

PZO 2016-02

Introduced by Larry Cochran, Parish President

To allow several accessory uses at golf courses and country clubs as a Special Exception Use and to allow commercial uses as a Special Permit Use.

Background:

At least eight (8) properties in St. Charles Parish were developed as country clubs or swim clubs in the late 60s/early 70s, likely to fill a gap in recreation. All of these clubs registered with the state as non-profit organizations, and were owned, operated, and financially sustained by members. Club sites varied in size from 243 acres (Willowdale Country Club and Golf Course, Luling) to less than two acres (Sun Villa, Norco). All the clubs were built with a swimming pool, bathhouse/concessions, and tennis courts; some also had a clubhouse building; two had golf courses.

Over time, recreational opportunities in the Parish and region increased, leaving these clubs with declining membership and fewer and fewer member-driven revenue-generating functions in their facilities. Clubs are struggling to sustain themselves. Most clubs have sold portions of their original sites to generate operating revenue.

Unused square footage is an asset that clubs could use to generate revenue. Some clubs have leased space to commercial businesses, but the R-1A and R-1B zoning districts generally do not permit commercial business. The current two-step process for permitting a customary accessory use in a club requires the club to obtain Planning Commission approval for any new commercial tenant through a Special Use Permit, then a Change of Occupancy for the tenant. The process can take 8 weeks.

The proposed ordinance changes will:

- Allow several low-intensity commercial uses to be permitted in clubs upon approval of the Planning Director and completing a Change of Occupancy.
- Require higher-intensity commercial uses in clubs to obtain a Special Permit from the Planning and Zoning Commission and, if approved, complete a Change of Occupancy.

Planning and Zoning context:

Zoning and permitted uses: All but one of the Parish's six existing clubs is situated entirely within a single-family residential zoning district—R-1A & R-1B (only Hill Heights is split-zoned R-1A (pool and club house site), C-2 (in the undeveloped northern part of the site and ball fields); and an OL spot (recently rezoned). Residential zoning districts prohibit commercial activity such as snack shops, restaurants, exercise and fitness businesses, cosmetology shops and spas, and retail sales. Although these activities are generally offered at country clubs and golf courses as accessory uses, they are not permitted in single-family zoning districts.

Permit process: Customary accessory uses, whether by the clubs or by private businesses under some form of agreement with the club, have been permitted, allowed, or discouraged inconsistently. The proposed changes will provide a consistent process.

Potential outcomes:

Existing clubs will be able to permit low-intensity tenants more quickly.

Existing clubs will be able to request permits for more intense commercial tenants from the Planning and Zoning Commission—a process which requires a public hearing and offers neighborhood residents a chance to voice concerns.