TO: Morristown City Council
FROM: Josh Cole, Senior Planner
DATE: October 6, 2026
SUBJECT: Group Housing Definitions and Regulations Text Amendment

BACKGROUND:

This is a staff-initiated text amendment to make a number of changes related to different types of group living facilities. They include:

1. Provide definitions for some of our senior and convalescent living facilities. Assisted Living, Convalescent Homes, and Nursing Homes are listed as Use on Review in several districts; however, there are no definitions of what these uses are.

14-203. DEFINITIONS

ASSISTED LIVING means a residential housing and care system for older adults or people with disabilities who need help with everyday tasks but do not need the heavy, round-the-clock medical care provided by a nursing home. Residents typically live in private or semi-private rooms and receive support that balances independence with safety.

CONVALESCENT HOME means a short-term care facility where people recover from a major surgery, injury, or serious illness after leaving the hospital. The main goal is to help patients regain their strength and skills so they can safely return home.

NURSING HOME means a residential facility that provides 24-hour medical care, nursing support, and help with daily activities for people who cannot live independently, such as older adults or chronically ill individuals. These centers bridge the gap between hospital care and at-home living.

2. Take these uses out of the Uses on Review and make them permitted uses. The only requirement for these uses is that they are located on collector or arterial roadways and according to the ITE, Institute of Traffic Engineers, these uses are low traffic generators and will have no greater impact than other permitted uses in those districts, so there is no need to be located on major roads.

3. Amend the definition of Group Home to reflect the change in State law (TCA 13-24-102).

Definition

GROUP HOME means, as per T.C.A. 13-24-102, the classification "single family residence" includes any home in which eight (8) or fewer unrelated persons with disabilities reside, and may include three (3) additional persons acting as support staff or guardians, who need not be related to each other or to any of the persons with disabilities residing in the home.

4. Include definition and provisions for larger group homes up to 15 persons with disabilities.

Definition

LARGE GROUP HOME means any residential group home in which fifteen (15) or fewer unrelated persons with disabilities reside and may include three (3) additional persons acting as support staff or guardians, who need not be related to each other or to any of the persons with disabilities residing in the home.

Large Group Homes would be a permitted use in the R-3, High Density Residential and OMP Office, Medical, Professional District.

5. Include definition and provisions for Secure Detention and Correctional Facilities. These are detention facilities for temporary or long-term periods.

Definition

SECURE DETENTION AND CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES means public or private building used to detain people against their will, whether temporarily or long-term including juvenile or criminal detention facilities. This does not include convalescent or nursing homes or other health or mental healthcare facilities.

Secure Detention and Correctional Facilities:

A. The facility will be no closer than five hundred (500) feet from property line to property line to a residential use or R-1, RD-1, RD-2, R-2 districts, school, park, or hospital.
B. Fences, if visible from the street shall be constructed of ornamental material, (such as wrought iron or aluminum) with or without masonry/wood piers or shall be screened by a row of six (6) foot evergreen trees on eight (8) foot centers.
C. Buffer: applicant shall maintain a minimum twenty-five (25) foot wide grass perimeter along the adjoining property line(s) to include a staggered row of evergreen trees on eight (8) foot centers.

These would be allowed as a Use on Review in the following districts:

OMP-R -Office, Medical and Professional- Restricted District
OMP -Office, Medical and Professional District
LI- Light Industrial District
HI- Heavy Industrial District
IB- Intermediate Business

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval of the proposed text amendment and Planning Commission voted in support of this request at their September meeting.

ORDINANCE NO. _____

BEING AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF MORRISTOWN, TENNESSEE AMENDING THE ZONING ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF MORRISTOWN AS RELATED TO GROUP HOUSING DEFINITIONS AND REGULATIONS.

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL of the City of Morristown that the text of the Zoning Ordinance (No. 2092) Chapters 2 (General Zoning Provisions), 7 (R-3) HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT), 8B (OMP-R OFFICE MEDICAL PROFESSIONAL – RESTRICTED DISTRICTED), 8 (OMP OFFICE MEDICAL PROFESSIONAL DISTRICT), 10 (IB INTERMEDIATE BUSINESS DISTRICT), 12 (LI LIGHT INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT), & 14 (HI HEAVY DENSITY INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT) to have the following amendments:

CHAPTER 2 GENERAL ZONING PROVISIONS
14-203 DEFINITIONS

ASSISTED LIVING means a residential housing and care system for older adults or people with disabilities who need help with everyday tasks but do not need the heavy, round-the-clock medical care provided by a nursing home. Residents typically live in private or semi-private rooms and receive support that balances independence with safety.

CONVALESCENT HOME means a short-term care facility where people recover from a major surgery, injury, or serious illness after leaving the hospital. The main goal is to help patients regain their strength and skills so they can safely return home.

GROUP HOME means, as per T.C.A. 13-24-102, the classification “single family residence” includes any home in which eight (8) or fewer unrelated persons with disabilities reside, and may include three (3) additional persons acting as support staff or guardians, who need not be related to each other or to any of the persons with disabilities residing in the home.

LARGE GROUP HOME means any residential group home in which fifteen (15) or fewer unrelated persons with disabilities reside and may include three (3) additional persons acting as support staff or guardians, who need not be related to each other or to any of the persons with disabilities residing in the home.

