

**Heather Hanover**  
*Chair*

**James Eshelman**  
*Vice-Chair*

**Commissioners**

**Scott Dzurka, Mayor**  
**Eric Hufnagel, City Commissioner**  
**Eric Harger**  
**Mark Holden**  
**Todd Krajniak**  
**Brian Mills**  
**Vacant**



**Chad A. Gamble**  
*City Manager*

**Mindy J. Seavey**  
*City Clerk*

**Kristina Kinde**  
*City Treasurer*

**Michael Homier**  
*City Attorney*

**Christopher Khorey, AICP**  
*Planning Consultant*

## PLANNING COMMISSION

**January 14, 2026**

The St. Johns Planning Commission will hold a regular meeting on January 14, 2026, at 5:30 pm in the County Commission Chambers located at the Clinton County Courthouse, 100 E. State Street, St. Johns, MI. (Please use Cass St. Entrance.)

### **AGENDA**

1. Call to Order (5:30 p.m.)
2. Approval of Agenda (5:31-5:32 p.m.)
3. Approval of Minutes (December 3, 2025, Meeting) (5:32-5:35 p.m.)
4. Public comment for non-agenda items (5:35-5:40 p.m.)
5. Public Hearings:
  - a. **Outdoor Cafes Zoning Ordinance Amendment** (5:40 – 5:50 p.m.)
6. New Business:
  - a. **Outdoor Cafes Zoning Ordinance Amendment** (5:50 – 6:00 p.m.) (ACTION ITEM)
7. Old Business:
  - a. **Zoning Amendment Discussion:** Sidewalk Requirement (6:00 – 6:20 p.m.)
8. Committee Site Plan Approvals: None
9. City Commission Update – Mayor Dzurka (6:20– 6:25 p.m.)
10. Commissioner Comments. (6:25– 6:30 p.m.)
11. Adjournment (6:30 p.m.) Next Meeting: February 4, 2026

**Heather Hanover**  
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*Vice-Chair*

**Commissioners**

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**Eric Hufnagel, Commissioner**  
**Mark Holden**  
**Eric Harger**  
**Brian Mills**  
**Shelley Gunther**  
**Kelly Taylor**



**PLANNING COMMISSION**

**DECEMBER 3, 2025**  
**REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting of the St. Johns Planning Commission was called to order by Chair Hanover at 5:31 p.m.

Members Present: Heather Hanover, Mark Holden, Eric Hufnagel, Brian Mills, Scott Dzurka, Eric Harger, James Eshelman, Kelly Taylor

Members Absent: Shelley Gunther

Staff Present: Chad Gamble, City Manager; Mindy J. Seavey, City Clerk; Jacob VanBoxel, McKenna; Ethan Senti, McKenna

**2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Motion by Commissioner Dzurka seconded by Commissioner Hufnagel to approve the agenda as presented.

YEA: Hanover, Holden, Hufnagel, Mills, Dzurka, Harger, Eshelman, Taylor

NAY: None

Motion carried.

**3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – NOVEMBER 12, 2025 MEETING**

Motion by Commissioner Hufnagel seconded by Commissioner Holden to approve the minutes as presented.

YEA: Hanover, Holden, Hufnagel, Mills, Dzurka, Harger, Eshelman, Taylor

NAY: None

Motion carried.

**4. PUBLIC COMMENT FOR NON-AGENDA ITEMS**

Chairperson Hanover welcomed our new member.

Commissioner Taylor said she is happy to be here and is excited to learn. She discussed reading some of the master plan.

Mayor Dzurka said we appointed an additional individual, Shelley, who could not make it this evening. He said Kelly and Shelley presented to the city commission last week and both come with a wealth of knowledge. He said he is confident they will get up to speed.

Chairperson Hanover asked if there were any public comments.

There were no public comments.

## **5. PUBLIC HEARINGS:**

### **A. City of St. Johns Master Plan and Parks Plan**

Motion by Commissioner Hufnagel seconded by Commissioner Holden that the public hearing be opened.

YEA: Hanover, Holden, Hufnagel, Mills, Dzurka, Harger, Eshelman, Taylor

NAY: None

Motion carried.

The public hearing was opened at 5:36 p.m.

Ethan Senti, McKenna, was present to give a quick overview of the plan.

