item # 3
Reviewed by:	Item: Rural Residential Small Lot Subdivision - UPDATE		
Council Priority: <input type="checkbox"/> Dispensary <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial Park Expansion <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Housing <input type="checkbox"/> Public Safety Facility/Safe Crossing of CSAH 75 <input type="checkbox"/> N/A			

ACTION REQUESTED

None – just an update and general discussion/questions should the Council have any.

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

Planning Commission has discussed the topic over the last two months. No formal recommendations have been made just direction on some key consensus items.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION

Council asked staff and the PC to look into what it would take to allow smaller lot rural subdivision with septic and/or well.

REFERENCE AND BACKGROUND

Over the past two months, the Planning Commission has had discussion on allowing rural residential small-lot subdivisions. Several key points of consensus have emerged regarding the creation of a new zoning district to support smaller rural lot subdivisions.

Key Areas of Consensus

- **Creation of a New Standalone Zoning District**
 - Amending the existing Rural Residential district via Conditional Use was a potential pathway but ultimately discouraged.
 - Conditional Uses are difficult to legally defend if denied and could be used to bypass the City’s typical infrastructure extension requirements.
 - Commission agreed with staff that the best route to go would be to add a new Zoning district
- **Water Extension Required**
 - PC has agreed that the new Zoning district should require extension of water service, which naturally limits eligible sites to areas reasonably close to existing water lines which is a strong reason to include as the district is supposed to be very limiting.
 - Failed wells pose greater long-term risks for both the City and developers than failing septic systems. This is a important factor the Commission discussed to get to this consensus.
- **Qualifying Factors for Eligibility**
 - Recent discussion focused on ordinance “qualifying factors” that determine whether a property is eligible for rezoning into the new district.
 - These factors, outlined in Subdivision 3, Section A of the draft ordinance, are intended to strictly limit use of the district and prevent developers from just seeking a rezone to this district to avoid water and sewer extensions.

Other key elements to sift through in the coming months:

- **Minimum Lot Size and Development Limits**
 - The draft ordinance sets a minimum lot size of 1.5 acres.

- Development is limited to no more than 30 single-family lots or 45 acres, whichever is less.
- While these thresholds are somewhat arbitrary, they are intended to prevent large or multi-phase subdivisions that could avoid city services and increase long-term infrastructure risks. This district is intended to be used only in rare, well-justified cases.
- More discussion will occur on appropriate lot sizes, densities, etc.
- Accessory structure requirements
 - It can be presumed that if folks want to build on a more rural lot that they may request larger accessory buildings. Ordinance language for accessory buildings should not be as limiting or strict as traditional requirements found in lower density or typical R-1 urban residential neighborhood standards
 - PC will start looking at this element in the coming months. To-date PC nor staff have really looked into this section

Next Steps

Staff is seeking Council feedback on:

- Alignment with the Planning Commission’s consensus items. Is Council in agreeance that the PC is headed towards the right path for the key areas of consensus? If not, what areas are in disagreement with?
- Any concerns Council may have at this stage
- Questions or direction Council may want to provide moving forward

Staff anticipate bringing the final ordinance forward for a formal public hearing in the coming months. One of the next steps will also be working with legal on the draft language and diving into the finer details.

BUDGET IMPACT

N/A

STAFF RECOMMENDED ACTION

N/A

SUPPORTING DATA/ATTACHMENTS

Very early preliminary draft of what a new Zoning District to support small lot rural subdivision *may* look like.

ORDINANCE NO. _____

AN ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING THE RR-1.5 RURAL RESIDENTIAL ONE AND ONE-HALF ACRE ZONING DISTRICT AND REQUIRING MUNICIPAL WATER SERVICE

Section 502.28. RR-1.5 – Rural Residential One and One-Half Acre District

Subd. 1. Intent and Authority.

The RR-1.5 Rural Residential One and One-Half Acre District is established to allow limited rural residential subdivision development at reduced lot sizes, with a minimum lot area of one and one-half (1.5) acres, in specific areas approved by the City Council.

This district applies only to lands depicted on **Exhibit A**, which is incorporated by reference. Properties within the RR-1.5 District are intended to remain outside the City’s long-term urban growth area due to natural constraints, infrastructure limitations, or legally binding restrictions on municipal expansion.

All properties shall be served by municipal water. Individual Subsurface Sewage Treatment Systems (SSTS) are permitted in accordance with Minnesota Rules Chapter 7080, as amended.

While the RR-1.5 District allows higher residential density than traditional Rural Residential zoning, development shall remain limited in scale and intensity and shall be consistent with the City’s Comprehensive Plan, infrastructure capacity, and applicable state and local regulations.

