

AGENDA
CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP
February 17, 2026 at 6:00 PM

Forest Lake City Center
Forest Lake, Minnesota

[City of Forest Lake - Link to Meeting Livestream](#)

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
3. Pledge of Allegiance
4. Open Forum - Citizen Petitions, Requests and Concerns
The Open Forum is available for residents to express personal opinions for any item of business. Please limit your comments to three (3) minutes.
5. Discussion Items
 - a) CSAH 32 (11th Ave.) Improvements Update - Washington County/Mark Statz
 - b) BOOST Land Use Code Modernization Initiative – Steven Gilmore
 - c) Street (211) Fund Review – Elle Larkin/Dave Adams
 - d) 2026 Strategic Plan Draft – Mark Statz
6. CLOSED SESSION: Continuation of February 9, 2026 Closed session pursuant to Minn. Stat. §13D.05, Subd. 3(a): City Administrator annual performance review
7. Adjourn

STAFF REPORT



MEETING DATE: February 4, 2026

STAFF ORIGINATOR: Mark Statz – City Administrator

AGENDA ITEM: County State Aid Highway 32 (11th Ave.) Project Update

INTRODUCTION: Washington County and City Engineering and Public Works staff have been working through the early stages of planned improvements to County State Aid Highway 32 (CSAH 32), also known as 11th Avenue. An update on the progress related to funding, design, public engagement and project logistics will be presented by County Staff.

ANALYSIS:
See attached presentation materials. County staff will be on hand to present the materials and answer any questions you may have.

RECOMMENDATION: Information is for update purposes only.

ATTACHMENTS: Project Information



CSAH 32 Project Update & Discussion

February 17, 2026

Project Background

- Project kicked-off in 2022
- Existing pavement is in poor condition and deteriorating quickly
- Adjacent to numerous wetlands
- Narrow corridor, minimum ROW, home access
- No dedicated pedestrian facilities
- Hardwood Creek Regional Trail crosses on the east end of the corridor via an overpass
- Minimal stormwater management



Project Goals

- Improve safety, capacity, and operations for all users along the corridor
- Explore off-road pedestrian facility options and improve connectivity
- Identify and engage with all project stakeholders
- Explore access and parking needs of businesses and individual property owners
- Identify and implement stormwater improvements



Project History

- Five Open Houses
 - Existing conditions
 - Preferred alternatives
 - Re-worked alternatives for community support
 - Strong support for realignment for Forest Road
- Numerous property owner discussions
- Received \$5,000,000 in funding through Congressman Stauber's office

COUNTY HIGHWAY 32 PEDESTRIAN AND SAFETY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

PROJECT DESCRIPTION
Washington County explored pedestrian and safety improvements to County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 32 between I-35 and Trunk Highway 61. The study assessed intersection and traffic safety, drainage, and bicycle and pedestrian improvements. The study resulted in a preliminary design for the roadway that would transition to final design and future construction starting in 2027.



EXISTING CONDITIONS

ENGAGEMENT GOALS
Engagement was a key feature of the study's development, including a total of five phases of engagement. Through this process, the project team looked for opportunities to inform the community of project outcomes and analysis and to gather input that would inform the preliminary design of CSAH 32.

ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES
Through the five phases of engagement, the project team gathered input about people's existing experiences in the study area, impressions of design options, and perspectives of the preliminary design. While the project began with three planned phases, two additional phases of engagement were added to the project to maintain open communication and understanding of the project goals and benefits. More specifically, the fourth and fifth phases were added in response to a strong community desire to revise a portion of the roadway design.

PHASE 1: NEEDS AND CONCERNS

Purpose: The first phase of engagement set out to understand people's needs and concerns related to CSAH 32 and the project area. Specifically, to learn about their experiences and what changes would they like to see. Additionally, it was an opportunity to bring awareness of the project.

