

# City of Bristol Zoning Regulations Update

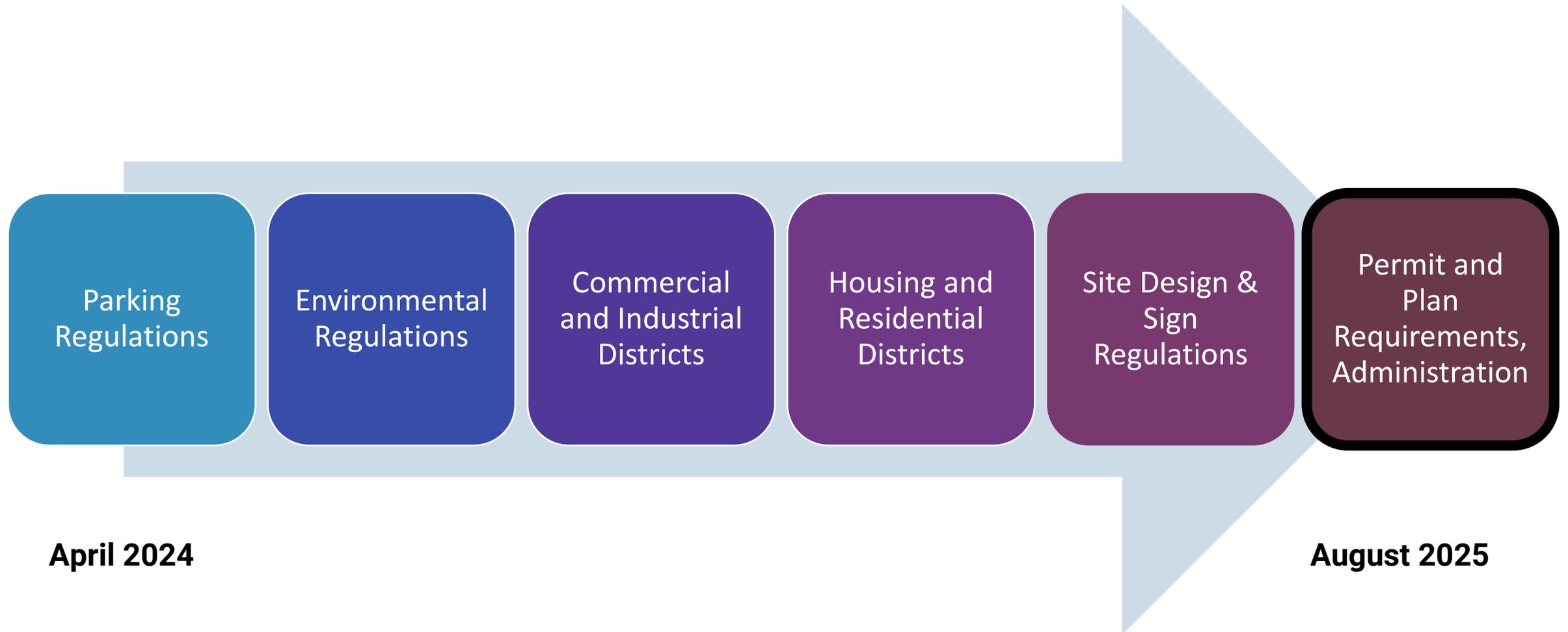
Zoning Commission Meeting 8/21/25



# Agenda

1. Review of zoning update schedule
2. Review previously introduced recommendations
  - R27: Cannabis Cultivators
  - R37: A Zone Bulk Standards
  - R38: Mixed Use Standards of BD Zone
3. Review new recommendations
  - R39: Signs
  - R40: Outdoor Lighting
  - R41: Access Management
  - R42: Landscaping
  - R43: Fences
  - R44: Average Finished Grade
  - R45: Animal Grooming
  - R46: Data Centers
  - R47: Posting of Properties
  - R48: Minor Text Amendments
- Next Steps

# Phase 3: Work Sequence



# Previously Introduced Recommended Amendments

# R27: Cannabis Cultivation

## What it does:

- Allows cannabis cultivation and micro-cultivation as Special Permit uses in the Industrial Zone and I and IP zones.
- Provides strict distancing requirements from residential zones, schools, churches, hospitals, and municipal or recreational facilities and other cannabis cultivation establishments.
- Requires Police and Fire Department approvals.
- Requires implementation of odor mitigation measures.



### City of Bristol Comprehensive Zoning Update

Date: 8/5/25

#### Recommendation 27: Cannabis Cultivation

**Purpose:** Regulate the cultivation of cannabis so as to permit only within indoor locations in the Industrial and Industrial Park zones and to provide adequate controls on their establishment to control potential nuisances associated with such use.

**Description:** Add cannabis cultivation and micro-cultivation as defined and authorized by Connecticut General Statutes Section 21a-420 as a Special Permit use in the Industrial zone, and Industrial Park Zones. Allow indoor cultivation only; prohibit outdoor cultivation.

**Geographic Extents:** Industrial zone, Industrial Park 1, 3, and 5 zones.

**Potential Impacts:** May result in establishment of a cannabis cultivation facility in the IP-1 or IP-5 zone. Location of such use in the I or IP-3 is unlikely given the residential zone distancing requirement and the size of those zones relative to their proximity to residential zones. May result in the establishment of a cannabis micro-cultivation facility in the I, IP-1, IP-3, or IP-5 zones.

