



## Agenda

Planning and Zoning Commission

20 Second Avenue SW, Oelwein

6:00 PM

March 05, 2026

Oelwein, Iowa

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**Mayor:** Brett DeVore

**Mayor Pro Tem:** Matt Weber

**Commission Members:** Savannah DeJong, Dave Gearhart, Peggy Sherrets, Roger Boylen, Paul Schemmel, David Kral, Terry Hull, Bill Kajewski

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### Roll Call

### Approve Minutes

1. Approve April 8 2025 Meeting Minutes

### New Business

2. Proposal to amend the residential setback regulations in the R-1 and R-2 zoning districts
3. Re-Zone from R-1 to R-2

### Adjournment

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In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, those requiring accommodation for Council meetings should notify the City Clerk's Office at least 24 hours prior to the meeting at 319-283-5440



## Minutes

Planning & Zoning  
20 Second Avenue SW, Oelwein  
6:00 PM

April 08, 2025  
Oelwein, Iowa

**Mayor:** Brett DeVore

**Mayor Pro Tem:** Matt Weber

**Commission Members:** Savannah DeJong, Dave Gearhart, Peggy Sherrets, Roger Boylen, Paul Schemmel, David Kral, Terry Hull

### Roll Call

Present: DeJong, Boylen, Schemmel, Hull, Kral  
Absent: Gearhart, Sherrets

### Approve Minutes

1. Consideration of a motion to approve the January 22, 2025 minutes.  
A motion was made by Boylen, seconded by Hull to approve the January 22, 2025 minutes. All were in favor.

### Variance Requests

2. Consideration of a motion for a variance on the zoning for 204 3rd St SE.  
Discussion was held on a residential home at 204 3<sup>rd</sup> Street SE which is zoned C-2 Commercial being rezoned to R-1. The group determined it matched the characteristics of the neighborhood, it is very likely to remain nothing other than a residential home for a very long time, it neighbors another home and is an area which is primarily zoned R-1. It was also suggested staff contact the neighbor at 206 3<sup>rd</sup> Street SE to discuss the same scenario.  
  
A motion to approve re-zoning to R-1 was made by DeJong seconded by Hull. All were in favor.
3. Consideration of a motion for a variance on the zoning for 1297 South Frederick Avenue.  
Discussion was held on a commercial property to be rezoned from C-2 to R-2. Owner has struggled to keep the commercial space filled, but would like to remodel the entire interior of the structure to a duplex or even potentially a 4-plex depending on floor-plan feasibility. Availability of parking requirements discussed and an easement exists to use the adjacent parking lot of Dollar Fresh. South Frederick is a mix of residential and commercial properties so re-zoning this property was determined to not be out of character to the area.  
  
A motion was made to approve re-zoning 1297 South Frederick Avenue to R-2 by Hull, seconded by Schemmel. All were in favor.

### Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Boylen, seconded by Schemmel. All were in favor.

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, those requiring accommodation for Council meetings should notify the City Clerk's Office at least 24 hours prior to the meeting at 319-283-5440



March 5, 2026

## PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO RESIDENTIAL SETBACK REGULATIONS

City of Oelwein, Iowa

Presented to the Planning & Zoning Commission

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### 1. Purpose of the Proposal

The purpose of this amendment is to modernize the residential setback regulations in the R-1 and R-2 zoning districts in order to:

- Increase infill development flexibility
- Make smaller and existing lots more buildable
- Eliminate counterintuitive lot-line-based restrictions
- Maintain reasonable fire separation between structures
- Improve consistency where right-of-way widths vary throughout the city

The current setback regulations were adopted under older planning models that do not always reflect current building practices, building codes, or the realities of existing lot patterns within the City of Oelwein.

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### 2. Background and Need for Change

#### A. Current Regulations

The current general residential setback requirements are:

- Front Yard: 25 feet
- Rear Yard: 25 feet
- Side Yard: 8 feet

While these standards provide uniformity, they can be overly restrictive in several common situations:

- On narrow lots, the required side yards significantly reduce buildable width.
- On lots where the right-of-way depth varies (deep ditches, irregular ROW widths), front setbacks from the property line produce inconsistent and sometimes excessive building setbacks.
- The current regulations restrict reasonable infill housing opportunities on existing platted lots.
- The regulations do not account for modern building code requirements governing fire separation.



