TREBIC

TRIAD REAL ESTATE AND BUILDING INDUSTRY COALITION

October 6th, 2025

To: City of Winston-Salem Development Staff
What: Residential Buffers UDO Change Request

This is a formal request to amend the following sections of the Winston-Salem UDO:

1. **MINIMUM PERIMETER LOT SIZE** a. When any perimeter lot within a PRD does not meet the minimum dimensional requirements of the underlying zoning district and directly abuts property which is located outside of the PRD, a minimum twenty (20) foot Type I bufferyard shall be required along the entire perimeter of the PRD. This bufferyard shall be located on commonly owned land and shall meet the size requirements of Section 6.3.3B.1, Size of Plant Material per one hundred (100) linear feet, as well as the plant spacing requirements of Section 6.3.3B.2, Spacing of Plant Material (**Found on page 5-76 of the UDO)**

2. **THOROUGHFARE OPEN SPACE** i. GENERALLY 1. If PRDs are located in GMA 3, 4, or 5, and are contiguous to major or minor thoroughfares, thoroughfare open space shall be required. 2. The intent of this thoroughfare open space is to preserve or enhance existing viewsheds along major transportation corridors. ii. GMA 3 A thoroughfare buffer at least fifty (50) feet wide and containing the forty (40) foot type III bufferyard plantings shall be provided in GMA 3. iii. GMA 4 AND 5 A thoroughfare buffer at least one hundred (100) feet wide and containing a type III bufferyard shall be provided in GMA 4 and 5. **(Found on page 5-78 of the UDO).**

Our recommendation is to eliminate or reduce the requirements set forth in the two items listed above. Doing this will expand the amount of area that is allowable for development, thereby helping to address the housing shortage; enhance the ability to build infill projects; allow for more creative developments with input from city staff; and help to prevent urban sprawl.

While TREBIC supports building standards and environmental stewardship, we believe these regulations are excessive, and that eliminating them will put Winston-Salem more in line with other municipalities regarding buffer requirements.

Here are some comments that we received from TREBIC members on this matter:

While it is important to maintain these perimeter boundaries, most of the time we are in a like use case.

A few points or suggestions for discussion.

1. The thoroughfare buffer in a typical RS-9 lot is equivalent to a full lot size, which has killed yield on two projects. I may suggest a vertical component may be added to the buffer should it remain to greatly reduce the width of the required buffer. This could help maintain the 'viewshed' as requested.

2. I think the 20' is excessive but understand the need for this buffer. I may suggest that the restriction be changed from a buffer to a setback much like Greensboro will do for a PUD. That way you would be able to put lots further into the perimeter or allow for better grading transitions between properties.

Below is the cost for a Type I buffer for the neighborhood I'm working on. The buffer table below shows the various widths and requirements. I added a Type II buffer for comparison. You can adjust the numbers based on the buffer. Type III gets even denser.

The number that might be most helpful is the cost/100ft.

4,378 linear feet of:

Type I buffer. 20' in width.
$26,400 - 88 deciduous trees. All 3" caliper oaks for simplicity. $300/tree
$101,728 - 352 evergreen plants. All 25 gallon nellie stevens for simplicity. $289/shrub
$87,560 - 87,560 square feet of mulch
$215,688 total cost for the buffer around this project or $4,902 per 100 feet

Type II buffer example. 20' in width.
$26,400 - 88 deciduous trees. All 3" caliper oaks for simplicity.
$101,728 - 352 evergreen plants. All 25 gallon nellie stevens for simplicity.
$28,600 - 440 supplemental evergreen shrubs. All 7 gallon distyliums for simplicity. $65/shrub
$87,560 - 87,560 square feet of mulch

$244,688 total cost or $5,552 per 100 feet

Type I Bufferyard Design Options

Min. Width	Min. Plant Material per One Hundred (100) Linear Feet
10 feet	2 deciduous trees; 8 primary evergreen plants; 10 supplemental evergreen shrubs
20 feet	2 deciduous trees; 8 primary evergreen plants
30 feet	2 deciduous trees; 5 primary evergreen plants
50 feet	2 deciduous trees; 3 primary evergreen plants

