

Ordinances made accessible

By *Kate Vanderstelt* on April 06, 2022

GROSSE POINTE WOODS — While an easy-to-read ordinance may seem like an oxymoron, Grosse Pointe Woods is working to make the unthinkable a reality. The city is redeveloping its zoning ordinance manual to make its ordinances as accessible as possible to residents and future developers alike.

“It’s user friendly, it’s business friendly and it’s developer friendly,” Building Inspector Gene Tutag said. “It’s a long time coming.”

Following years of using a cumbersome document, the updated zoning ordinance manual will include clickable links, diagrams, color and more.

“It’ll save everyone a lot of time, particularly architects and developers,” Tutag said of the update. He added, architects on the city’s planning commission had used the new format in other cities and are pleased it’s coming to the Woods.

Aside from architects and developers, residents should be excited about the change, as well, as it will help them find ordinances more easily.

“It’s a lot better understood for people who aren’t familiar with reading ordinances,” said Josie Modrack, the building department’s confidential administrative assistant.

In the current version, she added, “you can search ‘fence,’ but it won’t always bring you to what you’re looking for, so you end up kind of in a rabbit hole. (The update) is kind of getting that rabbit hole out of the picture.”

The biggest difference in the updated version is its clickable links, diagrams and use of color.

“Before, all the information was there, but it was just harder to kind of locate and be sure of it,” Modrack said. “So now you can confidently look through and be like, ‘This is the answer.’”

With an approximate \$30,000 price tag, the city commissioned Giffels Webster, a Detroit-based civil engineering and community planning firm, to complete the update.

Already through the planning commission’s public hearing stage, the update was brought to council for its first hearing at the April 4 council meeting. Next, it will be presented for a second hearing before officially being adopted. If everything goes to plan, Tutag hopes the new manual will be available for public use in May.

With how happy the commission is on the zoning manual update, they hope updates to the sign ordinance and master plan, which soon will be in the works, will follow suit using the accessible format.

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