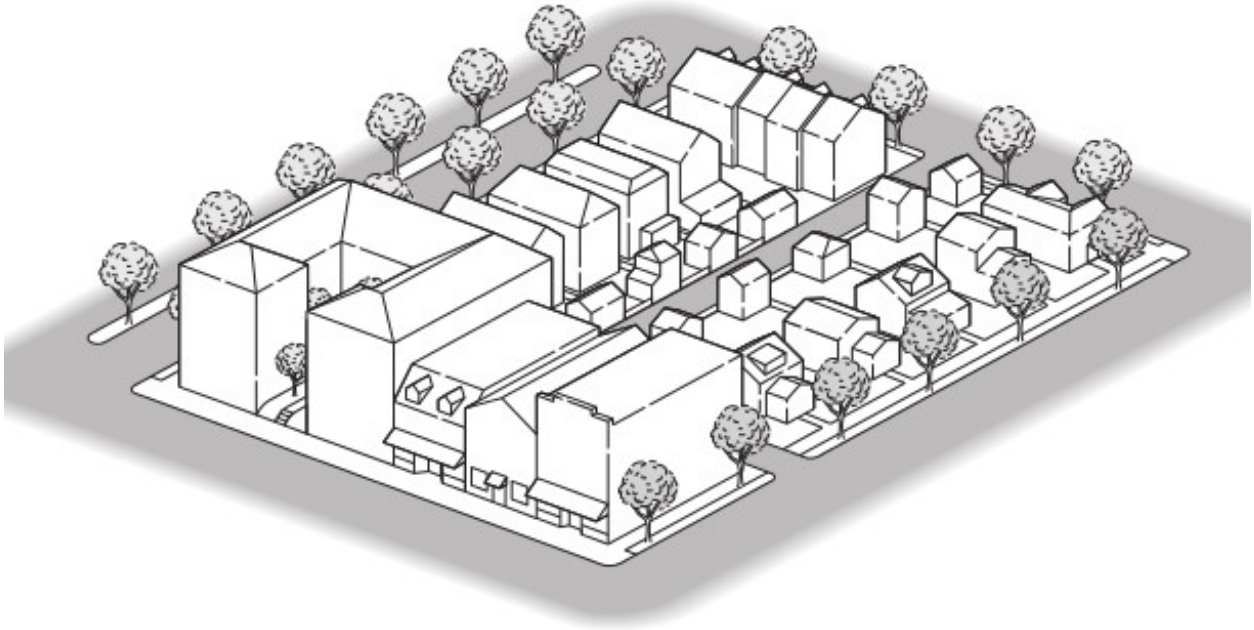


Zoning & Subdivision Update

City Plan Commission

Study Guide | *June 30, 2025*

FORWARD LA CROSSE

ZONING CODE UPDATE

Study Guide

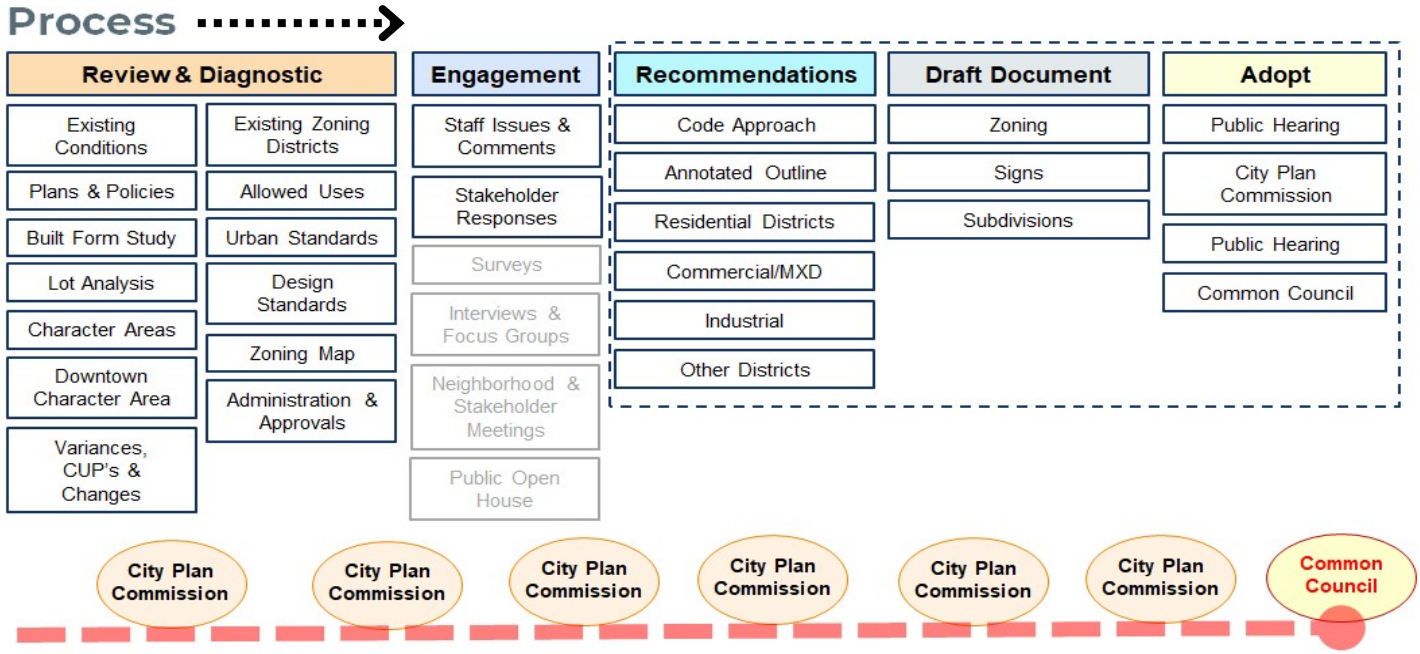
FORWARD LA CROSSE ZONING CODE UPDATE

Introduction

Use this study guide to help organize the information, analysis and steps to better understand the content of the zoning code and subdivision regulations including existing conditions, code diagnostics, applicable plans and policies, built form and character analysis. Below is the general process for how the code and subdivision regulations will be updated based on direction and input from community stakeholders, staff comments and guidance from the City Plan Commission.

Topics to Review

1) Memo 1 - Conditions & Plans
2) Memo 2 - District Summaries & Subdivisions
3) Built Form Study
4) Character Areas
5) Downtown Character Areas
6) Lot Size Study
7) Memo 3—Administration
8) Approval Flowchart Diagrams



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Study Guide

Memo 1: Existing Conditions

a) 2040 Comprehensive Plan

b) 2024 Housing Study Summary

c) Analysis to Impediments to Fair Housing Choice

d) Imagine 2040 Downtown Plan

e) History of Variances

f) History of Conditional Use Permits

g) Other adopted plans & policies

!/?

- *What are the key policies from the Comp Plan driving the zoning and subdivision updates?*
- *Review the Housing Study recommendations relative to zoning code content.*

!/?

Population information from the Comp Plan:

- *Population is projected to moderately increase from 50,869 (2021) to 53,480 (2050)*
- *As of Jan 1, 2024 the population was 52,115 (WI Department of Admin. Estimate)*

Residential land use makes up about 19% of the total land area in the City. Residential definitions from the Comp Plan (p. 32):

- ***Low-Density Residential**—mostly one-two story single-family structures but may also include two- and three-unit dwellings; other housing types such as townhomes and rowhomes may be compatible, especially if developed to fit a single-family mold*
- ***Medium Density Residential** - may include a variety of housing types including townhomes, rowhomes, small multi-family buildings, and large multi family buildings of two-four stories*
- ***High-Density Residential** - includes multi-family units in structures taller than three stories; interconnected within surrounding neighborhoods and as well as near major streets connections and employment/ commercial areas.*

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!/? *Land Use and Zoning matrix from the Comp Plan (p. 69)*

Zoning Guide for future land use: how to use this matrix

As the neighborhoods, districts, and corridors chapter guides property owners and policymakers in land use decisions, it also appropriately locates development within La Crosse's zoning code. Any zoning amendments should refer to this matrix to ensure the proposed zoning is consistent with the Future Land Use (NDC) Map.

