



Town of Johnstown

PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION AGENDA MEMORANDUM

ITEM:	Public Hearing for the Iron Horse Design Guidelines Amendment 2022
DESCRIPTION:	Proposed Iron Horse Design Guidelines Amendment for approximately 164 acres of Commercial & Industrial Development
LOCATION:	South of US 34, East of High Plains Blvd. (LCR 3)
APPLICANT:	Centerra Commercial, LLC
STAFF:	Kim Meyer, Planning & Development Director
HEARING DATE:	February 16, 2022

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The project request is to amend the current [Iron Horse Design Guidelines](#) to modify certain development standards and land uses. These Design Guidelines (DGs) would supersede versions and apply to current and future development projects.

ATTACHMENTS

- 1- Vicinity Map
- 2- Project Narrative from Applicant
- 3- Redline of Iron Horse Design Guidelines
- 4- Clean version of Iron Horse Design Guidelines
- 5- Administrative Interpretation Dec 2020

PROPERTY DATA

Zoning / Land Use:	PUD-MU / FedEx, Carrier West, Canyon Bakehouse
Surrounding Zoning / Land Use:	
North:	PUD-MU – Undeveloped Ag land– Future Encore PUD (Mixed Use)
East:	Larimer County 'RR2' residential
South:	PUD-MU – Undeveloped Ag land
West:	PUD-MU – 2534 PUD (Mixed Use)

PROPERTY BACKGROUND

Property was annexed and zoned PUD-MU, as Iron Horse PUD. There are two existing subdivisions creating industrial lots. Future subdivisions are anticipated to provide additional public streets, and lots for commercial and industrial uses. See Attachment 3 – Pg 12 and 13 – for an overview of the development.

The Community That Cares

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PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Applicant is proposing revisions to the existing Design Guidelines that generally include:

1. Update to land uses permitted or conditionally permitted in the Industrial Area: heavy equipment rental and sales, motor vehicle and RV sales and rental;
2. Delete the requirement to fully screen outdoor storage of materials from streets and adjacent properties in the industrial area via sections discussing storage, fences/walls, and service areas;
3. Modifications to Architectural design standards
4. Revised development signage design

STAFF ANALYSIS

Staff has discussed and negotiated the proposed amendment and its verbiage with the Applicant at length, and believe the Design Guidelines (DG) can benefit from some of the modifications proposed. There are a few outstanding concerns, discussed below, that the Applicant has chosen to maintain in their proposed amendment.

Land Use. The enhanced definitions and description proposed for the land uses section is helpful. See Attachment 3, pg 7 - The “non-heavy” equipment that has been contemplated and would be permitted with this change falls into the general category of smaller equipment that might be rented/purchased by a homeowner or small landscape contractor vs larger earth-movers you might see on a development site.

The main concerns related to the proposed changes to equipment rental and sales uses are in ensuring land uses that provide a clear benefit to Johnstown residents (i.e., jobs, sales tax, essential and needed services, etc.), balance our mix of uses, as well as complement and remain compatible with surrounding uses. While the industrial portion of Iron Horse was not intended for consumer retail sales / rental uses, upon consideration, this use feels more compatible in Iron Horse versus a purely commercial / retail area such as 2534. With this type of use, we would assume lower customer volumes than a typical “retail” use, the use of larger vehicles and trailers needed for delivery & pick-up/drop-off; as well as the utilization of gravel areas for outdoor storage of equipment. With the intent of Iron Horse to provide a high-quality location for an industrial user, Staff has determined that this scale of equipment-based uses may, indeed, fit into the overall mix of uses.

The proposal to include motor vehicle and RV trailer sales is of some concern in Section 1.9(5)G – Att 3, pg 7. The Town has very limited industrially-zoned land, and to balance our land uses and provide opportunity for employers and true industrial users, we have an interest in maintaining those areas that have been zoned for this type of more intense industrial use. Iron Horse has been and will continue to be a very valuable area to the Town and the community, and Staff has concerns with transforming too much property into more retail-type uses. Again, the argument of, “where does this belong” comes to mind. Iron Horse industrial lots do have the benefit of ultimately being screened behind the future commercial area to the north along US 34. The proposed solution is to include these uses as Conditional Uses such that the Town would have the opportunity to review the location, design, and placement of such “sales lots” – preferably with the ability to minimize their size and overall impact. Staff believes that additional considerations may be appropriate to limit these sales uses in scale or location, away from major transportation corridors, and possibly encouraging smaller, more local sellers, vs national sellers who seek larger, high visibility sites, such as:

“Sec 1.9(5)G. Motor vehicle sales; RV trailer sales – sites limited to maximum of 6 acres, with no site closer than 500 feet to a major arterial; or as an accessory use to a RV trailer manufacturer.”

External Impacts, Outdoor Screening, Fences/Walls. The Applicant has proposed multiple revisions to current guidelines that would modify the current standards of screening, and remove the current and intentional references to the Johnstown Municipal Code and town ordinance that currently require screening of all outdoor storage of materials and products. Staff does not support this proposed amendment and believes the treatment of screening of outdoor storage should be consistent throughout the Town and default to town code, which the current IHDGs does. The Town issued an Administrative Interpretation in December of 2020 related to this same issue in Iron Horse, see Attachment 5.

