

ITEM#: 7
DATE: 11-05-25

COMMISSION ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: TEXT AMENDMENT TO AMEND THE SPECIAL PURPOSE SOUTH LINCOLN SUB AREA MIXED-USE DISTRICT STANDARDS

BACKGROUND:

On August 12, 2025, City Council gave direction to Planning staff to amend the South Lincoln Sub Area Mixed-Use District (S-SMD) in response to a request from Jim Gregory. Mr. Gregory owns his home at 129 Washington Avenue, at the corner with S. 2nd Street, which is within S-SMD. His plan is to remove the existing house and replace it with a new house. After discussing his building plans with staff, Mr. Gregory requested amendments to S-SMD in order to be able to construct his preferred design. Many of the issues were driven by site being a corner lot and having to meet design requirements on two facades.

The S-SMD requirements in the Zoning Ordinance were created in 2003 to create a unique district that allowed for a mix of uses and responded to the historic character of the neighborhood defined in relation to single family homes. These changes were made in response to a neighborhood sub-area plan. The district allows for a mix of commercial and residential uses and was intended to help guide future development in an area seen to be in transition.

In an email to Council dated May 13, 2025, Mr. Gregory requested the following changes to the Zoning Code:

1. Adding a line in Table 29.1003(3) allowing for street side yard setbacks to be 15 feet (in lieu of two front yards with 25 feet of setback for all street frontages).
2. Changing Sec. 29.402(4) (in conjunction with #1) to add S-SMD to the list of exempted zoning districts that are not required to provide the same minimum front yard and street side yard setbacks.
3. Changing the 40-foot primary and secondary façade maximum to 48 feet.
4. Removing the requirement that roofs have at least one or more gable end sections, or at least two or more dormers, facing a street.

Although not addressed in the email, an additional change to the depth or length standard of a recessed facade with a secondary facade would need to be changed from 8 feet to 4 feet to allow for Mr. Gregory's desired home design.

City Council in August authorized the owner to submit a zoning text amendment application to address the design issues described above, but that such changes would only apply to single- and two-family dwellings. Apartments and Commercial buildings would retain all the current design requirements.

SETBACK CHANGES:

The front building setback (along Washington Avenue) in S-SMD is 25 feet (Table 29.1003(3)). (There are porch and eave projection exceptions.) The street side setback (along S. 2nd Street) is not stated in the table, but it defaults to a corner lot standard to provide the same front setback on all streets (Sec. 29.402(4)).

The 25-foot minimum front setback is a convention in residential zoning districts in Ames and in cities nationwide. A number of residential districts in Ames, including Residential Low Density (RL), Residential Medium Density (RM), and Urban Core Residential Medium Density (UCRM) have the same front yard setback requirement, but have 15-foot minimum setbacks for side yards abutting public rights-of-way. Notably, the S-SMD district requires reduced setbacks along S. 3rd Street of 10-15 feet to implement a neighborhood plan to intensify development along the collector street.

The proposed house design is centered upon the 60-foot-wide lot. There is 29 feet of building envelope available under the current standards. The intended house is 28 feet wide.

The owner wants to build the home in the center of the lot with essentially 16-foot setbacks on each side compared to the code requirements for 25 feet along 2nd Street and 6 feet from the interior north property line.

BUILDING FORM CHANGES:

S-SMD (Table 29.1003(3)) contains requirements for building form intended to replicate the massing and design of historic homes in the area, including for façade width and roofs.

Width:

"Width of a primary facade shall be no greater than 40 ft. Width of the secondary facade(s) closest to the street shall be no greater than 40 ft."

The owner would like to enclose one of the recessed porches as a three-season porch to have a longer facade.

"Recessed facades must be set back at least 8 feet from the primary or secondary facade. A primary facade or secondary facade is permitted but must be separated from other primary or secondary facades along that building face by a recessed facade of at least 24 ft. in length."

The current design of the building (Attachment B) has a recessed component that is set back 8 feet in part (the rear porch) but only 4 feet for the remainder (the garage).

Roofs:

"All buildings shall have gable roofs, with a minimum roof pitch of 6:12 rise to run.

All buildings shall have roofs with at least one or more gable end sections, or at least two or more dormers, facing a street."

These features match those of older existing homes in the area.

Mr. Gregory has a gabled end facing Washington, but he would also be required to add two dormers to the roof design along 2nd Street. These could be located anywhere along the roof.

