

## DEFINITIONS

# 2 ARTICLE TWO – DEFINITIONS

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### 201 Purpose

Article Two shall be known as the Definitions. The purpose of these provisions is to promote consistency and precision in the interpretation of the Zoning Ordinance. The meaning and construction of words as set forth shall apply throughout the Zoning Ordinance, unless where modified in a specific section or where the context of such words or phrases clearly indicates a different meaning or construction.

### 202 General Construction of Language

The following general rules of construction apply to the text of the Zoning Ordinance.

a. Headings

Section and subsection headings contained herein are provided for illustrative purposes only and shall not be deemed to limit, govern, modify, or otherwise affect the scope, meaning, intent of any provision of the Zoning Ordinance.

b. Illustration

In the case of any real or apparent conflict between the text of the Ordinance and any illustration explaining the text, the text shall apply.

c. Shall and May

“Shall” is always mandatory. “May” is discretionary.

d. Tenses and Numbers

Words used in the present tense include the future tense. Words used in the singular include the plural, and the plural the singular, unless the context clearly indicates the contrary.

e. Conjunctions

Unless the context clearly indicates the contrary, the following conjunctions shall be interpreted as follows:

1. “And” indicates that all connected items or provisions apply.
2. “Or” indicates that the connected items or provisions may apply singly or in any combination.
3. “Either ... or” indicates that the connected items or provisions shall apply singly but not in combination.

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f. Referenced Agencies

Unless otherwise indicated, all public officials, bodies, and agencies referred to in this Chapter are those of the City of Storm Lake.

### 203 Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this Zoning Ordinance, certain terms and words are hereby defined. Certain sections contain definitions, which are additional to those listed here. Where terms are not specifically defined, their ordinarily accepted meaning or meanings implied by their context shall apply.

### 204 A

1. **Abutting:** Having lot lines or district boundaries in common, including property separated by a public street or alley. Used interchangeably with adjacent.
2. **Accessory Structure:** A structure, which is incidental to and customarily associated with a specific principal use or building on the same site.
3. **Accessory Use:** A use, which is incidental to and customarily associated with a specific principal use on the same site.
4. **Addition:** Any construction which increases the size of a building or structure in terms of site coverage, height, length, width, or gross floor area.
5. **Agent of Owner:** Any person showing written verification that he/she is acting for, and with the knowledge and consent of, a property owner.
6. **Alley:** A public right of way, which is used as a secondary means of access to abutting property.
7. **Alteration:** Any construction or physical change in the internal arrangement of spaces, the supporting members, the positioning on a site, or the appearance of a building or structure.
8. **Apartment:** A housing unit within a building designed for and suitable for occupancy by only one family. Apartments are generally located within multi-family residential buildings.
9. **Attached:** Having one or more walls in common with a principal building or connected to a principal building by an integral architectural element, such as a covered passageway; facade wall extension; or archway.

### 205 B

1. **Base Zoning District:** A district established by this Ordinance, which prescribes basic regulations governing land use and site development standards. No more than one Base

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- Zoning District shall apply to any individually platted lot or parcel unless the lot or parcel is part of a Planned Unit Development.
2. Basement: A level of a building below street level that has at least one-half of its height below the surface of adjacent ground.
  3. Beginning of Construction: The initial incorporation of labor and materials into the foundation of a building or structure.
  4. Block: An area of land within a subdivision that is entirely bounded by streets and the exterior boundaries of the subdivision, or by a combination of the above with a watercourse or lake, and which has been designated as such on a plat for the purposes of legal description of a property.
  5. Block Face: The property abutting one side of a street and lying between the two nearest intersection streets, or between the one nearest intersecting street and a major physical barrier, including, but not limited to, railroads, streams, lakes, or the corporate limits of Storm Lake.
  6. Board of Adjustment: A body, established by the City, pursuant to [Chapter 414 of the Code of Iowa](#), expressly for the purpose of granting relief from situations of hardship, to hear appeals, and to provide for approval of variances and conditional uses as provided by this Ordinance.
  7. Buffer yard: A landscaped area intended to separate and partially obstruct the view of two adjacent land uses or properties from one another.
  8. Building: A structure entirely separated from any other structure by space or by walls and having a roof and built to provide shelter, support, or enclosure for persons or property.
  9. Building Coverage: The area of a site covered by buildings or roofed areas, excluding allowed projecting eaves, balconies, and similar features.
  10. Building Envelope: The three-dimensional space within which a structure is permitted to be built on a lot after all zoning and other applicable municipal requirements have been met.
  11. Building Footprint: The outer boundary of a building established by the location of its exterior walls.
  12. Building Official: The designee of the City Council, responsible for the enforcement of the Uniform Building Code.
  13. Business: Activities that include the exchange or manufacture of goods or services on a site.
  14. Business Center: A building containing more than one commercial business, or any group of non-residential buildings within a common development, characterized by shared parking and access.
  15. Boarding House for Students: A boarding house for students is a residential facility providing housing for students who are enrolled in any public, private or parochial school, vocational schools, college or university together with any necessary support staff.

