



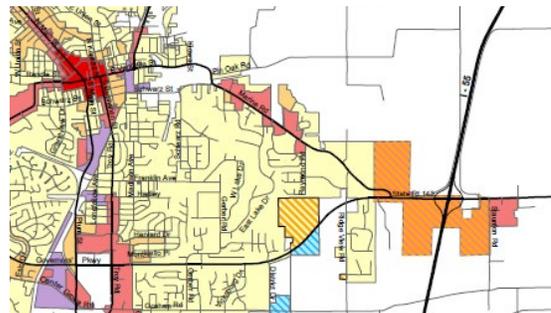
Memorandum

To: Emily Fultz, AICP – City Planner, City of Edwardsville
From: Michael Blue, FAICP – Principal, Teska Associates
Date: May 7, 2020
RE: **City of Edwardsville Zoning Ordinance Update: I-55 Zoning Corridor**

As the City begins updating the I-55 Corridor District regulations, confirming its goals for the area is an important first step in the process. After all, zoning isn't just a set of rules for development, it is rules for development to bring about the built and natural environments desired by the community. To that end, the update process begins by considering the big picture, the context in which the regulations function. We ask questions related to how development of the I-55 Corridor District can best bring the community what it seeks. This memo helps to frame those questions and the update process.

Why Update the I-55 Corridor District?

Let's start with a basic question, why have an I-55 Zoning Corridor District? The I-55 Zoning Corridor was established with the ideal of having attractive office park, residential, and town center development in the I-55 corridor. The District resulted from thoughtful planning by the City of Edwardsville, Madison County and Glen Carbon, and is intended to create a desirable area along and near I-55, with a focus around the Rt. 143 interchange.



So, the next logical question is why change the I-55 Zoning Corridor District? The general intent defined by the district remains consistent with community goals, however, the current "form-based" zoning around which the I-55 District regulations are structured no longer represents the best regulatory approach. Form-based regulations are best suited for mostly developed areas where a City seeks to preserve existing character (some of those techniques were applied in updating the B-1 Downtown District). The character of the I-55 District, however, is much different: a large scale area to be developed over a long timeframe. The flexibility required for development to be responsive to changing real estate market conditions suggests that a more conventional zoning approach is needed.

Principles of Development

The current I-55 District regulations present with a set of principles for development of the area. As noted above, the first update step is to confirm those principles remain valid, or refine them as appropriate. Therefore, just as the regulatory tools will be updated, City goals of the area may also be refined. This update is by no means a new plan for the area; to the contrary, it will build on existing

principals in establishing a revised regulatory approach. The Purpose Statement for the I-55 Zoning Corridor (Section 1.1 of City Code Appendix I) details the principles for development, which are summarized below:

1. *Citizen and community involvement.*
2. *City-wide and regional connections.*
3. *Transit system connections.*
4. *Appropriate building densities and land.*
5. *Economically viable.*
6. *Neighborhood form.*
7. *Design for the human scale.*
8. *Mixed-use.*
9. *Street network.*
10. *Public open space.*
11. *Architectural character.*
12. *Safety and civic engagement.*
13. *Stormwater planning and control.*

The City of Edwardsville Comprehensive Plan also provides goals for the I-55 Commercial Corridor:

- *The City will continue to explore opportunities to promote and recruit knowledge-based development within the corporate limits, particularly within the I-55 Corridor Plan project area on the City's eastern boundary.*
- *Preserve the high aesthetic quality and public safety interests when considering signage standards along the I-55 corridor, state highways and major arterials while recognizing individual uses' need for identity and visibility.*
- *This area has the most potential for attracting large-scale businesses due to the prominent regional access it offers. Such regional access opens up a larger market area for prospective businesses. This is a prominent area that Edwardsville should be marketing for major prospective developments.*

Clearly, past plans and regulations for the corridor envision an attractive area that adds to Edwardsville's quality of life and builds on its strong business environment. The zoning update will carry on those objectives.