PROPOSED ORDINANCE:

The following are the proposed changes to Article 4 and to the S-SMD base zoning district:

- In Sec. 29.402, Setbacks, (4), Through Lots and Corner Lots, add an exception for single- and two-family development to not have the same setbacks on all street frontages.
- In Table 29.1003(3), modify the S-SMD developments standards for single- and two-family properties:
 - o Add a requirement for a minimum setback of 15 feet on side streets for corner lots
 - o Add a requirement allowing for a maximum building form width of 48 feet for primary and secondary facades
 - o Add a requirement that recessed façades be recessed by only 4 feet
 - o Remove the requirement for roofs to have gable end sections or at least two or more dormers facing a street on secondary facade

In his application for a text amendment, Mr. Gregory requested that the requirement for gable end sections or at least two or more dormers apply to roofs on all sides. This would affect both primary and secondary façades. The design of Mr. Gregory's proposed house, however, complies with the requirement for the primary façade, which has a gable end.

Therefore, staff propose to only amend the roof requirement for secondary façades, leaving primary façades to comply with the existing standard. In the attached draft language, the pertinent section is highlighted in yellow on page 10.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Recommend that City Council amend the regulations for Sec. 29.402(4), setbacks on through lots and corner lots, and the development requirements in Table 29.1003(3) for the South Lincoln Sub Area Mixed-Use District (S-SMD), **with changes to the roofs only applied to secondary façades**, based upon the proposed changes as shown in Attachment A.

2. Recommend that City Council amend the regulations for Sec. 29.402(4), setbacks on through lots and corner lots, and the development requirements in Table 29.1003(3) for the South Lincoln Sub Area Mixed-Use District (S-SMD), **with changes to the roofs applied to both primary and secondary façades**. This would modify the proposed changes as shown in Attachment A by altering the section for “Roofs for Single- and Two-Family Dwellings”. All other proposed changes will remain. (Applicant’s Proposal)
3. Recommend that City Council amend the Zoning Ordinance differently from what staff recommended in Attachment A.
4. Recommend that City Council take no action.

PLANNING AND HOUSING DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION:

The primary issue is applying design standards to both primary and secondary facades, which only occur with corner lots. Under current conditions there are approximately 12 corner properties with single-family homes that are subject to the standard. The proposed change will only apply to these 12 lots. The changes will allow Mr. Gregory to proceed with his plans as desired. These changes, however, will only apply to single- and two-family properties. The regulations are unaltered for all other uses, including multifamily and commercial.

The changes proposed by staff do not entirely align with Mr. Gregory’s request. Mr. Gregory asked that the changes to the roof requirements be applied to all sides of a building. Staff propose that this change only applies to secondary façades. This will still allow Mr. Gregory to proceed with his proposed design, which has a primary façade that complies with the current standard.

Therefore, the Planning and Housing Department recommends Alternative #1.

Attachment A
Proposed Zoning Code Amendments

Sec. 29.402. SETBACKS

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(4) **Through Lots and Corner Lots.** On through lots, and corner lots with two or more abutting streets, except lots within the RL, RM, and UCRM Zoning Districts, [and in S-SMD for single- and two-family dwellings](#), the required front setback shall be provided on all streets.

Sec. 29.1003 “S-SMD” SOUTH LINCOLN SUB AREA MIXED-USE DISTRICT.

- (1) Purpose. The intent of the South Lincoln Mixed-Use District is to ensure that this specific area within the City’s Urban Core continues to develop as a mixed-use area through intensification, expansion, and diversification of uses. Redevelopment of this district is intended to integrate compact living areas in close proximity to commercial areas and civic space and provide areas of well-defined pedestrian emphasis. The purpose of development standards for this district is to limit the occurrence and impact of conflicts among uses and to ensure that development is pedestrian-oriented and compatible in scale, character, and appearance with the traditional character of the neighborhood.
- (2) Use Regulations. The uses permitted in the South Lincoln Sub Area Mixed Use District are set forth in Table 29.1003(2) below.

Table 29.1003(2)
South Lincoln Sub Area (S-SMD) Mixed-Use District

Use Category	Status	Approval Required	Approval Authority
RESIDENTIAL USES			
Group Living	Y	SDP Minor	Staff
Transitional Living Facility	Y, No Transitional Living Facility for former offenders may be closer than 500 ft. from another such facility or to a Family Home	SDP Minor	Staff
Supervised Transitional Homes	Y, subject to Section 29.1314	ZP	Staff
Household Living			
Single-Family Dwelling	Y	ZP	ZEO