Subd. 2. Purpose.

The RR-1.5 District is established to achieve the following purposes:

- a. To facilitate smaller-acreage residential subdivisions in limited areas of the City that abut Rural Residential zoning districts or are located at or near the City’s corporate boundaries, as identified on Exhibit A.
- b. To expand housing opportunities in areas that are serviceable by municipal water but are not reasonably served by municipal sanitary sewer.
- c. To provide a transitional land use pattern that maintains rural character while allowing compatibility with future urban development.

Subd. 3(C). Rezoning Limitations and Threshold Criteria.

ORDINANCE 502 – ZONING ORDINANCE

Rezoning to the RR-1.5 Rural Residential One and One-Half Acre District is intended to be exceptional and severely limited in application and shall not be construed as a zoning district of general applicability. The burden of demonstrating compliance with the criteria below shall rest with the applicant.

A. Mapped Areas.

Only properties identified on Exhibit A shall be eligible for rezoning to the RR-1.5 District provided all of the criteria below are satisfied.

No property shall be rezoned to the RR-1.5 District unless the City Council makes written findings that **all** of the following criteria are satisfied:

1. **Comprehensive Plan Consistency.**

The proposed rezoning is consistent with the City's adopted Comprehensive Plan, including land use designations, growth policies, and infrastructure planning, and does not undermine planned urban development or future orderly annexation objectives.

2. **Infrastructure Limitation Finding.**

Municipal sanitary sewer service is not reasonably feasible to serve the property within the foreseeable planning horizon, as determined by the City Engineer, due to physical, environmental, or cost-prohibitive constraints.

3. **No Premature Urbanization.**

The rezoning will not result in premature or inefficient urban development, nor create expectations for future extension of municipal sanitary sewer service.

4. **Edge Condition Requirement.**

The property is located at the edge of the City boundaries or is physically constrained by permanent features such as public parkland, water bodies, wetlands, transportation corridors, or other barriers that reasonably limit future municipal expansion.

5. **Compatibility with Adjacent Land Uses.**

The proposed development pattern is compatible with surrounding land uses and zoning districts and provides a logical transition between rural and urban development forms.

6. **Developer-Initiated Rezoning Limitation.**

Rezoning to the RR-1.5 District shall not be approved solely for the purpose of increasing development yield, lot density, or marketability of land absent the public purpose findings required by this Section.

7. **Subdivision Control.**

The rezoning shall not result in subdivision patterns that would impede future orderly redevelopment, infrastructure extension, or annexation should municipal sewer service become available.

8. **Public Interest Determination.**

The rezoning serves a demonstrable public interest and does not primarily benefit a single property owner or development proposal at the expense of the City's long-term planning objectives.

ORDINANCE 502 – ZONING ORDINANCE

9. **Density Limitation.**

Rezoning and subsequent subdivision shall not result in the creation of more than thirty (30) single-family residential lots or forty-five (45) acres of developed land, whichever is less.

10. **Septic suitability.**

The property shall be evaluated by Stearns County Environmental Services in regards to septic design, location, soils, and other factors to determine if the proposed subdivision is compatible for septic systems.

Subd. 4. Permitted Principal Uses.

The following principal uses are permitted within the RR-1.5 District:

- a. Single-family detached dwelling units.
- b. Public parks, recreational areas, environmental preserves, and wildlife or game refuges.

Subd. 5. Conditional Uses.

The following uses are permitted only upon issuance of a Conditional Use Permit in accordance with this Ordinance:

- a. Short-term rentals, subject to the requirements of Section 505.13 of this Code

Subd. 6. Accessory Uses and Structures.

The following accessory uses and structures are permitted within the RR-1.5 District:

a. **Detached Accessory Buildings**, subject to the following standards:

1. Detached accessory buildings shall comply with all applicable building and zoning codes, except as modified herein.
2. Exterior building materials, including siding and roofing, shall be substantially similar in appearance to those used on the principal dwelling.
3. No detached accessory building shall be constructed prior to the construction of the principal dwelling to which it is accessory.
4. Detached accessory buildings shall not exceed twenty (20) feet in height.
5. Detached accessory buildings shall not be located over primary or secondary septic system locations.

b. Home occupations, subject to Section 502.16 of this Code.

c. Private swimming pools, subject to Section 502.12, Subdivision 4. In-ground pools may utilize an automatic pool cover in lieu of fencing where certified to comply with ASTM F1346-91, or successor standards. Pools shall not be located over primary or secondary septic system locations.