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### 3. Rationale for Updating Setback Standards

#### A. Modern Building Code Already Addresses Fire Separation

The 2021 International Residential Code (IRC) regulates:

- Fire separation distance
- Wall fire-resistance ratings
- Limitations on wall openings near lot lines

This means life-safety objectives related to fire protection are already governed by building code requirements. Zoning setbacks are no longer the primary life-safety tool.

#### B. Infill Development & Small Lot Constraints

Many existing lots in Oelwein are narrow or were platted under older subdivision patterns. The current side yard requirements can:

- Prevent practical home construction
- Discourage redevelopment of vacant lots
- Reduce investment in established neighborhoods

Allowing flexibility in side setbacks — while maintaining minimum building separation — increases the feasibility of infill housing without compromising safety.

#### C. Variable Right-of-Way Widths

In some areas of the city, front property lines are located significantly farther from the center of the roadway due to:

- Wide drainage ditches
- Irregular right-of-way widths
- Historic road design

A uniform 25-foot setback from the property line does not produce consistent building placement relative to the street.

Using a centerline-based front setback (or an averaging method) would create more consistent streetscapes while restoring usable lot depth.

### 4. Proposed Conceptual Changes

#### A. Replace Fixed Side Lot Line Setbacks with Minimum Building Separation

##### Current Standard:

- 8 feet on each side

##### Proposed Concept:

- Permit a 0-foot side setback on one side
- Require a minimum 10-foot setback on the opposite side
- Maintain a minimum 10-foot building separation between principal structures on separate lots

Additional safeguards:

- If located within 5 feet of a lot line, the wall must meet IRC fire-resistance requirements.
- Openings (windows/doors) must comply with IRC limitations.



**Benefit:**

- Makes narrow lots buildable
- Encourages redevelopment
- Maintains fire safety
- Allows flexibility while preserving neighborhood spacing

**B. Modify Front Yard Measurement Method****Option 1 – Centerline-Based Front Setback**

- Require minimum setback from centerline of adjacent roadway (e.g., 45 feet), OR
- 15 feet from front property line, whichever results in greater setback

**Option 2 – Front Setback Averaging**

Where 30% or more of structures on the same block face are set back differently than district minimum, the required front setback shall be the average of those structures.

**Benefit:**

- Addresses inconsistent right-of-way widths
- Produces more consistent streetscapes
- Allows reasonable buildable depth on constrained lots

**C. Rear Yard Flexibility**

Consider reducing rear yard requirement from 25 feet to 15–20 feet in R-1 and R-2 districts to improve buildable envelope without impacting street appearance.

Rear yards primarily serve private open space purposes and are less visible from the public right-of-way.

**5. Expected Outcomes**

If adopted, these amendments would:

- Increase feasibility of residential infill development
- Make smaller platted lots buildable again
- Encourage reinvestment in established neighborhoods
- Modernize zoning to align with current building code standards
- Preserve reasonable spacing between structures
- Maintain public safety and neighborhood character

This proposal does not eliminate setbacks; it replaces rigid lot-line setbacks with more performance-based standards focused on actual building separation and contextual front-yard alignment.





## CURRENT CODE & CHANGE RECOMENNDATIONS

### Current Code R-1 -- 202.4:

202.4. Minimum Lot Area and Width Height	Minimum Yard Requirements	Maximum
Single-family dwellings	Front: 25 feet	35 feet
Area 7,000 square feet	Rear: 25 feet	Accessory buildings shall not exceed 15 feet in height to peak.
Width 60 feet	Side: 8 feet	

*Except:* Any lot existing and platted prior to November 9, 1970, the minimum lot area shall be 6,000 square feet.

*Except:* The side yard shall not be less than five feet on any existing lot that is less than 60 feet in width.

Two family dwellings:

Area: 10,000 square feet.

Width: 60 square feet.