**Context:** The zoning regulations currently lack regulations or restrictions on cannabis establishments permitted under Connecticut General Statutes Section 21a-420. Without regulations specific to cannabis establishments, establishments may locate in zones where similar non-cannabis establishments may be located. Multiple cities and towns in Connecticut permit Cannabis cultivators with varying restrictions on their location and operations. Below is a summary of regulations from five municipalities:

Town or City	Distancing Requirement from Residential Zone or Use	Distancing Requirement from Schools, Churches, Parks and other Sensitive Uses	Distancing Requirement from other Cannabis Cultivators	Other
East Hartford	none	none	none	Police and Fire Department approvals. Odor monitoring and mitigation
New Britain	100 feet	200 feet	1,000 feet	Security Plan Requirement
Rocky Hill	200 feet	200 feet	1,000 feet	
Southington	750 feet	750 feet	1,000 feet	
Waterbury	none	500 feet	2,000 feet	Security Plan, Odor Abatement Plan Requirement

# R37: A Zone Bulk Standards

## What it does:

- Reduces side and rear yard requirements in A zones.
- Allows for potential reduction of front yard standard to match abutting zones.
- Increases impervious coverage limits.
- Increases density from 12 to 20 units per acre if site abuts a state highway.



### City of Bristol Comprehensive Zoning Update

Date: 8/4/25

#### Recommendation 37: A Zone Bulk Standards

**Purpose:** To adjust bulk standards to more closely align with the purpose of the zone and existing development in A zones. To allow higher density residential development in A zones that have the infrastructure to support such density.

**Description:** This amendment would modify bulk standards of Section 7.2.2. It would also allow residential density to be increased from a maximum of 12 units per acre to 20 units per acre for A zone sites abutting a state highway. This requires an amendment of Section 7.2.2 and 7.2.3 of the regulations. This amendment also includes the removal of unnecessary and redundant content from Sections 4.3.20 and 7.2.4.

**Geographic Extents:** A Zone only.

**Potential Impacts:** May allow for residential density above levels that are currently permitted in the A zone.

**Context:** Many developments in the A zone do not conform to existing bulk standards. Additionally, development should be concentrated in areas that have the infrastructure to accommodate a higher density of development. One of the primary impacts of increased density is traffic generation. State highways generally have more capacity to absorb additional traffic than local roads.

#### Recommended Zoning Amendments:

1. Adjust the bulk requirements of Section 7.2.2 (Lot, Coverage, and Setback Standards) as follows (text to be removed shown in ~~strikethrough~~, text to be added shown in red)

Standard	8 units per acre or less	Greater than 8 units per acre	Single-family subdivisions
A) Minimum Lot Area	2 acres	4 acres	6,000 sf
B) Minimum Lot Frontage (ft)	50	50	60
C) Minimum Lot Width (ft)	150	200	N/A
D) Minimum Front Yard (ft)	40 <sup>A</sup>	40 <sup>A</sup>	15
E) Minimum Side Yard (ft)	<del>25/50</del> 20 or (30 <sup>B</sup> )	<del>25/50</del> 20 or (30 <sup>B</sup> )	6
F) Minimum Rear Yard (ft)	<del>25/50</del> 20 or (40 <sup>B</sup> )	<del>25/50</del> 20 or (40 <sup>B</sup> )	15
G) Maximum Building Height (ft)	40	40	35
H) Maximum Building Coverage (%)	30	35	40
I) Maximum Impervious Coverage (%)	<del>40</del> 50	<del>50</del> 60	N/A

<sup>A</sup> May be reduced to the minimum front yard requirement of the zone or zones abutting and opposite the frontage of the parcel. If abutting or opposite more than one zone, the greater minimum front yard requirement shall apply. In no case shall the front yard requirement be reduced to less than 20 feet.

<sup>B</sup> Applicable to yards abutting a single-family residential zoning district.

# R38: BD Zone Amendments

## What it does:

- Removes first floor street facing prohibition on dwelling units on Main Street, South Street, and Prospect Street.
- Increases the allowed floor area for first floor residential from 35% to 65% for streets other than North Main Street, Church Street, Riverside Avenue, North Street and School Street.
- Reduces the share of frontage windows and doors from 60% to 50%.
- Removes street frontage use restrictions from commercial parking structures.
- Provides restrictions on dwelling unit access to the street.



### City of Bristol Comprehensive Zoning Update

Date: 8/19/25

#### Recommendation 38: Amend Mixed-Use and Street Wall Requirements of BD Zone

**Purpose:** To encourage mixed-use development in the BD zone by providing more flexibility in the regulations.

**Description:** This recommendation relaxes restrictions on the share and location of residential units at street level in a mixed-use development. More specifically, it:

- Removes the street-level restriction on residential units facing Main Street, South Street, and Prospect Street.
- Increases the allowed residential floor area of street-level units on all other streets from 35% to 65%.
- Reduces the share of required non-residential street-facing walls from 60% to 50%.
- Provides regulations controlling dwelling unit access to the street.
- Provides more flexibility in the use of required commercial space in a parking structure and removes the commercial space requirement from parking structures on Main Street.
- Consolidates parking structure regulations specific to the BD and currently located in Sections 4.3.6 and 5.4.18 in Section 8.4.2.

**Geographic Extents:** BD zone

**Potential Impacts:** May encourage new mixed-use development in the BD.

**Context:** Demand for retail and office space is weak due to market trends partially related to the COVID pandemic. This demand is not expected to recover in the near future. By contrast, demand for housing is extremely high.

