



**CITY OF WAUCHULA
UNIFIED LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE TEXT AMENDMENTS
STAFF REPORT**

TO: City of Wauchula City Commission

PREPARED BY: Central Florida Regional Planning Council

AGENDA DATE: December 8, 2025

REQUESTED ACTION: (Ordinance 2025-18) City- initiated text amendments to the City of Wauchula Unified Land Development Code, related to certified recovery residences so as to comply with the requirements of 2025 Florida Legislature Senate Bill (SB) 954, as codified in F.S. Section 397.487; specifically amending Article 7, Development Approval Process, by adding section 7.12.00 Reasonable Accommodation for Certified Recovery Residences; and Amending Article 9, Definitions and Acronyms

HEARING DATES:

- November 17, 2025, 5:30 PM: Planning and Zoning Board (Public Hearing)
- **December 8, 2025, 6:00 PM:** **City Commission Meeting (First Reading)**
- January 12, 2025, 6:00 PM: City Commission Meeting (Adoption Public Hearing)

ATTACHMENTS:

- Ordinance 2025-18

PLANNING AND ZONING BOARD MOTION:

At their November 17, 2025 meeting, the Planning and Zoning Board voted to recommend approval of the text amendments to the City Commission.

CITY COMMISSION MOTION OPTIONS:

1. I move **approval of Ordinance 2025-18** on first reading.
2. I move **approval of Ordinance 2025-18 with changes** on first reading.
3. I move **continuation to a date and time certain**.

BACKGROUND:

On June 25, 2025, Governor Desantis approved Senate Bill 954. The bill requires local governments to adopt an ordinance by January 1, 2026, and subject to certain restrictions, to formalize and streamline the process for applicants seeking reasonable accommodations from land use regulations to open a certified recovery residence. The ordinance must contain a procedure which results in approval or denial within 60 days after receipt of an application, without public hearings beyond the minimum required to grant the requested accommodation.

“Recovery residence” is a residential dwelling unit, the community housing component of a licensed day or night treatment facility with community housing, or other form of group housing, which is offered or advertised through any means, including oral, written, electronic, or printed means, by any person or entity as a residence that provides a peer-supported, alcohol-free, and drug-free living environment.

“Certified recovery residence” is a recovery residence that holds a valid certificate of compliance and is actively managed by a certified recovery residence administrator.

“Reasonable accommodation” is a statutorily established method by which an individual who is disabled and/or handicapped (as those terms are defined in Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act and/or the Fair Housing Amendments Act, hereafter “disabled”), or a provider of services to the disabled qualifying for reasonable accommodations under the referenced statutes, can request a modification or alteration in the application of a specific Code provision, rule, policy, or practice, to them. The proposed accommodation sought by the disabled individual must be reasonable and necessary to afford such person an equal opportunity to use and enjoy housing.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED AMENDMENTS:

The requirements of Senate Bill 954 include the creation of a procedure to process requests for reasonable accommodation for certified recovery residences. A reasonable accommodation is a request to make an exception to a policy, rule, or practice to allow a person with a disability equal opportunity to use and enjoy a dwelling.

In the context of recovery housing, reasonable accommodations are often used to:

- Request zoning relief (e.g., to operate a sober home in a zone that limits unrelated residents living together)
- Challenge occupancy limits
- Avoid burdensome special use or conditional permitting processes
- Push back against discriminatory moratoriums or spacing requirements

The Federal Housing Administration requires that reasonable accommodation requests be granted unless the request imposes an undue financial or administrative burden or fundamentally alters the nature of the zoning program.

The purpose of this Ordinance is to establish procedures for review and approval of reasonable accommodation requests to the City’s land use and zoning ordinances, rules, regulations, policies, and procedures that may prohibit establishment of certified recovery residences. The proposed text amendments add language consistent with the requirements

of Senate Bill 954 to Article 7 Development Approval Process. Section 7.12.00 is a proposed addition to the Code. This language provides the process for applicants seeking reasonable accommodations from land use regulations to open a certified recovery residence. Relevant definitions are also added to the Definitions section. This Ordinance does not add any uses to the Table of Uses.

The changes to the ordinance resulted from discussion at the December 1, 2025 Commission Workshop.

