

**City Planning Commission**  
**Staff Report**  
**Tuesday, January 13, 2026**

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**Zoning Docket 007-26**

**Prepared by:** Haley Molina

**Date:** January 14, 2026

**Deadline for CPC action:** 03/14/26

**CC Deadline:** 60 Days from Receipt

**City Council District:** All

**Applicant(s):** City Council Motion No. M-25-567

**Request:** Text amendment to the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance to:

- Define “dwelling, shipping container” as a dwelling constructed wholly or partially from one or more repurposed shipping containers.
- Prescribe use standards for shipping container dwellings, including but not limited to the following:
  - “In S-RS Suburban Single-Family Residential Districts, Shipping Container Dwellings shall be subject to the following requirements:
    - a. The exterior walls of such structures shall be clad in permitted building materials, including but not limited to wood siding, stucco, brick, fiber cement panels, or corrugated metal panels. The cladding shall fully obscure the seams, corrugation, markings, and original metal surface of the shipping container from view.
    - b. Roof surfaces that originate from the container unit shall be obscured or concealed by an additional roof structure, such as a pitched or parapet roof, so as not to be visibly identifiable as a container.”
- Adding shipping container dwellings as a permitted or conditional use to zoning district use tables as appropriate.

**Location:**

The proposed text amendment would affect regulations that are applied to S-RS Suburban Single-Family Residential Districts

Description
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Zoning Docket 007/26 is a request by City Council Motion No. M-25-567 to regulate shipping container dwellings in the S-RS Suburban Single-Family Residential District.

The Motion asks that CPC staff 1. amend **Article 26** of the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance to define “dwelling, shipping container” as a dwelling constructed wholly or partially from one or more repurposed shipping containers; 2. Amend **Article 13, Section 13.2, Table 13-1 Permitted and Conditional Uses** to permit shipping container dwellings as by-right or conditional uses in the S-RS Suburban Single-Family Residential District, and others as appropriate; 3. prescribe use standards for shipping container dwellings

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in **Article 20**. The suggested language for the use standards focuses on an aesthetic outcome. The shipping container would need to be clad in a permitted material as well as covered with an additional roof structure so as not to be visibly identifiable as a container.

The staff recommends denial of the proposed text amendment for four main reasons.

- The zoning ordinance should not make a use distinction between stick-built residences and residences constructed from prefabricated structures, such as modular homes or shipping containers. The use as a single family residence is the same.
- Restrictive design guidelines have the possibility to stifle creativity. Shipping containers can be utilized in aesthetically pleasing ways.
- The Motion refers to “preserving the character and scale of the neighborhoods as required by the Master Plan”. However, the Master Plan states that character is defined in terms of scale, massing, and placement. This does not include materials.
- The staff recently completed a Land Use Barriers Study aimed at decreasing regulatory hurdles to development. The proposed Motion would overregulate a minute percentage of new construction, thus undermining recent policy decisions.

### Reason for Commission Review

The City Planning Commission is required to make a recommendation on all amendments to the text of the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance prior to City Council action, in accordance with **Article 4, Section 4.2.D.3 Action by City Planning Commission** of the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance.