**Recommended Zoning Amendments** (text to be removed shown in strikethrough, text to be added shown in red):

1. Amend the street-level, street-facing wall requirement of Section 8.4.2, Item B.5 as follows:

5. Area of street-level, street-facing walls consisting of windows and public entrance/exit doors ("building fenestration")	Minimum of <del>60%</del> 50% of such wall area devoted to non-residential uses.	The wall area shall be measured between 2 and 10 feet above the top of the building foundation. Windows and public entrance/exit doors shall contain clear or tinted glass capable of providing an unobstructed view from the outside into the building. In developments containing two or more buildings, each building shall comply with this standard independently of any other building on the lot.
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# **New Recommended Amendments**

# R39: Signs

## What it does:

- Removes content-based regulation of signs.
- Exempts campaign signs and murals from regulation.
- Recategorizes signs based upon construction/installation.
- Establishes a fixed size limit for freestanding signs for multi-tenant plazas.
- Allows small freestanding temporary signs and incidental signs as of right
- Strengthens restrictions on use of electronic signs
- Introduces new restrictions on use of window signs



### City of Bristol Comprehensive Zoning Update

Date: 8/1/25

#### Recommendation 39: Update Sign Regulations

**Purpose:** Simplify the sign regulations and move towards a "content neutral" approach in response to Reed v. Town of Gilbert Supreme Court ruling.

**Description:** This recommended amendment updates and reorganizes the entire content of Section 14. Notable changes include:

- Removal of regulations based upon the signs content (its message).
- Exemption of political signs (now called campaign signs) from sign regulation.
- Addition of regulations on window signs.
- Real estate and contractor signs now treated as the same sign type (temporary freestanding signs).
- Temporary freestanding signs displayed past 12 months now require a Sign Permit.
- Additional regulations on use of portable business signs.
- Sign types renamed/reclassified as follows:

Existing Sign Type	Recommended Sign Type
Freestanding Sign	Freestanding Sign
Wall Sign	Wall Sign
Projecting Sign	Projecting Sign
Roof Sign	Roof Sign
Canopy Sign	Canopy Sign
Marquee Sign	Marquee Sign
Directional Sign	Internal Use Sign
Identification Sign	Incidental or Freestanding Sign
Billboard	Billboard
Political Sign	Campaign Sign
Real Estate Sign	Temporary Freestanding Sign
Noncommercial Sign	<i>Eliminate Category</i>
Portable Special Event Sign	Portable Sign
Portable Business Sign	Portable Sign
Nameplate Sign	Incidental Sign
Service Club Meeting Sign	Portable Sign
Construction Sign	Temporary Freestanding Sign
Business Signs	<i>Eliminate Category</i>

Section 14 is now organized as follows:

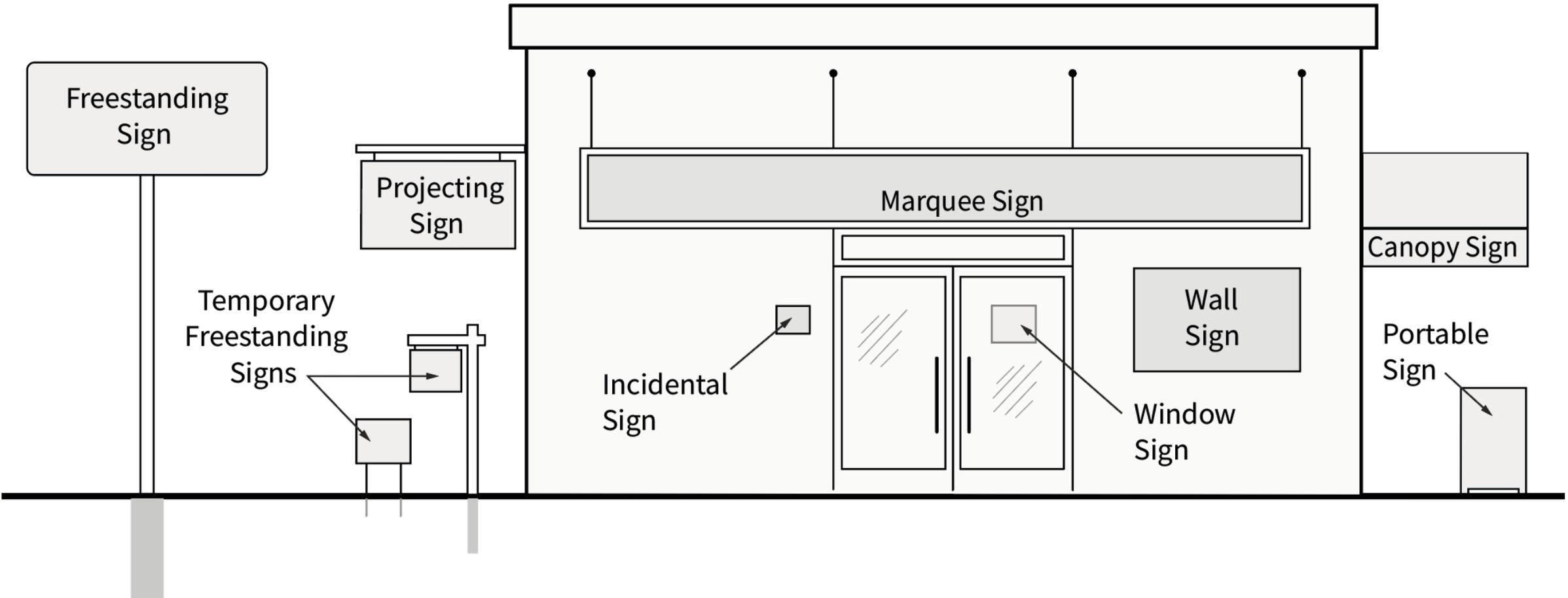
- Section 14.1: Update purpose statement to emphasize zoning authority and the intent to protect freedom of speech.
- New Section 14.2: Provide list of exempt sign types. Include legal obligation signs, internal signs, traffic signs, government signs, and campaign signs.
- New Section 14.3 (formerly 14.5): Update prohibited signs to include signs directly painted on a wall, as is currently prohibited by a subsequent section of the regulations, but exempt murals.