Outcomes

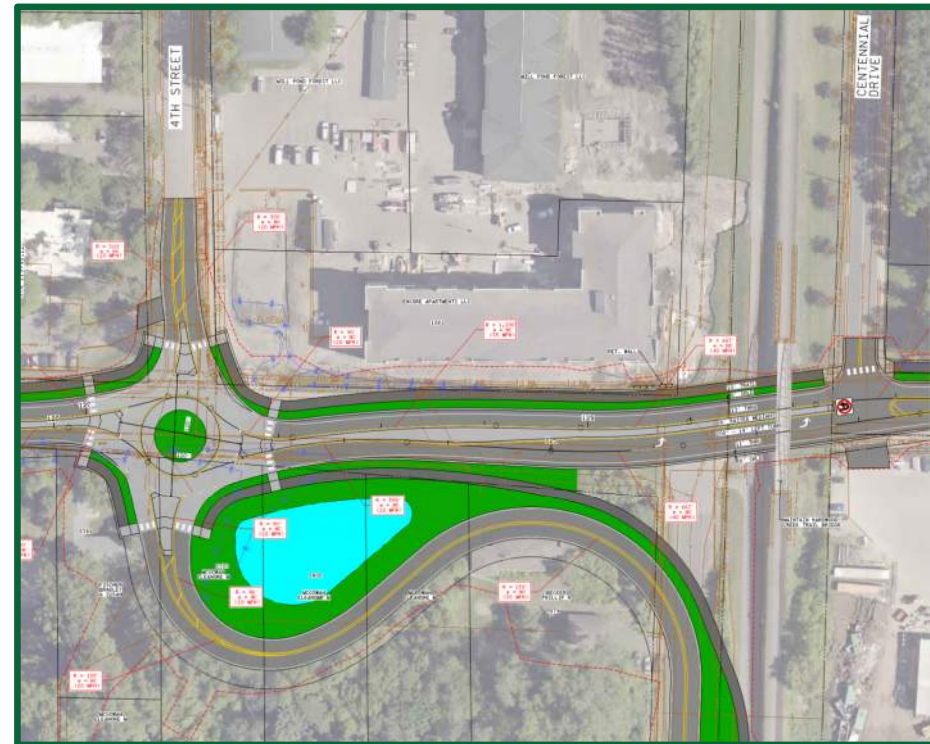
<p>Desired outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated bicycle and pedestrian facilities • Improved traffic safety • Access management • Improved pavement 	<p>Key Locations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12th Street SW Intersection • 4th Street SW Intersection • Forest Road N & Centennial Intersections • Highway 61/Lake Street Intersection
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Strategies:

- Stakeholder Meetings
- Open House August 2022
- Online Engagement

Project Design

- Three lane road section
 - Thru lanes, center left turn lane, and right turn lanes
- Pedestrian facility on north side of the road
 - Interstate 35 to Trunk Highway 61
- Stormwater management
- Realignment of Forest Road to 4th Street
 - Removes offset intersection
 - Allows 4-way intersection control
- New Signal at 12th Street
- New Roundabout at 4th Street/new Forest Road



Project Costs

	Project Total ⁺	Washington County	City of Forest Lake	City of Forest Lake	City of Forest Lake
		CSAH 32 Cost Share	CSAH 32 Cost Share	Forest Road Realignment	Total Project Costs
Project Engineering	\$ 1,370,000.00	\$ 1,027,500.00	\$ 246,600.00	\$ 95,900.00	\$ 342,500.00
Right-of-Way	\$ 1,975,000.00	\$ 888,750.00	\$ 411,250.00	\$ 675,000.00	\$ 1,086,250.00
Construction*	\$ 10,722,000.00	\$ 8,050,000.00	\$ 1,922,000.00	\$ 750,000.00	\$ 2,672,000.00
Construction Admin	\$ 1,011,520.00	\$ 644,000.00	\$ 153,760.00	\$ 60,000.00	\$ 213,760.00
Project Total	\$ 15,078,520.00	\$ 10,610,250.00	\$ 2,733,610.00	\$ 1,580,900.00	\$ 4,314,510.00
CDS Grant Share	\$ (5,000,000.00)	\$ (2,564,325.00)	\$ (854,775.00)	\$ (1,580,900.00)	\$ (2,435,675.00)
Total Project Costs ⁺	\$ 10,078,520.00	\$ 8,045,925.00	\$ 1,878,835.00	\$ 0	\$ 1,878,835.00

* Includes 10% Contingency

+ Based on 30% Deign

Next Steps

- Resolution of Support
 - City Council action agreeing to move forward with the project
- Begin Final Design
- Begin Right-of-Way Acquisition
 - Approx. 50 acquisitions
- Construction late 2027 → 2028
 - Tree clearing & surcharge late 2027
 - road open to traffic
 - Road construction 2028
 - Construction phasing to be worked through in Final Design
 - Potential cleanup / turf management 2029