### Analysis

#### Reason for text amendment

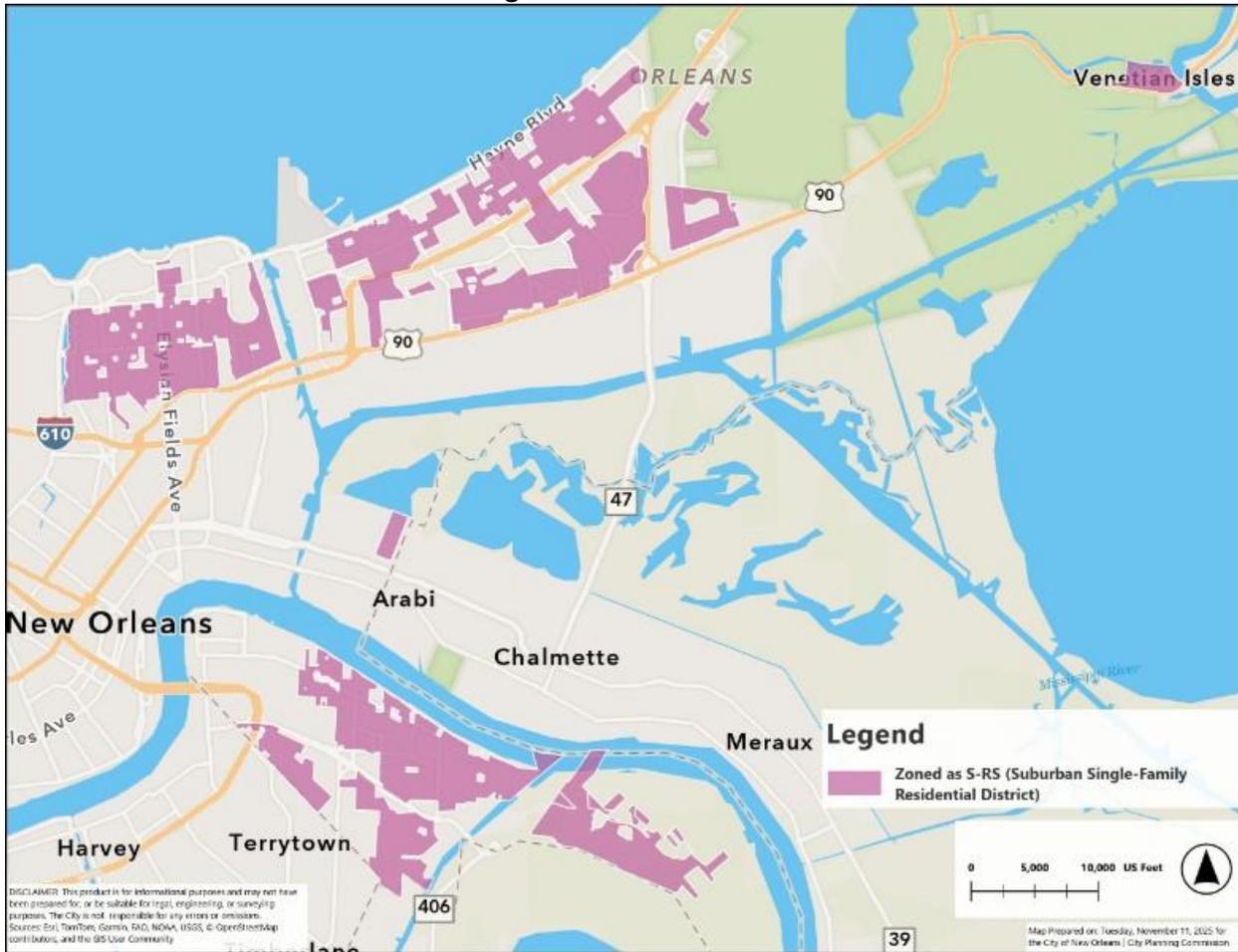
City Council Motion M-25-358 proposes to amend the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance to regulate the use of repurposed shipping containers as residential dwellings to ensure compatibility with the character and integrity of residential neighborhoods.

The Motion specifically states that standards “are necessary to obscure their industrial appearance and integrate them into residential streetscapes”. The justification is that “S-RS Single-Family Residential District has a more uniform lotting pattern than other zoning districts, with residential dwellings generally designed after World War II”. The reason for the amend is because “Standards promote aesthetic harmony, quality construction, and neighborhood compatibility, thereby protecting the public health, safety, and welfare, and preserving the character and scale of the neighborhoods as required by the Master Plan”.

#### *Affected Area*

The proposed text amendment would affect S-RS Suburban Single-Family Residential Districts citywide, illustrated by the purple sections of the maps, below.

Figure 1. Affected Sites



Source: ITI and PropertyViewer

### Changes Proposed by Applicant

Council Motion M-25-567 instructs the consideration of the following amendments:

- i. Defining “dwelling, shipping container” as a dwelling constructed wholly or partially from one or more repurposed shipping containers.
- ii. Prescribing use standards for shipping container dwellings, including but not limited to the following:

In S-RS Suburban Single-Family Residential Districts, Shipping Container Dwellings shall be subject to the following requirements:

- a. The exterior walls of such structures shall be clad in permitted building materials, including but not limited to wood siding, stucco, brick, fiber cement panels, or corrugated metal panels. The cladding shall fully obscure the seams, corrugation, markings, and original metal surface of the shipping container from view.

- b. Roof surfaces that originate from the container unit shall be obscured or concealed by an additional roof structure, such as a pitched or parapet roof, so as not to be visibly identifiable as a container.
- iii. Adding shipping container dwellings as a permitted or conditional use to zoning district use tables as appropriate.