NURSING HOME means a residential facility that provides 24-hour medical care, nursing support, and help with daily activities for people who cannot live independently, such as older adults or chronically ill individuals. These centers bridge the gap between hospital care and at-home living.

SECURE DETENTION AND CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES means public or private building used to detain people against their will, whether temporarily or long-term including juvenile or criminal detention facilities. This does not include convalescent or nursing homes or other health or mental healthcare facilities.

CHAPTER 7, R-3 HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT

14-702. USES PERMITTED

3. Convalescent and Nursing Homes, retirement homes, orphanages, and assisted living facilities.

4. Large Group Homes

14-703. USES PERMITTED ON REVIEW

2. ~~Convalescent and Nursing Homes, retirement homes, orphanages, and assisted living facilities.~~

~~A. The property shall have access from a collector or arterial street.~~

CHAPTER 8B OMP-R OFFICE, MEDICAL, PROFESSIONAL -- RESTRICTED DISTRICT

14-8B02. USES PERMITTED

4. Convalescent and Nursing Homes, retirement homes, orphanages, and assisted living facilities.

14-8B03. USES PERMITTED ON REVIEW

~~5. Convalescent and Nursing Homes~~

15. Secure Detention Facility

A. The facility will be no closer than five hundred (500) feet from property line to property line to a residential use or R-1, RD-1, RD-2, R-2 districts, school, park, or hospital.

B. Fences, if visible from the street shall be constructed of ornamental material, (such as wrought iron or aluminum) with or without masonry/wood piers or shall be screened by a row of six (6) foot evergreen trees on eight (8) foot centers.

C. Buffer: applicant shall maintain a minimum twenty-five (25) foot wide grass perimeter along the adjoining property line(s) to include a staggered row of evergreen trees on eight (8) foot centers.

CHAPTER 8, OMP OFFICE MEDICAL PROFESSION DISTRICT

14-802. USES PERMITTED

4. Convalescent and Nursing Homes, retirement homes, orphanages, and assisted living facilities.

10. Large Group Homes

14-803 USES PERMITTED ON REVIEW

11. ~~Convalescent and Nursing Homes~~

39. Secure Detention Facility

A. The facility will be no closer than five hundred (500) feet from property line to property line to a residential use or R-1, RD-1, RD-2, R-2 districts, school, park, or hospital.

B. Fences, if visible from the street shall be constructed of ornamental material, (such as wrought iron or aluminum) with or without masonry/wood piers or shall be screened by a row of six (6) foot evergreen trees on eight (8) foot centers.

C. Buffer: applicant shall maintain a minimum twenty-five (25) foot wide grass perimeter along the adjoining property line(s) to include a staggered row of evergreen trees on eight (8) foot centers.

CHAPTER 10, IB INTERMEDIATE BUSINESS DISTRICT

14-1003 USES PERMITTED ON REVIEW

10. Secure Detention Facility
    A. The facility will be no closer than five hundred (500) feet from property line to property line to a residential use or R-1, RD-1, RD-2, R-2 districts, school, park, or hospital.
    B. Fences, if visible from the street shall be constructed of ornamental material, (such as
    wrought iron or aluminum) with or without masonry/wood piers or shall be screened by a row of six (6) foot evergreen trees on eight (8) foot centers.
    C. Buffer: applicant shall maintain a minimum twenty-five (25) foot wide grass perimeter along the adjoining property line(s) to include a staggered row of evergreen trees on eight (8) foot centers.

CHAPTER 12, LI LIGHT INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT

14-1202. USES PERMITTED

11. Convalescent and Nursing Homes, retirement homes, orphanages, and assisted living facilities.

14-1203 USES PERMITTED ON REVIEW

17. ~~Convalescent and Nursing Homes~~
74. Secure Detention Facility
    A. The facility will be no closer than five hundred (500) feet from property line to property line to a residential use or R-1, RD-1, RD-2, R-2 districts, school, park, or hospital.
    B. Fences, if visible from the street shall be constructed of ornamental material, (such as wrought iron or aluminum) with or without masonry/wood piers or shall be screened by a row of six (6) foot evergreen trees on eight (8) foot centers.
    C. Buffer: applicant shall maintain a minimum twenty-five (25) foot wide grass perimeter along the adjoining property line(s) to include a staggered row of evergreen trees on eight (8) foot centers.

CHAPTER 14, HI HEAVY INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT

14-1402. USES PERMITTED

15. Convalescent and Nursing Homes, retirement homes, orphanages, and assisted living facilities.

14-1403 USES PERMITTED ON REVIEW

17. ~~Convalescent and Nursing Homes~~
75. Secure Detention Facility
    A. The facility will be no closer than five hundred (500) feet from property line to property line to a residential use or R-1, RD-1, RD-2, R-2 districts, school, park, or hospital.
    B. Fences, if visible from the street shall be constructed of ornamental material, (such as wrought iron or aluminum) with or without masonry/wood piers or shall be screened by a row of six (6) foot evergreen trees on eight (8) foot centers.

C. Buffer: applicant shall maintain a minimum twenty-five (25) foot wide grass perimeter along the adjoining property line(s) to include a staggered row of evergreen trees on eight (8) foot centers.

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED that these ordinances shall take effect from and after the date of its final passage, the public welfare requiring it.

Passed on second and final reading the _____ day of _____, 2026.

_____
Mayor

ATTEST:

_____
City Administrator