**CITY OF FOREST LAKE
WASHINGTON COUNTY, MINNESOTA**

RESOLUTION NO. 10-25-21-02

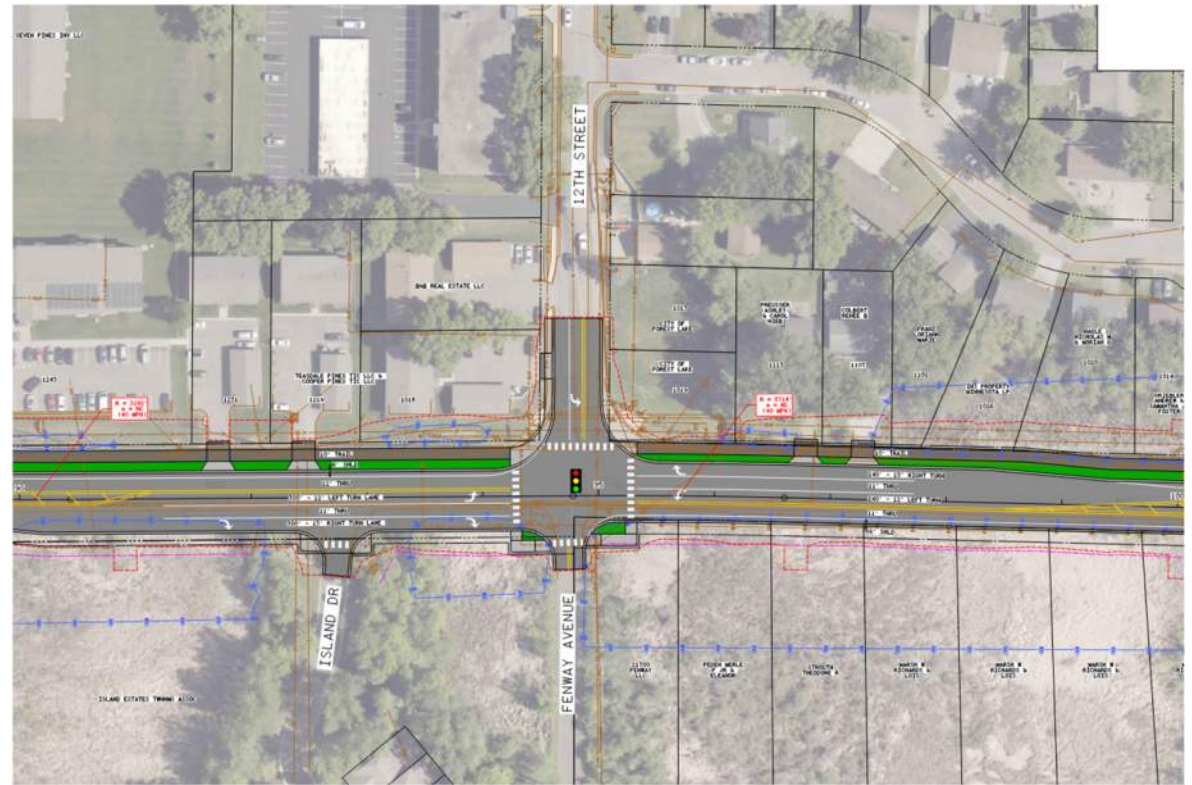
**A RESOLUTION OF SUPPORT FOR COUNTY HIGHWAY 33 IMPROVEMENT
PROJECT (COUNTY PROJECT NO. C.P. 13301)**

WHEREAS, Washington County has, through its Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) recommended a project on County State Aid Highway (CSAH) No. 33, also known as Everton Avenue, to improve pedestrian access and accommodations, the ride of CSAH 33, as well as safety; and

WHEREAS, the City of Forest Lake and Washington County have engaged in community engagement process as part of the preliminary design effort intended to gather and consider public feedback for the proposed improvements; and

Layout Review/Questions

- Questions?



