



City Council Report

Date: July 20, 2026

To: City Council

Through: Marc Heirshberg, Assistant City Manager

From: Nana Appiah, Development Services Director
Mary Kopaskie-Brown, Planning Director
Rachel Phillips, Assistant Planning Director

Subject: Mesa Zoning Ordinance text amendment (**2026 Zoning Code Refinement**)-
Proposed amendments to Title 11 Chapters 5, 6, 7, 8, 30, 31, 33, 34, 43, 67, 81, 86, and 87 of the Mesa City Code. (**Citywide**)

Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Planning and Zoning Board recommend that the City Council adopt the proposed Mesa Zoning Ordinance (MZO) 2026 Zoning Code Refinement text amendment.

On June 24, 2026, the Planning and Zoning Board voted to recommend (Vote: 5-0) that the City Council adopt the proposed Mesa Zoning Ordinance (MZO) Administrative Review text amendments with the condition that staff add new verbiage to Section 11-30-8(D) to allow the Planning Director or designee to consider alternative pedestrian walkway separation methods.

Purpose

Staff is recommending amendments to the Mesa Zoning Ordinance (MZO) to provide minor technical corrections, clarifications, and updates to improve clarity, consistency, and overall usability. The proposed amendments include refinements to definitions, development standards, land use regulations, and administrative procedures.

Details of the proposed text amendments are attached in Exhibit 1 – 2026 Zoning Code Refinement Ordinance. Specifically, the proposed text amendments:

1. Modify existing definitions for Boarding House, Home Occupations, Live/Work Unit, Indoor Warehousing and Storage, and property line terminology;
2. Add a new definition for Hazardous Material Warehousing and Storage and update the land use regulations table for Employment Districts;
3. Update select development and design standards for the Residential, Commercial and Mixed-Use, and Downtown Districts;
4. Revise standards in Chapter 30 related to street frontage requirements, pedestrian connections, ground-mounted equipment screening, and detached accessory buildings;

5. Revise standards in Chapter 31 related to Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), residential uses in commercial districts, and substation screening requirements for Data Centers and Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) Facilities;
6. Revise procedures in Chapter 67 related to written protests and City Council supermajority voting requirements.

Discussion

1. **Modify existing definitions for Boarding House, Home Occupations, Live/Work Unit, Indoor Warehousing and Storage, and property line terminology.**

Boarding House

Section 11-86-2 (Residential Use Classifications) currently defines Boarding Houses as a residential dwelling occupied by five or more unrelated individuals where lodging is provided for compensation.

Staff recommends revising the Boarding House definition to clarify that Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) may not be used as a Boarding House. ADUs are intended to serve as a secondary, self-contained residential unit accessory to a single residence and not for higher-occupancy rental arrangements that may alter the residential character and intensity of a neighborhood.

Home Occupations

The definition for Home Occupations in Section 11-86-2 (Residential Use Classifications) is recommended to be updated to the corresponding definition in Chapter 87.

Live/Work Unit

Section 11-86-4 (Commercial Use Classifications) currently defines a Live/Work Unit as a commercial or industrial unit with incidental residential accommodations. Staff recommends revising the definition to better reflect the intended function of a Live/Work Unit as a residential dwelling unit occupied by a single-unit household that incorporates an integrated workspace.

Live/Work Unit. *A dwelling unit occupied by no more than four (4) unrelated individuals, that is used primarily for residential purposes and where occupants(s) of the unit may conduct non-residential activities that are permitted within the zoning district in which the unit is located.*

Indoor Warehousing and Storage and Hazardous Material Warehousing and Storage

Section 11-86-5 (Employment and Industrial Use Classifications) currently defines Indoor Warehousing and Storage but broadly excludes the storage of hazardous materials. Staff has found that many modern Indoor Warehouses routinely store and distribute common consumer products, such as aerosols, cleaning supplies, and personal care products, that are considered hazardous materials under the International Fire Code. To address this issue, Staff recommends revising the definition to clarify that limited hazardous material storage may occur within Indoor Warehousing and Storage facilities, provided the quantities do not exceed thresholds established by the International Fire Code. The proposed amendment is intended to improve clarity and distinguish standard indoor warehousing uses from higher-intensity hazardous material storage uses.