He discussed:

- The purpose of the public hearing.
  - Present the draft of the Joint Master & Parks Plan.
  - Summarize the key plan process and components.
  - Receive final public comments.
  - Allow Planning Commission to provide feedback.
- Timeline & process
  - Background
    - The process began approximately a year ago.
    - Meetings with staff, planning commission, city commission and downtown development authority.
  - Public engagement
- Key elements
  - Introduction
  - Action Plan
  - Redevelopment and community character
  - Housing needs
  - Mobility plan
  - Parks and Recreation Plan
- Introduction
  - Master Plan Principles
  - Key Findings
  - Action Plan
- Public engagement and survey
- Redevelopment and community character
  - Future land use maps
    - Searles Estates
    - Townsend Road
    - North Downtown
  - Housing analysis
    - Biggest need is high-end housing.

- Projected housing needs in 2024.
- Mobility plan
  - Walkability map
  - Corridor design plan
  - Non-motorized network
- Parks and Recreation Plan
  - Action items included in plan.
- Plan Implementation
- Next steps
  - Upcoming meetings.

City Manager Gamble said Director Schafer is here. He said Ethan provided a parallel path with both plans and asked if Parks and Recreation Director Schafer had anything to add regarding the 2026-2030 City of St. Johns Parks and Recreation 5-Year Master Plan.

Director Schafer discussed the action plan items that were taken out: Fantasy Forest, upgrading park facilities (fall zones). He discussed the depot area.

Mayor Dzurka asked at what level do you want comments and feedback? He said to McKenna, Chad and the team, this document has come a long way, and he was impressed with how far it has come.

City Manager Gamble said if there are any tweaks and comments on spelling, we want to take those. If changes don't structurally change the document, those would be welcome.

Chairperson Hanover asked if there were any public comments.

There were none.

Mayor Dzurka discussed:

- He said he didn't see a mention of Safe Routes to School.
- He was surprised by the continual use of the Bluewater Highway and said for consistency, we call it M-21 or State Street.
- Page 29, the tree program, we talk about planting trees but didn't catch that we do a tree assessment.
- The map on page 34 might need some explanation.
- Page 81, fix the Mint Festival location.
- He asked about survey results on page 188. He was curious about the methodology.

Ethan Senti discussed the public feedback section, page 184, and starting on page 195 there is further explanation of the more recent efforts.

City Manager Gamble discussed the surveys that were on website and Facebook and the robust effort for public comments.

Ethan said we could put the more recent survey results in front of that.

Chairperson Hanover discussed an appendix.

Motion by Commissioner Dzurka seconded by Commissioner Eshelman that the public hearing be closed.

YEA: Hanover, Holden, Hufnagel, Mills, Dzurka, Harger, Eshelman, Taylor

NAY: None

Motion carried.

The public hearing was closed at 6:08 p.m.

B. Rezoning: 815, 817, 901, 905, 907, and 911 N. Lansing Street – MC to R-1

Motion by Commissioner Hufnagel seconded by Commissioner Eshelman that the public hearing be opened.

YEA: Hanover, Holden, Hufnagel, Mills, Dzurka, Harger, Eshelman, Taylor

NAY: None

Motion carried.

The public hearing was opened at 6:09 p.m.

Jacob VanBoxel, McKenna, was present. He discussed the proposed rezoning for the properties on North Lansing Street. He discussed 823 N. Lansing, and we discovered other properties should be rezoned in accordance with the other single application. These are on the west side of North Lansing. MC to R-1. The public hearing notice went out November 2<sup>nd</sup>. He discussed the difference between MC and R-1; the review criteria; consistent with master plan; their review of the rezoning. He said they recommended the Planning Commission should recommend rezoning to the city commission.

There was a discussion of:

- The drawing provided.

Chairperson Hanover asked if anyone from audience had any comments.

Colleen Smith was present. She asked why it would be municipal in the first place.

Chairperson Hanover said she thinks it was when Gateway North school was built.

Ms. Smith asked if they would make the other people pay the \$700.00 that they also paid. She said they still don't have assurances that they can build a house on it.

Chairperson Hanover explained that it takes a couple of readings of the ordinance for the city commission to approve.

City Manager Gamble said the ordinance will be at the December 8<sup>th</sup> meeting. He discussed the 20 days with an ordinance taking effect.

There was a discussion of the spot zoning discussion at the November 24<sup>th</sup> city commission meeting.

Motion by Commissioner Dzurka seconded by Commissioner Hufnagel that the public hearing be closed.

YEA: Hanover, Holden, Hufnagel, Mills, Dzurka, Harger, Eshelman, Taylor

NAY: None

Motion carried.

