



NORTH BRANCH

—Minnesota—

**PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR AGENDA
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2025 @ 5:30 PM
CITY HALL, 6408 ELM STREET, NORTH
BRANCH, MN 55056**

Open
Chair

Gary Shaefer
Commissioner

Open
Commissioner

Patrick Meacham
Commissioner

Steve Cich
Commissioner

1. CALL TO ORDER
2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
3. ROLL CALL
4. AGENDA APPROVAL
 - a. Approve Agenda
5. REPORTS
 - a. Interstate Business Park Design Standards
6. ADJOURNMENT

ACTION

ACTION



Prepared By: Nathan Sondrol, Community Development Director

Presenter: Nathan Sondrol, Community Development Director

Date: 01/30/2025

Board & Commission: Planning Commission

Subject: Interstate Business Park Design Standards

Overview / Background

In July 2024, the City Council with recommendation from the Planning Commission updated the design standards for properties in Zone 3 of Section 66-943 of the City Code. These modifications to the designed standards allowed for 2 existing businesses to expand and establish new facilities in North Branch.

The recent updates to the design standards have spurred more conversations among potential businesses, developers and staff about the design standards and the impact on the “new industrial park” with the City-owned land. The park has been vacant for many years, and it could be helpful to consider if the design standards are providing the intended benefit to the City.

City staff recently conducted presentations and marketing efforts of the Interstate Business Park and received feedback on the design standards.

Mr. Scott Thompson, Vice President, TrueBlue Commercial, attended one of the presentations and indicated that he would be willing to attend a meeting to discuss his observations and experiences with the City's design standards in Interstate Business Park. Mr. Thompson will be attending the meeting to discuss this with the EDA and Planning Commission.

Attached is the City Code listing the design standards and the design standards zone overview map.

Requested Action

To provide direction/input on further review of the design standards for the Interstate Business Park.

Attachments

1. City Code Section 66-943 Design Standards
2. Design Standards Overlay District Zone Map

Voting Requirements:

Voting Options Simple Majority

Sec 66-943 Design Standards

a) The zones set forth in this Section are defined in the design overlay [district map](#) on record with the City Clerk.

b) Architectural Standards. The requirements contained within this Division shall not apply to any structure in the Agricultural, Rural Residential or Park/Open Space districts. It shall apply to all structures used for commercial purposes in Single-Family Residential, Medium Density Residential, and High Density Residential, all structures in the Central Business, Commercial, and Industrial Districts.

These standards are intended to ensure coordinated design of new and existing building exteriors, including additions and accessory structures, in order to prevent visual disharmony; minimize adverse impacts on adjacent properties from buildings which detract from the character and appearance of the district; and aid in improving the overall economic viability of the district. These standards are further intended to prevent use of materials that are unsightly, subject to rapid deterioration or which contribute to depreciation of property values or cause urban blight. It is not the intent of this Section to unduly restrict design freedom when reviewing and approving project architecture in relationship to the proposed land use, site characteristics and interior building layout. While the City of North Branch has not established a theme or particular style of architecture that must be adhered to, a general goal of creating a professional appearance with architectural appeal associated with a small city atmosphere is desired within the City of North Branch.

(1) Architectural plans shall be prepared by an architect or other qualified person (as determined by the Zoning Administrator) and shall show the following:

- (a) Elevations of all sides of the building.
- (b) Type and color of exterior building materials.
- (c) Typical floor plans.
- (d) Dimensions of all structures.
- (e) The location of trash containers and of exterior electrical, heating, ventilation, and air conditioning equipment.
- (f) Utility plans including water, sanitary sewer, and storm sewer.
- (g) Additional plans deemed necessary by the Zoning Administrator.

(2) Exterior building materials shall be subject to Zoning Administrator approval and the following:

(a) Zone 1: Structures must provide a cohesive architectural appearance reflecting its functional purpose and must be composed of at least sixty-five percent (65%) Class I materials; not more than thirty-five percent (35%) percent Class II materials.

(b) Zone 2: Structures must provide a cohesive architectural appearance reflecting its functional purpose and must be composed of at least fifty percent (50%) Class I materials; not more than thirty-five percent (50%) percent Class II materials.

(c) Zone 3: Structures must provide a cohesive architectural appearance reflecting its functional purpose. Structures in this zone are not subject to material composition requirements by Class. All other design standards in this Section apply unless otherwise listed.

