

# City of Port St. Lucie

## City-Initiated Text Amendment

Chapter 154 – Landscaping Design Standards  
(P21-204)



## City Initiated Request:

The purpose of this amendment is to provide policy changes to permit air conditioning units in the front of the building. The purpose and intent of this amendment is to allow air conditioning units and mechanical equipment in the front of the building or facing the street, of property within Industrial, Warehouse, Commercial Service, and Utility zoning districts and ensure they are adequately screened with the appropriate landscaping, enclosures, or structures.



## Background:

In the past, the city received several variance requests to allow mechanical equipment in the front of the building, such as the University Park Business Center (P21-125) and Jenack III LLC in the Go Team Industrial Park (P21-130), and Gatlin Commons (P19-232)

Due to these variance requests for air conditioning units to be in the front yard of warehouse property, the Planning and Zoning Board directed that staff provide policy options to allow air conditioning units with adequate screening within zoning districts that allow warehouse and other industrial uses.

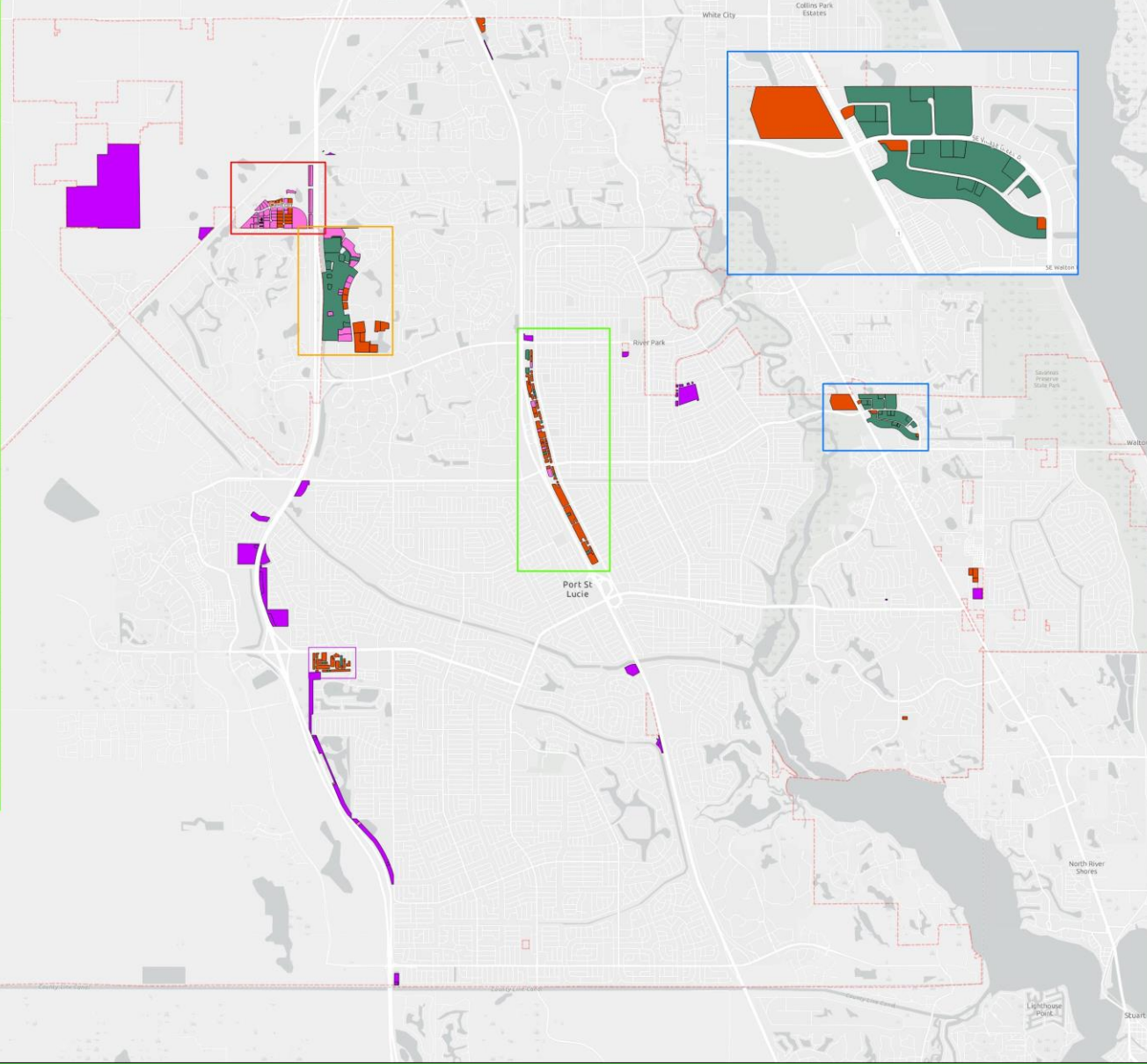
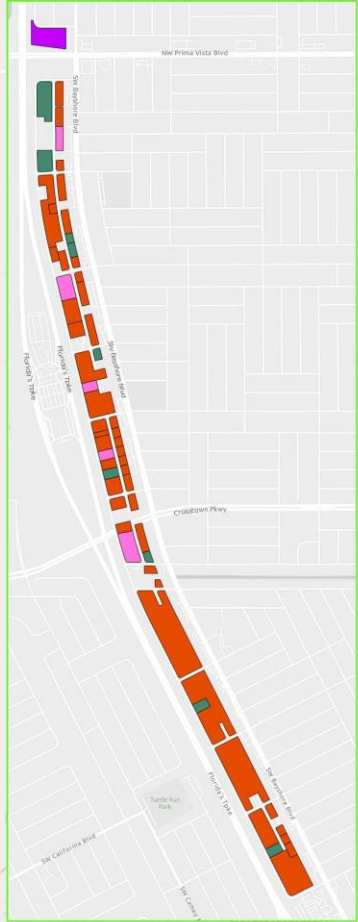
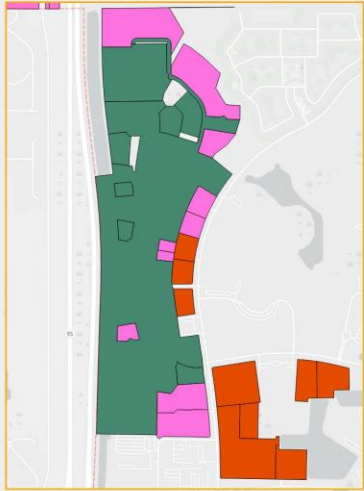
## Analysis:

Staff has researched several municipal codes from Palm Beach, Martin and St. Lucie Counties and has not found a city code that addresses air conditioning units in the front of buildings. Staff notes that should the City desire to allow air conditioning units in the front of commercial buildings and visible to right of ways, adequate screening of the units must be ensured. It is also potentially beneficial to limit the allowance to certain uses, such as industrial/warehouse uses.

# Analysis:

Staff has reached out to professionals in the air conditioning industry, and we find that:

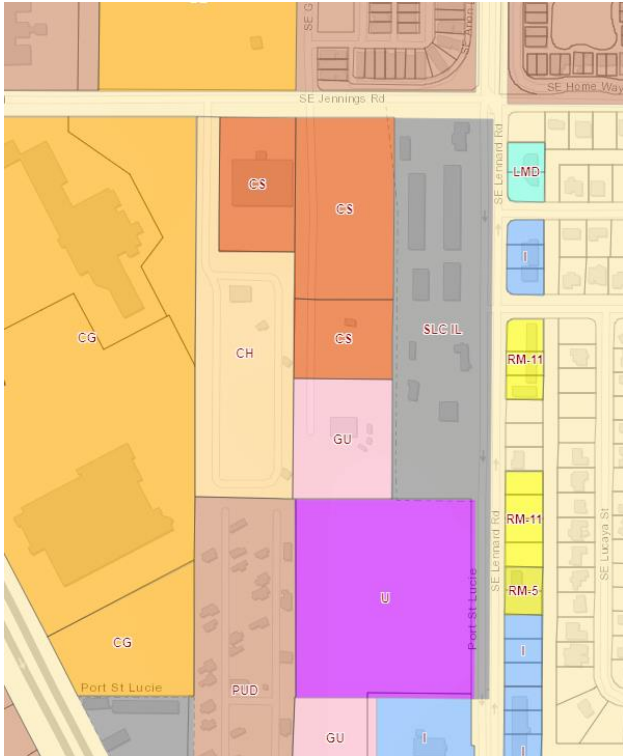
1. Manufacturing specs require, at minimum a foot separation around the unit. However, 2 feet or more is generally required.
2. From a mechanical, engineering and maintenance standpoint, a fence around the unit, even on one side, is not recommended. It can restrict airflow and space to service the unit.
3. Preferred is 2-3 feet around clear, a 4-foot hedge would be acceptable.
4. Normal sized compact units are 28" by 30". However, energy efficient units will be required expansion of pads to 35" by 35".
5. The space 5 feet above the unit must be clear.