The public hearing was closed at 6:18 p.m.

**6. NEW BUSINESS:**

A. City of St. Johns Master Plan and Parks Plan

There was a discussion about seeing a finalized version.

City Manager Gamble said this public hearing recommends the forwarding of both documents to the city commission. The December 8<sup>th</sup> meeting is for the Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2026-2030 City of St. Johns Parks and Recreation 5-Year Master Plan) to be approved. He discussed minor changes to the regular master plan document and said it will be circulated in January.

Motion by Commissioner Eshelman seconded by Commissioner Holden that the planning commission recommend the master plan to the city commission.

YEA: Hanover, Holden, Hufnagel, Mills, Dzurka, Harger, Eshelman, Taylor

NAY: None

Motion carried.

**B. Rezoning: 815, 817, 901, 905, 907, and 911 N. Lansing Street – MC to R-1**

Motion by Commissioner Dzurka seconded by Commissioner Hufnagel that the planning commission recommend rezoning of the parcels to the city commission.

YEA: Hanover, Holden, Hufnagel, Mills, Dzurka, Harger, Eshelman, Taylor

NAY: None

Motion carried.

**C. Zoning Amendment Discussion: Sidewalk Requirement**

Jacob VanBoxel, McKenna, discussed the section of the zoning ordinance regarding waivers of the sidewalk ordinance. He discussed key criteria of the waiver; volume of waiver requests coming in; revisit ordinance; and policy options.

Chairperson Hanover said she is a proponent of sidewalks. She said most waivers are not residential.

Commissioner Hufnagel said the Fred Motz units had an agreement for sidewalks only on one side; and discussed Galaxy Way.

Commissioner Eshelman discussed the new home on Sturgis Street and said the driveway request forced them to put in a sidewalk. He said it is a good strategy, but frustrating at times. Some routes may have to put in a bond issue.

There was a discussion of:

- Safe Routes to School.
- Sidewalks are done as the streets are re-done with the street millage.
- The ordinance language with the reasons a waiver can be approved.
- Different options presented by McKenna.
- The site plan review committee approving waivers.
- Sidewalks in the Industrial Park.
- Cost of sidewalk.
- What requires a site plan?
- Tied to size of the structure.
- Financial hardship.
- Put information in the packet next month regarding what triggers site plan review.
- The sidewalk map.
- Requiring sidewalk when a home is sold.
- Whether you need a sidewalk on both sides of the street.

**7. OLD BUSINESS: None**

**8. COMMITTEE SITE PLAN APPROVALS: None**

**9. CITY COMMISSION UPDATE – MAYOR DZURKA:**

Mayor Dzurka discussed: Todd resigned from the Planning Commission and recognized his service; welcomed two new members; Jimmy and Heather were reappointed; set our regular meeting dates for Planning Commission and ZBA; addressed the rezoning for N. Lansing property and the (3) unzoned industrial parcels.

## **10. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS**

Commissioner Taylor said she learned a lot about sidewalks.

Commissioner Hufnagel welcomed Kelly. He said at the city commission meeting he discussed rehashing the feral cat ordinance and someone reaching out regarding the TNR (Trap-Neuter-Release) program and said he thinks there is merit to that. He feels we should be looking at allowing those programs to reduce feral cats.

Mayor Dzurka said he has seen activity at the former Save A Lot space.

City Manager Gamble said he has not heard anything specific from an economic development standpoint. He said he heard Jimmy John's is entering the final building approval phase and should be open hopefully tomorrow.

Commissioner Mills discussed the dates of the planning commission. Kudos to Chad on the "for sale" sign on the Townsend Road property. He said his takeaway on the master plan is people really want economic development. He discussed putting all city property up for sale.

Commissioner Eshelman discussed the parks and partnering with some organizations or service groups for some of the projects.

Chairperson Hanover said welcome to Kelly. She wished everyone a Merry Christmas and said the Santa Parade is on Friday.

## **11. ADJOURNMENT**

Motion by Commissioner Dzurka seconded by Commissioner Taylor that the Planning Commission adjourn the meeting.

YEA: Hanover, Holden, Hufnagel, Mills, Dzurka, Harger, Eshelman, Taylor

NAY: None

Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

**CITY OF ST. JOHNS, MICHIGAN, PLANNING COMMISSION**

**NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING  
OF CHANGES TO SECTION 155.446 OF THE ZONING ORDINANCE**

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that the City of St. Johns Planning Commission will hold a Public Hearing on Wednesday, January 14, 2026, at 5:30 p.m. regarding a proposed change to Section 155.446 of the zoning ordinance, at the City of St. Johns' Council Chambers, 100 E. State St., St. Johns, MI 48879. The changes are regarding sidewalk cafés and outdoor seating permitted by right within the GC and CBD Districts as opposed to a Special Land Use.

