

ORDINANCE NO. _____

AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND CHAPTER 36, ARTICLE V, DIVISION 6, §§ 36-324.1 OF THE LITTLE ROCK REVISED CODE OF ORDINANCES (1988) TO PROVIDE FOR THE MODIFICATION OF VARIOUS PROCEDURES AND LAND USE REGULATIONS RELATED TO THE UU, URBAN USE DISTRICT, ZONING CLASSIFICATION; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

WHEREAS, the City of Little Rock Board of Directors approved to support the Downtown Master Plan in July 2024, which identifies a detailed implementation plan consisting of forty-two strategic actions to encourage residential density and guide development and investment in the Downtown area; and,

WHEREAS, the proposed amendments to the UU Urban Use District implement Strategy 4A of the Downtown Master Plan’s Tapestry of Neighborhoods section by refining the zoning framework to reduce barriers to development, prohibit inappropriate uses that have been determined to be detrimental to a walkable urban core, and promote high-quality urban design through appropriate parking standards; and,

WHEREAS, it has been determined by the City of Little Rock that it is appropriate to make certain modifications to the procedures and regulations contained within Chapter 36 of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Little Rock, Arkansas, related to the UU, Urban Use District, to ensure continued alignment with adopted planning goals and contemporary urban planning principles; and

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE
CITY OF LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS.**

Section 1. Little Rock, Ark, Rev. Code Chapter 36, Article V, Division 6 Subsection 36-342.1 is amended as follows:

Sec. 36-342.1. UU Urban Use District.

(a) *General purpose and intent.* The urban use district established by this chapter is designed to assure the continuation of development consistent with a traditional urban form. The urban use district is designed to help create a compact, dense,

distinguishable core area. The district is established in order to provide for an urban form allowing mid-rise and high-rise structures. This district is to provide for the urban residential, office, civic and business core of the city. Structures within the urban use district are encouraged to provide multiple uses within the same structure. The ground or street level of structures should include street-oriented activity and pedestrian amenities. The resulting area is to be pedestrian 'urban' oriented.

(b) *Application of regulations.* The regulations of this district shall apply to new development, redevelopment exceeding fifty (50) percent of the structure's current replacement value, and expansion of existing development or exterior modifications. Routine repairs and maintenance shall not require compliance with this section.

(c) *Pre-development Review.* Development subject to these regulations shall be required to submit for and attend a pre-development review meeting with the Planning & Development Department to ensure conformance with applicable development standards of the Urban Use District, to assure construction activity avoids disruption to the use of neighboring properties, to encourage the preservation and rehabilitation of historically and culturally significant sites, and to facilitate applications that are harmonious with the intent of the Downtown Master Plan, and other relevant, adopted municipal plans.

Except for construction of improvements in the public right-of-way required by the city, and redevelopment or expansion of existing development, all uses, structures or lots which existed on the effective date of this section which do not conform to the standards and guidelines in this section, shall be treated as nonconforming according to the provisions of article III of this chapter.

(d) *Definitions.*

(1) *Stepback* means a steplike recession in the profile of a high-rise building implemented to mitigate the canyon effect, reduce shadow impact on the public realm, and support a human-scale environment.

Section 2. Little Rock, Ark, Rev. Code Chapter 36, Article V, Division 6 Subsection 36-342.1(c) is amended as follows:

(e) *Development criteria.*

- 1 (1) *Lighting.* Any lighting shall be placed so as to reflect away from adjacent residential
2 structures. Fixtures adjacent to roadways shall be of a design that minimizes glare to the
3 motoring public. No excessive or unusual noise, odor or vibration shall be emitted so
4 that it constitutes a nuisance, which substantially exceeds that general level of noise,
5 odor or vibration emitted by uses adjacent to or immediately surrounding the site. Such
6 comparisons shall be made at the boundary of the site.
- 7 (2) *Screening.* All ground-mounted mechanical systems and trash receptacles and pickup
8 shall be oriented away from a primary street side of the property and screened from the
9 public right-of-way. Ground-mounted mechanical systems and trash receptacles shall be
10 placed adjacent to alleys if alleys are available.
- 11 (3) *Drive-in or drive-through facilities.* Drive-thru facilities shall only be allowed on
12 properties directly abutting Broadway Street, south of W. Capitol Avenue.
- 13 a. The drive-thru shall be located so that it runs along no more than two sides of the
14 lot, shall not encircle the building, and shall not abut the front façade of the building
15 (or either of the two front façades in the case of a corner lot).
- 16 b. Pedestrian access should be prioritized, and a pedestrian circulation plan shall be
17 submitted demonstrating safe, uninterrupted, and direct pedestrian access to all
18 public entrances.
- 19 c. *Nonconforming facilities.* Drive-thru facilities associated with sites legally existing
20 prior to the effective date of this section may continue as nonconforming uses.
21 Modifications to such facilities may be approved through the applicable
22 development review process, provided that the proposed changes comply with the
23 requirements outlined in this section.
- 24 i. If full compliance with these provisions is not feasible due to a substantial
25 hardship—defined as a condition or irregularity unique to the property—a
26 variance may be requested. Approval of a variance shall require the
27 proposed development to demonstrate a net reduction in adverse impacts on
28 the pedestrian environment. Mitigation measures may include, but are not
29 limited to: removal of redundant curb cuts, addition of landscaping, and
30 installation of pedestrian-oriented amenities.