Future Land Use	Single-Family Residential R-1	Residence District R-2	Special Residence R-3	Low-Density Multiple Dwelling District R-4	Multiple Dwelling District R-5	Special Multiple Dwelling District R-6	Washburn Neighborhood Residential District	Local Business District	Community Business District	Commercial District	Light Manufacturing District M-1	Heavy Industrial District	Public Utility District	Parking Lot District	Public and Semi-Public District	Conservancy District	Agricultural District	Exclusive Agricultural District
Low-Density Residential	C	C	C	C	i	i	C	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	C	i	i
Medium-Density Residential	i	C	C	C	C	i	C	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	C	i	i
High-Density Residential	i	i	i	i	C	C	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	C	i	i
Low-Intensity Mixed-Use	i	i	i	C	C	i	C	C	C	i	i	i	i	i	C	i	i	i
High-Intensity Mixed-Use	i	i	i	i	C	C	i	C	C	C	i	i	i	i	C	i	i	i
Neighborhood Retail/ Commercial	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	C	C	C	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i
Commercial	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	C	C	C	C	i	i	i	i	i	i	i
Industrial	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	C	C	i	i	i	i	i	i
Institutional	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	C	i	C	i	i	i
Parks & Open Space	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	C	C	C
Conservancy, Wetlands, Agriculture	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	C	C	C

C= Consistent | i=Inconsistent

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Memo 2: Diagnostic Summary

a) Introduction

b) Residential Districts

c) Residential Map Diagrams

d) Commercial Districts

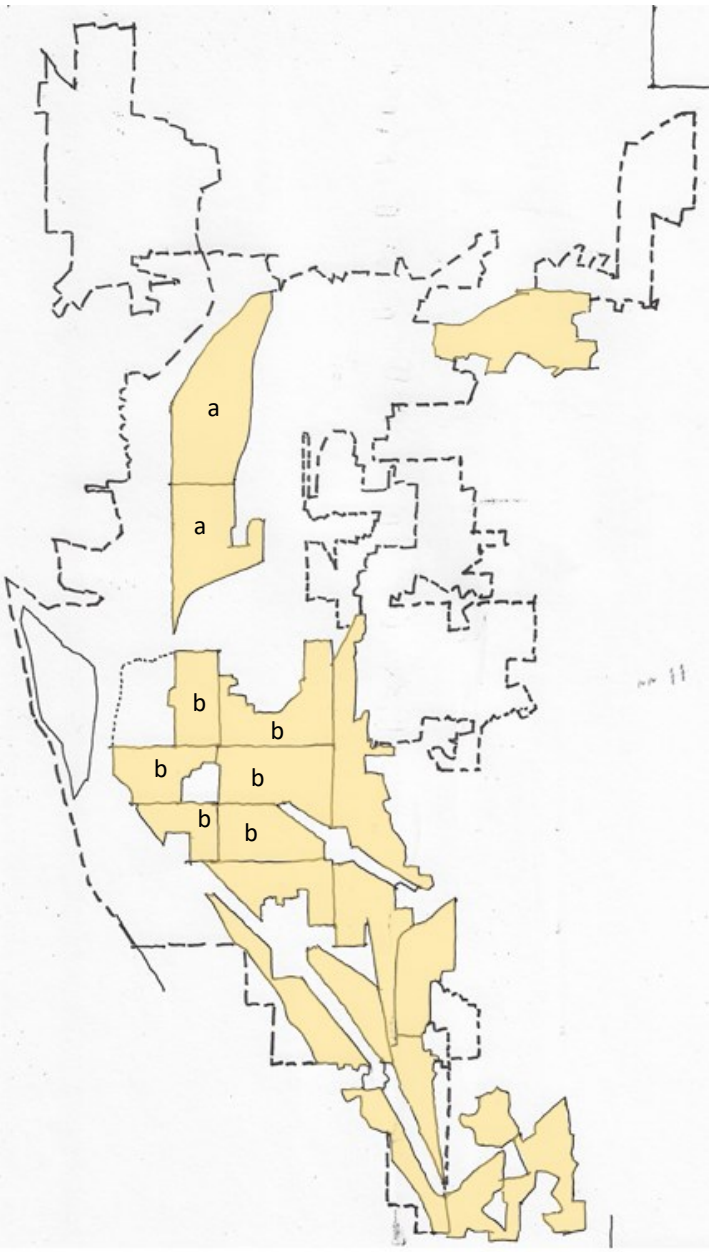
e) Industrial Districts

f) Overlay & Other Districts

g) Summary Dimensional Standards Table

h) Historic Zoning Map

i) Chapter 113 Subdivisions



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- *Residential neighborhood boundaries are shown in yellow at right. The Logan Northside and Lower Northside neighborhoods (a) contain a more consistent low density, detached residential pattern. Neighborhoods in the central part of the city (e.g., Downtown, Grandview-Emerson, Washburn, Weigent-Hogan, Powell-Poage-Hamilton and Holy Trinity-Longfellow) include a similar street and block pattern but contain more corridors and districts that tend to support greater density and diversity with housing, related uses and development changes.*