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### 206 C

1. Certificate of Occupancy: An official certificate issued by the Building Official or his/her designee, upon finding of conformance with the Uniform Building Code, and upon receipt of a Certificate of Zoning Compliance.
2. Certificate of Zoning Compliance: An official certificate issued by the Zoning Administrator or his/her designee, which indicates that the proposed use of building or land complies with the provisions of the Zoning Ordinance.
3. Change of Use: The replacement of an existing use by a new use.
4. Cluster: A development design technique that concentrates buildings in specific areas on a site to allow remaining land to be used for recreation, common open space, or the preservation of historically or environmentally sensitive features.
5. City: The City of Storm Lake, Iowa.
6. City Code: The official rules and regulations for the City of Storm Lake, Iowa.
7. City Council: The City Council of Storm Lake, Iowa.
8. Cluster Development: A development design technique that concentrates buildings in specific areas on a site to allow remaining land to be used for recreation, common open space, or the preservation of historically or environmentally sensitive features.
9. Co-Housing Community: A co-housing community is a type of intentional community composed of private homes supplemented by shared facilities. The community is planned, owned, and managed by the residents – who also share activities which may include cooking, dining, child care, gardening, and governance of the community. Common facilities may include a kitchen, dining room, laundry, child care facilities, offices, internet access, guest rooms, and recreational features.
10. Common Area: An area held, designed, and designated for common or cooperative use within a development.
11. Common Development: A development proposed and planned as one unified project not separated by a public street or alley.
12. Common Open Space: Land within or related to a development that is not individually owned or dedicated for public use, designed and generally intended for the common use of the residents of the development.
13. Compatibility: The degree to which two or more different land use types are able to exist together in close proximity, with no one use having significant negative effects on any other use.
14. Comprehensive Plan: The duly adopted Comprehensive Plan of the City of Storm Lake.
15. Conditional Use: A use that may be permitted in a zoning district subject to special conditions and with the approval of the Board of Adjustment. Conditional Uses are considered identical to Special Exception Uses as authorized by the Code of Iowa.

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16. Condominium: A real estate ownership arrangement that combines simple title to a specific unit and joint ownership in common elements shared with other unit owners. Types of units may include dwelling units, parking spaces, office spaces, or commercial spaces.
17. Conservation Subdivision: Wholly or in majority, a residential subdivision that permits a reduction in lot area, setback, or other site development regulations, provided 1) there is no increase in the overall density permitted for a conventional subdivision in a given zoning district, and 2) the remaining land area is used for common space.
18. County: Buena Vista County, Iowa.
19. Court: An approved private right-of-way, which provides access to residential properties, does not function as a local street because of its alignment, design, or location and is completely internal to a development.
20. Courtyard: An open, unoccupied space, bounded on two or more sides by the walls of the building.