## **Staff Analysis**

### *Problem to be addressed*

The Motion, as passed by City Council, followed this rationale: “Regulate the use of repurposed shipping containers in residential dwellings to ensure compatibility with the character and integrity of residential neighborhoods. Standards requiring specific exterior cladding and roofing treatments for dwellings constructed from shipping containers are necessary to obscure their industrial appearance and integrate them into residential streetscapes. S-RS Single-Family Residential District has a more uniform lotting pattern than other zoning districts, with residential dwellings generally designed after World War II. Standards promote aesthetic harmony, quality construction, and neighborhood compatibility, thereby protecting the public health, safety, and welfare, and preserving the character and scale of the neighborhoods as required by the Master Plan”.

This appears to be motivated by the recent construction of a relatively small number of residences out of shipping containers, and potential aesthetic impacts of those structures on the surrounding neighborhood.

### *Recommendation*

The staff recommends denial of the proposed text amendment for four main reasons.

- The zoning ordinance should not make a use distinction between stick-built residences and residences constructed from prefabricated structures, such as modular homes or shipping containers. The use as a single family residence is the same.
- Restrictive design guidelines have the possibility to stifle creativity. Shipping containers can be utilized in aesthetically pleasing ways.
- The Motion refers to “preserving the character and scale of the neighborhoods as required by the Master Plan”. However, the Master Plan states that character is defined in terms of scale, massing, and placement. This does not include materials.
- The staff recently completed a Land Use Barriers Study aimed at decreasing regulatory hurdles to development. The proposed Motion would overregulate a minute percentage of new construction, thus undermining recent policy decisions.

The staff does not support regulations that hold shipping container dwellings to a different standard than traditional construction. The use is the same; therefore, the regulatory response cannot focus on shipping containers as a land use issue (e.g., creating a definition for shipping container dwellings and restricting their use within zoning districts, as proposed). A possible alternative approach could be to consider aesthetic issues related to shipping containers like cladding and roof form. However, the staff does not support this approach because the same desired building materials and forms would also need to apply to conventional building construction. Corrugated metal is a common building material. Modern

architecture has featured flat roofs in residential contexts for the past 100 years. The staff does not support such design standards that limit the use of metal cladding and flat roofs, as those can limit good design as much as they can restrict poor design.

Aesthetics are generally subjective. Shipping containers can be utilized in aesthetically pleasing ways. There are a few local examples of shipping container architecture that are not inherently problematic and that are located within historic districts, including a property within the Irish Channel local historic district at 2350 Rousseau Street. At the initial Architectural Review Committee of the Historic District Landmarks Commission meeting, it was agreed that the use of shipping containers as a building material was appropriate (see **Figure 11**). The design celebrates the character of the building typology and also meets the standards for new construction. Just as shipping containers be used in well-designed, appropriate structures in historic districts such as the Irish Channel, so too can they be used successfully in newer, suburban neighborhoods.

The Motion refers to “preserving the character and scale of the neighborhoods as required by the Master Plan”. However, the Master Plan states that character is defined in terms of scale, massing, and placement. This does not include materials. The staff pulled permit data and found 7 examples of shipping container dwellings that were built within S-RS Suburban Single-Family Residential Districts in the past ten years. These instances are scattered evenly across the city, including within the Tall Timbers- Brechtel, New Aurora – English Turn, Pontchartrain Park, Lower Ninth Ward, Plum Orchard, and Lake Catherine neighborhoods. **Figures 3 through 9** show the range of building forms near each of these permitted shipping container dwellings. There is not a single architectural style that could be defined. The suburban residential neighborhoods were developed over decades and include a mix of materials and varied architectural styles. The Master Plan seeks to ensure that infill buildings fit in harmoniously in existing neighborhoods, but does not require them to copy existing architecture.

The staff recently completed a Land Use Barriers Study aimed at decreasing regulatory hurdles to development. The proposed Motion would overregulate a minute percentage of new construction, thus undermining recent policy decisions. Within the past ten years, at least seven container homes have been permitted in the S-RS Districts. This is a small fraction of new residential permits. The Motion proposes an additional review process for a small percentage of construction and a typology that is not intensifying. It is not clear whether shipping container dwellings offer cost savings compared to conventional construction methods. The typology has a projected 30 year life-span and requires specialized maintenance related to corrosion. Estimated costs for a container are \$40,000 and they still require conventional foundations, insulation, wiring, etc.