Two-Family Dwelling	Y	ZP	ZEO
Single-Family Attached Dwelling	Y	SDP Minor	Staff
Apartment Dwelling (18 units or less)	Y	SDP Minor	Staff
Apartment Dwelling (18 units or more)	Y, if pre-existing	SDP Minor	Staff
Family Home	Y	ZP	ZEO
Dwelling House	Y	ZP	ZEO
Household Living Accessory Uses			
Home Occupation	Y	--	--
Home Share	Y	ZP	ZEO
Hosted Home Share	Y	ZP	ZEO
Short-Term Lodging			
Bed & Breakfast Establishment	Y, subject to Section 29.1302	SP	ZBA
Vacation Lodging	Y	ZP	ZEO
OFFICE USES	Y	SDP Minor	Staff
TRADE USES			
Retail Sales and Services – General	Y, however, no more than 15,000 sf total commercial use per lot	SDP Minor	Staff
Retail Trade – Automotive Uses, etc.	N	--	--
Entertainment, Restaurant, and Recreation Trade	Y	SDP Minor	Staff
Wholesale Trade	N	--	--
INDUSTRIAL USES			
INSTITUTIONAL USES			
Colleges and Universities	N	--	--
Community Facilities	Y	SDP Minor	Staff
Child Day Care Facilities	Y	HO or SP (depending on size)	Staff or ZBA
Funeral Facilities	Y	SDP Minor	Staff
Social Service Providers	Y	SDP Minor	Staff
Medical Centers	N	--	--
Religious Institutions	Y	SP	ZBA
Schools	Y	SDP Minor	Staff
TRANSPORTATION, COMMUNICATION, AND UTILITY USES			
Basic Utilities	Y	SDP Major	City Council

Essential Public Services	Y	SP	ZBA
Parks and Open Areas	Y	SDP Minor	Staff
Radio & TV Broadcast	N	--	--
Personal Wireless Communication Facilities	Y	SP	ZBA
Commercial Parking	Y, only as an accessory use for remote parking for residential uses pursuant to Section 29.406(18)	SDP Minor	Staff

(3) Zone Development Standards. The zone development standards for the South Lincoln Sub Area Mixed Use District are set forth in Table 29.1003(3) below.

Table 29.1003(3)
South Lincoln Sun Area (S-SMD) Mixed-Use District
Zone Development Standards

Development Standards	S-SMD Zone
Floor Area Ratio (FAR)	Maximum – 0.75 No more than 15,000 sq. ft. of total commercial use per lot
Minimum Lot Area	
Single-Family Dwelling	6,000 sq. ft.
Two-Family Dwelling	7,000 sq. ft.
Single-Family Attached Dwelling	3,500 sq. ft. per unit for the two exterior units; 1,800 sq. ft. per unit for interior units
Apartment Dwelling	7,000 sq. ft. for the first two units and 1,000 sq. ft. for each additional unit
Commercial	6,000 sq. ft.
Minimum Lot Frontage	40 ft. at the property line and at the building line
Minimum Building Setbacks	
Front Lot Line	25 ft. build-to-line - Open porches may project into the required setback 8 ft. - Minor projections (e.g. eaves) are allowed to extend into the required setback 3 ft.
Side Lot Line	6 ft. one story 8 ft. two story 10 ft. three story 12 ft. four or more stories

<u>Street Side Lot Lines for Corner Lots with Single- and Two-Family Dwellings</u>	<u>15 ft. for side lot line abutting public right-of-way on a corner lot</u>
Rear Lot Line	25 ft.
Build-to-line along south side of South 3 rd Street	15 ft. build-to-line - Projections are not allowed to extend into the area between the built-to-line and the South 3rd Street right-of-way line
Build-to-line along north side of South 3 rd Street	10 ft. - Open porches may project into the area between the build-to-line and the South 3rd Street right-of-way line a distance of 8 ft. - Minor projections (e.g. eaves) are allowed to extend into the area between the build-to-line and the South 3rd Street right-of-way line a distance of 3 ft.
Landscaping in Setbacks Abutting an R Zoned Lot	High Screen. See Section 29.403
Minimum Landscaped Area	15%
Minimum Landscaping – All Buildings	At least one overstory tree shall be planted within the parking (space between public sidewalk and street curb) for every 60 ft. (or part thereof) of lot frontage. If the City of Ames planting standards cannot be met due to site-specific conditions, then the overstory tree shall be planted in the front yard, in addition to the other required planting as noted above. Parking lot screening and landscaping as a residential site shall be required. See Section 29.403
Building Heights	Maximum 3 stories or 40 feet, whichever is lower. Can extend up to four stories if ground floor contains more than 5,000 sq. ft. of walk-in retail and/or service commercial uses.
Parking allowed between the Buildings and Streets	No, except pre-existing
Drive-Through Facilities Permitted	No
Outdoor Display Permitted	No
Outdoor Storage Permitted	No
Trucks and Equipment over 19,500 lbs. Permitted	No