## 207 D

1. Density: The amount of development per specific unit of a site.
  - (a) Density, Gross: The total number of dwelling units divided by the total project area, expressed as gross dwelling units per acre.
  - (b) Density, Net: The total number of dwelling units divided by the total developable land area of a project. Net density calculations exclude public or private street rights of way, dedicated public park or open space, wetlands or water bodies, and any utility easement that prohibits development.
2. Drive-in Services: Uses that involve the sale of products or provision of services to occupants in vehicles.
3. Deck: a structural platform with or without a roof structure that adjoins a house and is supported by a means other than the principal structure (i.e. footings.)
4. Detached: Fully separated from any other building or jointed to another building in such a manner as not to constitute an enclosed or covered connection.
5. Driveway: A permanently paved, surfaced area providing vehicular access between a street and an off-street parking or loading area.
6. Duplex: A structure containing two separate but connected dwelling units, each of which is designed to be occupied as a separate permanent residence for one family and each of which has direct access to the outside.
7. Dwelling Unit: One or more rooms, designed, occupied or intended for occupancy as a separate living quarter, with cooking, sleeping, and sanitary facilities provided within the dwelling unit for the exclusive use of a single family maintaining a household.

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### 208 E

1. Easement: A privilege or right of use granted on, above, under, or across a particular tract of land for a specific purpose by one owner to another owner, public or private agency, or utility.
2. Enclosed: A roofed or covered space fully surrounded by walls.

### 209 F

1. Family: Two or more persons (one of whom is the householder) related by birth, marriage, or adoption, living together and sharing common living, sleeping, cooking, and eating facilities within an individual housing unit.
2. Federal: Pertaining to the Government of the United States of America.
3. Frontage: The length of a property line of any one premise abutting and parallel to a public street, private way, or court.

### 210 G

1. Grade: The horizontal elevation of the finished surface of ground, paving, or sidewalk adjacent to any building line.
  - (a) For buildings having walls facing one street only, the grade shall be the elevation of the sidewalk at the center of the wall facing the street.
  - (b) For buildings having walls facing more than one street, the grade shall be the average elevation of the grades of all walls facing each street.
  - (c) For buildings having no walls facing a street, the grade shall be the average level of the finished surface of the ground adjacent to the exterior walls of the building.
2. Gross Floor Area: The total enclosed area of all floors of a building, measured to the inside surfaces of the exterior walls. This definition excludes the areas of basements, elevator shafts, airspaces above atriums, and enclosed off-street parking and loading areas serving a principal use.

### 211 H

1. Height: The vertical distance from the established grade to the highest point of the coping of a flat roof, the deck line of a mansard roof, or to the ridge for gable, hip, shed, or gambrel roofs. For other cases, height shall be measured as the vertical distance from the established grade to the highest point of a structure as herein defined. Where a building or structure is located on a slope, height shall be measured from the average grade level adjacent to the building or structure.

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2. Home Based Business/Home Occupation: An accessory occupational use conducted entirely within a dwelling unit by its inhabitants, which is clearly incidental to the residential use of the dwelling unit or residential structure and does not change the residential character of its site.
3. Housing Unit or Dwelling Unit: A building or portion of a building arranged for and intended for occupancy as an independent living facility for one family, including permanent provisions for cooking.

### 212 I

1. Impervious Coverage: The total horizontal area of all buildings, roofed or covered spaces, paved surface areas, walkways and driveways, and any other site improvements that decrease the ability of the surface of the site to absorb water, expressed as a percent of site area. The surface water area of pools is excluded from this definition.

### 213 J

### 214 K

### 215 L

1. Landscaped Area: The area within the boundaries of a given lot, site or common development consisting primarily of plant material, including but not limited to grass, sod, trees, shrubs, vines, ground cover, and other organic plant materials; or grass paver masonry units installed such that the appearance of the area is primarily landscaped.
  - (a) Perimeter Landscaped Area: Any required landscaped area that adjoins the exterior boundary of a lot, site or common development.
  - (b) Interior Landscaped Area: Any landscaped area within a site exclusive of required perimeter landscaping.
2. Loading Area: An off-street area used for the loading or unloading of goods from a vehicle in connection with the use of the site on which such area is located.
3. Lot: A parcel of property with a separate and distinct number or other identifying designation which has been created, assigned and recorded in the Office of the Buena Vista County Register of Deeds, as provided for by appropriate sections of the Code of Iowa.
  - (a) Corner Lot: A lot located at the junction of at least two streets, private ways or courts or at least two segments of a curved street, private way or court, at which the angle of intersection is no greater than 135 degrees.
  - (b) Double Frontage Lot: A lot, other than a corner lot, having frontage on two streets, private ways or courts. (Also known as a Through Lot)

