To: Planning Commission
Through: Ben Boike, Community Development Director
From: Melissa Houtsma, City Planner
Date: March 15, 2022

PC Case 22-05 – Ordinance Amendment Regarding Off-Street Loading and Unloading Regulations – City of West St. Paul

BACKGROUND:

Presently the zoning ordinance reads, “Loading berths shall not occupy the front yard or a side yard adjacent to a street”. However, after some review and discussions with an industrial property owner, City Staff has elected to revisit this language and recommends an amendment that would allow more flexibility for some industrial properties while still maintaining the intent of the code.

The attached ordinance alters the code in order to allow loading berths/docks to be in the front yard in industrial districts, as long as said yard does not sit adjacent to a property of a different zoning district (such as commercial or residential). City Staff believes the intent of the current language was to lessen the visibility of loading docks from the street and/or adjacent properties. However, loading docks and larger scale vehicles are much more common in industrial areas and therefore, City Staff does not believe allowing the loading docks in the front yard (not abutting a different zoning district) to be detrimental to the views of the adjacent properties.

Visual Example:

- Lot 1 – Zoned Residential
- Lot 2 – Zoned Industrial
  - Front yard is the eastern property line,
  - Lot 2 could not have a loading dock in the front yard
  - Lot 2 could have a loading dock in the side yard facing the street (south)
- Lot 4 – Zoned Industrial
  - Front yard is the northern property line,
  - Lot 4 could have a loading dock in the front yard
  - Lot 4 could not have a loading dock in the side yard facing the street (east)
CURRENT ENVIRONMENT:
In addition to offering the industrial properties a little more flexibility, this amendment would also help to better align with the current environment of the I1 – Light Industrial zoning district as many properties currently have a loading dock in the front yard or in the side yard adjacent to the street (see image below).

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:
Staff recommends the Planning Commission hold a public hearing and make a recommendation on the proposed ordinance amendment.

ATTACHMENTS:
Staff Presentation
Redlined Ordinance

TIMELINE:
March 15: Planning Commission (Public Hearing)
March 28: City Council First Reading
April 11: City Council Final Reading