Type II Bufferyard Design Options

Min. Width	Min. Plant Material per One Hundred (100) Linear Feet
15 feet	2 deciduous trees; 8 primary evergreen plants; 20 supplemental evergreen shrubs
20 feet	2 deciduous trees; 8 primary evergreen plants; 10 supplemental evergreen shrubs
30 feet	2 deciduous trees; 8 primary evergreen plants
100 feet	2 deciduous trees; 4 primary evergreen plants

My biggest concern with the PRD buffer requirements being required to be in common area is that it adds cost burden to homeowners already saddled with cost burdens associated with housing. The PRD buffer requirement adds tremendous cost to the HOA (and their members) transferring cost to the consumer for things like tree and plant replacement, ground cover maintenance, not to mention the amount of land removed from the lot availability potential reducing density. PRD buffer restrictions benefit adjacent property owners by not saddling them with the cost to maintain these areas in perpetuity. PRD buffers should be eliminated from infill locations (perhaps GMA 1 and 2), and allowed to be placed on private property (with pertinent easements) in GMA 3 and above.

In addition to the reduced number of units, this process also leaves the HOA to deal with these buffers that end up in their common space. During development and construction, we install the plantings and maintain them, which the homeowners anticipate will continue, but many times the HOA's don't have the budget to continue to maintain these areas and they choose let them go "natural". We do our best to let our clients know that maintenance of this area will be determined by the HOA once we're built out, but we always get a lot of questions about it. You also run into issues when trees in the buffer zones fall on homeowner's properties and how that is handled.

In general, the elimination of these buffers would reduce the stress on the HOA's management and financial resources.

We offer the following suggestions, highlighted in red below:

1. **MINIMUM PERIMETER LOT SIZE** a. When any perimeter lot within a PRD does not meet the minimum dimensional requirements of the underlying zoning district and directly abuts property which is located outside of the PRD, a minimum twenty (20) foot Type I bufferyard shall be required along the entire perimeter of the PRD. This bufferyard shall be located on commonly owned land and shall meet the size requirements of Section 6.3.3B.1, Size of Plant Material per one hundred (100) linear feet, as well as the plant spacing requirements of Section 6.3.3B.2, Spacing of Plant Material (**Found on page 5-76 of the UDO)**

   Stimmel Associates Feedback:

   a. Lot reduction size in a PRD is used to increase density for that development. The adjacent zoning district meeting the min lot size can be adversely affected by the higher density, thus the need to buffer and 20' Type I (2 shade trees + 8 evergreens/100 LF)
   b. Suggest modifying language that If the PRD's perimeter lots meets the min. lot size per underlying zoning, then the buffer requirement could be eliminated in those areas. The restriction of "if any perimeter lot" does not meet the min. dimensional requirements is excessive.

2. **THOROUGHFARE OPEN SPACE** i. GENERALLY 1. If PRDs are located in GMA 3, 4, or 5, and are contiguous to major or minor thoroughfares, thoroughfare open space shall be required. 2. The intent of this thoroughfare open space is to preserve or enhance existing viewsheds along major transportation corridors. ii. GMA 3 A thoroughfare buffer at least fifty (50) feet wide and containing the forty (40) foot type III bufferyard plantings shall be provided in GMA 3. iii. GMA 4 AND 5 A thoroughfare

buffer at least one hundred (100) feet wide and containing a type III bufferyard shall be provided in GMA 4 and 5. **(Found on page 5-78 of the UDO).**

Stimmel Associates Feedback:

a. We agree that these are intense as currently enforced. We recommend a reduction of the depth for the buffers to 20-25' wide for GMA 3 with a min. 3' height berm and 30-40' wide for GMA's 4&5 with a min. 4' height berm. Or at a minimum provide the option for reduced depth if providing a berm as outlined above.

If you have any follow up questions, or if you need any additional information, please let us know. We appreciate you taking the time to work with us on this.

Sincerely,

Jon Hardister

President of TREBIC