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Study Guide

Built Form Study*

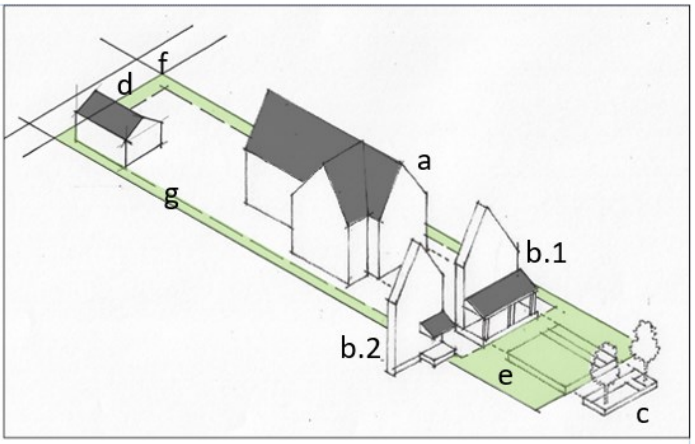
a) 18 Neighborhoods

b) 12 Districts

c) 5 Corridors

**based on the NDC Framework as defined in the Comp Plan*

Typical single family lot arrangement and built pattern



Common features

A. 1.5 to 2 story
B.1 Stoop entry
B.2 Porch entry
C. Sidewalk, planted blvds & on-street parking
D. Off street parking: alley loaded
E. Front yards: 15-25 ft
F. Rear yards: 6-8 ft
G. Side yard: one tends to be shifted more to one side

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- *Compare the built form study characteristics of the various neighborhoods to confirm physical form patterns for neighborhood scale residential and commercial uses.*
- *Should changes to urban and dimensional standards recognize and respond to the local context and character?*

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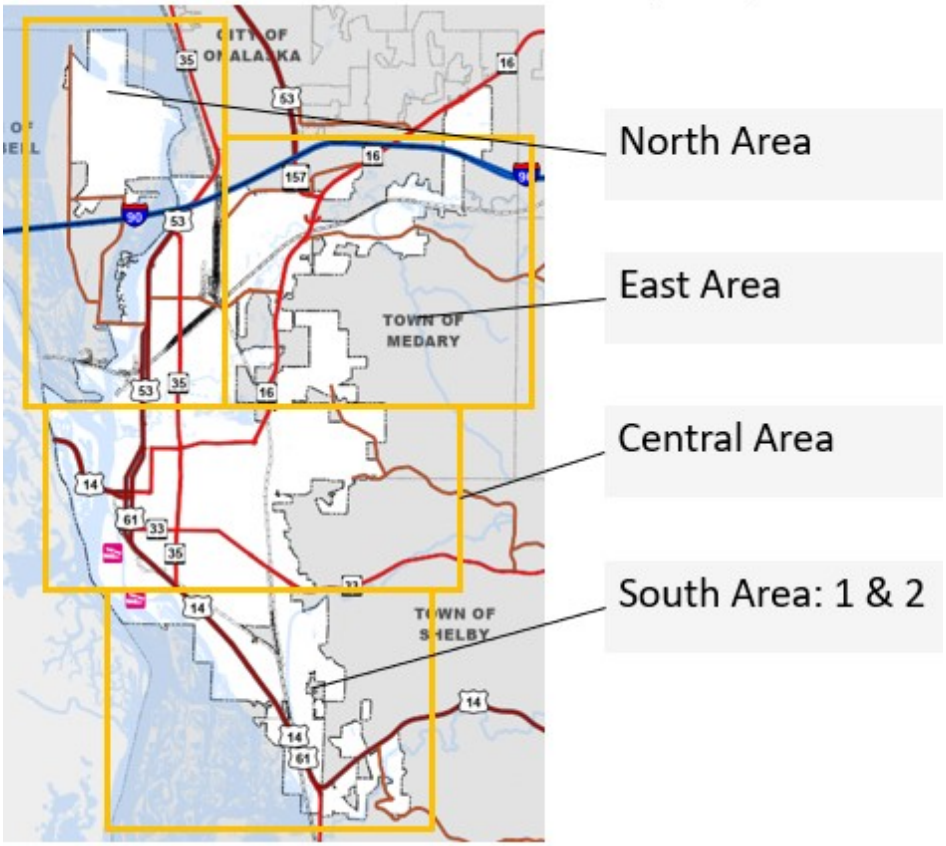
Character Areas