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- (c) Interior Lot: A lot other than a corner lot.
  - (d) Common Development Lot: When two or more contiguous lots are developed as part of a Planned Unit Development, these lots may be considered a single lot for purposes of this ordinance.
4. Lot Area: The total horizontal area within the lot lines of a lot (as expressed in square feet or acres).
  5. Lot Depth: The mean horizontal distance measured between the front and rear lot lines.
  6. Lot Line: A property boundary line(s) of record that divides one lot from another lot or a lot from the public or private street right-of-way or easement.
    - (a) Front Lot Line: The lot lines separating a lot and a public or private street right-of-way or easement.
      - 1) For an interior lot, the lot line separating the lot from the right-of-way or easement.
      - 2) For a corner lot, the shorter lot line abutting a public or private street or easement. In instances of equal line dimension, the Zoning Administrator shall determine the front lot line, or as may be noted on the final plat.
      - 3) For a double frontage lot, the lot lines separating the lot from the right-of-way or easement of the more minor street. In cases where each street has the same classification, the front lot line shall be determined by the Zoning Administrator at the time of application for the original building permit for the lot, or as may be noted on the final plat.
    - (b) Rear Lot Line: The lot line, which is opposite and most distant, from the front line.
    - (c) Side Lot Line: Any lot line that is neither a front or rear lot line. A side lot line separating a lot from a street, private way or court is a street side lot line. A side lot line separating a lot from another lot or lots is an interior side lot line.
  7. Lot Width: The horizontal distance measured between the side lot lines of a lot, at right angles to its depth along a straight line parallel to the front lot line at the minimum required setback line.

## 216 M

1. Manufactured Home Dwelling: Prefabricated houses that are constructed in parts off site or in a factory and then assembled at the building site in modular sections. Manufactured housing is not constructed or equipped with a permanent hitch or other device allowing it to be moved other than to a permanent site; does not have permanently attached to its body or frame any wheels or axles; bears a label certifying that it was built in compliance with the National Manufactured Home Construction and Safety Standards promulgated by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development

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2. **Mixed Use Building:** A building or structure that incorporates two or more use types within a single building or structure, provided that each use type is permitted within the individual Base Zoning District in which the building or structure is to be located.
3. **Mixed Use Development:** A single development, which incorporates complementary land use types.
4. **Mobile Home:** A building type designed to be transportable in one or more sections, constructed on a permanent chassis or undercarriage, and designed to be used as a dwelling unit or other use with or without a permanent foundation when connected to the required utilities, but not bearing a seal attesting to the approval and issuance of the Iowa Department of Health or conformance to the manufactured home procedural and enforcement regulations, as adopted by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development; or not otherwise satisfying the definition of Manufactured Home Dwellings.
5. **Mobile Home Park:** A unified development under single ownership, developed, planned, and improved for the placement of mobile home units for non-transient use. Mobile Home Parks include common areas and facilities for management, recreation, laundry, utility services, storage, storm shelter, and other services; but does not include mobile home sales lots on which unoccupied mobile homes are parked for the purposes of display, inspection, sale, or storage.
6. **Mobile Home Subdivision:** A development subdivided, planned, and improved for the placement of mobile home units on lots for uses by the individual owners of such lots. Mobile Home Subdivisions may include common areas and facilities for management, recreation, laundry, utility services, storage, storm shelter, and other services; but do not include mobile home sales lots on which unoccupied mobile homes are parked for the purpose of display, inspection, sale, or storage.
7. **Modular Home:** See manufactured home dwelling.
8. **Multi-Generational Household:** a family household consisting of three or more generations living under the same roof.