- 1 (4) *Building materials.* Facade materials may be any standard material, except corrugated
2 or ribbed materials.
- 3 (5) *Landscaping.*
- 4 a. All vehicular use areas shall be in compliance with chapter 15, article IV.
- 5 b. Street trees a minimum of three-inch caliper shall be required (type of trees as listed
6 in landscape ordinance [chapter 15]). The trees shall be located a minimum of two
7 (2) feet off the back of a curb and shall be thirty (30) feet on center and no closer
8 than thirty (30) feet to a street intersection with a water source provided. The tree
9 canopy shall be maintained at least eight (8) feet above the sidewalk.
- 10 c. Unless otherwise approved, the planter well shall have placed at its base a six (6)
11 inch thick section of approximately one (1) inch gravel with filter fabric laid on top
12 to assist with drainage.
- 13 (6) *Sidewalks.*
- 14 a. Sidewalks shall consist of a minimum five-foot concrete walk, excluding the first
15 two (2) feet from the curb. Sidewalks shall provide a minimum seven-foot
16 horizontal clearance at a height of four (4) feet from the ground.
- 17 b. Sidewalk sales and daily display or vending that is stored inside the principal
18 business building during closed business hours, may be allowed. However, these
19 activities shall not obstruct pedestrian movement, fire lanes, or areas designated for
20 access by the physically impaired.
- 21 (7) *Building orientation.* Buildings must be oriented to the street. The primary entrance of
22 the building shall be at street level on the street at the sidewalk. Entrances shall be
23 designed so that the door will not swing beyond the property line.
- 24 (8) *Street-level floor.* The ground-level (street fronting) floor of nonresidential structures
25 shall have a minimum surface area of sixty (60) percent transparent or window display.
- 26 (9) *Projections* (all requirements for a franchise remain in place).
- 27 a. Objects shall not project from the building facade over the public right-of-way
28 except for awnings, balconies and signs as specified in section 36-553.
- 29 b. Awnings shall not project more than eight (8) feet from the building facade and
30 have a minimum clearance of eight (8) feet above the sidewalk.

- 1 c. Balconies over the public right-of-way shall have a minimum clearance of nine (9)
2 feet above the sidewalk. The maximum projection shall be four (4) feet.

3 (10) *Parking requirements.*

- 4 a. No off-street parking shall be required.
5 b. *Parking maximums.* The maximum number of off-street parking allowed in this
6 district shall be the minimum standard established in Article VII (Sec. 36-502).

7 i. New parking structures or commercial garages proposed which provide
8 parking spaces in excess of the maximum allowable limit shall be required
9 to demonstrate a shared parking agreement with adjacent or nearby uses,
10 subject to consideration to be processed as a request for a variance per Sec.
11 36-69—70 of the Little Rock Municipal Code, through the Board of
12 Adjustments.

- 13 c. *Location.*

14 i. Surface parking. Surface parking areas, including parking pads, shall be
15 located behind or adjacent to a structure, never between the building and
16 abutting street.

17 ii. Parking structure. Parking structures associated with a proposed or
18 existing building shall be subordinate to the primary use of the structure and
19 be located behind, within, or adjacent to the structure, never between the
20 principal building and abutting street, excluding alleys.

- 21 d. *Surface parking.* Surface parking shall not exceed 25 percent in area of the proposed
22 site, inclusive of all parcels involved in the proposal.

- 23 e. *Parking structures or commercial garages.* Any parking structure with frontage
24 along Capitol Avenue, Broadway, Chester, Main, Markham and 9th Streets shall be
25 required to have active uses other than parking (such as office, light retail, personal
26 services and entertainment) or building facade constructed to meet the standards of
27 this section along the first floor of said frontage.

- 28 i. *[Screening.]* An opaque screening wall no less than three (3) feet in height shall
29 be placed on the exterior perimeter of the first floor of the street frontage of all
30 parking structures not otherwise required to have active uses or building facade
31 construction as noted in subsection a. above. The screening wall shall extend

1 above the finished floor of the first floor of the parking structure so as to screen
2 vehicles in the parking structure.