### Evaluation of approval standards

The City Planning Commission recommendation and the City Council decision on any zoning text amendment are matters of legislative discretion. In making their recommendation and decision, the City Planning Commission and the City Council are required to consider the standards in **Table 4-1: Standards for Zoning Amendments** of the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance. In this section, the staff evaluates the application using those standards.

**The proposed amendment is compatible with the Master Plan and Future Land Use Map.**

This standard is not met. The S-RS Districts are primarily applied to areas with a “Residential Single-family Post-war,” future land use map (FLUM) designation. The Motion proposes that shipping container dwellings be considered a separate use. However, the use would remain the same. Single-family residences are allowed within the Residential Single-Family Post-War Flum designation. Creating a new definition for shipping container dwellings would place construction methods into land use and undermine the purpose of the district. Brick-veneer and wood-sided construction are all regulated the same. Singling out shipping container dwellings would achieve no tangible benefit because you can achieve the same aesthetic outcome with conventional construction methods.

#### **RESIDENTIAL SINGLE-FAMILY POST-WAR**

**Goal:** Preserve the existing character and scale of low density single-family residential in post-war (WWII) areas of the city and allow for compatible infill development.

**Range of Uses:** Single-family dwellings, agriculture, stormwater management, and supporting public recreational and community facilities allowed (e.g. schools and places of worship). Neighborhood-serving businesses and traditional corner stores may be allowed where current or former use is verified. Conversion to multifamily, neighborhood-serving commercial, or mixed used may be allowed for historical institutional or other non-residential structures.

**Development Character:** New development will fit with the character and scale of surrounding neighborhoods where single- and two-family residential structures are typically set back away from the street on larger lots than in older, pre-war neighborhoods. Incorporate risk reduction and adaptation strategies in the built environment.

The staff reviewed the goals, strategies, and actions outlined within *Chapter 13, Land Use Plan* of the Master Plan. The plan emphasizes the preservation of the overall character of existing residential areas, including the following:

- Goal 1, Strategy 1.A. Preserve the overall character of existing residential areas.
  - Action 3. Maintain zoning districts that reflect the city’s established development patterns. Development patterns in areas built before World War II differ from those in areas developed after the war.
  - Action 4. Continue to refine development standards into district regulations that preserve established building character in terms of scale, massing, and placement, but allow for housing of different types and levels of affordability.
  - Action 7. Ensure that infill buildings fit in harmoniously in existing neighborhoods, but do not require them to copy existing architecture.
  - Action 8. Ensure that new housing built within established neighborhoods is compatible with the scale and character of existing development.

The Motion refers to “preserving the character and scale of the neighborhoods as required by the Master Plan”. However, the Master Plan states that character is defined in terms of scale, massing, and placement. This does not include materials. The staff pulled permit data and found 7 examples of shipping container dwellings that were built within S-RS Suburban Single-Family Residential Districts in the past ten years. These instances are scattered evenly across the city, including within the Tall Timbers- Brechtel, New Aurora – English Turn, Pontchartrain Park, Lower Ninth Ward, Plum Orchard, and Lake Catherine neighborhoods. **Figures 3 through 9** show the range of building forms near each of these permitted shipping container dwellings. There is not a single architectural style that could be defined. The suburban

residential neighborhoods were developed over decades and include a mix of materials and varied architectural styles. The Master Plan seeks to ensure that infill buildings fit in harmoniously in existing neighborhoods, but does not require them to mimic existing architecture.

**The proposed amendment is compatible with the place designations of this Ordinance.**

This standard is met. The proposed amendment is limited in its scope and does not affect the place designations in the zoning ordinance.

**The proposed amendment promotes the public health, safety and welfare of the City.**

The motion speaks to aesthetic harmony, not the quality of construction. Construction-related regulations are found in **Section 3115 Intermodal Shipping Containers of the Louisiana Building Code.**

The staff does not support adding design standards for a specific construction method. Subjective use standards and/or design standards would be difficult to enforce and would undermine the intent of the district regulations. The suburban residential neighborhoods were developed over decades and include a mix of materials and varied architectural styles. There is not a single architectural style that could be defined.