*Except:* Any lot existing and platted prior to November 9, 1970, the minimum lot area shall be 6,000 square feet.





**RECOMMENDED CHANGE:**

**Delete sections 202.4 and 203.4 and 202.3(8) and 203.3(8)**

**Replace with:**

**202.4 Lot Area and Setbacks (THIS WOULD ALSO REPLACE 203.4)**

- A. Minimum Lot area: 5000 Square Feet
- B. Minimum Lot Width: 50'
- C. Minimum Front yard: 15'
- D. Minimum Rear yard: 15'
- E. Minimum Side Yard:

Each principal residential structure shall provide two (2) side yards.

The minimum side yard setback shall be five (5) feet.

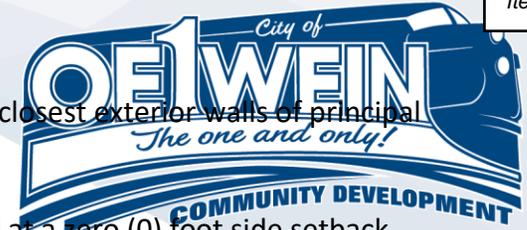
One (1) side yard may have a setback of zero (0) feet from the interior side lot line, provided the opposite side yard complies with Subsection F of this section.

In no case shall both side yards be less than five (5) feet unless otherwise permitted under approved townhouse or attached dwelling provisions.

**F. Minimum Building Separation:**

1. A minimum separation distance of ten (10) feet shall be maintained between principal structures located on separate lots.





2. Building separation shall be measured as the horizontal distance between the closest exterior walls of principal structures.
3. Where an existing or proposed principal structure on an adjacent lot is located at a zero (0) foot side setback along a common property line, any new principal structure constructed on the adjoining lot shall maintain a minimum ten (10) foot setback from that same property line.
4. Compliance with the ten (10) foot minimum building separation requirement shall supersede the minimum five (5) foot side yard requirement where necessary.

#### **G. Building Code Compliance.**

Any structure located less than five (5) feet from an interior side lot line shall comply with applicable fire-resistance rating and opening protection requirements of the adopted International Residential Code. Nothing in this section shall reduce or eliminate building code requirements governing fire separation distance.

#### **H. Corner Lots.**

The side yard adjacent to a public street on a corner lot shall not be eligible for a zero (0) foot side setback and shall comply with the required street side yard setback for the district.