STAFF REPORT



MEETING DATE: February 17, 2026
TO: City Council
STAFF ORIGINATOR: Steven Gilmore, AICP, Assistant Community Development Director
AGENDA ITEM: Overview of BOOST Code Modernization Effort

BOTTOM LINE UP FRONT

Better Ordinances (and) Ongoing Streamlined Transformation (BOOST) is a structural modernization of City Code Title XV (Land Use and Development) designed to improve clarity, predictability, and administrative efficiency without changing zoning districts, permitted uses, density standards, or underlying development policy. The work focuses on:

- (1) Clarifying decision-making authority currently implied in practice,
- (2) Consolidating and standardizing procedures; including development application pathways into a new Chapter 150,
- (3) Aligning the level of review with the scale and impact of proposals, and
- (4) Introducing clear graphics/process-flow illustrations to help residents, applicants, and agencies understand how applications move through the City.

PURPOSE

- Provide Council a high-level overview of BOOST.
- Summarize the work completed to date.
- Identify targeted process “pinch points” under evaluation.
- Provide examples of peer-city best practices supporting current and proposed work.
- Solicit Council feedback and policy direction before formal ordinance adoption steps.

BACKGROUND – WHY BOOST IS NECESSARY

Title XV has evolved incrementally through project-specific amendments and updates. While each amendment may have addressed a specific need, the cumulative effect can create complexity for residents, applicants, City boards, and staff.

BOOST strengthens the overall structure of Title XV by consolidating repeated procedural language, clarifying roles and decision pathways, and improving transparency and predictability.

BOOST addresses:

- Redundant or scattered procedural provisions
- Inconsistent terminology
- Authorities implied in practice but not clearly stated
- Time-consuming steps that may add calendar time without adding substantive decision value
- Limited visual guidance describing how applications move through review

WHAT BOOST IS (AND IS NOT)

BOOST Is:

- A structural and process-focused modernization of Title XV
- A transparency initiative making review pathways, roles, and thresholds easier to understand
- An effort to align review intensity with project scale while preserving public participation

BOOST Is NOT:

- A rezoning, comprehensive plan update, or rewrite of permitted uses
- A change to density, base development standards, or core policy direction
- A shift of legislative authority away from the City Council

ANALYSIS:

CURRENT BOOST FOCUS

1) Clarifying Authority and Defining Minor vs. Major Amendments

Issue

While Forest Lake’s code allows staff to make standards-based administrative determinations (e.g., completeness reviews, technical compliance checks, property line adjustments, final plat conformance review), much of that authority is implied rather than clearly defined.

Because the code does not consistently distinguish between minor and major amendments, even small adjustments to previously approved plans may default to elevation to a decision body. This can add calendar time without adding substantive policy review value.

BOOST Response

BOOST clarifies decision-making authority by explicitly defining categories of review and establishing objective thresholds so that review intensity aligns with project impact.

The framework distinguishes:

- **Administrative decisions:** Objective, standards-based determinations delegated to staff (e.g., completeness, technical compliance, minor amendments within defined thresholds).

- **Discretionary decisions:** Actions requiring findings, public review, and Planning Commission and/or Council approval.
- **Legislative decisions:** Policy-level actions reserved to the City Council (e.g., ordinance text or map amendments).

Minor vs. Major Amendments

BOOST proposes defining “minor” and “major” amendments using measurable guardrails.

- **Minor amendments (Administrative)**
Changes that remain within defined thresholds and do not alter density, land use, circulation patterns, required public improvements, or overall project character.
- **Major amendments (Discretionary)**
Changes that materially alter density, use, traffic circulation, open space, infrastructure obligations, or neighborhood impacts.

This structure preserves deliberative review for substantive changes while allowing efficient processing of technical or small-scale adjustments.

Peer City Example

Rosemount provides a strong model. Its code defines “major” site plan amendments using measurable triggers, including:

- Gross floor area increases beyond 5% (or 10% for an individual building)
- Open space reductions beyond 5%
- Significant circulation or parking changes

Changes below those thresholds may be approved administratively. This approach maintains oversight while preventing unnecessary delay.

Why This Matters

Clarifying authority and defining thresholds will:

- Reduce unnecessary escalation of minor adjustments
- Improve predictability for residents and businesses
- Allow Planning Commission and Council to focus on higher-impact decisions
- Strengthen defensibility by clearly tying discretion to defined findings

BOOST does not reduce oversight. It right-sizes oversight, preserving deliberative review where policy discretion exists, while enabling efficient administrative processing for minor changes.