# Recommended Sign Types

Existing Sign Type	Proposed Sign Type
Freestanding Sign	Freestanding Sign
Wall Sign	Wall Sign
Projecting Sign	Projecting Sign
Canopy Sign	Canopy Sign
Marquee Sign	Marquee Sign
Directional Sign	Internal Use Sign
Identification Sign	Incidental or Freestanding Sign
Billboard	Billboard
Political Sign	Campaign Sign
Real Estate Sign	Temporary Freestanding Sign
Noncommercial Sign	<i>Eliminate Category</i>
Portable Special Event Sign	Large Portable Sign
Portable Business Sign	Small Portable Sign
Nameplate Sign	Incidental Sign
Service Club Meeting Sign	Large Portable Sign
Construction Sign	Temporary Freestanding Sign
Business Signs	<i>Eliminate Category</i>



# Recommended Sign Types



# Exempted Signs

- **Legal Obligations:** Any sign required by a valid and applicable federal, state, or local law, regulation, ordinance, or judicial order.
- **Indoor Signs:** Signs contained solely within a building and intended solely for inside use and not for attracting attention from the outside.
- **Traffic Signs:** Any sign or traffic control device installed by an authorized agency or as required or recommended by the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices.
- **Government Signs:** Signs erected, maintained or otherwise posted, owned or leased by the U.S. government, State of Connecticut, or the City of Bristol.
- **Campaign Signs:** Any temporary sign directly related to a federal, state, or city election or referendum.

# Freestanding Temporary Signs

- Contractor Lawn Signs, Real Estate Signs, Other signs
- Typically limited to one per sign type and a max area of 6 sf. In residential zones and 18 sf in other zones.
- Our recommendation is to:
  - Treat all as the same and limit to two signs per frontage at any one time.
  - Maintain sign area limits
  - Allow all As of Right for one year, require a Zoning Permit for continuance beyond one year.



# Portable Signs

Provide two categories of portable signs:

- Small Portable Signs: Business Sandwich Board Sign: As of Right, One sign per establishment up to 8 sf
- Large Portable Signs: Special Event Sign, Sign permit required, up to 32 sf and 30 days max



# Incidental Signs

- Group the following sign types together as Incidental Signs:
  - Incidental Signs (outside of a business)
  - Historical Plaques
  - Address Signs
  - Home Occupation Signs
- Limit to two signs per principal structure or one sign per dwelling unit in buildings with more than one dwelling unit.
- Limit to 1 sf As or Right and 3 sf with a Sign Permit.



# Internal Use Sign

- Limit to 3 sf per sign and prohibit internal illumination.
- Allow As of Right in all zones



# Window Signs



Provide a new regulation limiting use of window signs as follows:

- Allow display only by commercial establishments
- Allow only on ground or first floors
- Limit to 25% of the window space or 48 sf, whichever is less
- Limit illuminated signs to a maximum of 3 sf per establishment.

**CGS § 8-2(d)** Zoning regulations adopted pursuant to subsection (a) of this section shall not:

**(4)(A)** Prohibit the continuance of any nonconforming use, building or structure existing at the time of the adoption of such regulations;

# R40 Outdoor Lighting

## What it does:

- Expands the regulation on outdoor lighting.
- Exempts multiple lighting types and uses.
- Strengthens prohibitions on lighting types.
- Reduces required lighting levels to 3 footcandles maximum.
- Provides a residential use regulation.
- Removes existing “Dark Sky” fixture requirement in place of specific performance standards.



### City of Bristol Comprehensive Zoning Update

Date: 8/1/25

#### Recommendation 40: Expand Outdoor Lighting Regulations

**Purpose:** Reduce lighting pollution consistent with “Dark Sky” best practices.

**Description:** This recommendation would expand the existing lighting regulations based upon guidance provided by Lights Out Connecticut Model Outdoor Lighting Regulations for Connecticut. It significantly expands the existing Section 11.2 Outdoor Lighting regulations and reduces the required illumination levels for most uses. More specifically, this expanded regulation does the following:

- Exempts specific types of lighting from regulation.
- Prohibits specific types of lighting.
- Establishes a lighting regulation for all residential uses.
- Establishes more detailed requirements for light shielding and additional restrictions on light trespass.
- Reduces required lighting levels from 3-6 footcandles to 1-3 footcandles and provides more detail about where lighting is required.
- Provides more specific restriction on uplighting to reduce glare and sky glow.
- Provides standards for lighting color temperature.
- Requires lighting to be enabled with automatic lighting control systems.
- Provides athletic field and activity area lighting standards.
- Specifies enforcement protocols.

**Geographic Extents:** All zones

**Potential Impacts:** Will reduce excessive outdoor lighting in new projects.

**Context:** Outdoor light pollution creates a range of environmental, health, and quality-of-life problems. Excessive or poorly designed lighting contributes to skyglow, which obscures views of stars and diminishes the natural night environment. It can disrupt wildlife behavior, particularly for nocturnal species and migratory birds, and interfere with plant growth cycles. Light pollution is linked to sleep disruption and negative impacts on circadian rhythms, which may affect overall health. In urban areas, glare and light trespass can reduce safety by impairing visibility and creating discomfort, especially for drivers and pedestrians.

#### Recommended Zoning Amendments:

Replace Section 11.2 with the following (see following pages):

# Recommended Exempt Uses

- Luminaires that emit less than 850 lumens.
- Critical lighting used by the Police Department, Fire Department, or Emergency Services.
- State or City roadway lighting.
- Temporary lighting authorized by a special event permit for a fair, carnival or similar function.
- Temporary holiday lighting provided it is not used for more than 60 days in a 12-month period.
- Flagpole lighting, provided all luminaires are shielded so that the light source is not visible from the property line and the CCT does not exceed 2,700K.
- Internally lit signs as permitted by Section 14.