a) North Area

b) East Area

c) Central Area

d) South Area 1 & 2



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- *Areas adjacent to a number of districts include "district orbits", areas that tend to attract interest, investment and influence that may be less compatible with established neighborhood character.*
- *Do these areas need additional standards and regulations relative to scale, density and physical form (e.g., the residential areas west, south and east of the UW campus)?*

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Downtown Character Areas

a) Downtown Area

b) Core

c) Main Street

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- *Note distinctions between the "main street" area and the larger downtown boundary.*
- *Some new development have included parking on the ground floor (within the building envelope) fronting the pedestrian public realm. Should this condition be differentiated in the "main street" area vs. other areas of downtown.*

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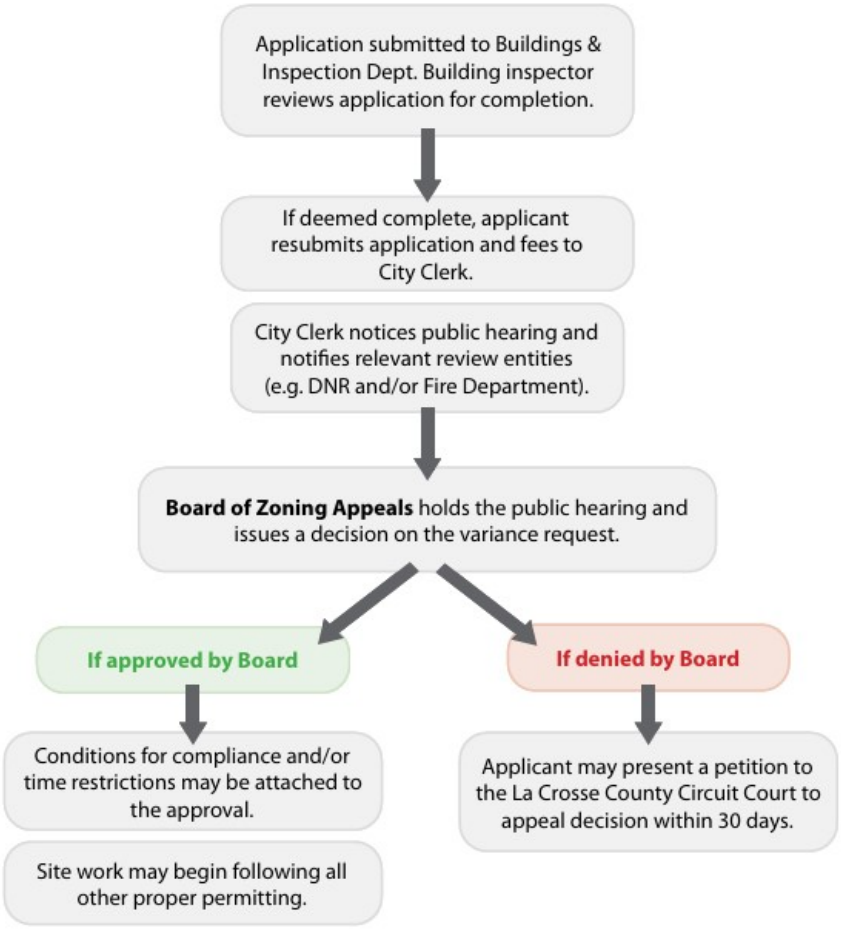
Approval Process Diagrams: Variance (Board of Zoning Appeals)



Phase Duration:

~1 month
(Application period: 13 days before previous Board meeting to 14 days prior to current meeting)

2 weeks
(14 days prior to Board meeting)

1 day
(Board of Zoning Appeals meeting)

If approved:
Site work must begin within 180 days of decision filing.