Indoor Warehousing and Storage. A building or portion thereof used for the storage, distribution, or handling of goods and materials, including hazardous materials, provided that such hazardous materials do not exceed the maximum allowable quantity for High-Hazard Group H-1 or H-2 Occupancies as defined by the International Fire Code. The facility shall not contain more than three (3) control areas as defined by the applicable fire code.

Property Line Terminology

Chapter 87 currently includes definitions for Lot Line terminology. The recently adopted Administrative Review Text Amendment updated references throughout the Mesa Zoning Ordinance to use “property line” terminology instead of “lot line” terminology. Staff recommends adding Property Line definitions to Chapter 87 to ensure the definitions chapter is consistent with terminology currently used throughout the Ordinance.

2. Add a new definition for Hazardous Material Warehousing and Storage and update the land use regulations table for Employment Districts.

Section 11-86-5 (Employment and Industrial Use Classifications) currently does not include a land use classification specifically for facilities primarily engaged in the storage of hazardous materials. Staff recommends adding a new land use definition for Hazardous Material Warehousing and Storage to address the storage of hazardous materials that exceeds threshold proposed for Indoor Warehousing and Storage.

Staff then recommends updating Table 11-7-2: Employment Districts to permit Hazardous Material Warehousing and Storage in the Light Industrial (LI), General Industrial (GI) and Heavy Industrial (HI) Districts with approval of a Council Use Permit (CUP).

Hazardous Material Warehousing and Storage. A building or portion thereof used for the storage, distribution or handling of goods and materials that exceed the maximum allowable quantity for High-Hazard Group H-1 or H-2 Occupancies or contains more than three control areas as defined in the International Fire Code. Such facilities shall comply with all applicable local, state, and federal regulations governing hazardous materials.

3. Update certain development and design standards for the residential, commercial and mixed-use and Downtown Districts.

Required Entryway Monumentation

As part of the recently adopted Administrative Review Text Amendment, Section 11-5-4 (Site Planning and Design Standards for the RS and RSL Districts) established requirements for entryway monumentation features within residential subdivisions. The current language requires monumentation at two neighborhood access points where a subdivision street intersects an arterial or collector street but does not clearly address subdivisions with fewer than two access points.

Staff recommends revising the standard to clarify that subdivisions with two or more access points must provide monumentation at a minimum of two locations, while subdivisions with only one access point are required to provide monumentation at that location.

Minimum Use of Primary Materials

Section 11-5-4 currently limits the use of any one primary exterior building material to no more than 85% of each façade. Staff recommends revising the standard to specify that the limitation applies to publicly visible façades, which is consistent with the intent of this design standard.

Colors

Sections 11-6-4 (Commercial and Mixed-Use Districts) and 11-8-6 (Downtown Business and Downtown Core Districts) currently require buildings larger than 10,000 square feet to use two exterior colors on every publicly visible façade. Staff recommends revising the standard to clarify that buildings must use at least two exterior colors on each publicly visible façade.

4. **Revise standards in Chapter 30 related to street frontage requirements, pedestrian connections, ground-mounted equipment screening, and detached accessory buildings.**

Street Frontage Requirements

Section 11-30-6 (Lots and Land Divisions) currently requires every lot to have frontage on a dedicated public or private street. Staff recommends revising the standard to allow internal lots within a platted group commercial, office, and industrial (C-O-I) development that contains a recorded cross-access easement. The proposed amendment is intended to provide additional site design flexibility while ensuring adequate access is maintained.

Pedestrian Connections

Section 11-30-8 (Pedestrian Connections) currently allows pedestrian walkways adjacent to auto lanes to be separated by a raised curb, decorative bollards, or another physical barrier. Staff recommends revising the standard to require a raised curb separation and remove decorative bollards as an alternative separation method. The proposed amendment is intended to improve pedestrian safety.