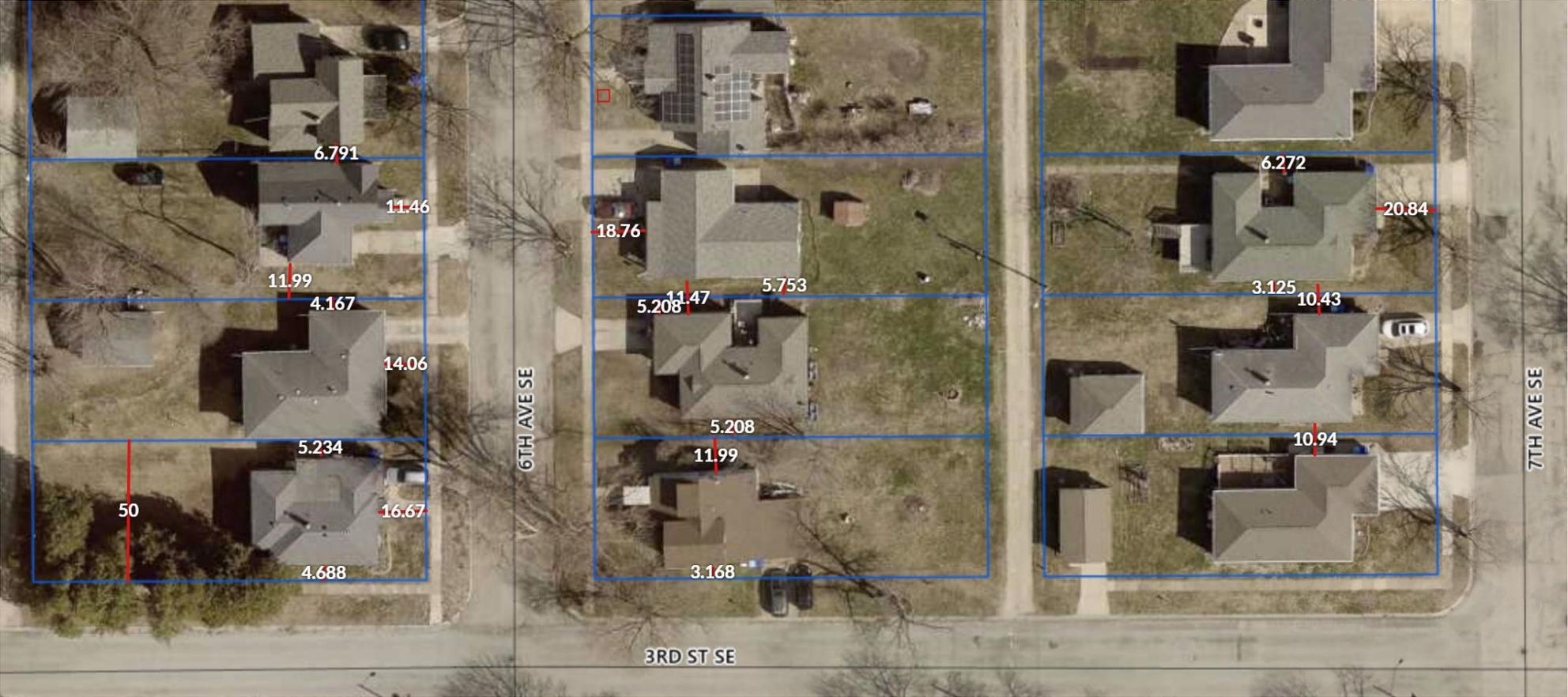


An existing area in Oelwein SE area



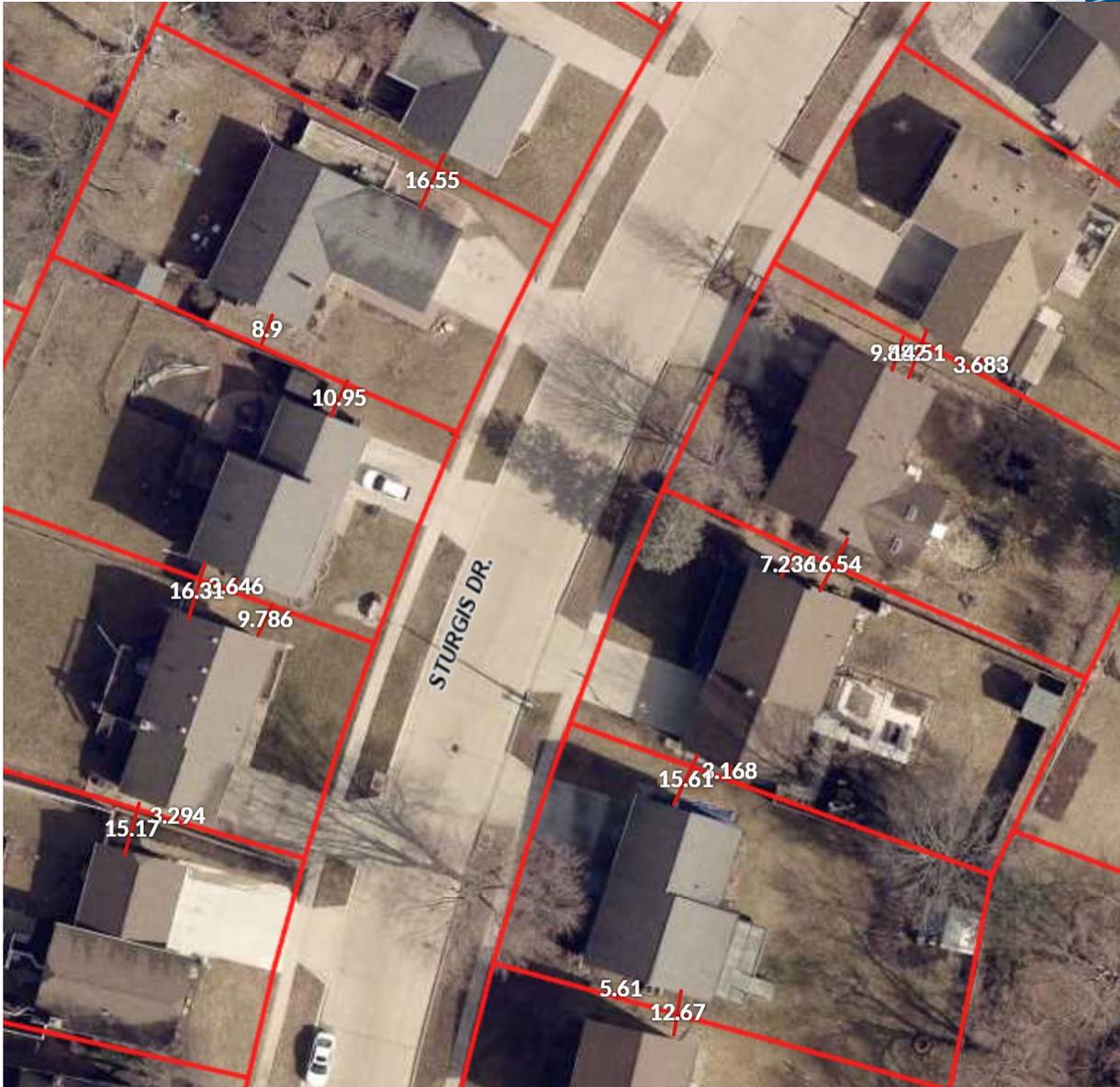


Another Oelwein Existing Area





A development in Cedar Falls