If denied:
Applicant must appeal decision within 30 days.

Notes

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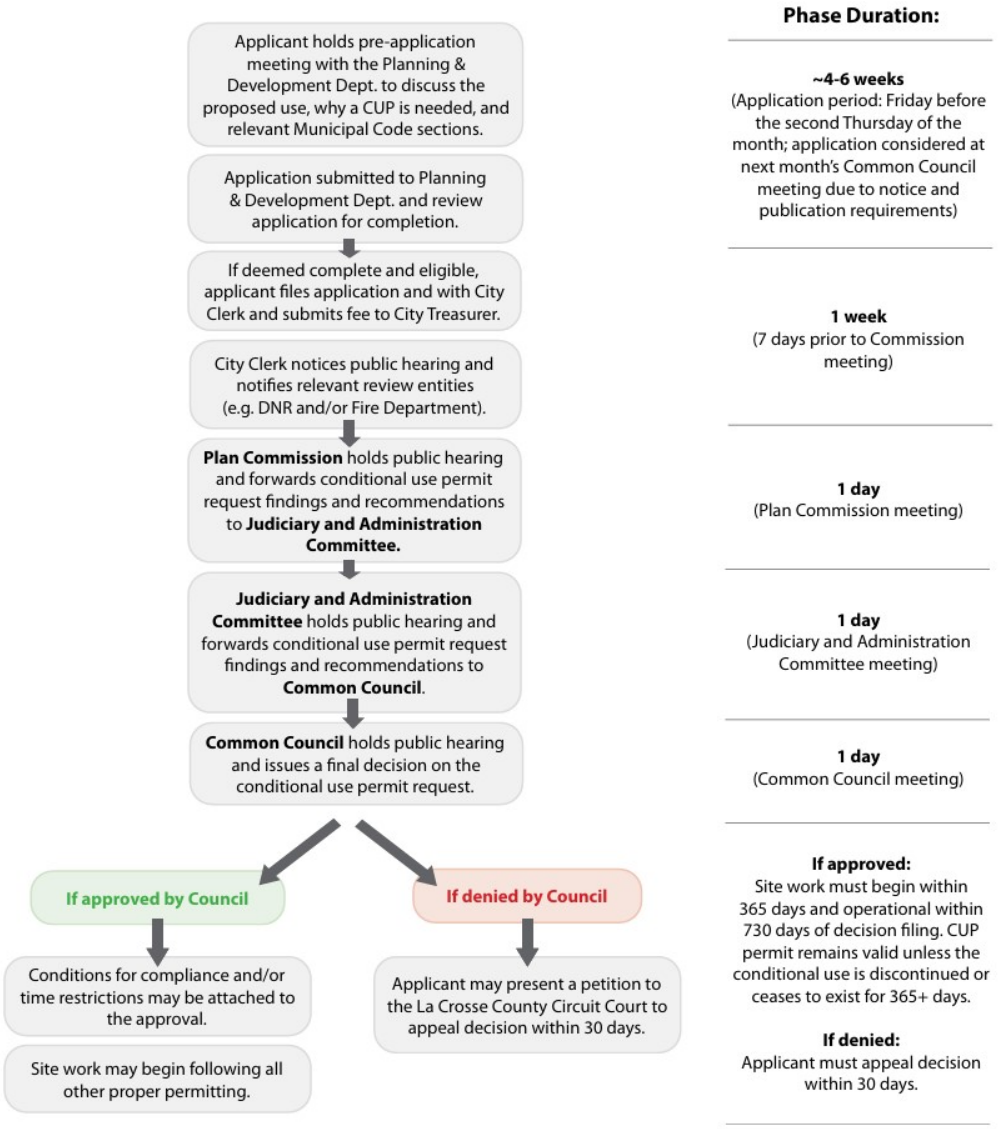
Approval Process Diagrams: Conditional Use Permit



Phase Duration:

~4-6 weeks
(Application period: Friday before the second Thursday of the month; application considered at next month's Common Council meeting due to notice and publication requirements)

1 week
(7 days prior to Commission meeting)

1 day
(Plan Commission meeting)

1 day
(Judiciary and Administration Committee meeting)

1 day
(Common Council meeting)

If approved:
Site work must begin within 365 days and operational within 730 days of decision filing. CUP permit remains valid unless the conditional use is discontinued or ceases to exist for 365+ days.