**The proposed amendment is compatible with the intent and general regulations of this Ordinance.**

This standard is not met. The zoning regulations applied in suburban residential neighborhoods not support design guidelines specific to shipping container dwelling. The suburban residential neighborhoods were developed over decades and include a mix of materials and varied architectural styles. There is not a single architectural style that could be defined as appropriate or inappropriate in the S-RS District and other suburban residential districts. Indeed, **Figure 2** includes a range of building forms for the suburban neighborhoods from **Article 13, Section 13.3 Site Design Standards of the CZO.** The note adds that “not all possible outcomes are represented,” indicating that a variety of residential designs is expected. Implicit in this is that repurposed shipping containers could be used in a way that successfully contributes to this variety of residential designs.

**The proposed amendment corrects an error or omission, adds clarification to existing requirements, or reflects a change in policy.**

This standard is not met. The Motion proposes to create a different tool to regulate shipping container dwellings. This change is not supported by any policy change. The staff recently completed a Land Use Barriers Study aimed at decreasing regulatory hurdles to development. The proposed Motion would overregulate a minute percentage of new construction, thus undermining recent policy decisions to reduce zoning regulatory barriers.

**The proposed amendment benefits the citizens of the City as a whole.**

This standard is not met. Capricious design guidelines have the possibility to stifle creativity. Shipping containers can be utilized in aesthetically pleasing ways. The Motion was prompted by neighborhood concerns related to a limited number of construction projects. This regulatory response is excessive in response to the supposed aesthetic impacts from a limited number of properties in that the effect of the

regulations would apply to numerous residential areas across the city.

**The proposed amendment provides a more workable way to achieve the intent and purposes of this Ordinance and the Master Plan.**

This standard is not met. The proposed text amendment adds unnecessary regulatory barriers that would unnecessarily add inconsistency, confusion, and delay to the zoning and permitting of residential development.

**The proposed amendment does not create a significant number of nonconformities.**

This standard is not met. While there are not many examples of shipping container dwellings, there are some and these would no longer conform.

**Staff Recommendation**

The staff recommends **DENIAL** of Zoning Docket 007/26.

**City Planning Commission Meeting (January 13, 2026)**

The staff summarized the application and presented its recommendation of denial. There were no comments in opposition or support. Commissioner Jordan questioned what prompted the request. The staff responded that it was prompted by a recent shipping container dwelling that the neighbors did not feel was in keeping with the neighborhood character. Commissioner Flick stated that building concerns would be addressed by the building code. No further discussion was had. Commissioner Flick made a motion for denial. Commissioner Steeg seconded the motion, which was adopted.

**MOTION:**

BE IT MOVED BY THE CITY PLANNING COMMISSION THAT ZONING DOCKET 007/26 IS HEREBY RECOMMENDED FOR DENIAL. BE IT FURTHER MOVED THAT THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR IS HEREBY AUTHORIZED TO NOTIFY THE CITY COUNCIL OF SAID ACTION.

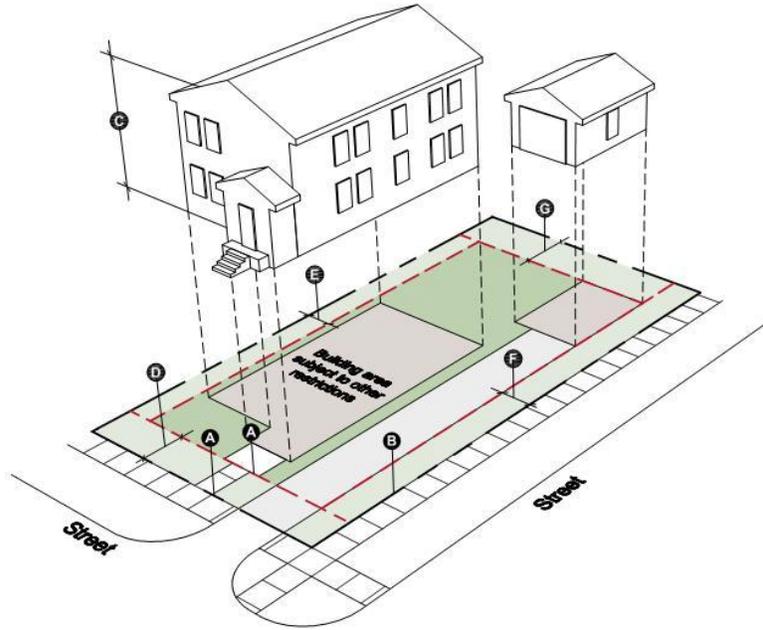
YEAS: Flick, Jordan, Poche, Steeg, Stewart, Witry