(d) Classes of materials. For the purposes of this subdivision, exterior materials shall be divided into Class I and Class II categories as follows:

- 1. Class I consisting of:

- i. Brick,
- ii. Natural stone (or similar appearing, high quality manufactured stone),
- iii. Glass curtain wall,
- iv. Copper,
- v. Other comparable or superior materials, or
- vi. New materials that meet the intent of the preamble above.

2. Class II consisting of:

- i. Specialty concrete block such as burnished, textured or rock face,
- ii. Architecturally precast concrete panels having an exposed aggregate, light sandblast, acid etch, form liner, smooth as cast, tooled, natural stone veneer, brick face and/or cast stone type finish,
- iii. Masonry stucco,
- iv. Fiber-cement exterior siding,
- v. Other comparable or superior materials,
- vi. New materials that meet the intent of the preamble above.
- vii. Exterior finish installation system (EFIS),
- viii. Opaque panels,
- ix. Ornamental metal,
- x. Smooth concrete block,
- xi. Scored concrete block,
- xii. Smooth concrete tilt-up panels,
- xiii. Glazed block,
- xiv. Glass block,
- xv. Ceramic,
- xvi. Other comparable or superior materials, or
- xvii. New materials that meet the intent of the preamble above.

(e) A distinctly different color of brick may be considered as a second Class I material, however, minor blended color combinations shall not be considered as a separate material.

(f) Buildings may be constructed primarily of one (1) specific Class I material provided that the design fits the purpose of the building and is obviously superior to the general intent of this Division to provide visual interest, variation in detailing, and eliminate long wall sections without windows.

(g) Buildings constructed in Zone 3 shall have a minimum of two complementary color tones or two materials incorporated on all sides of the building. This can be completed through wainscoting, columns, pilasters, or other ornamentation as determined by the Zoning Administrator.

(h) Garish or bright accent colors for awnings, trim, banding, walls, entries or any portion of the building shall be minimized, but in no case shall such coloring exceed five percent (5%) of each wall area.

(i) In Zones 1 and 2 exposed roof materials shall be similar to, or an architectural equivalent of a high quality asphalt shingle (300# or better), wood shingle, standing seam metal roof, or better.

(j) In Zone 3, roof materials shall be of a finished material and all fasteners and connectors shall be the same color as the roof material.

(3) The overall architectural character shall have a consistent architectural expression on all sides of the building and be compatible with its surroundings.

(4) Windows or simulated windows shall be used on the ground level of any wall parallel to or nearly parallel to a street.

(5) All structures, including parking ramps shall be designed to be architecturally integrated into the overall site and be made of comparable materials and decorative elements.

(6) All façade treatments shall be maintained so as to not be unsightly in appearance or in a state of disrepair, nor shall harmful health or safety conditions be present for the life of the project.

(7) Prohibited Exterior Materials in Zone 1 and 2:

- (a) Vinyl Siding.
- (b) Metal Siding, except as provided above.
- (c) Formed Metal Panels with exposed fasteners.
- (d) Pre-engineered post-frame structures with agricultural grade metal wall and roof panels, commonly called “pole barns” are not permitted.

(8) Prohibited Exterior Materials in Zone 3:

- (a) Unfinished steel on walls or roofs.
- (b) Unfinished aluminum on walls or roofs.
- (c) Reflective materials.

(9) Exceptions – The following exceptions to the exterior building material requirements may apply:

- (a) The use is an essential service as defined by this Division; or
- (b) The applicant shall have the burden of demonstrating that:
 - 1. The proposed building maintains the quality in design and materials intended by this Division,
 - 2. The proposed building design and materials are compatible and in harmony with other structures within the district,
 - 3. The justification for deviation from the requirements of this section shall not be based on economic considerations.

(c) Sides of a building which are not visible from any public road may use any combination of Class I or II materials, if approved by the Planning Commission and City Council. The applicant must be able to demonstrate that said side of building is not visible from any public road.

(d) Garage doors, window trim, flashing, accent items and the like, shall not constitute required materials that make up the exterior finish of a building for the purposes of this section.

(e) Building Additions. Properties zoned I - Industrial and I2 - Heavy Industrial may be excepted from the minimum exterior building material standards for additions onto existing buildings. This exception only applies to additions of not more than 75 percent of the gross floor area of the initial principal building constructed on the property. The type and percent composition of the material(s) on the new additio(s) must be equal to or greater than the material(s) on the existing principal building. Additions exceeding 75 percent are required to meet the minimum exterior material standards for that Zone. In this case, the property owner may opt to satisfy the minimum standards on both the addition(s) and existing building. This exception does not apply to new secondary buildings and accessory structures on the property, if permitted by zoning.