If denied:
Applicant must appeal decision within 30 days.

Notes

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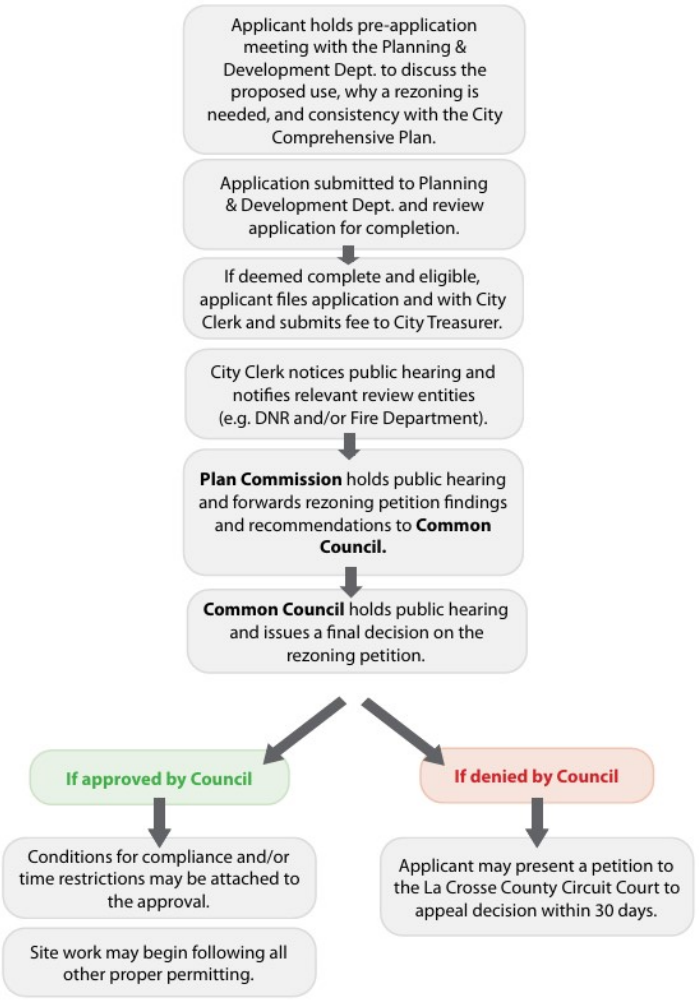
Approval Process Diagrams: Zoning Amendment (Rezoning)



Phase Duration:

~4-6 weeks
(Application period: Friday before the second Thursday of the month; application considered at next month's Common Council meeting due to notice and publication requirements)

2 weeks
(14 days prior to Commission meeting)

1 day
(Plan Commission meeting)

1 day
(Common Council meeting)

If approved:
Site work cannot begin until the rezoning is finalized and filed, and a building permit has been issued by the Fire Department. Permits will not be issued during the rezoning process unless the applicant requests and receives authorization from the Judiciary and Administration Committee of the Common Council following a public hearing.

If denied:
Applicant must appeal decision within 30 days.

Note:

1. Petition for zoning amendment may be initiated by one or more property owners of the property within the area proposed to be changed.
2. Petitions to change any flood district boundary or floodplain regulation may require technical data, including aerial maps, flood elevations, and development details, as determined by the Fire Department - Division of Fire Prevention and Building Safety and DNR.
3. Floodplain zoning amendments require approval from the DNR and FEMA before becoming effective, except for map changes tied to the La Crosse River Valley Floodplain Study.