ORDINANCE 2025-18

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF WAUCHULA, FLORIDA; AMENDING THE WAUCHULA UNIFIED LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE, RELATED TO CERTIFIED RECOVERY RESIDENCES SO AS TO COMPLY WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF 2025 FLORIDA LEGISLATURE SENATE BILL (SB) 954, AS CODIFIED IN F.S. SECTION 397.487; SPECIFICALLY AMENDING ARTICLE 7, DEVELOPMENT APPROVAL PROCESS, BY ADDING SECTION 7.12.00 REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION FOR CERTIFIED RECOVERY RESIDENCES; AND AMENDING ARTICLE 9, DEFINITIONS AND ACRONYMS; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING FOR CODIFICATION; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

WHEREAS, the Florida Legislature, by HB 21 (2015), established a voluntary certification program for recovery residences that establishes operational and ethical safeguards for disabled persons and the City desires to acknowledge and promote such safeguards; and

WHEREAS, in accordance with SB 954 (2025) pertaining to “Certified Recovery Residences”, the City desires to enact an ordinance providing for procedures for the review and approval of certified recovery residences including handling and processing requests for accommodation from the City’s Land Development Code before the statute’s effective date of January 1, 2026; and

WHEREAS, “reasonable accommodation” is a statutorily established method by which an individual who is disabled and/or handicapped (as those terms are defined in Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act and/or the Fair Housing Amendments Act, hereafter “disabled”), or a provider of services to the disabled qualifying for reasonable accommodations under the referenced statutes, can request a modification or alteration in the application of a specific Code provision, rule, policy, or practice, to them. The proposed accommodation sought by the disabled individual must be reasonable and necessary to afford such person an equal opportunity to use and enjoy housing; and

WHEREAS, the City hereby desires to adopt within the City’s Land Development Code, and consistent with SB 954(2025) and the Final Order of the Southern District of Florida in Jeffrey O. v. Town of Boca Raton, 511 F. Supp. 2d 1339 (S.D. Fla. 2007), reasonable accommodation procedures that will permit disabled individuals (or qualifying entities) to request reasonable accommodations and, where appropriate based on the facts and law, to receive reasonable accommodations; and

WHEREAS, the City desires to require annual recertification of reasonable accommodation approvals to ensure ongoing protection for the disabled; and

WHEREAS, the Planning and Zoning Board, sitting as the Local Planning Agency, has determined that the change is consistent with and furthers the goals, objectives and policies of the City’s Comprehensive Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Planning and Zoning Board reviewed the proposed text amendment at a public hearing held on November 18, 2025 and voted to recommend that the changes be approved; and

WHEREAS, the City Commission is charged with protecting the health, safety, and welfare of its residents and believes this Ordinance to be in the best interests of the residents.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF WAUCHULA, FLORIDA, THAT:

Section 1. Ratification. That the foregoing “WHEREAS” clauses are hereby ratified and confirmed as being true and correct and are hereby made a specific part of this ordinance.

Section 2. Amendment. The text amendments to Article 7, Development Approval Process, by adding Section 7.12.00 Reasonable Accommodation for Certified Recovery Residences; and Article 9, as shown in **Exhibit “A”** attached hereto and made a part hereof, are hereby approved.

Section 3. Severability. If any provision or portion of this ordinance is declared by any court of competent jurisdiction to be void, unconstitutional, or unenforceable, then all remaining provisions and portions of this ordinance shall remain in full force and effect.

Section 4. Repeal of Ordinances in Conflict. All other ordinances of Wauchula, or portions thereof which conflict with this or any part of this Ordinance are hereby repealed.

Section 5. Codification. It is the intention of the City Commission that the provisions of this Ordinance shall become and be made a part of the Code of Ordinances of the City, Unified Land Development Code; and that sections of this Ordinance may be renumbered or relettered and the word "ordinance" may be changed to "chapter", "section", "article", or such other appropriate word or phrase in order to accomplish such intentions; and regardless of whether such inclusion in the Code is accomplished, sections of this Ordinance may be renumbered or relettered and the correction of typographical and/or scrivener's errors which do not affect the intent may be authorized by the City Manager or designee, without need of public hearing, by filing a corrected or recodified copy of same with the City Clerk.

Section 6. Effective Date. This ordinance shall be effective immediately after passage upon Second Reading.

Section 7. Certified Copy. A certified copy of this enacting ordinance and certified copy of the City of Wauchula of Ordinances shall be located in the Office of the City Clerk of Wauchula. The City Clerk shall also make copies available to the public for a reasonable publication charge.

INTRODUCED AND PASSED on first reading in regular session of the City Commission of the City of Wauchula, the ____ day of ____, 2025.

PASSED on second and final reading by the City Commission of the City of Wauchula, Florida, at regular session this ____ day of ____, 2026.