ORDINANCE 502 – ZONING ORDINANCE

d. Private sports courts, including but not limited to tennis or basketball courts, provided such courts are not located over primary or secondary septic system locations.

e. Personal amateur radio, television, and satellite dish antennas.

Subd. 7. Minimum Lot Area.

The minimum lot area within the RR-1.5 District shall be **one and one-half (1.5) acres**, or **65,340 square feet**.

Subd. 8. Yard and Setback Requirements.

a. Front Yard.

Minimum front yard setback shall be thirty (30) feet, except where existing development on the same side of the street establishes a different prevailing setback, in which case the setback shall be consistent with the established building line.

b. Side Yard.

Minimum side yard setback shall be fifteen (15) feet. On corner lots, the side yard abutting a public street shall be not less than thirty (30) feet.

c. Rear Yard.

Minimum rear yard setback shall be thirty (30) feet.

d. Accessory Structures.

Detached accessory structures shall be set back a minimum of ten (10) feet from side and rear lot lines. On corner lots, accessory structures shall be set back a minimum of twenty (20) feet from the side lot line abutting a public street.

Subd. 9. Height Limitations.

Buildings, excluding agricultural structures where otherwise permitted by law, shall not exceed forty (40) feet in height.

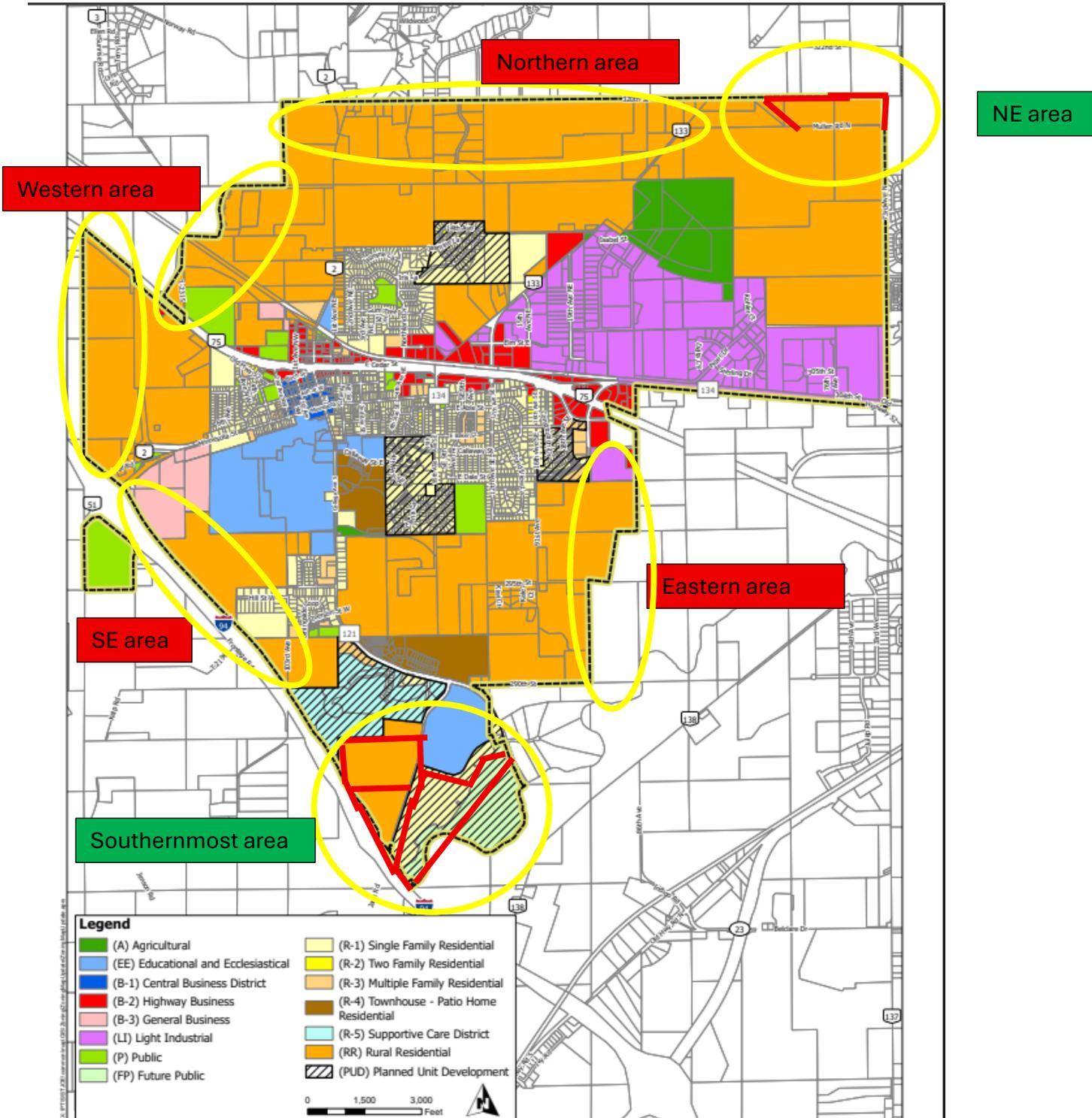
Subd. 10. Lot Coverage.