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Joshi-Gupta, Kepper

**Figure 2. Illustration of site development standards for suburban neighborhoods – single-family and two-family (Article 13, Section 13.3 Site Design Standards of the CZO).**

**Suburban Neighborhoods - Single-Family & Two-Family**



*Illustration of site development standards*



***Range of potential building forms (not all development outcomes represented)***

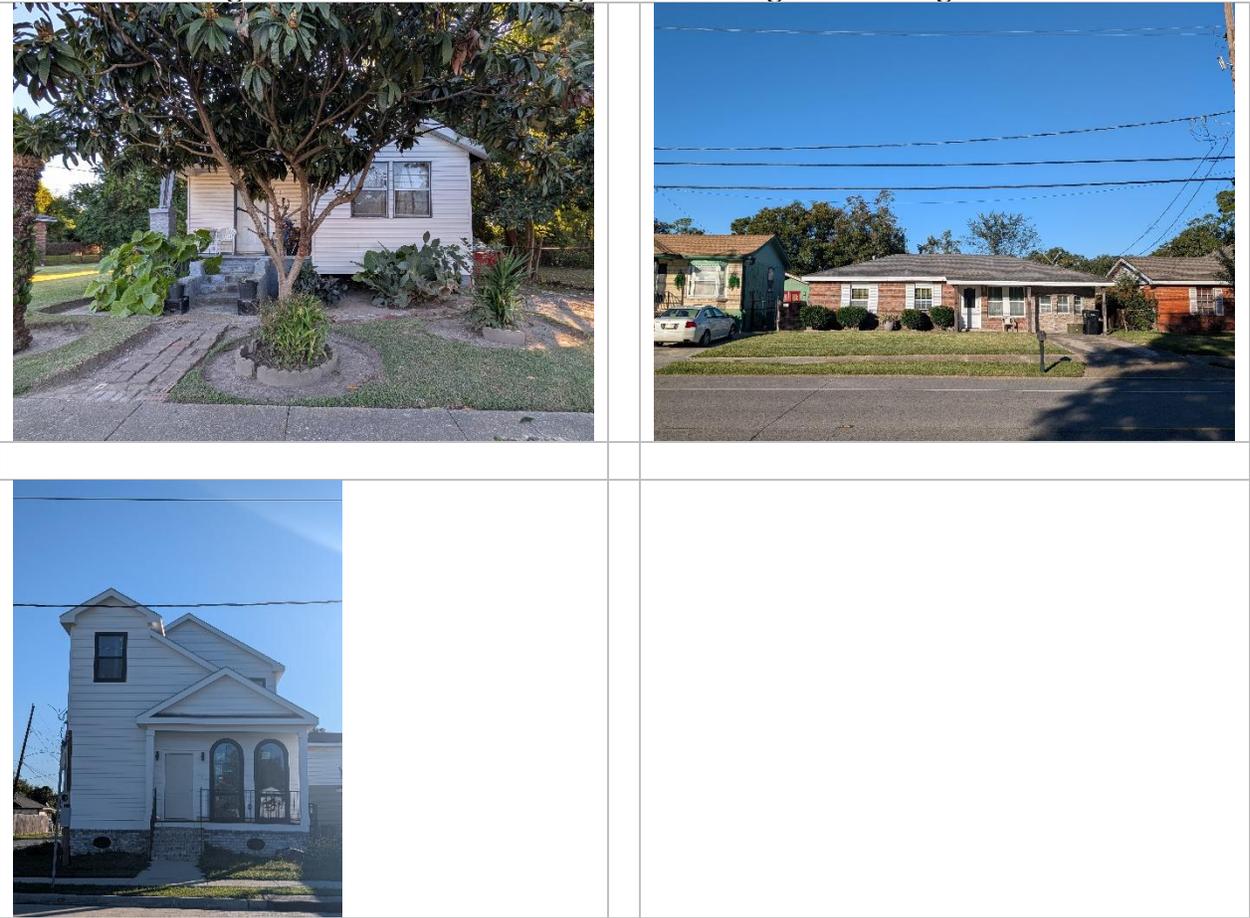
*Photographs may be substituted at the discretion of the Executive Director of the City Planning Commission with the approval of the City Planning Commission.*