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Oelwein, Iowa 50662



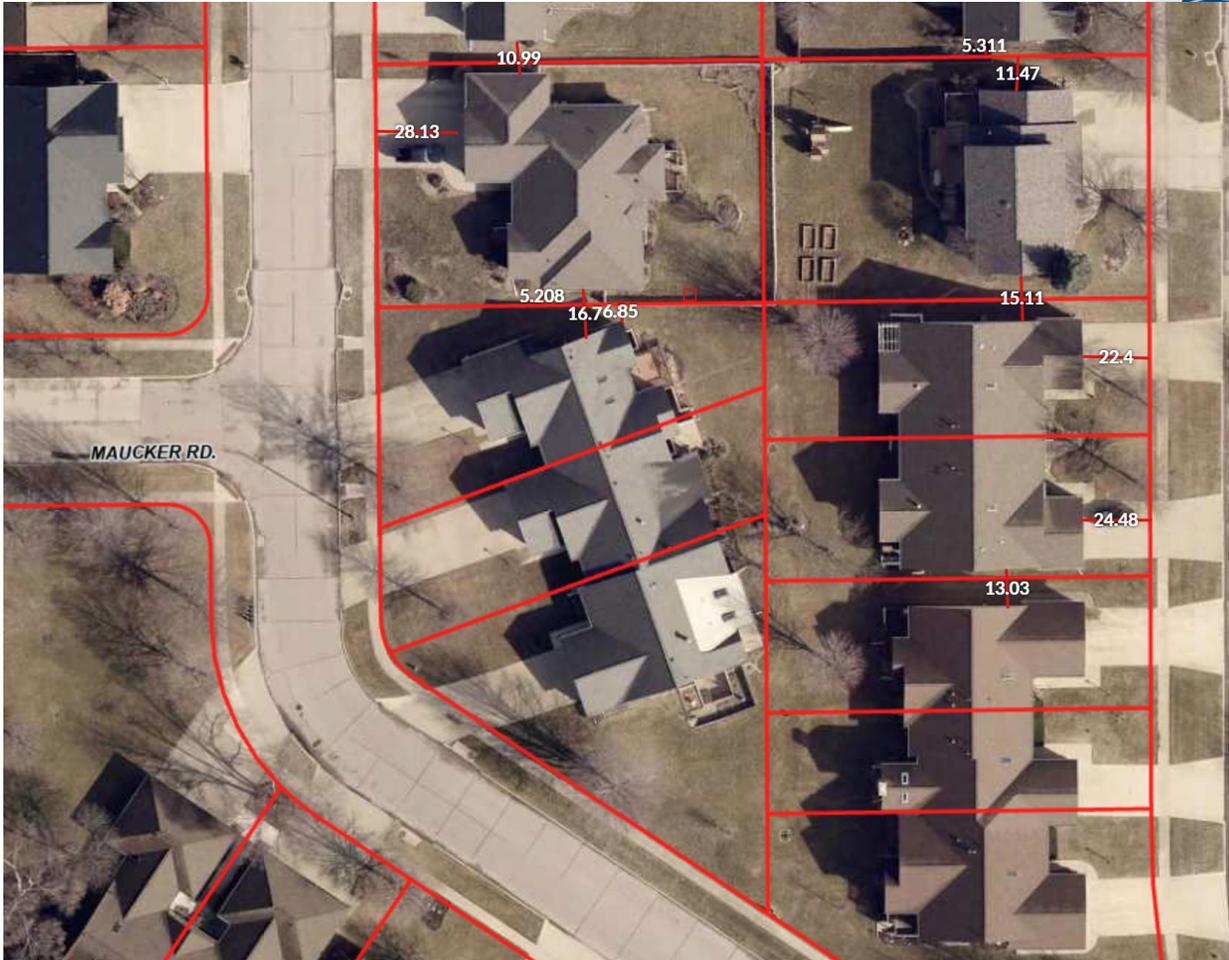
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Another Cedar Falls Development Area