Parking	As per Section 29.406 Mixed-use buildings containing both commercial and residential uses can reduce required parking for the commercial uses of the building to one space per every 350 square feet. Shared parking can be provided subject to the Joint Use Parking provisions in Section 29.406(17). No parking shall be allowed within any setback area along a street, except on a driveway that leads to the side or rear yard. No paving shall be allowed in such setback area if it is likely that it will facilitate parking. No parking shall be permitted between the building and any street.
Density	
Minimum	See Minimum Lot Area above.
Maximum	None
Entrance Walks	Required from the principal pedestrian entrance to the front property line. Must be a minimum of 5 ft. in width. Must be physically separated from other pavement.
Vehicular Access	Any new driveways constructed from a public street for one- and two-family structures shall not exceed 16 feet in width. Any new driveway constructed from a public street for multifamily or commercial development shall not exceed 20 feet in width. Existing front yard driveways may be maintained and replaced but shall not be widened to more than 16 feet in width for one- and two-family structures and 20 feet for multifamily and commercial developments. For lots accessed from South 3 rd Street, driveways may exceed 16 and 20 feet in width but shall not exceed 30 feet in width.
Building Form	
Width <u>(Excepting Single- and Two-Family Dwellings)</u>	Width of a primary façade shall be no greater than 40 ft. Width of a secondary façade(s) closest to the street shall be no

	greater than 40 ft. Recessed façades must be set back at least 8 feet from the primary or secondary façade. A second primary façade or secondary façade is permitted but must be separated from other primary or secondary façades along that building face by a recessed façade of at least 24 ft. in length.
<u>Width for Single- and Two-Family Dwellings</u>	<u>Width of a primary façade shall be no greater than 48 ft. Width of a secondary façade(s) shall be no greater than 48 ft. Recessed façades must be set back at least 4 feet from the primary or secondary façade. A second primary façade or secondary façade is permitted but must be separated from other primary or secondary façades along that building face by a recessed façade of at least 24 ft. in length.</u>
Porches	If the width of the primary façade or the secondary façade closest to the street is greater than 20 feet and two or more stories in height, it must have a porch, or alternatively, a similar one-story, but enclosed, building element of at least 8 ft. in width projecting at least 6 ft. from the façade.
Roofs <u>(Excepting Single- and Two-Family Dwellings)</u>	All buildings shall have gable roofs, with a minimum roof pitch of 6:12 rise to run. All buildings shall have roofs with at least one or more gable end sections, or at least two or more dormers, facing a street.
<u>Roofs for Single- and Two-Family Dwellings</u>	<u>All buildings shall have gable roofs, with a minimum roof pitch of 6:12 rise to run.</u> <u>All buildings shall have roofs with at least one or more gable end sections, or at least two or more dormers, for the primary façade facing a street. Secondary façades are not required to meet this standard.</u>
Pedestrian Entrance	There shall be at least one pedestrian entrance facing the street.
Building Materials	The appearance of primary exterior siding shall be horizontally oriented overlap siding with 4 inches to 6 inches exposed

	between laps. Brick, stone, concrete bloc, other masonry or EIFS shall only be used as an exterior building material in combination with other exterior siding materials. The primary roof material shall be shingles.
Permitted Signage	
Wall Signs	Affixed to the outside of a building which contains the business
Monument Signs	Located on the lot on which the business is located
Number	
Wall Signs	1 wall sign per street frontage
Monument Sign	1 per lot
Size	
Wall Signs	16 sq. ft., except that a wall sign may be up to 32 sq. ft. in size if it is affixed to a building on a lot which abuts an arterial street, and the wall sign faces the arterial street.
Monument Signs	16 sq. ft., except that a monument sign may be up to 32 sq. ft. in size if the lot on which it is located abuts an arterial street, and the monument sign faces the arterial street.
Monument Sign Height	The maximum height of a monument sign is 8 ft., including the sign base; that is, the top of the monument sign shall be no more than eight feet above the grade of the site on which it is located.
Lighting	The lighting of both wall signs and monument signs shall be projected downward, regardless of whether the lighting source is internal or external. If the sign faces an abutting residentially zoned lot, or a residentially zoned lot that is separated from the site of the illuminated sign by only one street, the face of the illuminated sign shall have a dark background.