All related documentation may be reviewed, and written comments will be accepted at the St. Johns City Hall, 100 E. State St., St. Johns, between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. during all scheduled days of operation.

Any party having an interest in the matter may attend the Public Hearing and make their comments known to the Planning Commission. Individuals with disabilities needing special accommodations to fully participate in the meeting may contact the Office of the City Clerk to request the necessary assistance. This request must be made at least two business days prior to the meeting.

Mindy Seavey, City Clerk  
CITY OF ST. JOHNS

**Below is the proposed text of new Ourdoor Dining regulations for consideration and discussion:**

**§ 155.446 SIDEWALK CAFÉ & OUTDOOR SEATING AREAS.**

Sidewalk cafes and outdoor seating areas are permitted in the GC and CBD Districts, provided:

- (A) The café will be designed so as not to block pedestrian traffic or access to the restaurant or adjacent businesses.
  - a. A minimum of five (5) feet of sidewalk along the curb and leading to the entrance to the establishment must be maintained free of tables and other encumbrances.
- (B) Outdoor speakers are prohibited in the CBD District.
- (C) Food and/or drink service to an outdoor seating area may not occur between the hours of 11 PM and 7 AM.
- (D) The café operator shall be responsible for maintaining the area trash free.
- (E) Outdoor seating areas shall be required to be enclosed in instances where there is waitstaff or alcohol service. For the purpose of this Section, an enclosure is a decorative wood or metal railing or other decorative removable physical delineation.
- (F) All roofs and other overhead structures must be shown on the site plan. A previously approved outdoor cafe may add a roof, subject to Zoning Administrator approval.
- (G) A site plan shall specify the plans for layout of tables, chairs, and equipment during the months when the outdoor seating is in use.
- (H) Outdoor seating shall be subject to applicable City, County and State requirements.
- (I) Outdoor cafes on public property must meet the following standards:
  - a. The applicant will obtain approval from the DDA Design Committee.
  - b. The applicant will provide evidence of primary comprehensive general liability insurance by a Michigan authorized insurance carrier in an amount not less than \$500,000.00 naming the City of St. Johns as co-insured if any City property is involved covering any and all claims arising by virtue of the use and/or activity as well as provide evidence of prepaid annual premium to the City of St. Johns timely every year. Failure to do so will automatically terminate special use approval of such use or activity if it involves the use of City property.
  - c. In addition, the applicant must receive a Café Permit from the Zoning Administrator to use the space in question.
  - d. In order to use any part of a state trunk line right-of-way, the applicant must receive permission from MDOT.
- (J) Approval of an outdoor cafe may be revoked by the City if the condition(s) of approval or other ordinance requirements have not been met or that use poses a nuisance to the surrounding properties.



# Memorandum

**TO:** St. Johns Planning Commission  
**FROM:** Christopher Khorey, AICP, Vice President  
Jacob VanBoxel, MSA, Principal Planner  
**SUBJECT:** **Sidewalk Requirement Discussion and Amendment Options**  
**DATE:** January 7, 2026

## BACKGROUND

Section 155.201 of the Zoning Ordinance was adopted by the City Commission on June 24, 2024. The Ordinance, which is attached to this memo, requires a sidewalk to be constructed, if one does not currently exist, in the following circumstances:

- Whenever a Site Plan Approval (of any type – Administrative, Committee, or Planning Commission) is required for improvements to a site.
- Whenever a new principal building (including a single family home) is constructed on site. (Note that for all new principal buildings, except single family homes, Site Plan Approval is required, so this provision is primarily intended to require sidewalks when a home is built).
- Whenever a new roadway is constructed.

The Ordinance has a waiver provision, and empowers the Planning Commission (but not staff, McKenna, or the Site Plan Review Committee) to waive the sidewalk requirement. The key criteria for the waiver is that there is a “legal, physical, or environmental” impediment to construction.

The Planning Commission has fielded several waiver requests since the Ordinance was adopted, and at least one property owner has considered a waiver request before opting to comply with the Ordinance. The Planning Commission has granted a full or partial waiver for all requests.

The volume of waiver requests suggests the Planning Commission should re-evaluate the Ordinance.