This ordinance was moved for adoption by Commissioner _____.
The motion was seconded by Commissioner _____, and upon being put to a vote, the vote was as follows:

Commissioner Anne Miller _____	insert yes or no
Commissioner Russell Graylin Smith _____	insert yes or no
Commissioner Keith Nadaskay, Jr _____	insert yes or no
Commissioner Dr. Sherri Albritton _____	insert yes or no
Commissioner Gary Smith _____	insert yes or no

(SEAL)

ATTEST:

APPROVED:

Stephanie Camacho, City Clerk

Richard Keith Nadaskay, Jr., Mayor

APPROVED AS TO FORM AND LEGALITY:

Thomas A. Cloud, City Attorney

EXHIBIT “A”
**PROPOSED TEXT AMENDMENTS TO THE CITY’S
UNIFIED LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE**

Text shown as underlined is text to be added.
Text shown as ~~strikeout~~ is text to be removed.

ARTICLE 7: DEVELOPMENT APPROVAL PROCESS

7.12.00 Reasonable Accommodation for Certified Recovery Residences

- (A) Certified Recovery Residences shall comply with section 397.487 F.S.
- (B) Requests for reasonable accommodation by certified recovery residences. This section implements the procedure for processing requests for reasonable accommodation to the City’s Unified Land Development Code (“ULDC”) Land Development Regulations, Rules, Policies, and Procedures for persons with disabilities as defined by the federal Fair Housing Amendments Act (42 U.S.C. 3601, et seq.) (“FHA”) and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act (42 U.S.C. Section 12131, et seq.) (“ADA”). For purposes of this section, a "disabled" person is an individual who qualifies as disabled and/or handicapped under the FHA and/or ADA. Any person who is disabled (or qualifying entities) may request a reasonable accommodation with respect to the City's Land Development Code, Code of Ordinances, rules, policies, practices and/or procedures as provided by the FHA and the ADA pursuant to the procedures set out in this section.
- 1) *Notice to the Public of Availability of Accommodation.* The City shall display a notice in the City's public notice bulletin board (and shall maintain copies available for review in the City Clerk department, advising the public that disabled individuals (and qualifying entities) may request a reasonable accommodation as provided herein.
- 2) *Application.* A request by an applicant for reasonable accommodation under this section shall be made in writing by completion of a reasonable accommodation request form, which form is maintained by, and shall be submitted to the City Manager, or designee. The reasonable accommodation form shall contain such questions and requests for information as are necessary for processing the reasonable accommodation request. The reasonable accommodation request form shall be substantially in the form set forth in subsection (6)(a), below.
- a. *Confidentiality of Medical Information or Records.* Should the information provided by the applicant to the City include medical information or records, including records indicating the medical condition, diagnosis or medical history of the disabled individual, such individual may, at the time of submitting such medical information, request that the City, to the extent allowed by law, treat such medical information as confidential information of the disabled individual. The City shall thereafter endeavor to provide written

notice to the disabled individual, and/or their representative, of any request received by the City for disclosure of the medical information or documentation which the disabled individual has previously requested be treated as confidential by the City. The City will cooperate with the disabled individual, to the extent allowed by law, in actions initiated by such individual to oppose the disclosure of such medical information or documentation, but the City shall have no obligation to initiate, prosecute or pursue any such action, or to incur any legal or other expenses (whether by retention of outside counsel or allocation of internal resources) in connection therewith, and may comply with any judicial order without prior notice to the disabled individual.

b. *Fee.* There shall be no fee imposed by the City in connection with a request for reasonable accommodation under this section or an appeal of a determination on such request to the City commission, and the City shall have no obligation to pay a requesting party's (or an appealing party's, as applicable) attorney's fees or costs in connection with the request, or an appeal.

c. *City assistance.* The City shall provide such assistance and accommodation as is required pursuant to FHA and ADA in connection with an applicant's request for reasonable accommodation, including, without limitation, assistance with reading application questions, responding to questions, completing the form, filing an appeal, and appearing at a hearing, etc., to ensure the process is accessible.

3) *Findings regarding reasonable accommodation.* In determining whether the reasonable accommodation request shall be granted or denied, the requesting party shall be required to establish, at a minimum, that:

a. They are protected under the FHA and/or ADA by demonstrating that they are handicapped or disabled, or a qualifying entity, as defined in the FHA and/or ADA.

b. The proposed reasonable accommodations sought are reasonable and necessary to afford the subject individual(s) with disabilities an equal opportunity to use and enjoy the housing that is the subject of the request.