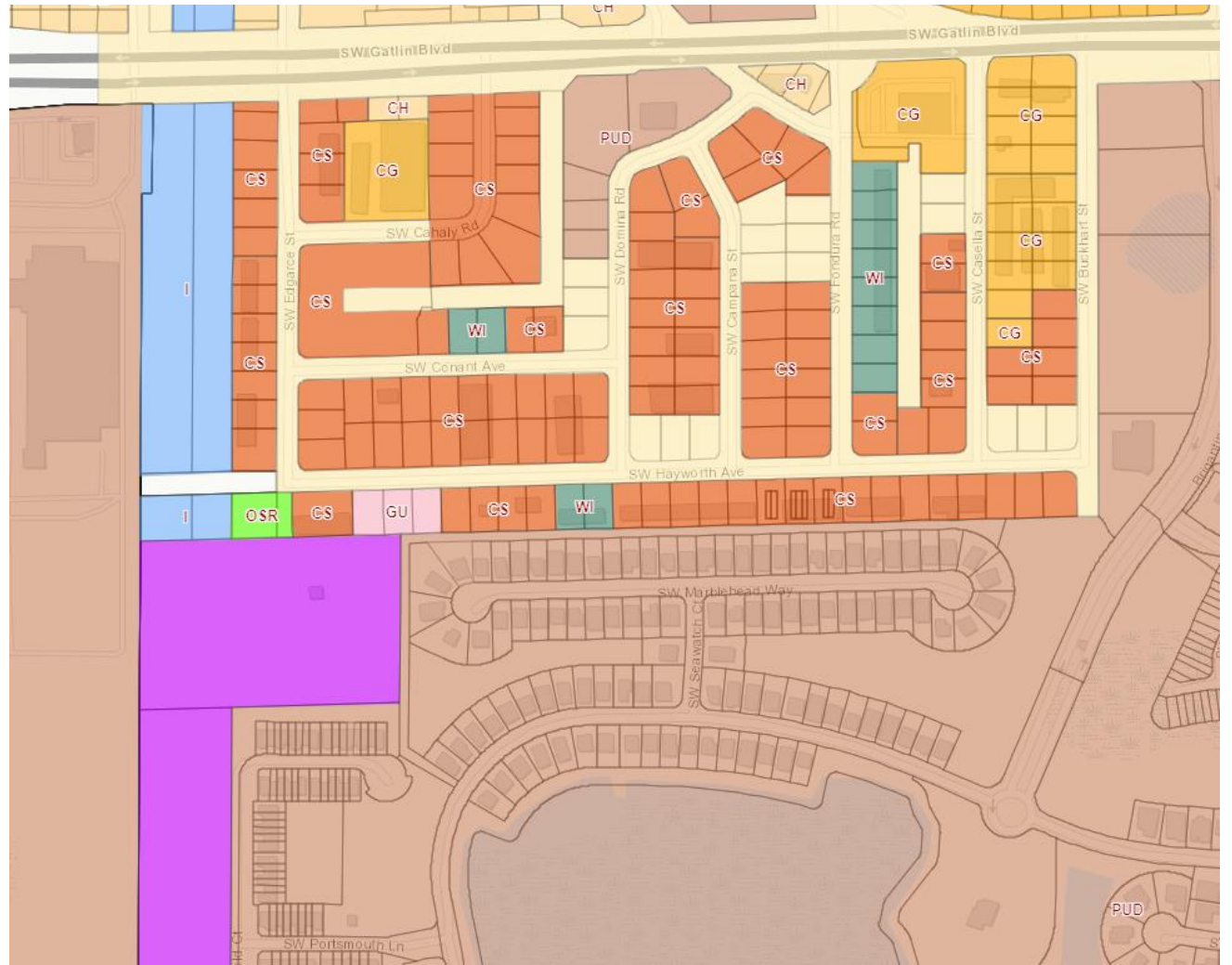
CityofPSL.com



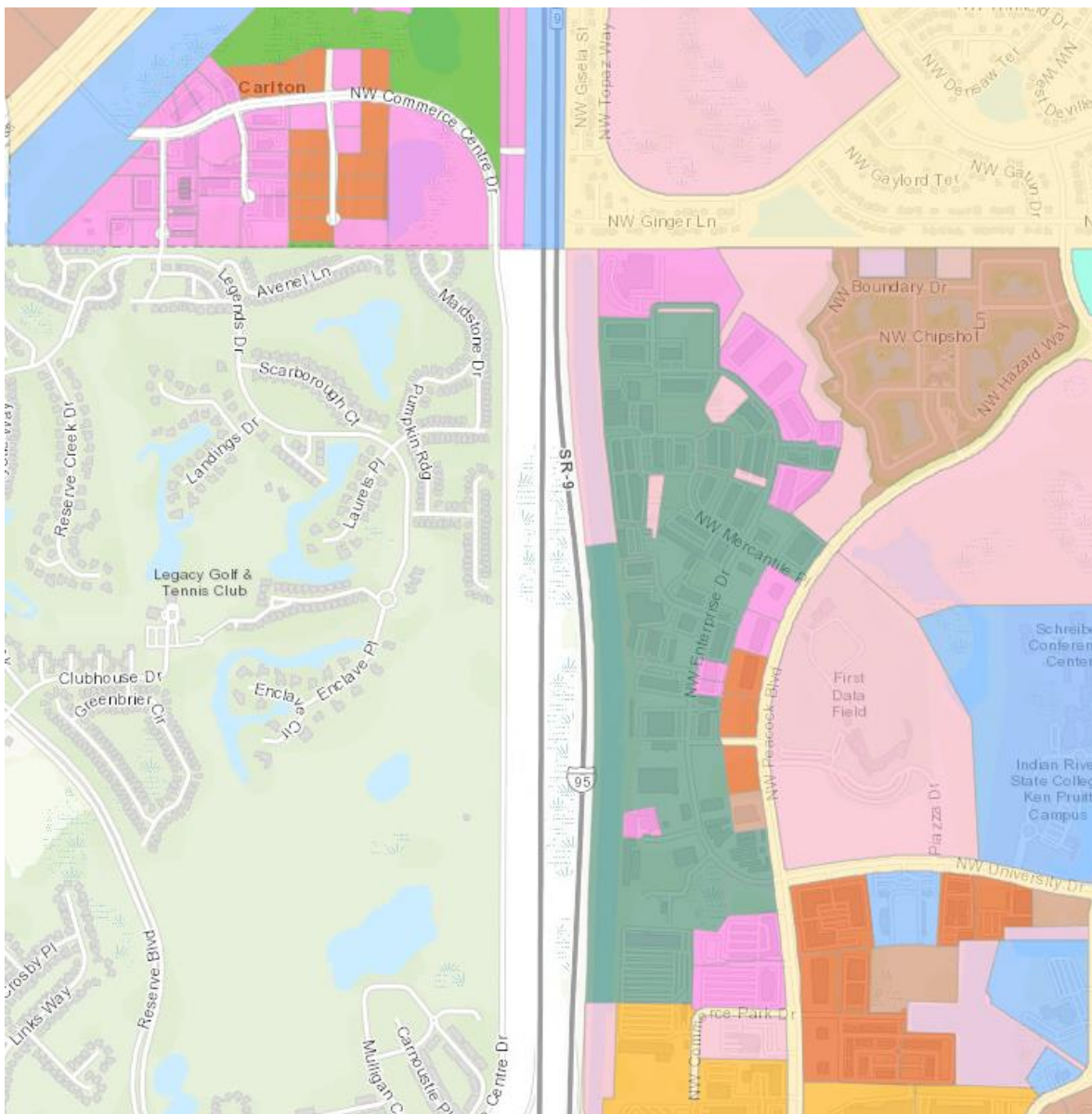
Areas of the City with IN (pink), CS (red), WI (green), and U (purple) zoning