**Figure 3. Tall Timbers- Brechtel range of building forms**



**2830 Elmwood Park Drive, Tall Timbers- Brechtel, Council District C**

**Figure 4. New Aurora – English Turn range of building forms**



3020 Sullen Place, New Aurora – English Turn, Council District C

**Figure 5. Pontchartrain Park range of building forms**



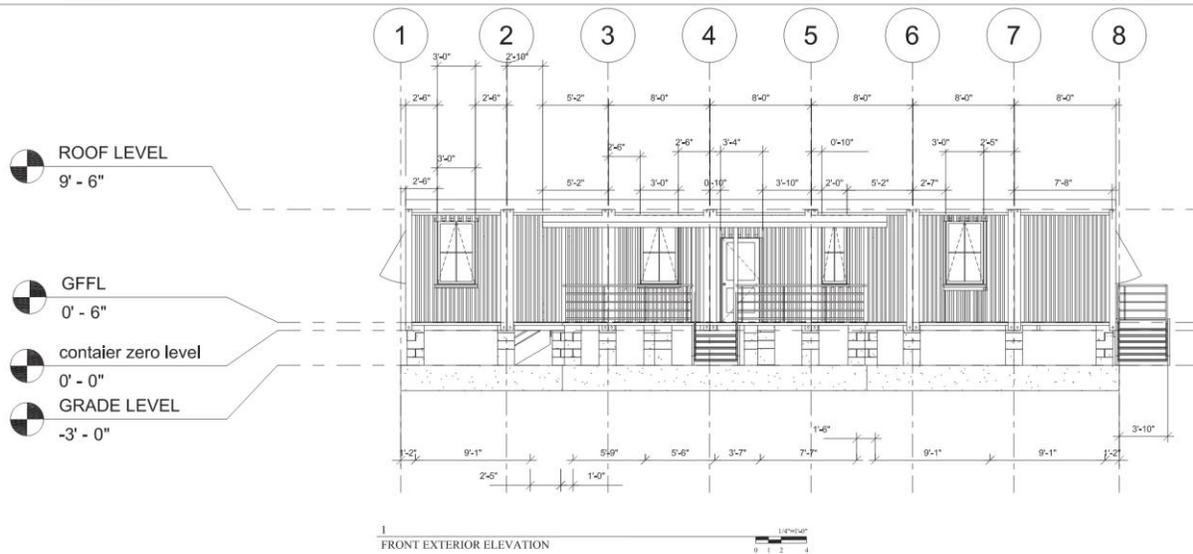
5620 Providence Place, Pontchartrain Park, Council District D

**Figure 6. Lower Ninth Ward range of building forms**



2508 Tricou Street, Lower Ninth Ward, Council District E

**Figure 7. Plum Orchard range of building forms**



4501 Francisco Verrett Drive, Plum Orchard, Council District E

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**Figure 8. Lake Catherine range of building forms**



N



4640 Naples Street, Lake Catherine, Council District E

**Figure 9. Lower Ninth Ward range of building forms**



2010 Reynes Street, Lower Ninth Ward, Council District E

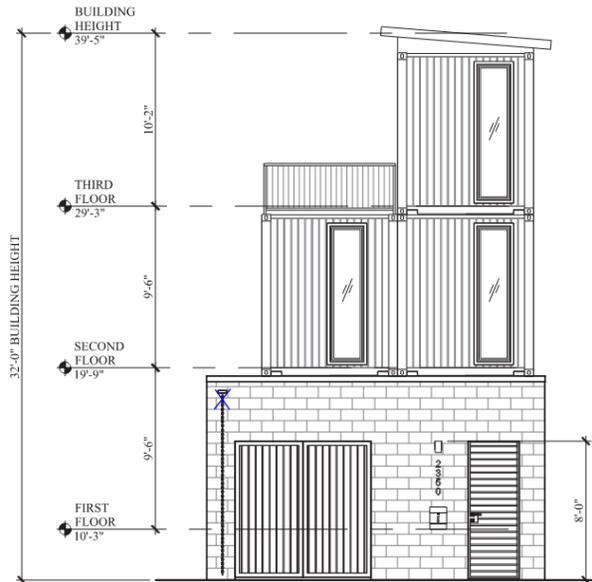
**Figure 10. Leonidas – Historic Urban Two-Family Residential District  
1228 General Ogden**



**(source: [officejt.com/work](http://officejt.com/work))**

Description: “The building is composed of a converted shipping container and two elevated blocks of similar size and proportion but clad in ubiquitous wooden fence boards. The clustered arrangement optimizes space on the triangular site and, given it will be viewed from multiple directions, allows for an ambiguous reading of the form”. The container is participating in the dialogue with the rectangular forms. The stacking mimics shipping containers. The vertical cladding mimics shipping containers.