Recent Development Activity

In considering future appearance of an area, it is wise to see what's there now, and whether it reflects local objectives. Among the more prominent developments in the corridor are three existing headquarter office buildings clustered at Route 143 and Staunton Road: Scott Credit Union, Hortica Insurance, and Prairie Farms Dairy. The buildings were not built to the regulations of the form-based I-55 District. Their most striking difference is their setback from the road (to varying degrees), behind parking fields. The question to consider is the extent to which these buildings and the sites represent a desirable development form.





Another major development in the area is the nearly complete Plummer Family Park. This facility is notable not so much from a zoning or development perspective, but in how it will advance goals related to human scale, public open space, and economic viability for the area. From a zoning perspective, the City may consider the need for more open space in the District, possibly as part of future development.

Two recently approved developments coming to the corridor have highlighted challenges in using the current form-based regulations. Both were developed as planned unit developments to provide relief from strict applications of the current codes.

Providence Presbyterian Church is scheduled to break ground this Spring on Route 143. City approval of the church noted that the use is in keeping with the intent of the Corridor Zoning, but the requirement for a “build to line”, with the structure up close to the street, was impractical. Given that church patrons would be driving and seeking convenient access to the building, the main entrance would be naturally oriented toward the parking lot, leaving the “back” of the building facing the street – not an attractive or desirable building layout. The build to line requirement also conflicted with the drainage pattern of the property, which necessitated locating a detention area toward the front of site. These are both examples of how a strict form-based requirement can create practical difficulties for development.

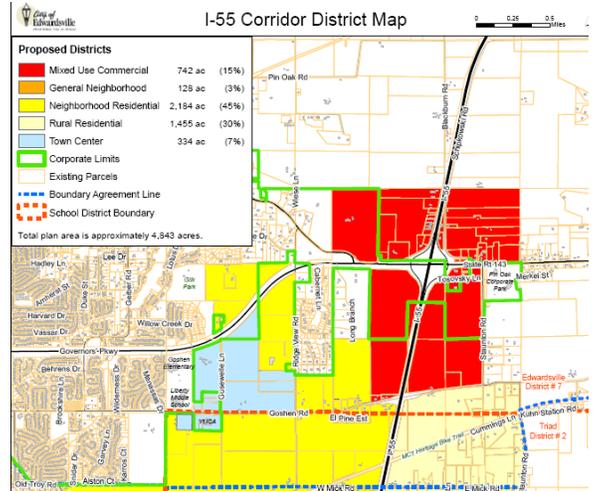
A second example is the **Anderson Goshen Campus** on Goshen Road. Most noteworthy regarding the I-55 Corridor zoning was the requirement for transparent windows. These generally are considered desirable in walkable areas so that first floor locations are pedestrian friendly, with visually appealing depth rather than blank walls or blocked windows. (NOTE: A transparency requirement was added to the downtown zoning update.) However, in this case, that transparency would have created privacy issues for patients. Further, due to the medical use and specific needs of the operator, the district requirements for minimum building size and multiple story buildings could not be met and required zoning relief. Specifically, a larger building would have required more parking (which the site could not accommodate) and multiple stories was not in keeping with the type of medical operation planned. While the City was able to find a middle ground to meet the code’s intent for quality development and the operator’s needs, a more straightforward zoning approach could have facilitated a more effective process.



Questions to Consider

The I-55 District update will seek a balance between a more straightforward development process and the quality of development sought through the district principles. To do this, the update process will key in on several questions:

- What should development in the area look like?
- What forms (office, commercial, residential, recreational) should development take in the area?
- What should the development process be like – PUD, by right, review of appearance?
- How much flexibility should be part of the development standards in terms of process, use and design?
- Is the notion of a neighborhood commercial district in the area still a City goal?
- Do office developments currently in the District (Scott Credit Union, Hortica Insurance and Prairie Farms) reflect the City’s design goals for the area?
- Do the new residential subdivisions near the I-55 District set an appropriate standard for neighborhood design and mix of housing types in the area?



Next Steps

The questions asked here will be considered through a series of workshops and discussions, which will be done virtually due to the pandemic. Participants will include City elected and appointed officials, as well as local stakeholders and the Zoning Advisory Group. Insights and direction from those discussions will be used to refine the I-55 Corridor District regulations to define an effective and efficient development process.