# Recommended Prohibited Lighting

- Luminous tube lights or strips of light intended to outline or highlight a structure, whether composed of linear light tubes or a sequence of individual illumination sources.
- Light sources that strobe, oscillate, or vary in intensity or color as perceptible to the human eye **including such lights placed on the inside of windows and directed to the outside.**
- Lasers.
- Illumination of entire building facades. Facade illumination shall be limited to security lighting or lighting of specific architectural features.



# Recommended Regulations: Residential Zones

## 11.2.4 Lighting for Residential Uses

Any outdoor light source for a residential use that emits more than 850 **1,600** lumens shall be fully shielded and positioned so that the light source is not directly visible at a height of 5 feet above ground from any residence on another property.



# Recommended Lighting of Common Areas Regulations

Driveways, parking lots, loading areas, sidewalks, plazas, and other common areas used by vehicles or pedestrians on properties subject to Site Plan or Special Permit approval shall be illuminated in accordance with the following:

- A. The average horizontal maintained illumination shall be no less than **one footcandle**.
- B. With the exception of gas station canopies, loading areas, and primary building entrances, the average horizontal maintained illumination shall not exceed **3 footcandles**, unless otherwise required for safety, security, or operational needs.
- C. The maximum height of the light source shall be 30 feet measured from the surface of the ground. The use of luminaires mounted at lower heights is strongly encouraged.
- D. For parking lots with more than 20 parking spaces, the maximum-to-minimum uniformity ratio shall not exceed 10:1.

# Recommended Lighting Standards

The following shall be applicable to all uses across all zones subject to a Site Plan or Special Permit approval except for athletic field or activity area lighting that complies with Section 11.2.7:

- A. Illumination Level: Lighting shall provide the lowest level of illumination necessary for safety and intended use as specified by ANSI/IES except as otherwise specified by this Section 11.2. No lighting installation shall exceed the ANSI/IES recommended levels for the specified use.
- B. Light Trespass: Luminaires shall be located, aimed, and optically cutoff so that the light source is not directly visible from an adjacent property or the public right-of-way as measured at a height of 5 feet above ground.
- C. Glare and Sky Glow: Unless otherwise specified, luminaires shall be fully shielded and emit no more than 5% of their total lumen output above 80 degrees as measured from perpendicular to the ground.
- D. Correlated Color Temperature: All light sources shall have a CCT of 3,000K or less.
- E. Lighting Control: All outdoor lighting shall be enabled to be controlled by automatic timers and/or motion sensors. Except where there is a need to maintain lighting levels due to safety, security, or overnight hours of operation, all outdoor lighting shall be:
  - 1. Turned off after 11:00 p.m. and during daylight conditions, and/or
  - 2. Turned off or reduced to 25% of the full illumination level after 15 minutes of no activity.

# Recommended Athletic Field or Activity Area Lighting

The following shall apply to outdoor athletic fields or other special outdoor activity areas such as sports courts that are subject to a Site Plan or Special Permit approval:

- A. The luminaires shall include internal or external shielding to minimize uplighting and light trespass.
- B. Field or surface lighting shall be provided exclusively for the illumination of the surface of play and viewing stands and not for other applications.
- C. The design and installation of lighting shall follow the illuminance and uniformity guidelines of the Illuminating Engineering Society for the appropriate class of play.
- D. At least 85% of lumens shall be confined to within 60 feet or one pole height, whichever is greater, of the activity surface.
- E. The CCT of the lighting shall not exceed 4,200K.
- F. When the field or surface is used for purposes other than practice or play, lighting shall not exceed 25% of full output. After practice or play, illumination shall be reduced to 25% of full output within one hour and turned off completely within two hours.

# Recommended Lighting Enforcement Regulations

## Enforcement

- A. The Zoning Enforcement Officer may inspect any outdoor lighting installation for compliance with this section at any time.
- B. Upon notice of violation of the regulations of this Section 11.2, the responsible party shall correct the violation and provide a written statement to the Zoning Enforcement Officer as to how the violation was corrected within 30 days.
- C. If such statement is not received and/or corrective action is not sufficiently taken within 30 days, the Zoning Enforcement Officer may require a photometric survey and impose additional penalties as authorized by Section 8-12 of the Connecticut General Statutes.

# R41: Access Management

## What it does:

- Merges the existing Section 13.11 driveway standards with the Section 12 Access Management Regulations.
- Eliminated the Access Management Overlay Zone and applies the access management across all zones with an emphasis on Site Plan and Special Permit uses.
- Allows for variance in the sight distance requirement based upon local conditions.
- Provides consistent standards for distancing of driveways and consistency with Municipal Ordinance.
- Simplifies the Access Management Scoring System.
- Relocates traffic study requirements to Section 16.

### City of Bristol Comprehensive Zoning Update

Date: 8/19/25

#### Recommendation 41: Overhaul Access Management Regulations

**Purpose:** Develop a unified access management regulation that is applicable citywide.

**Description:** This recommendation includes the following amendments:

- Merger of the existing driveway standards of Section 13.11 with Section 12 Access Management.
- Elimination of the Access Management Overlay Zone and removal of the overlay from the Official Zoning Map.
- New Section 12.2: Definitions of access management terms provided.
- New Section 12.3: Driveway standards for all uses provided here. Most of this regulation comes from existing Section 13.11 and from Section 21-51 of the Bristol Code of Ordinances. Provides a reference to the Board of Public Works, which has authority to modify the application of driveway regulations in the Code of Ordinances.
- New Section 12.4.2: Sight line standards modified to require a calculation for local conditions to be conducted based upon AASHTO and CTDOT standards instead of the current 415-foot requirement for all driveways, which exceeds what is needed for most conditions and does not allow for reductions based upon posted speed limit or design speed of the roadway. Reduces the minimum standard to 155 feet instead, which is the absolute minimum distance required for most conditions.
- New Section 12.4.3: Maintains existing intersection distancing requirements based upon intersection traffic control type but amends and simplifies the required measurement technique to be consistent with the technique established by Section 21-51 of the Bristol Code of Ordinances. Establishes an incentive-based reduction in the required distance based upon points earned under the existing Section 12.6 Access Management Scoring System.
- New Section 12.5: The section amends the existing Section 12.6 Access Management Scoring System by simplifying the table and the traffic study/site access analysis requirement. This amended section now requires the Commission to substitute a required traffic study with a site access analysis, but only for projects scoring 10 or more points.
- Relocation of content from Section 12.6 Items D and E to new Section 16.2.4 Traffic Studies as Items A and B respectively.