## PROPOSED REVISIONS

At the December meeting, the Planning Commission identified three types of applications where waiving the sidewalk requirement would be appropriate:

- When the sidewalk would have little purpose or utility to the general public, due to a lack of connecting pedestrian infrastructure and/or nearby destinations.
- When the cost of installing the sidewalk is disproportionate to the cost and scale of the improvements that triggered the Site Plan Approval.



- When the level of proposed development is limited in scope, such that a future development is likely on the site, and the sidewalk could be postponed until that later, larger development.

With this amendment, we are also endeavoring to reduce the procedural burden on applicants and the number of discretionary decisions required of the Planning Commission. Therefore, we propose the following changes.

- Eliminate the sidewalk trigger for Administrative Site Plan Approvals. This should address the first and third goals by exempting smaller projects.
- Exempt properties in the I-1 and I-2 Districts north of Walker Road, where sidewalks serve little purpose amid heavy truck traffic and intense industrial uses.
- Exempt single family homes where there is no existing sidewalk within 300 feet of the lot in question.

We look forward to discussing this topic on January 14.

## **§ 155.201 SIDEWALKS.**

(A) *Sidewalks required.* Sidewalks, at least five feet in width and meeting the design and engineering requirements of the City of St. Johns shall be installed along the street frontage of a property whenever a Committee or Planning Commission Site Plan Review (as described in Section 155.276) is required under this chapter or whenever a new principal structure is constructed on any lot (including single family homes, except in the circumstances described below). Sidewalks shall also be installed along both sides of all new roadways constructed in the City of St. Johns.

(B) *Automatic Exemptions.* In the following circumstances, a property subject to Committee or Planning Commission Site Plan Review shall not be required to install sidewalks.

- (1) Properties in the I-1 and I-2 Districts located north of Walker Road. The delineation in this section shall be understood as Walker Road, which is in the northern part of the City, and not Walker Street, which is located downtown.
- (2) Properties where a new single family home is proposed, and where there is no sidewalk within 300 feet extending from both side lot lines of the property where the new construction is proposed.

(C) *Waiver process.* The Planning Commission may waive the requirements of division (A) above based on the following criteria:

- (1) There is a legal, physical, or environmental impediment that makes the construction of a sidewalk meeting the city's design standards impossible, in the opinion of the Planning Commission.
- (2) The granting of the waiver would not be detrimental to the public health, safety, or general welfare and would not create a precedent which would prevent the enforcement of this chapter for similar conditions or situations in the area in which the property is located.
- (3) A waiver not limited by a specific duration shall be deemed unspecified in length, but shall not be considered a permanent waiver of sidewalk requirements nor revoke in any way the right of the city to order, install, or assess for sidewalks in accordance with other sections of the Code of Ordinances upon a determination that conditions are necessary for the construction of sidewalk in accordance with public need, health, safety, and general welfare.
- (4) In permitting a waiver, conditions of approval may be imposed that are necessary to meet the intent of this division or to preserve the public health, safety, and general welfare.

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(B) *Automatic Exemptions. In the following circumstances, a property subject to Committee or Planning Commission Site Plan Review shall not be required to install sidewalks.*

- (1) Properties in the I-1 and I-2 Districts located north of Walker Road. The delineation in this section shall be understood as Walker Road, which is in the northern part of the City, and not Walker Street, which is located downtown.
- (2) Properties where a new single family home is proposed, and where there is no sidewalk within 300 feet extending from both side lot lines of the property where the new construction is proposed.

(C) Waiver process. The Planning Commission may waive the requirements of division (A) above based on the following criteria:

- (1) There is a legal, physical, or environmental impediment that makes the construction of a sidewalk meeting the city's design standards impossible, in the opinion of the Planning Commission.
- (2) The granting of the waiver would not be detrimental to the public health, safety, or general welfare and would not create a precedent which would prevent the enforcement of this chapter for similar conditions or situations in the area in which the property is located.
- (3) A waiver not limited by a specific duration shall be deemed unspecified in length, but shall not be considered a permanent waiver of sidewalk requirements nor revoke in any way the right of the city to order, install, or assess for sidewalks in accordance with other sections of the Code of Ordinances upon a determination that conditions are necessary for the construction of sidewalk in accordance with public need, health, safety, and general welfare.
- (4) In permitting a waiver, conditions of approval may be imposed that are necessary to meet the intent of this division or to preserve the public health, safety, and general welfare.