No structure or combination of structures shall occupy more than **thirty percent (30%)** of the total lot area.

EXHIBIT A

(RR-1.5 District Map – Incorporated by Reference)

EXHIBIT A

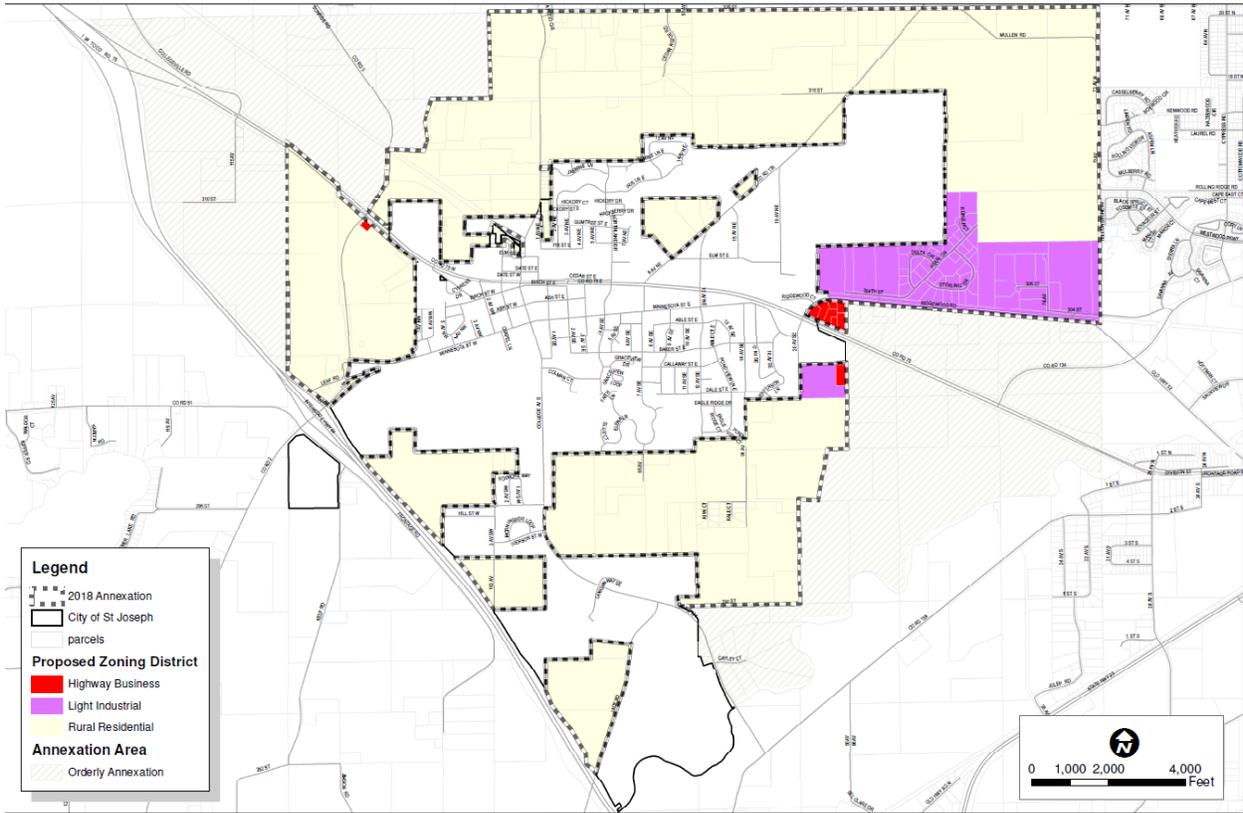


Yellow circles are just corresponding areas and do not mean anything else.

Potential areas where this district could apply are outlined in red

ORDINANCE 502 – ZONING ORDINANCE

ORDERLY ANNEXATION AREAS MAP



ORDINANCE 502 – ZONING ORDINANCE