**Geographic Extents:** All zones.

**Potential Impacts:** Will require that all Site Plan Application and Special Permit projects meet minimum standards for distancing from an intersection and for sightlines, which are beyond what is currently required outside the access management overlay zone.

**Context:** The existing Section 12 access management regulations are only applicable to the access management overlay area along River Street and Riverside Avenue. Citywide regulations specific to the location and design of driveways are located in Section 13.11, but are limited in scope. Additionally, Section 21-51 of the Bristol Code of Ordinances provides standards for driveway location, but Section 13.11 is not consistent with those standards.

**Recommended Zoning Amendments:** See following pages.

# R42: Update Landscaping Standards

## What it does:

- Specifies that the standards are applicable only to projects subject to Site Plan Application or Special Permit approval.
- Removes unneeded reference to American Association of Nurserymen and replace with prohibition on the installation of invasive species.
- Limits Commission approval of tree removal to healthy non-invasive trees.
- Allows for use of deciduous plant materials within a required buffer.
- Specifies that screening substituted for a required buffer shall comply with the Section 11.1.3 Screening requirements.
- Other minor modifications for clarity.



**City of Bristol Comprehensive Zoning Update**

Date: 8/1/25

**Recommendation 42: Update Landscaping Standards**

**Purpose:** Provide minor updates to landscaping standards to clarify requirements.

**Description:** This recommendation provides minor amendments to Section 11.1 including the following:

- Specify that the standards are applicable only to projects subject to Site Plan Application or Special Permit approval.
- Remove unneeded reference to American Association of Nurserymen and replace with prohibition on the installation of invasive species.
- Limit Commission approval of tree removal to healthy non-invasive trees.
- Allow for use of deciduous plant materials within a required buffer.
- Specify that screening substituted for a required buffer shall comply with the Section 11.1.3 Screening requirements.
- Other minor modifications for clarity.

**Geographic Extents:** All zones

**Potential Impacts:** None.

**Recommended Zoning Amendments:** See following pages (text to be removed in ~~strikethrough~~, text to be added in red)



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# R43: Update Fence Regulations

## What it does:

- Consolidates Sections 11.3.2 and 11.3.3 into one section as they provide exactly the same standards for commercial and industrial zones.
- Allow for the continuance of safety fences for safety purposes.
- Changes references from “Zoning Permit” to “Fence Permit”.
- Other minor changes to improve clarity and organization



**City of Bristol Comprehensive Zoning Update**

Date: 8/1/25

**Recommendation 43: Update Fence Regulations**

**Purpose:** Provide minor updates to the fence standards to clarify requirements.

**Description:** This recommendation provides minor amendments to Section 11.3 including the following:

- Consolidate Sections 11.3.2 and 11.3.3 into one section as they provide exactly the same standards for commercial and industrial zones.
- Section 11.3.4: Allow for the continuance of safety fences for safety purposes.
- Section 11.3.6: Change references from “Zoning Permit” to “Fence Permit”.
- Other minor changes to improve clarity and organization

**Geographic Extents:** All Zones

**Potential Impacts:** None

**Recommended Zoning Amendments:** See following pages (text to be removed in ~~strikethrough~~, text to be added in red)

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# R44: Average Finished Grade

## What it does:

Modifies the definition of average finish grade to require measurement:

- 6 feet offset from exterior wall foundation, or footing (or at property line if nearer),
- At intervals no greater than 20 feet including measurements at the highest and lowest grades.



**City of Bristol Comprehensive Zoning Update**

Date: 8/4/25

**Recommendation 44: Amend Definition of "Average Finished Grade"**

**Purpose:** The term "Average Finished Grade" is used to establish building height. The current definition provides no guidance on how the grade is to be measured and established. This amended definition would ensure that the average finished grade is measured consistently across projects and that maximum building height standards are effectively enforced.

**Description:** Amend the definition of average finished grade to require measurement of the grade 6 feet from the exterior of a building instead of where the building meets the ground and require measurements to be taken no more than 20 feet apart and to include the highest and lowest points. Also amend to allow for applicability to structures other than buildings.

**Geographic Extents:** All Zones

**Potential Impacts:** None

**Context:** Zoning regulations across Connecticut vary in how average finished grade is measured. Many communities require the measurement to be taken a specified distance from the exterior wall or foundation with that distance typically ranging from 6 to 10 feet. Most communities require measurements to be taken at several points including the highest and lowest grades.

**Recommended Zoning Amendments:**

Amend the existing definition of "Average Finished Grade" in Section 18 as follows (text to be removed in strikethrough, new text in red):

**Average Finished Grade:** The final elevation of the average ground level adjoining ~~around~~ a building-at ~~all exterior walls~~ or structure as measured at a distance of 6 feet offset from the exterior walls, foundation, or footing (as applicable) at intervals of no more than 20 feet including measurements taken at the lowest and highest grades. The measurement shall be taken at the property line in locations where the property line is located less than 6 feet from the exterior wall, foundation, or footing.



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# R45: Add Animal Grooming Establishments

## What it does:

- Defines animal grooming establishments as a principal use.
- Allows them through a Site Plan approval in the BN, BG, and BHC zones.
- Allows with a Zoning Permit in the BD zone.