Proposed amendments to Sections that include reference to this issue:

- Sec 1.9(6)b. (Attachment 3 - Pg 8) discusses from which adjacent uses screening would NOT be required, such as the railroad right-of-way to the north and south, a ditch, and certain outlots internal to the subdivision.
- Sec 8.2 E. (Att 3 – pg 25) deleted “concealment” of materials, supplies and equipment and added “screened from public roadways”
 - Staff supports this general verbiage, but given the focus/topic of this section on “Service Areas” would prefer the entire last sentence be stricken/moved from this, to avoid confusion, and default to other existing screening language in the DGs: “Materials, supplies, and equipment being stored on a site should be screened from public roadways inside a closed building or behind a visual screen such as walls, berming or landscaping.”
- Sec 9.0 (Att 3 – Pg 27) “excluding adjacent industrial properties”
 - If additional details on screening – i.e., from Sec 8.2
- Sec 11.2 E (Att 3 – Pg 27) Most of the wording revisions are acceptable; however, Staff cannot support, “...with no landscaping, berming or other screening required.” This feels like a side-step to removing the requirement for any additional screening; this is not the place to regulate screening. Staff maintains that “outdoor storage” should be screened.

Overall Staff’s perspective is that the screening of outdoor storage has the ability to greatly influence the visual impact of an area. Having consistent rules related to this issue creates equity across our industrial and commercial areas, and makes administration and enforcement much clearer. Admittedly, the Town has some work to do on increasing the efficacy of code enforcement efforts, as there are areas where this requirement has been poorly enforced, which gives license to others to ignore or remain ignorant to this requirement. Overall, there are a wide range of “industrial” uses and users/properties, and Johnstown wants to ensure our industrial developments welcome and invite the broad range of employers and manufacturers. Philosophically, users should mitigate development and use impacts on adjacent properties, be they visual, noise, odor, vibration, or other impacts. The fact that what is next to a development may be right-of-way for a road or railroad, or a ditch or drainage easement, does not create inherent buffers or screening of uses on the opposite side of that space.

All other proposed amendments, including general housekeeping revisions and those that propose changes related to limiting required architectural features and articulation to those elevations facing public streets (Sec 2.2.8, Att 3 – Pg 17) and updated signage have been reviewed by Staff and found to be reasonable and appropriate for this area of Iron Horse, and generally supportable.

In most other respects, these proposed IHDGs provide for high-quality development, and Staff believes they will continue to serve the development and the community well, and offer a diverse and attractive industrial area for the Town. Where these guidelines do not address an issue or standard, the PUD defaults to current Town Code. Staff has no further concerns.

NOTICE

Notice for the Planning & Zoning Commission hearing was published in the local paper of widest circulation, the Johnstown Breeze, on Thursday, January 20, 2022. This notice provided the date, time, and location of the Planning and Zoning Commission hearing, as well as a description of the project. Given the nature of these amendment, notices were not mailed to property owners.

RECOMMENDED PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION FINDINGS AND MOTIONS

Findings:

1. The proposed amendment to the Iron Horse Design Guidelines is in alignment with the current Johnstown Area Comprehensive Plan and its Future Land Use Plan.
2. The proposed amendment provides “as good or better” development to the Town, than strict implementation of current Town Code for commercial and industrial development would provide.

Recommended Motion – Approval with Conditions

Based on the application received, associated submittal materials, and the preceding analysis, the Planning & Zoning Commission finds that the proposed Amended Iron Horse Design Guidelines furthers the *Johnstown Area Comprehensive Plan* goals, and is generally compatible with all other applicable Town standards and regulations, and therefore moves to recommend to the Town Council Approval with Conditions of the Iron Horse Design Guidelines amendment based upon the findings as stated in this staff report, with the following conditions:

1. Update Sec 1.9(5)G. to read: “Motor vehicle sales; RV trailer sales – sites limited to maximum of 6 acres, with no site closer than 500 feet to a major arterial; or as an accessory use to a RV trailer manufacturer.
2. Remove the following proposed language from this amendment:
 - a. In Section 1.9 (6)b – “...excluding adjacent industrial uses, railroads, the Farmer’s Ditch south of the UPRR, Outlot C, and Outlot D as shown on Exhibit 1-2. Retain the reference to the Town’s ordinance governing screening of outdoor storage.
 - b. In Section 8.2 E. delete the last sentence, “Materials, supplies, and equipment being stored on a site should be screened from public roadways inside a closed building or behind a visual screen such as walls, berming or landscaping.”
 - c. In Section 9.0 delete “excluding adjacent industrial properties”
 - d. In Section 11.2 E delete “...with no landscaping, berming or other screening required.”

Alternate Motions

- A. Motion to Approve with no Conditions: "I move that the Commission recommend to Town Council approval of the amended Iron Horse Design Guidelines amendment as presented"

- B. Motion to Deny: "I move that the Commission recommend to the Town Council denial of the Iron Horse Design Guidelines amendment based upon the following findings..."

Respectfully Submitted:



Kim Meyer
Planning & Development Director