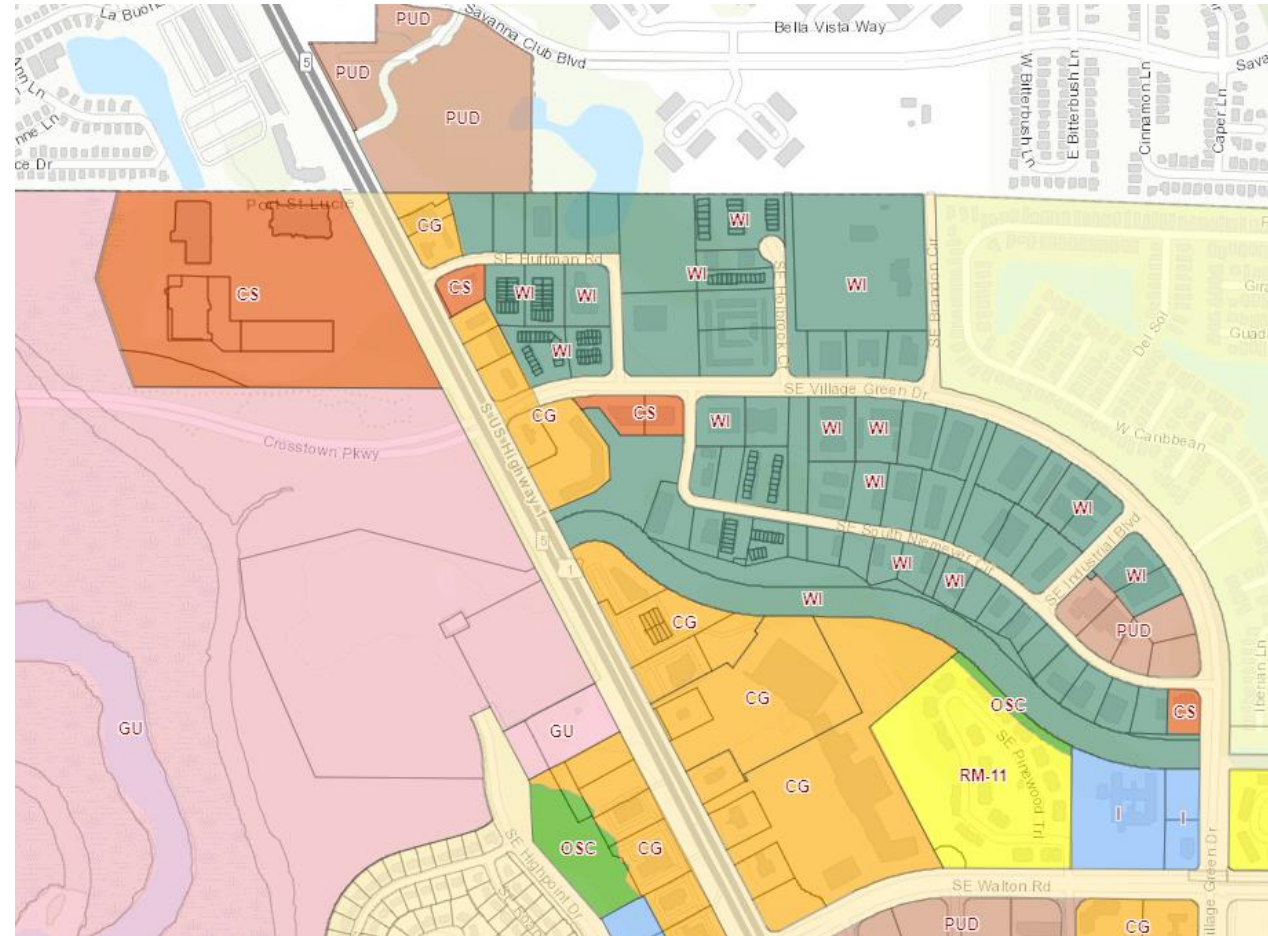
Lennard and Jennings



Gatlin Blvd near I-95

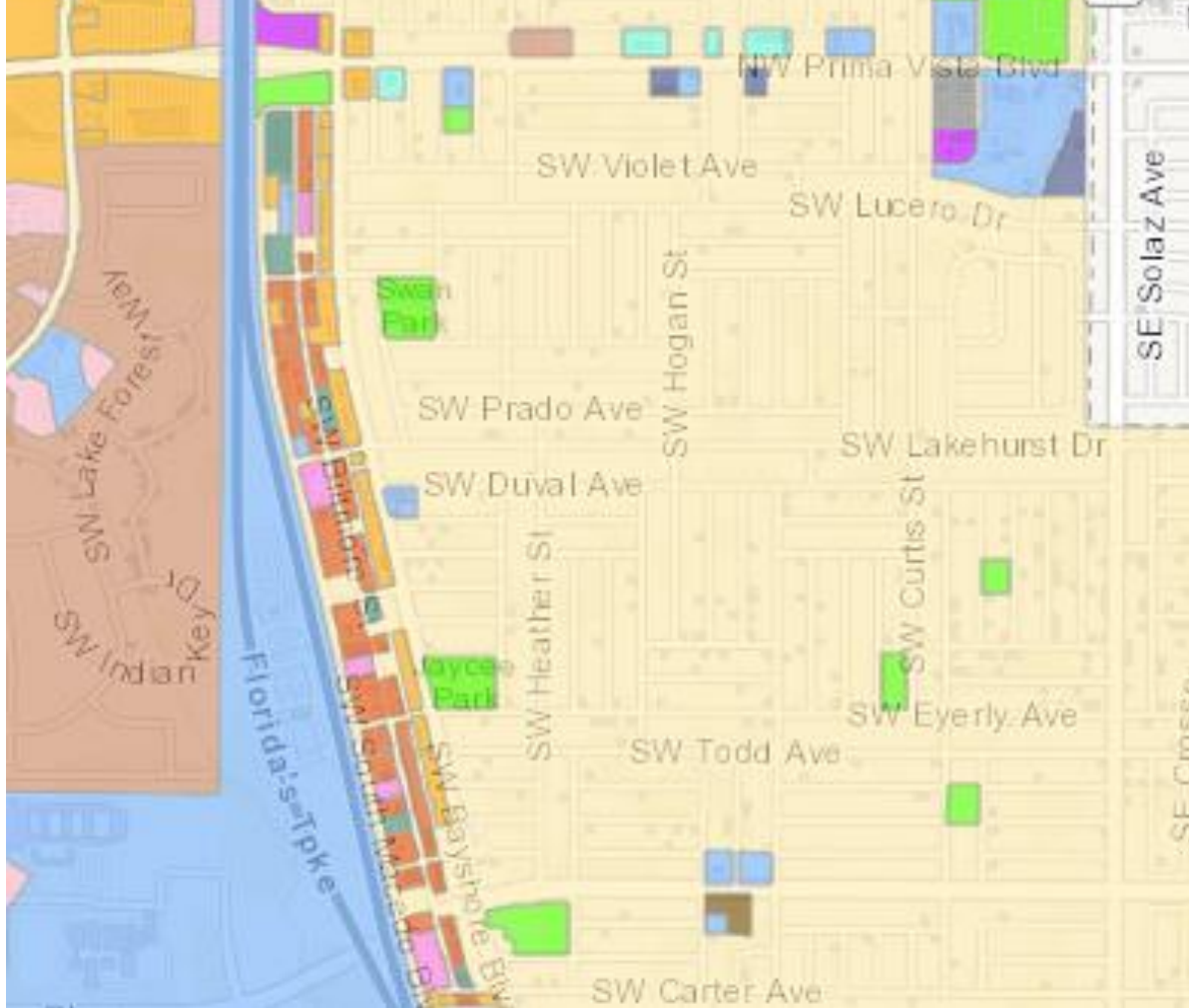


Commerce Center Dr / SLW  
(west of Peacock Blvd.)



Village Green Drive





Bayshore, north  
(Prima Vista to Crosstown)

Bayshore, South  
(Crosstown to PSL Blvd)



# Proposed Text Amendment:

(F) **Mechanical, Electrical, and Utility Equipment.** A hedge that is at least 24 inches in height when planted and that is spaced at least 24 inches on center shall be planted around mechanical, electrical, and utility equipment except where access to the equipment is necessary. Lift stations shall have a wall or fence located around the perimeter except where the gate is located. The gate shall be semi-transparent in order to allow for visual inspection of the equipment by the Utility Department. The lift station's alarm light shall be clearly visible above the wall or fence at all times. Hedging shall be located around the wall or fence.

Within the CG, CH, CN, LMD, and P zoning districts, air conditioning condensing ~~and~~ or compressor units shall not be located on a side or front of a building that faces a street right-of-way. Within the IN, WI, CS, and U zoning districts, all air conditioning condensing and compressor units shall be fully screened from view from residential properties or street rights-of-way at ground level on the property line. Screening shall consist of an opaque fence and a hedge of shrubs at least 24 inches in height when planted and spaced no greater than 24 inches on center around the entire AC unit or compressor, except where access to the equipment is necessary. Screening must be installed and maintained in a manner consistent with the architectural style, color, and materials of the principal use and the shrubs planted in a manner that is consistent with the approved landscaping plan.

## **P&Z Board Recommendation:**

On April 5, 2022, the Planning and Zoning Board voted to recommend approval of the proposed text amendment to the Landscaping Design Standards, with a typographical correction. Staff has made the correction to the proposed ordinance.

## **Staff Recommendation:**

Based on the low number of variance requests for AC units in the front yards (three requests over the past five years) and the different conditions in each area that this text amendment would apply to, staff recommends that the denial of the proposed zoning text amendment.

This will preserve the status quo and allow each request to be reviewed individually.