## 217 N

1. **Nonconforming Development:** A building, structure, or improvement which does not comply with the regulations for its Zoning district set forth by this Zoning Ordinance but which complied with applicable regulations at the time of construction.
2. **Nonconforming Lot:** A lot which was lawful prior to the adoption, revision, or amendment of this Zoning Ordinance but that fails by reason of such adoption, revision, or amendment to conform to the present requirements of the zoning ordinance.
3. **Nonconforming Sign:** A sign that was legally erected prior to the adoption, revision, or amendment of this Zoning Ordinance but that fails by reason of such adoption, revision, or amendment to conform to the present requirements of the zoning ordinance.
4. **Nonconforming Structure:** A structure which was lawful prior to the adoption, revision, or amendment of this Zoning Ordinance but that fails by reason of such adoption, revision, or amendment to conform to the present requirements of the zoning ordinance.

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5. Nonconforming Use: A land use which was lawful prior to the adoption, revision, or amendment of this Zoning Ordinance but that fails by reason of such adoption, revision, or amendment to conform to the present requirements of the zoning ordinance.
6. Nuisance: An unreasonable and continuous invasion of the use and enjoyment of a property right which a reasonable person would find annoying, unpleasant, obnoxious, or offensive.

### 218 Q

1. Open Space: Land and water areas retained for use as active or passive recreation areas or for resource protection in an essentially undeveloped state. Open space does not include required yard areas.
2. Outdoor Storage: The storage of materials, parts, or products that are related to the primary use of a site for a period exceeding three days.
3. Overlay District: A district established by this Ordinance to prescribe special regulations to be applied to a site only in combination with a base district.
4. Owner: An individual, firm, association, syndicate, partnership, or corporation having sufficient proprietary interest to seek development of land.

### 219 P

1. Parking Facility: An area on a lot and/or within a building, including one or more parking spaces, along with provision for access circulation, maneuvering, and landscaping, meeting the requirements of this Zoning Ordinance. Parking facilities include parking lots, private garages, and parking structures. Vehicle storage is distinct from parking, and is regulated by provisions in Sections 307cc, 308, 309j, Table 4-2. Provisions of Article 9 also govern vehicle storage: Parking Regulations.
2. Parking, Remote: A supply of off-street parking at a location not on the site of a given development. (also considered “off –site parking”)
3. Parking Spaces: An area on a lot and/or within a building, intended for the use of temporary parking of a personal vehicle and with a means of access to a public street. This term is used interchangeably with “parking stall”.
4. Paved: Permanently surfaced with poured concrete, concrete pavers, or asphalt.
5. Permitted Use: A land use type allowed as a matter of right in a zoning district, subject only to special requirements of this Zoning Ordinance.
6. Planning and Zoning Commission: The Planning and Zoning Commission of the City of Storm Lake, as authorized pursuant to [Chapter 414 of the Code of Iowa](#).
7. Planned Unit Development: A development of land which is under unified control and is planned and developed as a whole in a single development operation or programmed series of

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development stages. The development may include streets, circulation ways, utilities, buildings, open spaces, and other site features and improvements.

8. Porch, Unenclosed: A roofed or unroofed open structure projecting from an exterior wall of a building and having no enclosed features more than forty two inches above its floor other than a roof with supporting structure.
9. Premises: A lot, parcel, tract or plot of land, contiguous and under common ownership or control, together with the buildings and structure thereon.
10. Private Garage: A building for the storage of motor vehicles where no repair service facilities are maintained and where no motor vehicles are kept for rental or sale.
11. Property Line: See "Lot Line."

### 220 Q

### 221 R

1. Recreational Vehicle: A vehicle towed or self-propelled on its own chassis or attached to the chassis of another vehicle and designed or used for temporary dwelling, recreational, or sporting purposes. Recreational vehicles include, but are not limited to, travel trailers; campers; motor coach homes; converted buses and trucks, boats, and boat trailers.
2. Regulation: A specific requirement set forth by this Zoning Ordinance, which must be followed.
3. Retention Basin: Similar to a detention basin, a retention basin is a natural or manmade depression that retains storm water runoff and does not outlet it to a surface water body. Retention basins temporarily store water until it has infiltrated into the ground or has evaporated.

