



City of Port St. Lucie Text Amendment
Chapter 158 – Zoning Code, Section 154.03
Project No. P21-204

SUMMARY

Applicant's Request:	An amendment to Chapter 158, Section 154.03
Applicant:	City of Port St. Lucie
Application Type:	Text Amendment to City's Land Development Regulations
Project Planner:	Stephen Mayer, Planner III

Background

The proposed amendment to Article XV- Land Use, Chapter 154.03 Landscaping Design Standards of Port St. Lucie Code of Ordinances (specific to Section 154.03(F)) is a staff-initiated Text Amendment. The purpose of this amendment is to provide policy changes to permit air condition units in the front yards. The purpose and intent of this amendment is to allow air conditioning units and mechanical equipment in the front yard of property within Industrial, Warehouse, Commercial Service, and Utility zoning districts and ensure they are adequately screened with the appropriate landscaping, enclosures, or structures.

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). The PZ board expressed interest in reviewing options to alleviate the number of variance requests. Staff is also aware that formal requests will be brought forward if the code remains unchanged.

The common discussion items for allowing mechanical equipment, such as air condition units include:

- The backs of the warehouse buildings typically include loading zones and loading gates, making it difficult to place necessary mechanical equipment adjacent to the rear of the building. Even when it is possible, placing bollards in front of the A/C units could protect the A/C units from being hit by vehicles. However, this would impact the use of the loading zone.
- Warehouses and commercial buildings are designed with flat roofs so that the A/C equipment can be located on the roof. The buildings could be designed to have a flat roof so that the A/C units could go on the roof. However, larger, heavier units are expensive to place on roofs, and difficult to screen with parapet walls. Due to the necessity to screen the air conditioning from public view, applicants must request variances to allow higher parapets that allowed by code.
- The purpose of the City code regarding A/C units is to foster the development of visually attractive streets and sites by not allowing A/C units to face the street. Hedging placed around the units would minimize, not prevent, the view of the units from the streets or entrances.
- Circumstances such as changes in use require additional or larger/heavier mechanical equipment than what the building was originally engineered for. When it is not feasible to place the

equipment in the read, sides or on the roof, or fabricate other solutions, the applicant is left no other choice but to request a variance, seeking to incorporate the units on exterior frontage of the building.

Analysis

Staff has researched several municipal codes from Palm Beach, Martin and St. Lucie Counties and has not found a city code that allows air condition units in the front of buildings. Staff noes that should the City desire to allow air condition 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.

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

Proposed Amendment

See attached Exhibit A. Changes to Section 154.03 are shown in ~~strikethrough~~ and underline format.

(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 a fence or wall that is at least 70% opaque and include a hedge of shrubs at least 24 inches in height when planted and spaced at least 24 inches on center around the entire AC unit or compressor, except were 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.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The Planning and Zoning Department staff recommends approval of the proposed amendment based on the analysis and findings, as noted in the staff report.

PLANNING AND ZONING BOARD ACTION OPTIONS: *

- Motion to recommend approval to the City Council
- Motion to recommend approval to the City Council with changes

- Motion to recommend denial to the City Council
- * Should the Board need further clarification or information from staff it may exercise the right to table or continue the hearing or review to a future meeting.