(Code 1996, § 17.44.120)

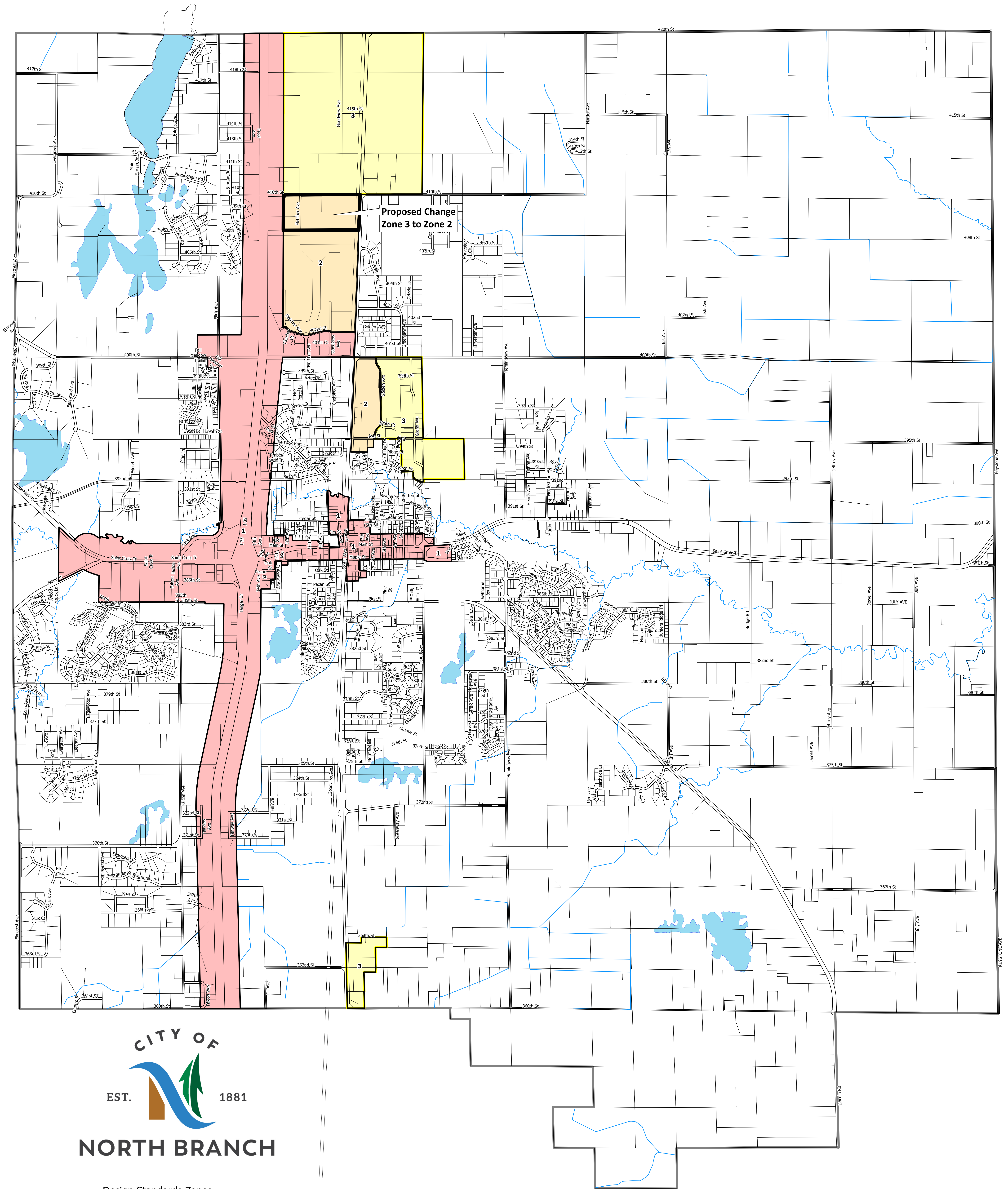
HISTORY

Amended by Ord. [325-21](#) on 10/26/2021

Amended by Ord. [356-23](#) on 6/27/2023

Amended by Ord. [376-24](#) on 7/30/2024

Amended by Ord. [377-24 \(Summary Ordinance of 376-24\)](#) on 7/30/2024



Design Standards Zones

- 1
- 2
- 3