### City of Bristol Comprehensive Zoning Update

Date: 8/19/25

#### Recommendation 45: Add Animal Grooming Establishments as a Permitted Use

**Purpose:** Animal grooming establishments are an increasingly common use, but the zoning regulations do not define or specify where this use is permitted or by what type of permit. As a result, it is unclear whether this use would be permitted as a retail use or as a personal service establishment. The definition of this use and the identification of zones where allowed, and permit type required, would allow for the City to manage these uses and would add clarity to businesses seeking to establish in Bristol.

**Description:** This amendment defines animal grooming establishments and allows them in the BN, BG, and BHC zones through a Site Plan Application and the BD zone with a Zoning Permit. It also provides a parking requirement.

**Geographic Extents:** BN, BG, BD, and BHC zones

**Potential Impacts:** May support the development of animal grooming establishments in the City.

#### Recommended Zoning Amendments:

1. Provide the following definition of Animal Grooming Establishment in Section 19 Use Definitions:

**Animal Grooming Establishment:** An establishment where domestic pets such as dogs and cats, are bathed, clipped, brushed, styled, or otherwise groomed for hygienic, aesthetic, or show purposes. Such establishments may include incidental sale of pet care products and accessories, but do not provide overnight boarding, veterinary medical treatment, or breeding services.

2. Add Animal Grooming Establishment to the Use Summary Table of Section 4.2 as follows including the following permit requirements specified per zone where allowed:

Principal Use	Commercial, Industrial, and Mixed-Use Districts							
	BN	BG <sup>1</sup>	BD	BHC <sup>2</sup>	I	IP-1	IP-3	IP-5
Animal Grooming Establishment	ZP+S	ZP+S	ZP	ZP+S	—	—	—	—

3. Add Animal Grooming Establishment to Section 13.2 Amount of Off-Street Parking Required under Service Based Uses with a requirement of 3.0 spaces per ksf.

# R46: Add Data Centers

## What it does:

- Defines data centers as a principal use.
- Sets a limit of 250,000 sf in the I, IP-1, IP-3, and IP-5 zones and 15,000 sf in the BHC zone.
- Establishes distancing requirements 500 feet from residential zones in the I, IP-1, IP-3, and IP-5 and 350 feet from a residential property in a residential zone if located in the BHC zone.
- Requires a vibration/sound analysis and implementation of noise mitigation measures as well as sound emission monitoring.
- Requires architectural articulation and/or use of landscaping to mitigate large expanses of blank walls visible to the public.



### City of Bristol Comprehensive Zoning Update

Date: 8/20/25

#### Recommendation 46: Add Data Centers as a Permitted Use

**Purpose:** The zoning regulations do not define data centers as a specific use. By default, if treated as an industrial use, data centers would be allowed in the Industrial or Industrial Park zones. Defining this use and identifying zones where allowed, and the permit type required, would allow for better regulation of this use. Additionally, the provision of specific use regulations would ensure that such use does not cause a nuisance to surrounding land uses, particularly residential uses.

#### Description:

- Define data center as a permitted use.
- Allow data centers in the BHC, I, IP-1, IP-3, IP-5 zones with a Special Permit.
- Limit data centers to 15,000 square feet of gross floor area in the BHC.
- Limit data centers in the I, IP-1, IP-3, IP-5 zones to 250,000 square feet maximum.
- Establish a minimum lot size of one acre for data centers in the BHC.
- Establish distancing requirements from a residential zone/use: 350 feet in the BHC, 500 feet in the I, IP-1, IP-3, IP-5 zones.
- Require a noise mitigation study, implementation of noise mitigation measures, and monitoring of noise.

**Geographic Extents:** BHC, I, IP-1, IP-3, IP-5 zones

**Potential Impacts:** May support the establishment of data centers.

**Context:** Over the past decade, demand for data centers has surged in response to the rapid growth of cloud computing, streaming services, e-commerce, artificial intelligence, and connected devices. This demand has led to increased interest in establishing small and large-scale facilities in areas where land, power, and cooling resources are more readily available. Noise is a principal concern as these uses generate a constant low level "humming" noise on a 24-hour, 7 day a week basis.

#### Recommended Zoning Amendments:

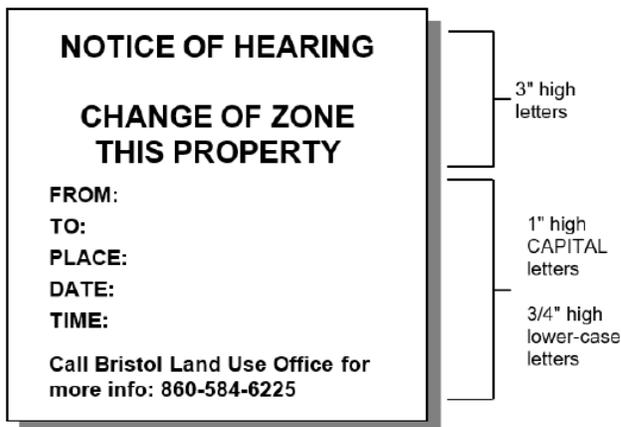
1. Add the following definitions of data centers to Section 19 Use Definitions:

**Data Center:** A facility used primarily for the storage, management, processing, and transmission of digital data. Data centers typically include computer servers, data storage equipment, high-capacity telecommunications and network infrastructure, power generation systems, backup power systems, cooling systems, and associated support areas. This use excludes call centers and facilities primarily engaged in office functions.

# R47: Posting of Properties

## What it does:

- Reduces the sign posting requirement from every 200 feet of frontage to every 250 feet.
- Allows for an increase in spacing to 500 feet for properties with more than 1,000 feet of frontage if signs are provided 4'x4' size.