The foregoing, in addition to applicable federal standards, (all as interpreted by the courts) shall be the basis for a decision upon a reasonable accommodation request made by the City Manager, or his/her designee, or by a Special Magistrate in the event of an appeal.

4) Decision process.

The City Manager, or his/her designee, shall have the authority to consider and act on requests for reasonable accommodation, recertification of an approved

reasonable accommodation, and amendment to an approved reasonable accommodation.

- a. When a reasonable accommodation request form has been completed and submitted to the City Clerk, it must be date-stamped upon receipt.
 - b. Next, it will be referred to the City Manager, or designee, for review and consideration. The City Manager, or designee, shall issue a written determination within no more than sixty (60) days of the date of receipt of a completed application and may, in accordance with federal law, (1) grant the accommodation request, (2) grant a portion of the request and deny a portion of the request, and/or impose conditions upon the grant of the request, or (3) deny the request in accordance with federal law, stating with specificity, the evidence-based reasons for denial and identifying any deficiencies or actions necessary for reconsideration. All written determinations shall give notice of the right to appeal. The notice of determination shall be sent to the requesting party (i.e. the disabled individual or his/her representative) by certified mail, return receipt requested. If a final written determination is not issued within sixty (60) days after receipt of a completed application, the request is deemed approved unless the parties agree in writing to reasonable extension of time.
 - c. If reasonably necessary to reach a determination on the request for reasonable accommodation, the City Manager, or his/her designee, may, within thirty (30) days of the receipt of the request for reasonable accommodation, request additional information from the requesting party, specifying in sufficient detail what information is required. The requesting party shall have thirty (30) days after the date of the request for additional information to provide the requested information. If the requesting party fails to provide the requested additional information within said thirty (30) day period, the City Manager, or his/her designee, shall issue a written notice advising that the requesting party had failed to timely submit the additional information and therefore the request for reasonable accommodation shall be deemed abandoned and/or withdrawn and no further action by the City with regard to said reasonable accommodation request shall be required.
 - d. The City may not require public hearings beyond the minimum required by law to grant the requested accommodation.
- 5) *Appeal.* The appeal of any decision of the City Manager or his/her designee regarding a request for reasonable accommodation, recertification of an approved reasonable accommodation, or amendment to an approved reasonable accommodation shall be considered pursuant to the requirements of this section. Within thirty (30) days after the City Manager's, or his/her designee's, determination regarding a reasonable accommodation request is mailed to the requesting party, such applicant may appeal the decision by filing a notice of appeal

with the City Clerk. The City Clerk or designee shall act as clerk to the Special Magistrate for purposes of an appeal from a decision under this section. All appeals shall contain a statement containing sufficient detail of the grounds for the appeal. Appeals shall be to the Special Magistrate who shall, after public notice and a public hearing, render a determination as soon as reasonably practicable, but in no event later than sixty (60) days after an appeal has been filed. The appeal shall be conducted as a de novo review of the evidence on record for the original review under the required findings of this section. The decision of the Special Magistrate shall be considered final City action and may be appealed within thirty (30) days to a court of competent jurisdiction as provided by law.

6) Request form for reasonable accommodation.

a. Contents of reasonable accommodation request form

1. Name and contact information of the applicant, and as applicable, the applicant's authorized representative.
2. Information regarding property at which reasonable accommodation is requested, including the parcel address of such location and property identification number.
3. Describe the accommodation and the specific regulation(s) and/or procedure(s) from which accommodation is sought.
4. Reasons the accommodation may be necessary for the applicant or the individuals with disabilities seeking the specific accommodation; and if relating to housing, why the requested reasonable accommodation is necessary to use and enjoy the housing.
5. Description of the qualifying disability or handicap.
6. Other relevant information pertaining to the disability or property that may be needed by the City for it to be able to evaluate the request for reasonable accommodation.
7. A statement as to whether the applicant is seeking the accommodation in order to make housing and/or provision of housing financially viable, with supporting documentation.
8. A statement as to the therapeutic necessity of the accommodation for the applicant, with supporting documentation.
9. If seeking a reasonable accommodation from the definition of family.
 - a) Proof of state licensure, as applicable to the location for which the reasonable accommodation is requested; or

