



Arlington Unified Development Code

Planning and Zoning Commission Work Session October 2, 2013

INTRODUCTION

The Planning and Zoning Commission is in the process of reviewing a consolidated version of the proposed unified development code. The Commission has started a series of work sessions about the draft code to enable detailed review and discussion of the draft document. This handout is intended to assist the Commission focus their review on the most significant issues within the draft document, and to provide information and questions on the specific topics of discussion at the work sessions.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

The topics for discussion at the October 2, 2013, work session include landscaping, screening, and buffering. These standards are part of Article 5, *Design and Development Standards* of the draft code, specifically, Sections 5.1 through 5.3. Staff will provide a full presentation at the meeting.

The information in this handout provides some background information on each of these topics, highlights portions of the draft code that have notable changes over the current code, and introduces new sections and concepts that are proposed for inclusion in the new code.

DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

1. GENERAL INFORMATION

Article 5, *Design and Development Standards*, consolidates the various regulations that address development quality and appearance. The goals of the UDC diagnosis related to this article included:

- Carrying forward as many existing design standards and policies as appropriate;
- Raising the bar in some areas of design; and,
- Creating a cohesive regulatory framework.

The consultant reviewed the existing zoning ordinance and recent amendments, such as the Entertainment District and Lamar Collins Mixed Use District, in order to ascertain the policy directions of the City as they relate to design and development standards. Many of the proposals in Article 5 are based on these policies. The standards themselves were reviewed to eliminate duplications and inconsistencies, reorganized, and finally updated where appropriate to create a clear set of standards, all contained within a single section of the code.

2. APPLICABILITY STANDARDS (SECTION 5.1)

Important considerations for any kind of regulation are 1) what types of work does the regulation apply, and 2) when is compliance with the standard required. The current ordinance has applicability requirements noted throughout some but not all sections, which leaves it open to interpretation on when some requirements apply. However, the draft UDC provides a single set of applicability requirements for all development standards. The proposed standards are detailed below.

a. **New Construction**

All of the design and development standards would apply to all new construction, including when an existing building is demolished and a building constructed in its place.

b. **Change in Use**

Certain standards would apply upon any change in use of the building or property in the Entertainment District overlay. As presently defined, change in use is based on the use category of the land use tables in Article 3. The standards that would apply are:

- Parking lot landscaping and screening for the entire site.
- Residential screening and buffering (if applicable).
- Mechanical equipment and screening.
- Screening of service, loading and storage areas.
- Off-street parking requirements for the entire site (if the change in use triggers a recalculation of the number of spaces).
- Building design standards for one of the following: façade colors for the building, covered entryways, or street trees.
- Signs for the site or tenant space, as applicable.

c. **External Additions**

If additions are made to existing buildings, certain standards would apply depending on the size of the addition, as based on a percentage of the existing building's total area. There are three ranges of additions:

- *Less than 10 percent:* The same as requirements for change in use would apply, except for building design standards.
- *Between 10 and 30 percent:* The same as requirements for change in use would apply.
- *Over 30 percent:* The same as requirements for new construction apply.

d. Exceptions

The standards in Article 5 do not apply to:

- Existing single-family residences. However, references have are included to indicate that the single-family residential design standards would apply in some cases, as noted in the current zoning ordinance.
- Major sports complex properties, Six Flags, and Hurricane Harbor properties.
- Property covered by a planned development for standards with specific design criteria adopted as part of the development. If the planned development is silent on a particular standard in the Code, then the standard in the Code would apply.
- Building design standards would not apply to historic structures located in an LP overlay district, designated as “high priority” in the City’s historic resources survey, or those with certain historic national, state, or local designations.

3. LANDSCAPING (SECTION 5.2)

a. General Comments

Landscaping standards are found in several locations in the current zoning ordinance. The new landscaping section in Article 5 consolidates these standards into a single section. There are three general types of landscaping requirements: single family residential, perimeter setback, and parking lot landscaping and screening. These standards are the minimum requirements.

A landscape plan is required for all development applications, except for single-family dwellings. If the site is larger than one-half acre, the plan must be prepared by a registered landscape architect. This is the same as the current requirements.

The lists of recommended trees, shrubs, groundcover, and similar plants have been deleted from this section. It is recommended that these lists be maintained separately in a user’s guide or policy document, which would be prepared after adoption of the code.

b. Residential Landscaping

The residential landscaping standards are generally the same as those in the current zoning ordinance, with only minor adjustments to the text. In addition, the text has been reorganized and formatted for the UDC.

The minimum width of a sidewalk is proposed to increase from 4 feet to 5 feet, as recommended by the adopted Hike and Bike System Master Plan.

c. Perimeter Landscape Setback

Perimeter landscaping is required along all public street right-of-way for multi-family and nonresidential development.

- Currently, the minimum width of the perimeter setback required is 20 feet along freeways and 10 feet on all other streets. The draft UDC recommends a wider variety of widths, which would depend on the type of roadway. The purpose is to make the landscaping design more compatible with the width of the road. The requirements for trees, shrubs, and groundcover have also been adjusted. The table below shows the proposed standards.

