



City of Winston-Salem City Council
Council Agenda Item Summary

Title	Informational Item – Planned Residential Development (PRD) Bufferyard and Thoroughfare Open Space Amendment Request
City Council Committee	General Government Committee
Staff Lead (Presenter)	Chris Murphy, Planning and Development Services Director
Department Head	Chris Murphy, Planning and Development Services Director
City Manager/ACM	Aaron King, ACM

Agenda Item Summary

Recommended Council Action	Information Item
Suggested Action/ Motion Options	Provide guidance on response to amendment request
Strategic Focus Area	Economic Prosperity
Strategic Plan Objective	EP1: Addressing Housing Affordability and Homelessness
Anticipated Fiscal Impact	No Material Fiscal Impact

Summary of Information

The Triad Real Estate and Building Industry Coalition (TREBIC) submitted a formal request (see attached) in October to amend two sections of the Planned Residential Development (PRD) regulations within the *Unified Development Ordinances* (UDO). These sections relate to the perimeter bufferyard and the thoroughfare open space requirements in certain types of residential subdivisions.

Planned Residential Developments (PRDs) are single-family residential developments that allow the same density (dwelling units per acre) as a traditional subdivision based on the underlying zoning but with the units concentrated or clustered on lots smaller than the minimum lot size required by the zoning district. In exchange for the reduction in lot size, a percentage of open space must be maintained based on the zoning district. The use of PRD standards has become a popular tool for single-family residential development as it allows for the development of sites with challenges such as wetlands, streams, floodplains, topography, and irregular shape. (See attached graphic of a PRD.)

Regulations related to PRDs existed prior to the adoption of the UDO in the mid-1990s. A perimeter bufferyard requirement was part of these initial regulations until 2005 when

it was removed with the adoption of UDO-131. The requirement was reinstated in 2008 with the adoption of UDO-183 which was a major revision to the PRD standards. The requirement for thoroughfare open space was also established with the adoption of this amendment. While the thoroughfare open space requirement has remained unchanged since 2008, the perimeter bufferyard requirement has been amended over the years.

- UDO-183 (2008) – Established the requirement of a 30-foot, Type II bufferyard when PRD lots do not meet the size requirements of the underlying zoning district and the requirement of thoroughfare open space for PRDs in GMA 3, 4, and 5. The openspace requirement in GMA 3 was 50 feet and 100 feet for GMS 4 and 5. An alternative compliance measure for thoroughfare open space was also established with adoption.
- UDO-215 (2010) – Adopted a simplified version of the existing bufferyard requirement and amended the requirement from a Type II bufferyard to five evergreen and five deciduous plants per one hundred linear feet.
- UDO-CC1 (2020) – Adopted a rewording of the previous ordinance language without amending the requirements.
- UDO-CC23 (2023) – Amended the bufferyard requirement from 30-foot bufferyard consisting of five evergreen and five deciduous plants per 100 feet to a 20-feet, Type I bufferyard.

Thoroughfare open space is the requirement for open space for PRDs located along a major or minor thoroughfare and in GMAs 3, 4, and 5. Bufferyards are sections of land used to separate and partially screen two adjacent land uses that are ordinarily incompatible by virtue of their use. Vegetation and other landscaping features are typically used to create the buffer. (See attached graphic of a bufferyard.) The bufferyard requirement was originally removed in 2005 due to difficulties in enforcement as bufferyards were allowed to be placed on either private property or commonly owned land. The 2008 addition of a perimeter bufferyard requirement was similar in nature to the pre-2005 requirement except the bufferyard had to be located on commonly owned land. At the time, the inclusion of the provision was intended to improve compatibility between standard subdivisions and PRDs given the varying lot sizes due to input from neighborhood organizations.

Given the need for additional housing and the desire to remove barriers to housing development, Planning staff is in agreement with TREBIC to remove the perimeter bufferyard requirement in the PRD standards as it is essentially buffering single-family residential from single-family residential. However, staff still believes that there is merit in requiring the thoroughfare open space in some form.

Planning staff is seeking guidance on how to approach the request made by TREBIC to amend the PRD standards.

Attachments

- TREBIC Letter
- PRD Graphic
- Bufferyard Graphic

Committee Action	
For:	Against:
Remarks:	