2) Standardizing Language and Centralizing Shared Procedures – Draft Chapter 150

Issue

Procedural provisions are currently distributed across multiple chapters of Title XV. Similar processes are described in different ways, terminology is inconsistent, and shared requirements—such as notice standards, findings, completeness determinations, and sequencing rules—are repeated throughout the code.

This fragmentation can:

- Create confusion for residents and applicants
- Increase the risk of inconsistent interpretation
- Require navigating multiple chapters to understand a single application pathway
- Make the code more difficult to maintain or update
- Obscure how an application actually moves through the City’s review process

Over time, incremental amendments have added redundancy even where underlying policy has remained stable.

BOOST Response – New Chapter 150

BOOST introduces a new Chapter 150 (Land Use and Development Administration) to consolidate shared administrative and procedural provisions into a single, clearly structured framework.

Procedural items move to Chapter 150. Technical standards remain in their respective chapters.

In practical terms:

- Chapter 150 becomes the “how” of land use and development administration (process, authority, sequencing, findings, appeals, and enforcement).
- Individual chapters (e.g., Subdivisions, Site Plans, CUPs, PUDs) retain the “what”, the technical and substantive development standards.

This creates a consistent procedural foundation that other chapters reference rather than repeat, reducing redundancy while preserving all existing development standards.

Core Elements of Draft Chapter 150

- ***Centralized application and completeness standards***
Clear front-end requirements so applicants know when an application is ready for scheduling.
- ***Unified notice and hearing procedures, where appropriate***
Standardized public notice and sequencing to reduce duplication.
- ***Defined categories of decision-making authority***
Administrative, discretionary, and legislative distinctions aligned with impact.
- ***Consistent findings requirements***
Findings clearly tied to applicable standards.
- ***Appeals, enforcement, and cross-cutting provisions in one location***
A single procedural “hub” rather than repeated language across chapters.

Why This Matters

Chapter 150 would:

- Preserve all substantive development standards
- Improve transparency and usability
- Reduce redundancy and internal conflict within the code
- Make future amendments more efficient and targeted
- Strengthens defensibility by clearly separating process from standards

Importantly, Chapter 150 does not change land use policy or development criteria. It modernizes how those standards are administered.

3) Introducing Visual Graphics / Process-Flow Illustrations Within the Code

Issue

Title XV is almost entirely text based. While the written standards are substantive, the absence of visual process guidance makes it difficult to quickly understand:

- How an application moves through review
- When a public hearing is required
- What level of authority applies
- When findings are required
- When a change is administrative versus discretionary

As a result, applicants often rely on staff explanation rather than the code itself to understand sequencing and expectations. This can:

- Create confusion at the front end of projects
- Increase misinterpretation of process requirements
- Add time to intake and scheduling
- Reduce accessibility for residents and first-time applicants

The issue is not the substance of the process; it is the lack of clear visual communication.

Boost Response

BOOST introduces clear, simple graphics within Chapter 150 and related chapters to visually depict review pathways and authority levels. (See attached draft graphics for examples of the proposed look and feel.)

Proposed tools include:

- ***Application pathway charts***
Simple diagrams that show the difference between staff decisions, Planning Commission decisions, and City Council decisions.

- **Subdivision process charts**
Step-by-step visuals showing how a project moves from Concept Review → Preliminary Plat → Final Plat and recording.
- **Minor vs. Major change charts**
Clear visuals showing which changes staff can approve and which changes must go to a board or Council.
- **Appeal charts**
Diagrams show how and where decisions can be appealed.

Why This Matters

Incorporating graphics will:

- Improve transparency and accessibility
- Reduce front-end confusion for applicants and residents
- Shorten explanation time during intake and meetings
- Help decision-makers quickly understand review structure
- Reinforce internal consistency by clearly illustrating process intent

This is a modernization tool increasingly used in peer communities and professional planning documents. It does not alter policy or authority, it improves clarity and usability.

TARGETED PROCESS REFINEMENTS UNDER EVALUATION (ADDRESSING PROCESS PINCH POINTS)

A) Subdivision and PUD Review Sequencing Issue

Forest Lake's subdivision process, particularly when combined with PUD approvals, can involve layered and potentially duplicative public hearings across multiple stages (PUD, Preliminary Plat, Final Plat).