3 (11) *Signs*. Off-premises signs are not allowed. Ground-mounted signs are discouraged and
4 may only be permitted as a variance as per division 2 of this chapter. Otherwise,
5 permitted signs shall be as in section 36-553, signs permitted in institutional and office
6 zones, of this chapter. On the street level, the maximum area of signage may be doubled
7 if at least fifty (50) percent of the street-level office and retail space has direct access to
8 the street.

9 **Section 3.** Little Rock, Ark, Rev. Code Chapter 36, Article V, Division 6 Subsection 36-
10 342.1(d) is amended as follows:

11 (f) *Use regulations*.

12 (2) *Conditional uses*. Conditional uses shall include those uses allowed in the light industrial
13 "I-2" district as "permitted uses" and those uses allowed in the residential, office and
14 commercial districts of this chapter as "conditional uses", except that all uses must be
15 inside or enclosed.

16 *a. Other conditional uses*.

17 i. Event center.

18 a. Hours of operation shall end no later than 12:00 a.m. (midnight). Event
19 centers located within a designated Entertainment District, authorized by
20 Ordinance No. 21,761 (July 13, 2019), may operate beyond midnight in
21 accordance with the regulations and limitations specific to that district.

22 ii. Parking, structure or commercial garage.

23 iii. Private club with dining or bar service.

24 (3) Prohibited uses.

25 a. Gas stations.

26 b. Parking, commercial surface lot.

27 **Section 4.** Little Rock, Ark, Rev. Code Chapter 36, Article V, Division 6 Subsection 36-
28 342.1(e) is amended as follows:

29 (g) *Height regulations*. No building hereafter erected or structurally altered, unless otherwise
30 stated, shall exceed a height of eighty-five (85) feet. Development proposed to exceed eighty-
31 five (85) feet shall be processed as a conditional use and shall provide a minimum ten-foot

(10') stepback for all portions of the structure above eighty-five (85) feet, along all sides of the building, including those abutting alleys. Where a development is proposed to exceed eighty-five (85) feet and is located within one (1) block directly adjacent to another building exceeding eighty-five (85) feet—whether in a cardinal or ordinal direction—the proposal shall be processed through the Planned Zoning District (PZD) section of the zoning ordinance, with the intent to establish a workable development plan that aligns with the purpose and intent of the zoning district.

(1) Views.

a. Corridors. New construction shall be designed to preserve identified view corridors, those being: President Clinton Avenue Corridor, River Market Avenue Corridor, Capitol Avenue Corridor, and West Markham Corridor.

b. River Views. Views of the Arkansas River north of E. 2nd Street shall be preserved for structures existing at the time of the effective date of this section, free from any visual obstructions above the height of six (6) stories.

Section 5. Little Rock, Ark, Rev. Code Chapter 36, Article V, Division 6 Subsection 36-342.1(f) is amended as follows:

(h) *Area regulations.*

(1) *Front yard.* Unless otherwise noted, buildings shall have a zero-foot setback along the public right-of-way. In no case may a structure be built in the right-of-way. Along Chester Street from I-630 to La Harpe Boulevard, the front building line shall be ten (10) feet.

a. Front setbacks abutting the public right-of-way are allowed, not to exceed ten (10) feet, where the front setback area results in enhanced outdoor planned and landscaped space, public or quasi-public, such as outdoor seating and plazas.

b. Front setbacks required where adjacent to lots containing residential detached structures shall be aligned with the average of the current setbacks or adjacent structures within 10 percent variance, not to exceed a maximum of fifteen (15) feet.

(2) *Rear yard.* No setback required except where adjacent to lots containing single-family detached structures. In this case the rear yard shall have a setback of not less than twenty-five (25) feet.

(3) *Side yard.* No setback required except where adjacent to lots containing single-family detached structures. In this case the side yards shall have a setback of not less than four (4) feet.

Section 6. *Severability.* In the event any title, section, paragraph, item, clause, phrase, or word of this ordinance is declared or adjudged to be invalid or unconstitutional, such declaration or adjudication shall not affect the remaining portion of the ordinance which shall remain in full force and effect as if the portion so declared or adjudged invalid or unconstitutional was not originally a part of the ordinance.

Section 7. *Repealer.* All laws, ordinances, resolutions, including but not limited to Little Rock, Ark., Ordinance No. 18,228 (March 7, 2000), or parts of the same that are inconsistent with the provisions of this ordinance area hereby repealed to the extent of such inconsistency.

PASSED: December 16, 2025

ATTEST:

APPROVED:

Allison Segars, City Clerk

Frank Scott, Jr., Mayor

APPROVED AS TO LEGAL FORM:

Thomas M. Carpenter, City Attorney

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