Notes

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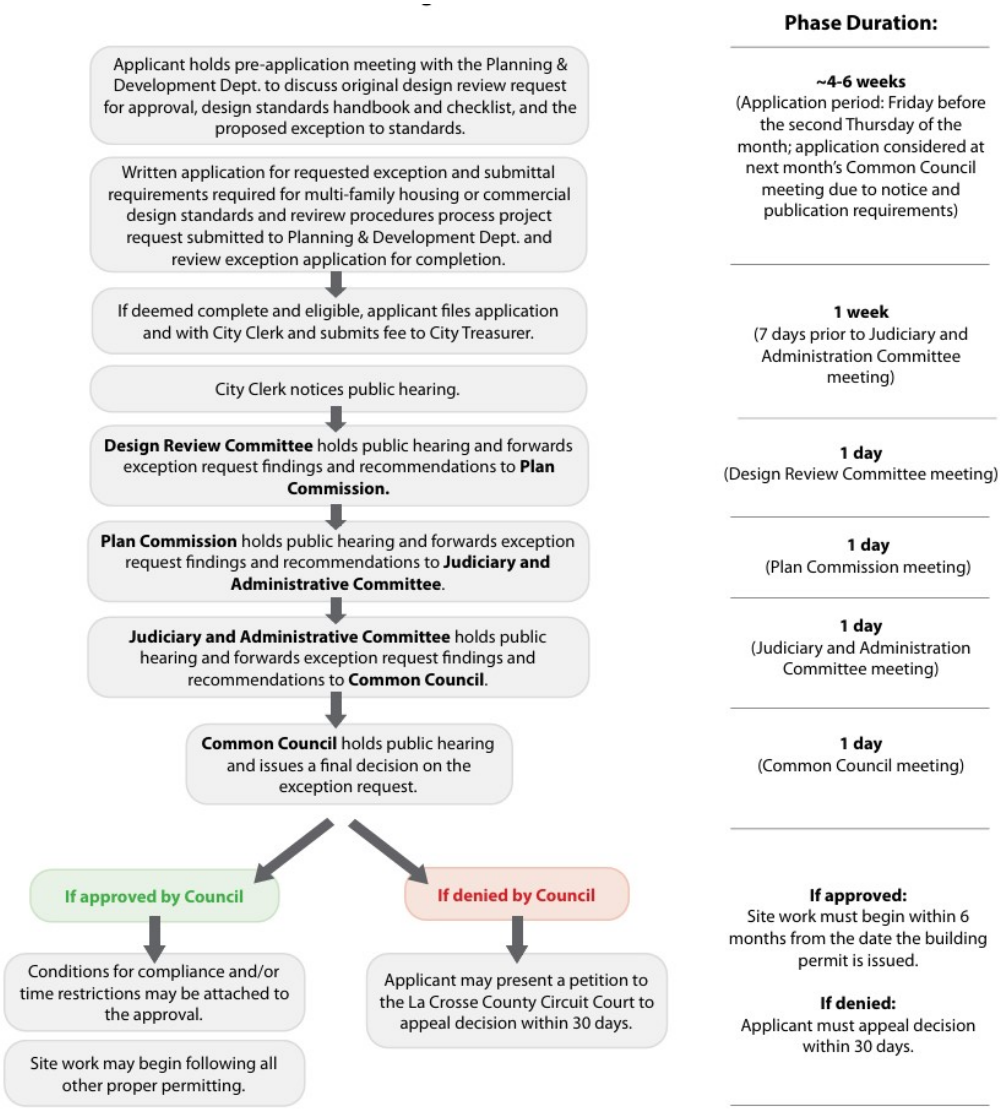
Approval Process Diagrams: Request for Exemption to Design Standards



Phase Duration:

~4-6 weeks
(Application period: Friday before the second Thursday of the month; application considered at next month's Common Council meeting due to notice and publication requirements)

1 week
(7 days prior to Judiciary and Administration Committee meeting)

1 day
(Design Review Committee meeting)

1 day
(Plan Commission meeting)

1 day
(Judiciary and Administration Committee meeting)

1 day
(Common Council meeting)

If approved:
Site work must begin within 6 months from the date the building permit is issued.

If denied:
Applicant must appeal decision within 30 days.

Note:

1. Ch. 11 Art. VII Div. 3. Multi-Family Housing Design Standards.
2. Ch. 11 Art. VII Div. 4. Commercial Design Standards. The applicant is encouraged to meet with City staff at the schematic stage, the design stage, and at the submittal stage. Members of the Design Review Committee will be encouraged to attend the pre-application meeting to facilitate the development review process. Developers are strongly encouraged to obtain Design Review Committee approval prior to submitting plans to the State for State review and approval.

Notes

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