While each stage serves a purpose, the code does not clearly distinguish:

- When policy-level decisions are being made
- When subsequent stages are primarily conformance review
- When an amendment requires rehearing versus administrative review

As a result:

- Core issues (density, layout, traffic, neighborhood impact) may be revisited at multiple stages
- Public hearings may occur more than once on substantially the same policy questions
- Minor adjustments can unintentionally trigger full discretionary review

This creates uncertainty, extends timelines, and may not add additional substantive public value.

Peer Context

Most peer cities concentrate substantive public hearing review at the Preliminary Plat or Preliminary PUD, where core policy questions are addressed.

Subsequent stages (e.g., Final Plat) typically function as:

- Conformance review
- Recordation approval
- Administrative or limited review unless materially different

Peer cities commonly use guardrails such as:

- Density increase = major amendment (hearing required)
- Change in land use category = major amendment
- Significant site reconfiguration beyond defined percentage thresholds (often 5–10%) = major amendment
- Minor footprint shifts, parking adjustments, or technical refinements within thresholds = administrative

This approach limits hearings to the stage where policy decisions occur and avoids automatic repetition at Final Plat unless the applicant proposes material deviations.

BOOST Direction (Next Phase)

As a forward phase of BOOST, staff recommends evaluating land use application, subdivision and PUD sequencing with the goal of:

- Concentrating primary public hearings at the Preliminary Plat/PUD stage
- Limiting proposals to one public hearing unless material changes occur
- Clearly defining “material change” thresholds that trigger rehearing
- Clarifying that Final Plat functions primarily as a conformance step unless guardrails are exceeded
- Aligning Forest Lake’s structure more closely with peer city standards

Why This Matters

This refinement would:

- Reduce unnecessary duplication in layered approvals
- Preserving meaningful public participation where it has the greatest impact
- Improve predictability for residents and applicants
- Align Forest Lake’s process with common peer city practices
- Allow Planning Commission and Council to focus deliberation on substantive policy decisions

Importantly, this direction does not eliminate public hearings. It ensures hearings occur where policy discretion is exercised and avoids repeating the same deliberation at multiple stages without new information.

B) Neighborhood Meetings (Strategic Use for Meaningful Engagement)

Issue

Neighborhood meetings can be a valuable early engagement tool, particularly for larger or higher-impact projects. While the code does identify when a neighborhood meeting is required, it does not clearly define how the meeting fits within the overall review sequence or provide sufficient flexibility in timing and mechanics.

In addition, the current structure includes highly prescriptive logistical requirements (e.g., specific days of the week, time windows, and restrictions tied to certain dates). While well-intended, these constraints can limit flexibility and shift focus from meaningful engagement to procedural compliance.

As a result:

- Meetings may occur too late in the process to meaningfully inform project design
- The relationship between neighborhood meetings and formal public hearings may be unclear
- Rigid scheduling requirements may create delay without proportional public benefit
- Expectations may vary in practice across application types

The issue is not the value of neighborhood meetings, it is how and when they are implemented, and whether the framework allows for consistent, strategic application

BOOST Direction

As part of the next phase of BOOST, staff recommends:

- Establishing objective triggers for when a neighborhood meeting is required (e.g., project size, number of units, intensity changes, proximity to established neighborhoods).
- Clarifying sequencing so meetings occur early enough to inform project design before formal hearings.
- Allowing limited administrative discretion—within clearly adopted criteria—to waive or require a meeting.
- Aligning meeting requirements with project scale and anticipated community impact

Why This Matters

A clearer framework would:

- Preserve meaningful early engagement for higher-impact proposals

- Avoid unnecessary delays for low-impact or technical applications
- Improve predictability for applicants and residents
- Ensure neighborhood meetings serve a substantive purpose rather than functioning as a duplicative procedural step

This refinement maintains public participation while aligning engagement requirements with project scale and impact.

RECOMMENDATION

COUNCIL FEEDBACK REQUESTED

- Does the overall BOOST direction align with Council expectations for code modernization (clarity, predictability, transparency)?
- Are there specific process pinch points Council wants prioritized (e.g., subdivision sequencing, completeness, neighborhood meetings, minor change thresholds)?
- Are the proposed administrative guardrails (objective thresholds for “minor” changes) appropriate, or should staff explore different triggers?
- Are there stakeholder impacts Council wants specifically analyzed before draft ordinance language returns for formal action?

