

## Planning & Zoning Commission Staff Report

**Meeting Date:** June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023

**Applicant:** City of Sunset Hills

**Description:** P-16-23 City of Sunset Hills (Unified Development Ordinance): An ordinance amending Section 7.5 and Appendix A Section 1.5 of the Unified Development Ordinance to revise regulations pertaining to traffic study requirements and level of service.

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### **SUMMARY:**

The City has reviewed the development regulations in City Code as they pertain to traffic study requirements, more specifically the “level of service” requirement. The Unified Development Ordinance requires a traffic study as part of the application process of a commercial, office, and/or industrial planned development located in Section 7.5 and as part of the general development standards of the PD- Planned Development Districts development requirements located in Appendix A.

The traffic study is required to analyze the existing traffic conditions in relation to the subject site before a proposed development is constructed, as well as traffic impacts associated with the proposed development once constructed.

A discussion was held at both the April and May Board of Alderman meetings to discuss code requirements of traffic studies as they relate to “level of service”. After input from the Board, City Staff has prepared ordinance amendment language for the Planning & Zoning Commission’s recommendation to the Board of Alderman.

The following staff report identifies an overview of a traffic study, the current language in City Code, the potential concern with the current language and the proposed language after input from the Board of Alderman.

## **TRAFFIC STUDY:**

Staff has prepared a general overview of the traffic study process for a particular development and what information they produce. It should be noted that a particular development may need special attention or evaluation that is outside of the general overview.

### **Scoping Meeting**

A discussion over the scope of the proposed project between the professional traffic consultant and the City takes place. During this meeting the traffic consultant will review any questions they may have about the development, discuss the area of impact which will be analyzed in the study, and outline any further information needed before they can complete the analysis which is in the form of a traffic impact study.

### **Existing Conditions**

The traffic study evaluates the impact of a development. Existing conditions must be identified before impact may be assessed. Existing conditions include the types of roadway facilities (collector, arterial, highway, etc.) that exist, the types of intersections that exist (signalized or unsignalized), and the current traffic volumes (including turning movements) on the facilities and at the intersections.

### **Site Review**

The transportation consultant reviews the site plan to understand the proposed access location and ensure proper access management and sight distance. The proposed use is also identified within the site plan. Forecasts are prepared to estimate the amount of traffic the proposed development would generate and when it occurs (AM, PM, Weekend, etc.). This forecasting process is commonly known as "trip generation". The volume is then assigned onto the roadways and intersections upon the assumed directional distribution. This process is commonly known as "trip distribution".

## Traffic Analysis

The traffic consultant analyzes the existing and proposed operations utilizing a modeling software. The model produces six levels of services (A-F). Levels of Service (LOS) are measures of traffic flow, which consider factors such as speed, delay, traffic interruptions, safety, driver comfort, and convenience. Level of Service “D” is often considered acceptable for peak conditions in suburban areas. For reference, below (Figure 1) is in image describing each level of service and the delay per vehicle for both signalized and unsignalized intersections.

LEVEL OF SERVICE (LOS)	CONTROL DELAY PER VEHICLE (SEC/VEH)	
	SIGNALIZED INTERSECTIONS	UNSIGNALIZED INTERSECTIONS
A	≤ 10	0-10
B	> 10-20	> 10-15
C	> 20-35	> 15-25
D	> 35-55	> 25-35
E	> 55-80	> 35-50
F	> 80	> 50

Figure 1: Level of Service Thresholds

### CURRENT REGULATIONS:

The UDO requires a traffic study as part of the application process for a commercial, office, and/or industrial planned development located in Section 7.5 and as part of the general development standards of the PD-Planned Development Districts development requirements located in Appendix A.

Section 7.5 of the UDO contains the application requirements for commercial, office, and/or industrial planned development.

### Section 7.5.2.m states:

“A professional traffic study performed by a firm chosen by the City showing the proposed traffic circulation pattern within and in the vicinity of the area of the planned development, including

the location and description of public improvements to be installed, any streets and access easements, and any impact on current conditions. The traffic study must determine that the proposed traffic will maintain at least a "D" level of service."

