

MEMO

To: Town of Abita Springs Board of Aldermen
From: Alexandra G. Carter, President & CEO, Desire Line
Date: July 21, 2026
RE: **Council Action – Final Amended Land Development Code and Zoning Map**

I. PURPOSE OF THIS MEMO. This memo is intended to support Council reintroduction of the amended Land Development Code and Zoning Map. Specifically, it summarizes the major policy issues raised since February 24, 2026, and the revisions incorporated into the proposed Land Development Code and Zoning Map in response to Council direction and public input.

II. SUMMARY OF CHANGES SINCE INITIAL INTRODUCTION (FEB 24). The July 21 amended and reintroduced Land Development Code and Zoning Map reflects substantial revisions based on public input and Council feedback, including:

- Conservation Residential District renamed to Large Lot Residential throughout the Code and Zoning Map to better reflect the district's purpose and reduce confusion.
- Clarified revocation procedures by consolidating applicable permit and approval revocation processes within Chapter 2 – Procedures for improved consistency and administration.
- Clarified standards for single-site, multi-building development in Commercial and Mixed-Use districts by adding language that acknowledges multiple principal buildings may be permitted on a single site subject to building size and site development standards and adding pedestrian connectivity requirements. This approach encourages multiple smaller buildings that reflect Abita's traditional development pattern rather than a single large building. The revised standards rely on building size, parking, landscaping, and pedestrian connectivity requirements rather than lot coverage or a maximum number of principal buildings.
- Targeted commercial map revisions, including restoration and expansion of Commercial zoning in key areas and refinement of Mixed-Use districts along Highway 435 to better reflect existing development patterns.
- Responded to individual resident and property owner requests consistent with public and Council feedback over the course of meetings, public discussions, and public hearings.
- Simplification of zoning districts (removal of AMU; consolidation through Resilience Overlay; renaming of the Mixed Use Districts).
- Adjusted development thresholds (e.g., allowing 4,000–6,000 sf uses in Mixed-Use, allowing a second ADU with Conditional Use approval).
- Consolidation and clarification of land use categories and permitting processes (gas stations, event venues, home occupations, retail and incidental sales, dimensional standards, certificates of appropriateness, conditional and nonconforming uses).
- Addition and refinement of specific uses and treatment of animals (drive-thrus, boutique retail, small-scale theaters, container homes, modular homes).
- Updated Resilience Overlay standards addressing flood risk and infrastructure constraints.
- Updated parking standards to better address mixed uses.
- Clarified right-of-way revocation procedures including directing applications to the Board of Aldermen, with referral to the Planning and Zoning Commission authorized when additional planning review is warranted.
- Removed customer limit for home occupations in support of accommodating group instruction/classes, such as dance lessons and martial arts.

III. STATUS OF POLICY ISSUES.

Issues Addressed and Incorporated: the following topics have been reviewed extensively and are incorporated into the July 21 draft:

- Commercial vs. Mixed-Use zoning balance
- Economic development and tax base considerations
- Resilience Overlay and flood risk standards
- Land use category consolidations and clarifications
- Retail and building size thresholds
- Hotel/motel room limits
- Permitted and conditional use adjustments
- Map amendments in response to resident and property owner feedback as of July 7, 2026.

IV. KEY FINDINGS

A. Commercial and Mixed-Use Balance

- Key commercial areas have been retained and expanded
 - Existing businesses identified by the Council have been remapped to Commercial
 - Mixed-Use districts continue to allow economically productive uses and better reflect local conditions
- Conclusion:** The revised map maintains economic opportunity while reflecting community input on scale and character.

B. Development Clarity and Investment

- The updated Code simplifies and clarifies development standards
 - Streamlined processes reduce uncertainty for property owners and businesses
- Conclusion:** The revised Code improves the predictability and feasibility of investment in Abita Springs.

C. Legal Considerations (Downzoning).

Conservation, Commercial, and Mixed-Use zoning allows continued reasonable economic use of property.

Conclusion: The proposed changes are consistent with established zoning authority and do not constitute a taking.

D. Resilience Overlay

- Overlay standards address flood risk through elevation and fill limitations
 - Consolidation simplifies administration and mapping
- Conclusion:** The revised approach improves clarity while maintaining flood protection objectives.

V. RECOMMENDED COUNCIL ACTION

The July 21 draft reflects all amendments directed by the Board of Aldermen during the public review process and no additional substantive revisions are recommended by staff. Vote to introduce the amended Land Development Code and Zoning Map, where the July 21, 2026 version is advanced as the final version.

VI. CONCLUSION. The July 21, 2026, draft Code and Map reflect over two years of public engagement, extensive Planning Commission and Council input, and review of more than 900+ public comments.

Staff and consultant recommendation: Proceed with reintroduction and final decision-making.



Alexandra G. Carter, AICP
President & CEO, Desire Line