PTZA26-0001
Drone Related Land Use Regulations
Zoning Amendment

City of Southfield
Planning Department
DRAFT - 12.17.25

Purpose: To provide clarity with regard to the review process for the permitted location and required configuration of drone port facilities.

Background: The use of drones in a variety of non-military governmental and civilian commercial applications continues to grow and evolve. The City Zoning Ordinance currently does not address drone related land uses as either accessory or principal uses of property and does not specify how they are to be reviewed or provide specific development regulations. As a result, all inquiries on this are handled by interpretation of provisions in the zoning ordinance for "similar" uses or facilities. Given that drones are becoming a common fixture in modern life it is desirable that clearer regulatory standards be established as to where commercial drone (non-hobby) facilities can be located and how they are to be configured.

Sustainable Southfield 2.0 Master Plan Goals & Objectives: Goals and objective related to the proposed amendment.

- Retain, expand, and attract businesses
- Remain business-friendly
- Encourage innovation and the growth of emerging sectors
- Cultivate external business relationships that connect to the regional economy
- Recruit growing businesses that are suited to the region and are seeking a highly skilled workforce or are willing to train an entry-level workforce
- Continually upgrade technology infrastructure to meet future needs
- Regularly evaluate economic and market trends that will establish the land use policies and alternatives to be considered, including demographic, socioeconomic, housing, and transportation trends
- Identify economic sectors that have the potential to contribute to the type of economic development being sought by the City
- Create a diversified and balanced mixture of land uses that will support the economic vitality, tax base, and livability of the City
- Coordinate local developments and improvements with regional transportation investments to ensure the most efficient use of resources
- Create context-responsive design options for multimodal transportation improvements that will help tailor them to their location

Recommendation: That the Zoning Ordinance be amended to regulate the location and configuration of drone-related facilities.

ARTICLE 2 DEFINITIONS

5.4 Definitions (C-D)

(28) DRONE: a vehicle without a human operator onboard, controlled remotely or operating autonomously, designed to carry a payload of sensors or for delivery (also known as an Unmanned Vehicle).

(29) DRONE PORT: a designated area within a site intended for the takeoff, landing, staging, testing, training, storage, servicing or other operations of drones accessory to an approved permitted or special use operating on the same site.

(31) ~~(28)~~ DWELLING, MULTIPLE FAMILY: is a building or portion thereof designed exclusively for occupancy by three (3) or more families living independently of each other.

(32) ~~(29)~~ DWELLING, MULTIPLE FAMILY HIGH RISE: a multiple family dwelling of three (3) or more stories in height.

(33) ~~(30)~~ DWELLING, MULTIPLE FAMILY LOWRISE: a multiple family dwelling not more than two (2) stories in height.

(34) ~~(31)~~ DWELLING, ONE FAMILY: is a building designed exclusively for, and occupied exclusively by, one (1) family.

(35) ~~(32)~~ DWELLING, TWOFAMILY: is a building designed exclusively for occupancy by two (2) families living independently of each other.

ARTICLE 4 GENERAL PROVISIONS

5.61 Drone Ports

A. *Intent: As drone ports may be a complementary component facility to a variety of allowed land uses within the city it is the purpose of this section to establish regulations related to the location, configuration and operation of such facilities. These standards apply to sites that regularly host drone activities, but not to occasional operations by hobbyists or drone service providers that do not require permanent alteration to the site.*

B. *Permitted Zoning Districts:*
   1. *Single Family Districts (R-A, R-1, R-2, R-3, R-4, R-E): permitted accessory to approved non-residential special uses*
   2. *Mobile Home Park District (RMH): permitted to provide centralized delivery services to a mobile home park residential community*
   3. *Attached Single Family District (RT): permitted to provide centralized delivery services to an attached single family residential community*
   4. *Multiple Family Residential (RM, RMM, RMU): permitted to provide centralized delivery services to a multiple family residential community*
   5. *Commercial Districts (OS, ERO-M, ERO, TV-R, NS, RS, B-1, B-2, B-3): permitted as a component of an approved permitted or special use*
   6. *Industrial Districts (I-L, I-1): permitted as a component of an approved permitted or special use*

C. *Review Process:*
   1. *Small drone ports: drone port facilities that occupy less than fifteen (15) percent of the site are subject to administrative site plan review per Section 5.22*
   2. *Large drone ports: drone port facilities that occupy greater than fifteen (15) percent of the site are subject to site plan review by the Planning Commission per Section 5.22*

D. *Specific Site Development Standards:*
   1. *Screening and Fencing:*
      a) *Rooftop Drone Ports: Screening shall be provided per Section 5.33*
      b) *Ground Drone Ports: Port area shall be fenced, the fencing (including living fence option) shall comply with Section 5.37-1*
   2. *Other Requirements;*
      a) *Shall comply with all applicable site development standards from Article 4 – General Provisions, the Article for the applicable zoning district and Article 22 – Schedule of Regulations*
      b) *Shall comply within any required building or structure setbacks of the applicable zoning district*
      c) *Shall comply with the requirements of Section 9.357 Unmanned Aircraft Systems*