NEXT STEPS

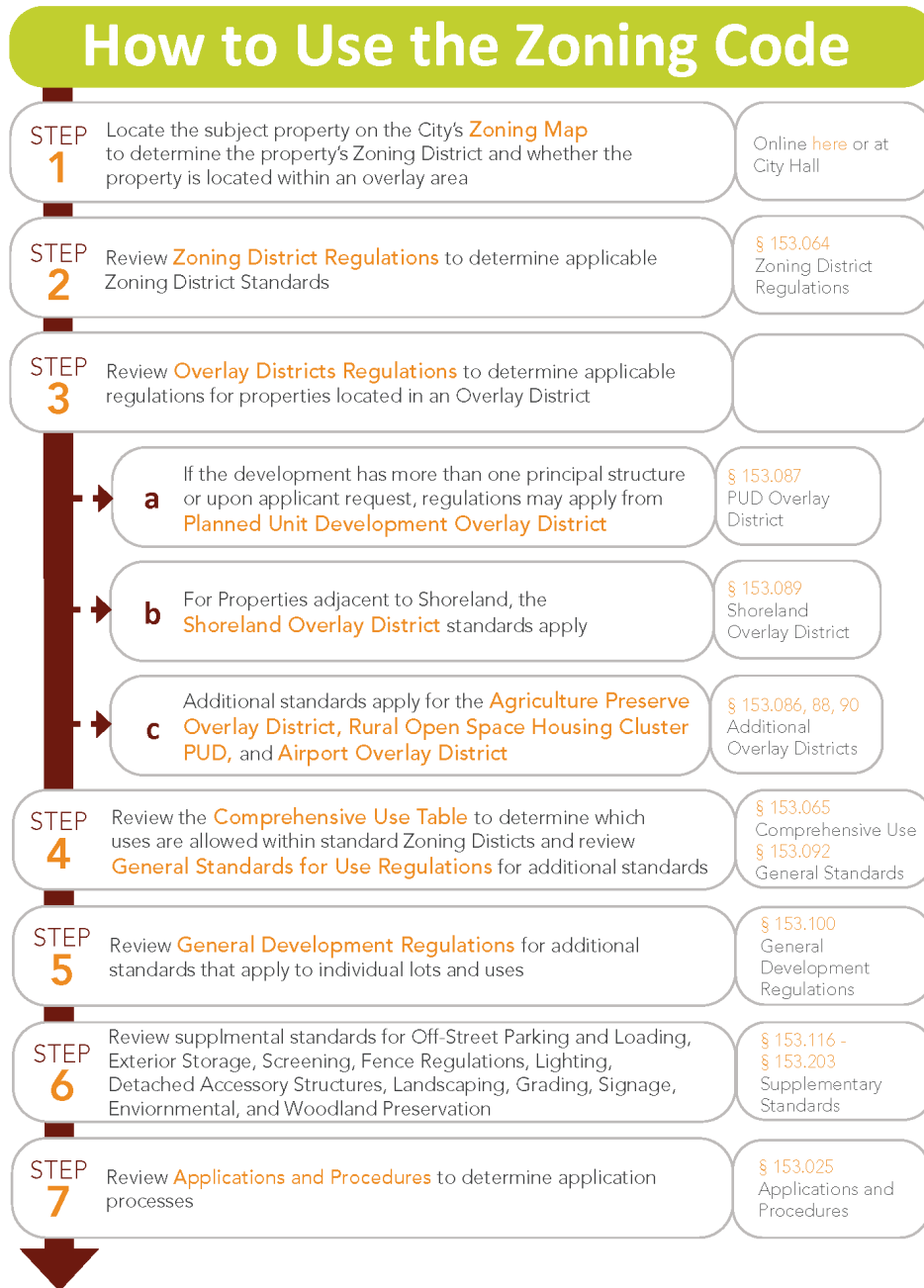
- Continue Planning Commission work sessions on Chapter 150 structure, language, and graphics.
- Draft refined ordinance language for Council consideration once direction is confirmed.
- Complete peer-city benchmarking on remaining process elements where Council desires comparison.
- Proceed through formal adoption steps (public notice/hearings as required) prior to any final ordinance changes.

