

# Memorandum



Date: September 15, 2025

To: Mayor and Commissioners

From: Kalla Langston, City Clerk

**Subject:** Summary- City of Buchanan Unified Development Code

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Below is a summary of the City of Buchanan Unified Development Code (UDC, August 18, 2025 draft). The Planning Commission has diligently reviewed multiple drafts over the past several years. They recently conducted a public hearing on September 9, 2025, where no public comments were received. At this meeting, the Planning Commission put forward a motion that was unanimously approved: “to recommend to the City Commission the Unified Development Code of the City of Buchanan known as Zoning Ordinance with the following items; the zoning plan for the areas subject to zoning of the local unit of government; the establishment of zoning districts, the boundaries of the zoning districts; and the text the a zoning ordinance with maps; and the manner of administering and enforcing the ordinance pursuant to MCL 125.3305. As well as fix the grammar errors and input the definition of sketch plan”.

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## Purpose and Goals

1. Implements Michigan zoning laws and local plans.
2. Encourages **compact, pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use development**.
3. Provides a mix of housing options, supports daily needs within walking distance, and prioritizes pedestrians and bicyclists over automobiles.
4. Promotes preservation and adaptive reuse of historic buildings.

## Major Components

1. Subdivision Standards (Article II)
  - o Requires interconnected street networks, sidewalks, alleys (in neighborhood plans), and street trees.
  - o Sets block length, lot size, and civic space standards (minimum 5% civic/open space in new plans) .
2. Zoning (Article III)
  - o Establishes zoning districts:
    - Natural (N), Neighborhood Edge (NE), General Neighborhood (GN), Neighborhood Center (NC), Downtown (D), Suburban Commercial (SC), Industrial (I), plus Neighborhood Plans (NP) .

- Encourages mixed-use in centers/downtown, protects natural lands, and transitions from older zoning districts.
- 3. Development Standards
  - Parking and loading requirements by use type .
  - Tree preservation and landscaping standards (protect landmark trees, maintain urban canopy).
  - Sign regulations with safety, design, and insurance requirements.
- 4. Administration & Process (Article IV)
  - Defines roles of City Commission, Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, and Design Review Committee.
  - Provides procedures for rezoning, special use permits, variances, site plan review, and appeals.
  - Requires public hearings with clear notice rules.
  - Enforcement tools include stop-work orders, fines, abatement, and legal action for violations.
- 5. Nonconformities
  - Existing uses/structures may continue but cannot expand; damaged structures over 50% value must be rebuilt to code.
- 6. Definitions (Article V)
  - Provides clear definitions for technical zoning and land use terms (e.g., accessory dwelling units, adult foster care, stoops, alleys).

### Key Takeaways

1. The UDC modernizes Buchanan's development rules into a single, unified ordinance.
2. It balances growth with preservation, supporting mixed-use walkable neighborhoods, while protecting natural areas and historic resources.
3. It streamlines development approvals with clear procedures and enforcement mechanisms.

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**Recommendation:** Accept the introduction and direct Clerk Langston to schedule a public hearing for the first reading of the Unified Development Code.