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News Release

For Immediate Release

"Use Groups" Proposed for Zoning Ordinance

The City of Springfield Planning Department is proposing changes to the City's Zoning Ordinance that would define "Use Groups" in some of the city's Zoning Districts.

The changes are designed to make zoning requirements more understandable, and allow greater flexibility for businesses by focusing on what is allowed based on common characteristics of uses, rather than a highly specific list of business classifications.

The new section, Section 1-2000 of the Zoning Ordinance, was approved by the Planning & Zoning Commission at its June 10 meeting, and will go before City Council for a public hearing on July 12, 2010.

This proposal makes no changes to the development requirements or limitations placed on businesses within each Zoning District, and makes no changes whatsoever to Residential Zoning Districts. Rather, it seeks to more accurately reflect the way Zoning Districts are already used, and make the zoning process simpler to navigate for businesses and citizens.

Use Groups will make it easier to determine which districts are the most appropriate for various types of activities, and will allow existing businesses to make adjustments in their operation without requesting a zoning change — so long as those adjustments fit within the definition and spirit of their Use Group.

"This is probably the biggest change to the Zoning Ordinance since it was re-written in 1995," said Mike MacPherson, Principal City Planner. "Having said that, we recognize that we will likely have to go back and make changes as we work toward implementing this. Similar to the Community Gardens ordinance we worked on last year, we are welcoming public comment and hope to get as much input as possible as we make these changes."

Information on this proposal has been sent to each neighborhood association in the city, and has been presented to the Developer Input and Issues Group with the Chamber of Commerce. It was approved unanimously by the Planning & Zoning Commission.

Use Groups classify land uses and activities on the basis of common function, product or physical characteristics. Characteristics include the type and amount of activity, the type of customers, how goods or services are sold or delivered, and certain site factors. Section 1-2000 establishes 10 Use Groups: General Office, Medical Office, Retail Sales, Personal Services, Eating and Drinking Establishments, Entertainment-Oriented, Temporary Lodging, Major Event Entertainment, Commercial Outdoor Recreation, and Wholesale Sales.

Characteristics of each Use Group are defined, and include a list of example and accessory uses that are allowed. Some Use Groups also include a list of uses that are restricted in some manner or prohibited altogether.

It is important to note that while this is a substantial change to the Zoning Ordinance, the intent and use limitations of each Zoning District have been maintained. The decision to allow or prohibit the Use Groups within the various Zoning Districts is based on the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan.
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