At the June 24, 2026 Planning and Zoning hearing, the Board requested that staff add verbiage to the above-referenced code section to allow the Planning Director or designee to consider alternative separation methods, in lieu of a raised curb, so long as the alternative provides an equal or greater physical separation from the pedestrian walkway. Staff revised the proposed standard as follows:

D. Separation. Where a pedestrian walkway is parallel and adjacent to an auto lane, it must be raised and separated from the auto travel lane by a raised curb at least **SIX (6)** inches high, ~~decorative bollards, or other physical barrier.~~ **ALTERNATIVE SEPARATION METHODS MAY BE APPROVED BY THE PLANNING DIRECTOR OR DESIGNEE UPON A FINDING THAT THE PROPOSED DESIGN PROVIDES EQUAL OR GREATER PHYSICAL SEPARATION FROM THE PEDESTRIAN WALKWAY.**

Ground-Mounted Mechanical Equipment Screening

Section 11-30-9 (Screening) currently requires ground-mounted equipment to be screened using walls, berms, and landscaping. Staff recommends revising the standard to allow vinyl artistic wraps as an alternative screening method for electrical transformers, subject to approval by the Planning Director or designee. The proposed amendment is intended to provide additional design flexibility while maintaining the intent of the screening standards.

Detached Accessory Buildings

Section 11-30-17 (Detached Accessory Buildings) currently requires detached accessory buildings to maintain a minimum separation of six feet from primary residences and other detached structures. Staff recommends reducing the minimum separation requirement from six feet to five feet to align with current Building Code standards.

5. **Revise standards in Chapter 31 related to Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), residential uses in commercial districts, and substation screening requirements for Data Centers and Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) Facilities.**

Accessory Dwelling Units

Section 11-31-3 (Accessory Dwelling Units) currently establishes standards for attached and detached ADUs. Staff recommends revising the standards to clarify that ADUs may not be used as boarding houses and to require a minimum five foot separation between detached ADUs, primary residences, and detached accessory structures, consistent with current Building Code requirements.

Large Commercial Developments

Section 11-31-16 (Large Commercial Development) currently requires all building entries designed for general public and customer access to incorporate specific design elements. Staff recommends revising the standard to clarify that the requirement applies to **anchor** building entries to improve clarity.

Residential Uses in Commercial Districts

Section 11-31-31 (Residential Uses in Commercial Districts) currently establishes standards for residential development within commercial zoning districts but does not specify which development standards apply to these projects. Staff recommends revising the standards to clarify that residential projects in commercial districts shall comply with the MX District development standards, as these projects are often developed as mixed-use projects.

Data Centers and Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) Facilities

Sections 11-31-36 (Data Centers) and 11-31-37 (Battery Energy Storage System Facilities) currently establish development standards for substations and related equipment, including screening and opacity requirements for decorative louvered, slatted, or perforated screening elements. Staff recommends revising the standards to clarify the required opacity ranges for these screening elements and ensure consistent application of the development standards.

6. **Revise procedures in Chapter 67 related to written protests and City Council supermajority voting requirements.**

Section 11-67-4 currently establishes procedures related to written protests and supermajority voting requirements for certain City Council actions. Staff recommends revising the section to align with A.R.S. § 9-462.04 and reorganize the existing procedures for improved clarity and administration.

Citizen Participation

Website Posting:

A draft of the proposed text amendments was posted on the Long Range Planning website on May 7, 2026, and an email send to stakeholders letting them know if was ready for review and comments.

Open House:

Stakeholders from the Long Range Planning subscription list, Development Advisory Forum, and electric vehicle and drone industries were invited to a virtual open house on May 27, 2026, to discuss the proposed text amendments.

- Nine people attended the open house.
- Attendees had the following questions and/or comments:
 - Does the limit of three containment areas for Warehousing and Storage apply per building or tenant space.
- Staff provided the following response to the questions/comments:
 - Staff indicated that they would like to follow up with the Chief Building Official to ensure an accurate response was provided. Staff followed up with an email on 6/2/2026 confirming that the three containment area applied per building.

Individual Meetings:

Staff met with Valley Partnership on May 26, 2026, to discuss the proposed text amendments. Valley Partnership staff had a couple of clarifying questions on the proposed text amendments which City Staff answered.

Implementation

Staff recommends the ordinance approving the proposed text amendments become effective 30 days from the date of City Council approval.

Exhibits

Exhibit 1 – 2026 Zoning Code Refinement Ordinance

Exhibit 2 – 2026 Zoning Code Refinement

Exhibit 3 – Public Comments