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**City of Oelwein  
Planning & Zoning Commission**

**Rezoning Proposal – R-1 to R-2**

**Applicant:** City of Oelwein

**Requested Action:** Amend the Official Zoning Map

**Current Zoning Classification:** R-1

**Proposed Zoning Classification:** R-2

**Subject Properties:**

- 201 9th Ave SW – Parcel #1820435001
- 204 8th Ave SW – Parcel #1820435014
- 208 8th Ave SW – Parcel #1820435013
- Parcel #1820435019 (currently without assigned mailing address)

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**I. Purpose of Request**

The City is requesting a rezoning of the above-referenced parcels from R-1 (1 and 2 family dwellings) to R-2 (multifamily dwellings). The purpose of this amendment is to support the planned expansion and revitalization of the existing neighborhood in alignment with future City development initiatives.

This rezoning will provide greater flexibility for housing types while maintaining residential character, allowing for incremental infill development and reinvestment in the area.

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**II. Background and Context**

The subject properties are located within an established residential neighborhood. As the City continues to evaluate long-term growth, infrastructure investment, and neighborhood stabilization strategies, it has identified this area as appropriate for moderate residential density consistent with R-2 zoning.

The transition from R-1 to R-2 would:

- Allow for multi-family residential dwellings where appropriate
- Encourage reinvestment in underutilized or aging properties
- Support neighborhood vitality through diversified housing options
- Align with anticipated future public improvements and revitalization efforts

The proposed R-2 classification remains residential in nature and is compatible with surrounding land uses while providing modest density increases necessary for sustainable neighborhood growth.





### III. Consistency with City Planning Goals

The proposed rezoning supports the City's broader goals of:

- Promoting reinvestment in established neighborhoods
- Expanding housing options within existing infrastructure service areas
- Encouraging responsible infill development
- Enhancing long-term neighborhood stability and property values

The requested zoning change represents a measured and appropriate adjustment to accommodate future revitalization efforts without introducing incompatible commercial or high-density uses.