### City of Bristol Comprehensive Zoning Update

Date: 8/20/25

#### Recommendation 47: Amend Requirements for the Posting of Properties

**Purpose:** Adjust the sign posting requirement of Section 17.1.5 Posting of Property to reduce excessive signage and to require signage that is more proportional to the length of the frontage. Remove redundant language.

**Description:** This amendment makes the following changes to Section 17.1.5 Posting of Property:

- Increases the sign posting distance from 200 feet to 250 feet for all properties.
- Increases the sign posting distance from 200 feet to 500 feet for properties with more than 1,000 feet of frontage provided such signage is a minimum of 4 feet x 4 feet.
- Removes the following redundant content, which is fully addressed by the first sentence of the section: "There shall be a minimum of two signs posted on corner and through lots, one facing each street."

**Geographic Extents:** All zones

**Potential Impacts:** Reduces burden on applicants

#### Recommended Zoning Amendments:

1. Amend Section 17.1.5.A.1 as follows (text to be removed in strikethrough, text to be added in red)

1. A minimum of one such sign shall be posted facing each street on which the subject property has frontage. Signs shall also be so posted approximately every ~~200~~ 250 feet ~~apart~~ along the street frontage of the subject property. **Where the frontage is more than 1,000 feet in length, signs may be posted approximately every 500 feet provided that such signs are a minimum of 4 feet by 4 feet in size.** ~~There shall be a minimum of two signs posted on corner and through lots, one facing each street.~~ In those cases where the subject property does not have frontage on or is not otherwise readily visible from a street, the sign shall be posted in a location deemed suitable by the Zoning Enforcement Officer.

# R48: Minor Text Amendments

## What it does:

Provides minor text amendments across the regulations that do not individually justify a recommended amendment including:

- Expands the definition of “Commission” to include the Planning Commission in addition to the Zoning Commission
- Clarifies the permit requirement for uses requiring a Site Plan Application and approval from the Planning Commission by replacing the “ZP+S” nomenclature to “SPA”.
- Consolidates the “Boat or Recreational Vehicle Sales and Service” and “Recreational Vehicle Sales” uses groups,



**City of Bristol Comprehensive Zoning Update**

Date: 8/20/25

**Recommendation 48: Provide Minor Text and Formatting Amendments Across the Regulations**

**Purpose:** The purpose of this amendment is to improve the regulations for clarity and consistency and to adjust requirements in response to need.

**Description:** This recommended amendment does the following:

- Expands the definition of “Commission” to include the Planning Commission in addition to the Zoning Commission since many references to the “Commission” across the regulations are applicable to both or either Commission depending on the application requirement.
- Clarifies the permit requirement for uses requiring a Site Plan Application and approval from the Planning Commission by replacing the “ZP+S” nomenclature intended to refer to the Site Plan requirement before issuance of a Zoning Permit with “SPA” which will indicate a Site Plan Application requirement. This does not impact the current requirements, but seeks to provide more clarity about the application requirement.
- Consolidates the “Boat or Recreational Vehicle Sales and Service” and “Recreational Vehicle Sales” uses groups, which are permitted in the same zones, into the “Boat or Recreational Vehicle Sales and Service” use group.
- Increases allowed projection of a stair or ramp from 3 feet to 4 feet into any required yard.
- Relocates information relevant to building and lot coverage definitions from Section 10.6 to Section 18 Zoning Terminology Definitions.
- Adjusts the parking requirement for manufacturing, wholesale, and distribution uses.
- Provides a definition of “mural” to be added to Section 18 Zoning Terminology.
- Modifies the Section 16.2.2.E waiver of a Site Plan for Special Permits by requiring the Zoning Commission to waive the Site Plan requirement instead of the City Planner. Provides more guidance on the basis for a waiver.

**Geographic Extents:** N/A

**Potential Impacts:** None

**Recommended Zoning Amendments** (text to be removed in strikethrough, text to be added in red):

1. Section 1.4, Item N: Amend as follows: “The “Commission” means the **Planning or** Zoning Commission of the City of Bristol, unless otherwise specified.” Replace “Zoning Commission” with “Commission” in Sections 1.5, 5.4.18.G, and 16.3.11.B.



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# R48: Minor Text Amendments

## What it does (cont.):

- Increases allowed projection of a stair or ramp from 3 feet to 4 feet into any required yard.
- Relocates information relevant to building and lot coverage definitions from Section 10.6 to Section 18 Zoning Terminology Definitions.
- Adjusts the parking requirement for manufacturing, wholesale, and distribution uses.
- Expands the Section 15.8 Sustainability Incentive to include any Class I renewable energy source in addition to solar and increases the points factor.
- Provides a definition of mural.
- Changes approval of a Site Plan waiver from the City Planner to the Zoning Commission.

### City of Bristol Comprehensive Zoning Update

Date: 8/20/25

#### Recommendation 48: Provide Minor Text and Formatting Amendments Across the Regulations

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**Description:** This recommended amendment does the following:

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**Geographic Extents:** N/A

**Potential Impacts:** None

**Recommended Zoning Amendments** (text to be removed in strikethrough, text to be added in red):

1. Section 1.4, Item N: Amend as follows: "The "Commission" means the **Planning or** Zoning Commission of the City of Bristol, unless otherwise specified." Replace "Zoning Commission" with "Commission" in Sections 1.5, 5.4.18.G, and 16.3.11.B.

# Next Steps

- Continue review of Site Plan and Special Permit requirements.
- Share the recommended amendments with NVCOG, surrounding municipalities.
- Bring the application for amendments to the next Zoning Commission meeting.
- Conduct a public hearing of the amendments.

# Next Meetings

The next meeting is your regular meeting on 9/15 where the application for amendments will be received.

Public Hearing for adoption is tentatively on 10/20

## SEPTEMBER 2025

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
31	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	1	2	3	4