ATTACHMENTS:

Graphic Example 1: How to Use Zoning Code

Graphic Example 2: Procedures Summary

Graphic Example 1: How to Use Zoning Code



Graphic Example 2: Procedures Summary

PROCEDURE	ZA	PC	CC
Site Plan	○	○	●
Administrative Adjustment	●	—	—
Zoning Variance	○	○	●
Conditional Use Permit	○	○	●
Interim Use Permit	○	○	●
Comprehensive Plan Amendment	○	○	●
Zoning Map Amendment	○	○	●
Zoning Code Text Amendment	○	○	●
Planned Unit Development			
Development Plan	○	○	●
Site Plan	●	—	—
Appeal of Staff Decision	○	○	●
Site Alteration Permit	●	—	—
Reasonable Accommodation	●	—	—

Table notes:

○ = review and recommendation

● = final decision

ZA = zoning administrator

PC = planning commission

CC = city council

STAFF REPORT



MEETING DATE: Tuesday, February 17th, 2026

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council

STAFF ORIGINATOR: Dave Adams, Public Works Director
Elle Larkin, Finance Director

AGENDA ITEM: 211 Fund Review

INTRODUCTION:

City staff, including Ryan Goodman (City Engineer), Dave Adams (Public Works Director), Mark Statz (City Administrator), and Elle Larkin (Finance Director), met multiple times to review Fund 211. The discussion stemmed from a broader revenue conversation related to state aid, grants, how incurred costs were recorded to fund 211, and other potential funding sources. As updated revenue information became available, staff determined it was necessary to reassess the fund balance and overall capacity of Fund 211. The goal was to ensure alignment between available resources and planned capital expenditures. This memo provides a brief overview of that discussion and the next steps for Council consideration.

ANALYSIS:

Based on current known revenues and expenditures, Fund 211 remains healthy but requires careful cash flow management. Staff reviewed project priorities and evaluated timing to ensure expenditures align with confirmed or reasonably anticipated funding sources. A key objective is to meet infrastructure needs without cutting into Local Road project funding. Staff will discuss the updated fund balance and seek Council direction on project sequencing moving forward.

ATTACHMENTS:

- 211 PowerPoint Overview (to be provided at the Workshop)

STAFF REPORT



MEETING DATE: February 17, 2026
STAFF ORIGINATOR: Mark Statz – City Administrator
AGENDA ITEM: 2026 City of Forest Lake Strategic Plan

INTRODUCTION: At the Council’s workshop on January 20, 2026, the Council reviewed draft Strategic Plan which included five (5) Strategic Priorities and a number of Action Strategies associated with each. Based on feedback from staff and council, we have prepared a revised set of priorities.

ANALYSIS:
See attached Strategic Priorities. The Action Strategies associated with these priorities have been left out of the discussion for now while we solidify the core pillars of the plan. If the Council is supportive of the four priorities presented, we will discuss a public engagement strategy.

RECOMMENDATION:
Discussion only.

ATTACHMENTS:
Strategic Plan Presentation

2026 Strategic Plan

Priority Statements



INVEST IN IMPROVED INFRASTRUCTURE	ATTRACT MORE BUSINESS, DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT
<p>Strong infrastructure is the foundation of a community and a core responsibility of public investment. With a forward-looking approach, we remain committed to advancing our capital improvement plans; ensuring reliable public services, thriving neighborhoods, and sustainable growth for years to come.</p>	<p>Growth reflects a thriving community, while redevelopment ensures long-term sustainability. By fostering conditions for continued private investment, we strengthen our tax base; reducing the financial burden on residents and supporting essential services that make Forest Lake <i>as good as it sounds</i>.</p>

2026 Strategic Plan

Priority Statements



<p style="text-align: center;">FOSTER COMMUNITY PRIDE</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">ENHANCE ORGANIZATIONAL RESILIENCE</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Forest Lake’s citizens care deeply about our community as shown by active organizations and strong support for public safety. The City will continue to strengthen this pride by modeling the same commitment we ask of our residents and businesses. True engagement means finding new and meaningful ways to listen and serve; building trust, fostering collaboration, and creating a community where every voice matters.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Forest Lake has navigated growth, economic shifts, and a pandemic. To reduce inefficiency and waste, we must continue to strengthen stability and build resilience; creating a steady, reliable organization that attracts investment and earns trust. This commitment positions Forest Lake to thrive now and into the future.</p>