Table 5.3-1: Minimum Width of Landscape Setback			
	Interstate Highway	Major/ Minor Arterial Major Collector	Minor Collector Local
Buffer Width (min.)	20 feet	15 feet	10 feet
Grass Coverage (max.)	40%	40%	50%
Tree Requirement (min.)	1 per 35 feet	1 per 35 feet	1 per 40 feet
Evergreen Tree Requirement (min.)	40%	40%	30%
Shrub Requirement (min.)	10 per 50 feet	9 per 50 feet	7 per 50 feet
Evergreen Shrub Requirement (min.)	50%	50%	50%
Drought Tolerant Plants (min.)	50%	50%	50%

- New landscaping standards are proposed for site entries into multi-family developments. These options include medians, decorative pavement, gateway elements, and other improvements.
- The Downtown Business, Downtown Neighborhood Overlay, and Lamar Collins Mixed Use districts have specific streetscape standards that are being carried forward in this section with minor adjustments.

d. Parking Lot Landscaping and Screening

The standards in this section were consolidated from the existing landscaping regulations in the zoning ordinance as well as other zoning districts with similar requirements (such as the Festival and Entertainment districts).

- The internal parking area landscaping section is reorganized to make the specific requirements clearer. The standards are divided into required landscape area, island design, and island planting requirements. There are no substantive changes over the current zoning ordinance standards.
- To permit the preservation of trees, flexibility is provided to allow up to a 5% reduction in the number of parking spaces.
- The current zoning ordinance provides for additional landscaping due to overparking on a site, and that standard is included in the draft UDC. New

language is proposed to provide the zoning administrator flexibility in approving an alternate plan for infill or redevelopment projects.

e. Tree Preservation and Replacement

All of the tree preservation and replacement standards have been consolidated into a single section. The permit and administrative requirements have been moved into the procedural section of the new code. There are no substantive changes to this section.

f. Landscaping Design and Materials Requirements

This section is a mix of new language and existing requirements. Included are standards and guidelines for plant quality and size, irrigation and maintenance. However, specific lists of plant types are not included; these are recommended to be maintained in a separate user guide or policy document.

4. SCREENING, BUFFERING AND FENCES (SECTION 5.3)

a. General Comments

This section was previously the residential adjacency standards and general fence requirements in the zoning ordinance. A number of provisions were consolidated and modified to make the standards in this section reflect modern development patterns that allow a closer relationship between different structures and uses.

b. Required Screening and Buffering

Substantive changes are proposed for screening and landscape buffers. These changes are detailed below. Provisions are also suggested to allow reductions or waivers of buffers and screening for infill projects.

- *Buffers:* The landscape buffers are recommended to be reduced in width to address potential redevelopment and infill projects. The current buffer widths are 20, 30, and 40 feet, and are proposed to change to 10, 15, and 30 feet, respectively. The width depends on adjacent zoning and land use. For example, when industrial property is adjacent to single-family residential property, a 30-foot buffer is required.
- *Screening:* Each buffer requires a screening device, and the standard differs in each buffer. The current standards allow wood fencing, with masonry being optional. The proposed standards require masonry fences with the 30-foot buffer, and other options available in the other two buffers. Materials range from masonry, ornamental metal, composite or vinyl materials, cedar or redwood, and double-sided wood stockade. Chain link is not a permitted material for a screening fence.

- *Landscaping:* Current standards require the planting of 1 tree per 600 square feet of buffer area. Proposed standards are 1 tree per 450 square feet of buffer area, with allowances to count existing vegetation.
- *Permitted Structures and Uses:* Buildings and parking areas would not be allowed to encroach into the buffer yard. Low-impact improvements such as sidewalks, trails, fountains, and outdoor furniture would be permitted in the buffer area. This is similar to current standards.

c. Mechanical Equipment and Screening

This section consolidates provisions from existing standards, including the residential design standards. Clear standards are provided for equipment mounted to a roof, a wall, and the ground. A process to consider alternate standards due to site or design limitations is included to provide flexibility in certain situations.

d. Screening of Service, Loading and Storage Areas

This section consolidates existing provisions from various sections of the zoning ordinance into a single set of standards. The requirements include screening for outside storage and display areas, loading docks, shopping cart storage, and screening for refuse facility areas and drive-through service lanes.

The requirements for screening refuse facility areas have been modified to eliminate the required screening if the containers are otherwise screened from view by intervening buildings or if they are located in a parking garage.

e. Fencing

All fencing requirements for single-family development and fencing along major roadways is consolidated in this section. New general standards for commercial fencing are proposed. The fences described in this section also function as screening devices in the buffer yard standards.

The standards for single-family residential privacy fencing have been edited to eliminate duplicate provisions and provide a single set of standards. The current code has three separate standards with conflicting provisions.

Front yard fence standards for single-family dwellings are proposed to change. The maximum height is proposed to increase from 2.5 feet (30 inches) to 4 feet (48 inches). The permitted materials would be limited to ornamental iron, with an allowance for masonry columns. Currently, the allowed materials include wood, vinyl, or ornamental iron.

New standards are proposed to address fencing for permitted agricultural uses to accommodate the characteristics of those activities. The current zoning ordinance does not provide any standards. The draft UDC would allow for traditional agricultural fence materials such as post and rail, pipe and cable, and woven wire.