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BILL NO.

ORDINANCE NO. 2026-DRAFT

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 17, NUISANCES, OF THE MARYLAND HEIGHTS MUNICIPAL CODE TO ALLOW MANAGED NATURAL LANDSCAPES

WHEREAS, Section 17-101 of the Maryland Heights Municipal Code declares all weeds and grasses in violation of the property maintenance code a public nuisance; and

WHEREAS, the City Council seeks to allow the flexibility to use native vegetation in intentionally planned landscapes and to allow the restoration or preservation of such plants while maintaining public health, safety, and welfare; and

WHEREAS, managed natural landscapes, as defined by the proposed regulations, offer numerous benefits to the community such as providing wildlife and pollinator habitat, reduction of emissions and energy consumption, reduction of chemical pesticides and fertilizers, and increased infiltration of stormwater and improvement of water quality.

WHEREAS, the City Council has considered the matter and determined the proposed amendments are necessary and appropriate to allow for more ecological practices while protecting the public health, safety, and general welfare.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MARYLAND HEIGHTS, MISSOURI, AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1: Paragraph “a” of Section 17-101, Nuisance Declared, of the Maryland Heights Municipal Code is hereby amended as follows:

- (a) All weeds and grasses in violation of the property maintenance code are declared a public nuisance. On farms and lots of three (3) acres or more located in a "NU" Non-Urban District, all weeds and grasses of a height of sixteen (16) inches or more are declared a public nuisance. **In lieu of the preceding, a property owner may install and maintain a managed natural landscape in accordance with Section 17-105, Managed natural landscape.**

Section 2: Chapter 17, Nuisances, of the Maryland Heights Municipal Code is hereby amended to incorporate the following new Section 17-105, Managed Natural Landscapes, as follows:

Sec. 17-105. Managed Natural Landscapes.

- (a) *Definition.* “Managed natural landscape” shall be defined as a planned, intentional, and maintained planting of grasses, sedges, rushes, wildflowers, forbs, or ferns in lieu of turf grass groundcover in accordance with the design guidelines published by the Missouri Botanical Garden (Shaw Nature Reserve), University of Missouri MU Extension, and/or The Missouri Prairie Foundation (Grow Native! Program). Managed natural landscapes shall not include traditional turf grass or similar lawns intentionally or unintentionally left unattended.
- (b) *Purpose.* The purpose of this section is to allow the flexibility to use native vegetation in intentionally planned landscapes and to allow the restoration or preservation of such plants while maintaining public health, safety, and welfare.

(c) *Intent.*

1. The intent of this section is to promote managed natural landscapes to:
 - i. Provide wildlife habitat, including but not limited to pollinators and other desirable species.
 - ii. Reduce emissions and energy consumption from mowing turf grass.
 - iii. Reduce use of chemical pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizer.
 - iv. Increase infiltration of stormwater, reduce erosion, and improve water quality in nearby waterways.
2. It is not the intent of this section to allow vegetated areas to be unmanaged, overgrown, or to include plants prohibited by Section 17-101(c).

(d) *Application process.*

1. The property owner shall submit an application to the City Planner.
2. The City Planner shall review the application for compliance with this section and may request additional information as needed to verify compliance prior to formal approval.
3. The Department of Community Development shall keep records on file of each property approved for a managed natural landscape.
4. *Change of Ownership.* Approval of the managed natural landscape shall run with the property.
5. *Improper Maintenance or Discontinuance.* If the managed natural landscape is not properly maintained or is abandoned, abatement and enforcement shall be in accordance with the provisions of this chapter.

Section 3: This ordinance shall be in full force and effect from and after its passage and approval.

PASSED BY THE CITY COUNCIL THIS ____ DAY OF FEBRUARY 2026.

MAYOR/PRESIDING OFFICER

APPROVED BY THE MAYOR THIS _____ DAY OF FEBRUARY 2026.

MAYOR

ATTEST:

CITY CLERK