**Appendix A A-1.5.1 states:**

1)The approval of planned development may provide for such exceptions from the regulations associated with traditional zoning districts as may be necessary or desirable to achieve the objectives of the proposed planned development. No planned development shall be allowed which would result in:

- a) Inadequate or unsafe vehicular access to the development;
- b) Traffic volumes exceeding the capacity of the adjoining or nearby streets. Capacity shall be based on a street providing "level of service D" as defined in the latest publication of Transportation and Traffic Engineers Handbook, Institute of Transportation Engineers;
- c) An undue burden on public parks, recreation areas, schools, fire and police protection and other public facilities or utilities which serve or are proposed to serve the planned development;
- d) A failure to comply with the performance standards referenced in Section 4.12 or
- e) Other detrimental impacts on the surrounding area including, but not limited to, visual pollution

**POTENTIAL CONCERNS:**

The City has carefully reviewed the Level of Service requirement within the City Code. Currently, new developments are required to ensure traffic operations neighboring the site do not degrade lower than the level of service "D" to be approved. The strict requirement does not allow for the Board of Alderman discretion on developments that may otherwise have been approved. In some cases, the existing conditions may be a Level of Service "E" in which the new development would make the level of service better, but not be permitted as it is still an "E".

City staff provided options to adjust City Code at the May Board of Alderman meeting in the form of a discussion. Options were presented to allow the Board to look at all factors (traffic congestion, economic impact, etc.) of the development and make a collective determination, rather than approving or denying a development based on a single factor. At the Board of Aldermen meeting on April 25th, there was discussion about keeping the required level of service but allowing for a grace percentage for those who do fall outside of the required level of service “D”. Following the Board’s direction, staff spoke internally and recommended a grace of 20% increase in the number of seconds for the proposed development if the proposed development will result in below a level of service “D” at the May 9<sup>th</sup> Board of Alderman meeting. It should be noted that if the traffic study meets the grace period, it does not signify any motion of approval, but allows it to move forward through the initial review process.

The Unified Development Ordinance requires a traffic study as part of the application process of a commercial, office, and/or industrial planned development located in Section 7.5 and as part of the general development standards of the PD- Planned Development Districts development requirements located in Appendix A. Staff has prepared draft language for the Planning & Zoning Commission to reflect the grace period of a 20% increase in the number of seconds in Section 7.5 of the UDO as discussed at the Board of Alderman meetings. In review of the ordinances, it was also decided that additional clarity is encouraged in the Appendix A of the UDO for PD-Planned Development. Additional language clarifying that residential projects should also be included to be required to meet a Level of Service “D” requirement.

**DRAFT LANGUAGE:**

Below is the draft language (red-line adjustments) for review and recommendation to the Planning and Zoning Commission on June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

**Proposed Section 7.5.2.m states:** A professional traffic study performed by a firm chosen by the City showing the proposed traffic circulation pattern within and in the vicinity of the area of the

planned development, including the location and description of public improvements to be installed, any streets and access easements, and any impact on current conditions. The traffic study must determine that the proposed traffic will maintain at least a “D” level of service **or if the proposed development will result in below a level “D” service, the traffic study must find no greater than a 20% increase in the number of seconds for the proposed development.**

**Appendix A A-1.5.1 states:**

1)The approval of planned development may provide for such exceptions from the regulations associated with traditional zoning districts as may be necessary or desirable to achieve the objectives of the proposed planned development. No planned development shall be allowed which would result in:

- a) Inadequate or unsafe vehicular access to the development;
- b) Traffic volumes exceeding the capacity of the adjoining or nearby streets. **Capacity for residential project** shall be based on a street providing "level of service D" as defined in the latest publication of Transportation and Traffic Engineers Handbook, Institute of Transportation Engineers;
- c) An undue burden on public parks, recreation areas, schools, fire and police protection and other public facilities or utilities which serve or are proposed to serve the planned development;
- d) A failure to comply with the performance standards referenced in Section 4.12 or
- e) Other detrimental impacts on the surrounding area including, but not limited to, visual pollution

The changes herein are recommended by Staff to effectively administer the UDO as originally intended an to implement revised language as directed by the Board of Alderman.

**Staff is requesting that the Planning and Zoning Commission vote on these amendments to move forward as recommendation to the Board of Alderman.**

**EXHIBITS:**

1. Draft Ordinance
2. Application
3. Public Notice