### IV. Public Interest Considerations

Rezoning these parcels to R-2 will:

- Provide flexibility for future redevelopment
- Support strategic housing diversification
- Encourage private investment
- Utilize existing utilities and public infrastructure efficiently

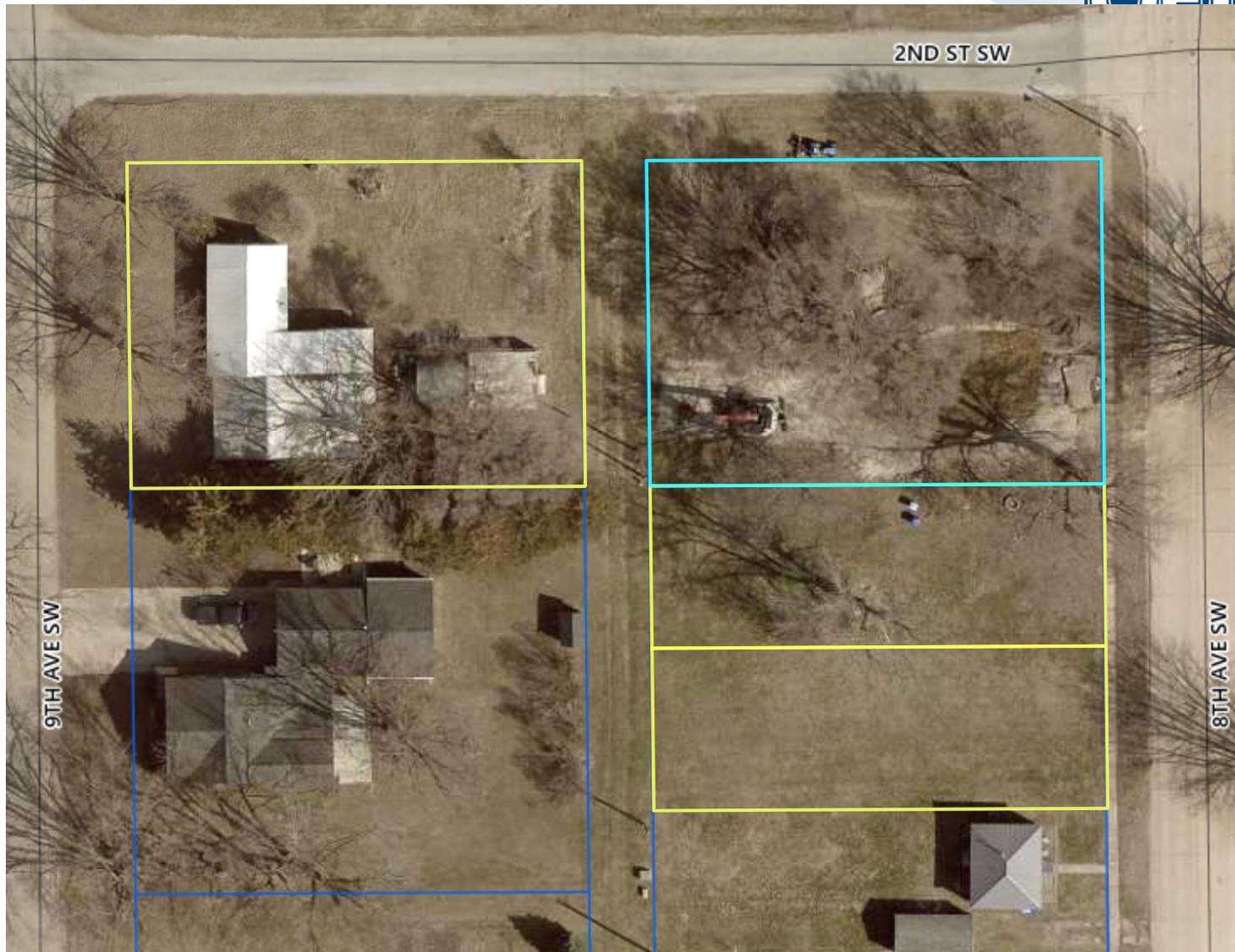
The proposed change is in the public interest and is consistent with orderly growth and sound land use planning principles.

### V. Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Planning & Zoning Commission review the proposed amendment and forward a recommendation of approval to the City Council for rezoning the following parcels from R-1 to R-2:

- 201 9th Ave SW – Parcel #1820435001
- 204 8th Ave SW – Parcel #1820435014
- 208 8th Ave SW – Parcel #1820435013
- Parcel #1820435019 (currently without assigned mailing address)





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