- b) Proof of certification pursuant to Section 397.487, Fla. Stat. as amended, or alternatively, certification under a nationally accredited agency or recognition or sanction by Congress if the accommodation is for or related to a recovery residence, as defined in Section 397.311, Fla. Stat.; and
 - c) All applicants must provide proof of satisfactory fire, safety, and health inspections as required by Section 397.487, Fla. Stat. or other applicable statute, as amended from time to time for the location for which the reasonable accommodation is requested.
 - 10. Signature of applicant.
 - 11. Date of application;
 - 12. If on-site supervisor or manager, provide the name and contact information (phone and email) for each;
 - 13. Disclosure of ownership interests of property; and
 - 14. Consent of all property owners for application.
- 7) *Stay of enforcement.* While an application for reasonable accommodation, or appeal of a determination of same, is pending before the City, the City will not enforce the subject zoning ordinance, rules, policies, and procedures against the applicant.
- 8) *Expiration of approvals.* Approvals of requests for reasonable accommodation shall expire within one hundred eighty (180) days if not implemented.
- 9) Revocation of reasonable accommodation.
 - a. Any reasonable accommodation received shall be deemed revoked if the applicant or the property upon which the accommodation is granted is found in violation of any conditions of the approval granting the reasonable accommodation by a court of law or by the special magistrate hearing code enforcement cases.
 - b. Failure to obtain state certification or a required state license, or failure to maintain state certification or a required state license or alternate certification permitted by this section, shall result in revocation of the reasonable accommodation and cessation of operations within sixty (60) days of termination of the license or certification.
- 10) *Annual certification.* All reasonable accommodation requests approved by the City shall be valid for no more than one year and shall require annual recertification each year on or before February 1st. Recertification requests must be filed at least ninety

(90) days before the conclusion of the end of the one-year period of effectiveness of the reasonable accommodation approval. The failure of the applicant to timely apply for annual recertification, or the denial of an annual recertification application, shall result in the revocation of the approved reasonable accommodation. Recertification requests shall follow the same submittal, review and procedural requirements as set forth above for new applications. If a reasonable accommodation is for a property which is required to be licensed or certified pursuant to this section or applicable state or federal law, then to be recertified an applicant must provide proof of active licensure or certification consistent with the requirements of section (6)(a)(9).

- 11) *Revisions.* Any changes to the use or property desired by the applicant or identified by the City, state, or any certifying or licensing entity after approval or during the recertification process which require an additional reasonable accommodation or amendment to the original reasonable accommodation approval shall be processed as an amendment to the original approval and such amendment application shall follow the same application and review process set forth herein for an original reasonable accommodation request.

ARTICLE 9

DEFINITIONS

Reasonable Accommodation: A statutorily established method by which an individual who is disabled and/or handicapped (as those terms are defined in Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act and/or the Fair Housing Amendments Act, hereafter “disabled”), or a provider of services to the disabled qualifying for reasonable accommodations under the referenced statutes, can request a modification or alteration in the application of a specific Code provision, rule, policy, or practice, to them. The proposed accommodation sought by the disabled individual must be reasonable and necessary to afford such person an equal opportunity to use and enjoy housing.

Recovery Residence: A residential dwelling unit, the community housing component of a licensed day or night treatment facility with community housing, or other form of group housing, which is offered or advertised through any means, including oral, written, electronic, or printed means, by any person or entity as a residence that provides a peer-supported, alcohol-free, and drug-free living environment (F.S. 397.311).

Recovery Residence, Certified: A recovery residence that holds a valid certificate of compliance and is actively managed by a certified recovery residence administrator (F.S. 397.311).

- (a) A Level I certified recovery residence houses individuals in recovery who have completed treatment, with a minimum of 9 months of sobriety. A Level I certified recovery residence is democratically run by the members who reside in the home.

- (b) A Level II certified recovery residence encompasses the traditional perspectives of sober living homes. There is oversight from a house manager who has experience with living in recovery. Residents are expected to follow rules outlined in a resident handbook provided by the certified recovery residence administrator. Residents must pay dues, if applicable, and work toward achieving realistic and defined milestones within a chosen recovery path.
- (c) A Level III certified recovery residence offers higher supervision by staff with formal training to ensure resident accountability. Such residences are staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and offer residents peer-support services, which may include, but are not limited to, life skill mentoring, recovery planning, and meal preparation. Clinical services may not be performed at the residence. Such residences are most appropriate for persons who require a more structured environment during early recovery from addiction.
- (d) A Level IV certified recovery residence is a residence offered, referred to, or provided by, a licensed service provider to its patients who are required to reside at the residence while receiving intensive outpatient and higher levels of outpatient care. Such residences are staffed 24 hours a day and combine outpatient licensable services with recovery residential living. Residents are required to follow a treatment plan and attend group and individual sessions, in addition to developing a recovery plan within the social model of living in a sober lifestyle. No clinical services are provided at the residence and all licensable services are provided offsite.