**Figure 11. Irish Channel Full Control HDLC District – 2350 Rousseau Street**



**(source: Safety and Permits)**

The proposal was reviewed at the October, November, and December 2016 HDLC Architectural Review Committee meetings. At the initial meeting, it was agreed that the use of shipping containers as a building material was appropriate, subject to feedback about a roof structure and a garage. Conceptual approval was granted at the December meeting, subject to modifications related to transparency at the front door and a finish on the concrete block. The proposal was found to comply with the following HDLC Guidelines: Section 12, Pages 1-11 of the Guidelines for New Construction, Additions and Demolition, state that when reviewing new construction, the HDLC requires:

- The preservation of the cohesive ambiance of the local Historic District through compatible, sympathetic construction.
- Compatible siting, proportion, scale, form, materials, fenestration, roof configuration, details and finishes.
- Maintaining the appropriate historic contextual setting with the surrounding neighborhood.
- Use of materials and techniques that are compatible with the surrounding neighborhood.

**MOTION**

**NO. M-25-567**

**CITY HALL: November 6, 2025**

**BY: COUNCILMEMBER KING**

**SECONDED BY:**

**WHEREAS**, the City of New Orleans seeks to regulate the use of repurposed shipping containers in residential dwellings to ensure compatibility with the character and integrity of residential neighborhoods; and

**WHEREAS**, standards requiring specific exterior cladding and roofing treatments for dwellings constructed from shipping containers are necessary to obscure their industrial appearance and integrate them into residential streetscapes; and

**WHEREAS**, the S-RS Single-Family Residential District has a more uniform lotting pattern than other zoning districts, with residential dwellings generally designed after World War II; and

**WHEREAS**, such standards promote aesthetic harmony, quality construction, and neighborhood compatibility, thereby protecting the public health, safety, and welfare, and preserving the character and scale of the neighborhoods as required by the Master Plan; **NOW, THEREFORE**

**BE IT MOVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW ORLEANS**, That the City Planning Commission is directed to conduct a public hearing to consider amendments to the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance (Ordinance No. 4,264 M.C.S., as amended by Ordinance No. 26,413 M.C.S. and subsequent amendments), as follows:

- Defining “dwelling, shipping container” as a dwelling constructed wholly or partially from one or more repurposed shipping containers.
- Prescribing use standards for shipping container dwellings, including but not limited to the following:

“In S-RS Suburban Single-Family Residential Districts, Shipping Container Dwellings shall be subject to the following requirements:

- a. The exterior walls of such structures shall be clad in permitted building materials, including but not limited to wood siding, stucco, brick, fiber cement panels, or corrugated metal panels. The cladding shall fully obscure the seams, corrugation, markings, and original metal surface of the shipping container from view.
  - b. Roof surfaces that originate from the container unit shall be obscured or concealed by an additional roof structure, such as a pitched or parapet roof, so as not to be visibly identifiable as a container.”
- Adding shipping container dwellings as a permitted or conditional use to zoning district use tables as appropriate.

**BE IT FURTHER MOVED,** That the Project Neighborhood Participation Program requirement be and is hereby waived.

**BE IT FURTHER MOVED,** That the application fee of \$1,500 to effectuate this request be and is hereby waived.

**BE IT FURTHER MOVED,** That in the process of studying and reviewing the proposed amendment, the City Planning Commission staff is directed and granted the flexibility to make all appropriate changes relative to this request to ensure consistency and continuity and to make need and/or appropriate adjustments deemed necessary stemming from the study and review of this request.

**THE FOREGOING MOTION WAS READ IN FULL, THE ROLL WAS CALLED ON THE ADOPTION THEREOF, AND RESULTED AS FOLLOWS:**

**YEAS:**

**NAYS:**

**ABSENT:**

**RECUSED:**

**AND THE MOTION WAS ADOPTED.**