### 222 S

1. Screening: The method by which a view of one site from another adjacent site is shielded, concealed, or hidden. Screening techniques include fences, walls, hedges, berms, or other features as may be permitted by the landscape provisions of this ordinance.
2. Setback: The required distance between every structure and the lot lines of the lot on which it is located.
3. Sign: A symbolic, visual device fixed upon a building, vehicle, structure, or parcel of land, which is intended to convey information about a product, business, activity, place, person, institution, candidate, or political idea.

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4. Site: The parcel of land to be developed or built upon. A site may encompass a single lot; or a group of lots developed as a common development under the special and overlay districts provisions of this ordinance.
5. Site Plan: A plan, prepared to scale, showing accurately and with complete dimensioning, the boundaries of a site and the location of all buildings, structures, uses, and principal site development features proposed for a specific parcel of land.
6. State: The State of Iowa.
7. Story: The portion of a building included between the surface of any floor and the surface of the next floor above it; if there is no floor above it, the space between such floor and the next ceiling above it. A half story is a story under a sloped roof, the wall heights of which on at least two opposite, exterior walls are less than four feet.
8. Street: A right of way, dedicated to public use, which affords a primary means of access to the abutting property. This definition is intended to be inclusive of the term as defined in Iowa statute.
  - (a) Street, Arterial: A major thoroughfare primarily intended for through traffic that carries the largest volume of traffic with limited access to private property and high degree of connectivity to the regional highway system.
  - (b) Street, Collector: A street that collects traffic from local streets and disperses traffic between larger arterial highways and smaller streets and provides for access to private properties, particularly in commercial corridors or districts.
  - (c) Street, Intersecting and Principal: In regard to a site, the principal street shall be the street to which the majority of lots on a block face are oriented; the intersecting street shall be a street other than a principal street.
  - (d) Street, Local: A street, which is used primarily for access to the abutting properties and distribution of traffic from neighborhoods to collector and arterial streets.
  - (e) Street, Major: Arterial or collector
  - (f) Street, Minor: Local Streets. In some cases “minor” street may be referencing determining a street that carries less traffic or serves a lesser function in the street system when comparing one or more streets (for example when determining lot frontage on double frontage lots)
9. Structure: Any object constructed or built, the use of which requires location on the ground or attachment to something located on the ground.

## 223 T

1. Townhouse: A dwelling unit having a common wall with or abutting one or more adjacent dwelling units in a townhouse structure, with its own front and rear access to the outside, and neither above nor below any other dwelling unit. (also called a townhome or rowhouse)
2. Townhouse Structure: A building formed by at least two and not more than twelve contiguous townhouses with common or abutting walls.

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### 224 U

1. Use: The conduct of an activity, or the performance of a function or operation, on a site or in a building or facility.
2. Utilities: Installations, either above or below ground, necessary for the production, generation, transmission, delivery, collection, treatments, or storage of water, solid or fluid wastes, storm water, energy media, gas, electronic or electromagnetic signals, or other services which are precedent to development and use of land.

### 225 V

1. Variance: Permission to depart from the zoning code when, because of special circumstances applicable to the property, strict application of the provisions of this development code deprives such property of privileges enjoyed by other property in the vicinity that is under identical zoning.

### 226 W

1. Wind Energy Conservation System (WECS): any structure or device designed to convert wind into energy for use on site or to be put back into the grid. WECS may include a standalone structure or a structure affixed to a permanent building, sign, light pole or other secure structure.

### 227 X

### 228 Y

1. Yard; Required: That portion of a lot that lies between a lot line and the corresponding building setback line or the required landscape area. This area shall be unoccupied and unobstructed from the ground upward except as may be specifically provided for or required by this ordinance.
  - (a) Front Yard: The space extending the full width of a lot, lying between the front lot line and the front setback line. For a corner lot, the front yard shall ordinarily be defined as that yard along a street, which meets one of the following two criteria:
    - 1) the yard along the block face to which a greater number of structures are oriented; or
    - 2) the yard along a street that has the smaller horizontal dimension.

