



Arlington Unified Development Code

Planning and Zoning Commission Work Session November 6, 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 document. This handout is intended to assist the Commission in focusing their review on the most significant issues within the document, and to provide information on the specific topics of discussion at the work sessions.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

The topics for discussion at the November 6, 2013, work session cover various sections of the draft code not reviewed previously. Specifically, the discussion covers the following:

1. Section 5.8, *Overlay and Other District Design and Development Standards*
2. Section 5.9, *Transportation and Connectivity*
3. Section 5.10, *Common Open Space*
4. Section 5.11, *Alternative Energy System Standards*
5. Article 4, *Dimensional Standards*
6. Article 6, *Subdivision Regulations*

Staff will provide a full presentation at the meeting. The information in this handout provides some background information on this topic, 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.

OVERLAY AND OTHER DISTRICT STANDARDS (SECTION 5.8)

1. GENERAL COMMENTS

There are several overlay districts being carried forward in the draft UDC, and this section combines the special standards for four of them into a single location. The overlay districts in this section include the Entertainment District, Airport, Landmark Preservation, and Conservation District overlay districts. Each of these has unique requirements not covered under other sections of the code.

The overlay districts addressed in other sections of the draft UDC include the Downtown Neighborhood and Lamar Collins Mixed Use districts. The existing Business Park overlay district is not proposed to be retained.

2. ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT OVERLAY (SECTION 5.8.1)

This subsection includes the special standards for the Entertainment District overlay. Some of the existing design standards in this district were reorganized and merged into another section of the draft UDC (i.e., building design and signs), and the remaining standards are included in this subsection. Those standards are described below. In general, the standards were carried forward with only minor changes.

a. Land Uses

This section references the permitted and prohibited land uses within the Entertainment District overlay.

- *Permitted Uses.* Any use allowed in the underlying base zoning district is permitted in the overlay area. Restaurants with drive-through windows require approval of a specific use permit.
- *Prohibited Uses.* Some land uses are expressly prohibited in the overlay, regardless of the underlying base zoning. Those uses are listed in this section.

b. Private Realm Design Standards

This section contains several standards that apply to buildings, site development, and private open spaces within the overlay district. Included are building setbacks and build-to lines, building height and length, exterior illumination, and windows.

c. Public Realm Design Standards

This section addresses the public area standards for the overlay, and carries forward the existing requirements. It contains standards for streetscape and roadside design, parks and landscaping, public area lighting, and street furniture (i.e., benches, tree grates, bollards, and bike racks).

3. OTHER OVERLAY DISTRICTS (SECTION 5.8.2 – 5.8.4)

a. Airport Overlay

This subsection incorporates the existing overlay district that applies to Arlington Municipal Airport. There are no changes to the requirements.

b. Landmark Preservation Overlay

This subsection incorporates the existing overlay district that applies to properties located in the landmark preservation overlay district. This overlay applies to 12 properties in the city. There are no changes to the requirements.

c. Conservation District Overlay

This subsection incorporates the existing overlay district that applies to properties that are part of a conservation district. There are two adopted districts in the city, both located just west of the UT Arlington campus in the Oak Hill neighborhood. There are no changes to the requirements.

TRANSPORTATION AND CONNECTIVITY (SECTION 5.9)

1. BACKGROUND

Throughout the existing ordinances, there are standards relating to both vehicular and pedestrian connectivity. They have been consolidated into Section 5.10 and updated to meet current best practices. These standards attempt to avoid the creation of large, isolated tracts without routes for through traffic or pedestrian and bicycle connections.

2. TRAFFIC IMPACT MITIGATION

New development may be required to conduct a traffic study to provide an evaluation of the road system capacity. This language cross-references this existing requirement from Article 6 *Subdivision Regulations*.

3. STREETS AND VEHICULAR CIRCULATION

This section consists of general design requirements related to streets and vehicular circulation, and they apply to all property types (residential and nonresidential). It states that all streets must meet the standards contained in both the *Subdivision Regulations* article and the *Design Criteria Manual*, and provides the policy and planning basis for those requirements. The standards cover:

a. Street Connectivity

This language provides policies for the creation and design of well-connected streets that distribute traffic over multiple streets to avoid traffic congestion. These policies are the basis for providing streets that link neighborhoods, properties, and land uses.

b. Residential Streets

Residential streets should be laid out so that cut-through traffic is discouraged. The language recommends the use of traffic calming devices (diverters, neck-downs, curvilinear design) to reduce speeds and cut-through traffic where necessary.

c. Vehicle Access to Public Streets and Adjacent Land

This section requires all developments to provide connections to public streets and provide for future connections to adjacent vacant property. The intent is to prevent property from becoming land-locked due to development taking place on adjacent sites.

d. Driveways and Access

This language states that all property must provide reasonable access for emergency vehicles, and that all driveways be designed to City standards.

e. Visibility at Intersections.

This section provides a cross-reference to the existing standards that address visibility at street intersections to ensure drivers have a clear view of the street. This is commonly referred to as a “visibility triangle”.

4. PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION

This subsection includes the requirements for providing sidewalks on streets and within multifamily and commercial developments.

a. Sidewalks Required

Sidewalks are required to be installed along all arterials, collector streets, and local streets, including cul-de-sacs. Sidewalks also must be installed on the

perimeter/frontage of all developments. The requirement does not apply to residential zoning districts where the minimum lot size is one acre or larger. In addition, flexibility is provided to address steep-sloped areas or impacts on natural resources. This language is based upon current requirements.

b. Multi-Family Residential Pedestrian Connections

Multi-family development must provide an on-site system of pedestrian walkways that afford access to and connections between buildings, parking areas, property boundaries, and perimeter sidewalks or trails. All sidewalks must be at least 5 feet in width. These are new requirements that build upon the proposed multi-family design standards.

c. Nonresidential On-Site Pedestrian Connections

Nonresidential development must provide an on-site system of pedestrian walkways that provide access to and connections between all buildings on the site, public sidewalks, or trails. All sidewalks or walkways must be at least 5 feet in width.

Crosswalk areas on the site should be designed to be visible to the pedestrian. This can be achieved using different paving materials, colors, bollards, or medians. The pedestrian routes should also include some design features that protect pedestrians from adjacent traffic and provide seating or lighting. These are all new requirements that build upon the proposed nonresidential design standards.

d. Bicycle Circulation

This section requires the construction of bicycle facilities in accordance with the Hike and Bike System Master Plan. There is a similar requirement in the existing subdivision regulations.

COMMON OPEN SPACE (SECTION 5.10)

1. BACKGROUND

This proposed new section builds on the existing requirements for open space. This requirement is a private set-aside of open space, not a public dedication of park land. This set-aside requirement is intended to serve as a mechanism to create new open space areas within developments for recreation, social interaction, and other outdoor uses, and to soften the visual aspects of denser development.

2. APPLICABILITY

This subsection carries forward existing requirements from the Entertainment district design standards and applies to a select range of development types. It requires a set aside of common open space on sites developed for single-family attached dwellings, multifamily use, and nonresidential and mixed-use developments.

3. STANDARDS

The standards for common open space describe the types of areas that count as open space, general design standards for the space, and the use, ownership and maintenance of the areas. The standards are described in more detail below.

a. Areas Counted as Common Open Space

There are six broad types of space that count as common open space. Many of these types are already commonly associated with particular types of development, which means developments would get credit for improvements that would have been made anyway.

- *Natural areas.* These areas include flood hazard areas, water features, some sloped hillside areas, and wildlife habitat areas.
- *Active recreational areas.* These areas would typically be found in single-family or multifamily residential areas. They include areas such as swimming pools, ball fields, playgrounds, tennis courts, and trails.
- *Formal plantings, public art and gardens.* These areas are usually formally designed areas for passive activities.
- *Squares, forecourts, plazas and parks.* These types of spaces are typically found in large developments and serve entire neighborhoods or commercial centers.
- *Required landscape areas.* All areas used for required landscaping on a site count as common open space. However, it does not include landscaping in parking lots.
- *Public access easements.* Areas that contain sidewalks or trails can count towards common open space.

b. Areas Not Credited

Some types of space do not count towards required common open space. These include private yards not covered by an open space easement, streets, open parking areas, outdoor storage areas and balconies.

c. General Design Standards for Common Open Space

There are several standards related to the design and maintenance of common open space areas.

- *Location and configuration.* Areas should be readily accessible and usable by residents or users in the development. Requires that the land used as common open space is contiguous and compact and not spread out through the site.
- *Orientation of adjacent buildings.* Buildings adjacent to open space must have an entrance that faces the open space area.
- *Multi-phase developments.* Each phase of a development can be considered separately for the purpose of calculating and providing the open space.
- *Landscaping and changes.* Clarifies that City approval is required for all landscaping plans for open space areas, as well as changes to those areas.

d. Use of Common Open Space Areas

This section provides requirements for how much of certain open spaces areas be useable. It applies to areas that serve as recreational areas, public plazas and squares, parks, and public access easements. Natural areas and landscaped areas are not included since they do not provide for a useable function in the same manner.

Limits are also placed on improving the open space with structures, buildings or parking areas. Allowed improvements include recreation and playground equipment, passive recreational and educational improvements, and similar activities.

e. Ownership

This section provides methods for the ownership of common open space areas.

- *Property owner's association.* Requires the recording of a declaration of covenants and restrictions if the property is owned by a property owner's association or homeowner's association. This is most common in residential areas.
- *Private ownership.* Requires the inclusion of deed restrictions or a designation on a plat that provide for maintenance and preservation of the area as open space.

f. Maintenance

Open space must be maintained in accordance with any approved plans.

ALTERNATIVE ENERGY SYSTEM STANDARDS (SECTION 5.11)

The Diagnosis report recommended providing standards for allowing alternative energy systems. While there was interest expressed by interviewees during the preparation of the report, the current zoning ordinance does not allow the use of features such as solar and wind power. This new section in the draft UDC addresses this interest by providing modest guidelines for the use of solar and wind energy systems as well as geoechange and geothermal systems. Compliance with other applicable construction and electrical codes is required.

a. Ground-Mounted Solar Array Standards

These systems are normally used for providing electricity for heating, cooling, or water heaters. Ground-mounted arrays cannot be located in front yards, must maintain a 10-foot setback from property lines and structures, and cannot be taller than 12 feet in a residential district or 20 feet in nonresidential district.

b. Building-Mounted Solar Array Standards

These systems are roof-mounted or wall-mounted devices. These systems are most common in residential areas since available land area is smaller. Systems must be located at least 6 feet from all property lines and structures, other than the structure on which it is mounted. The system cannot extend taller than the maximum height allowed in the zoning district, and could be attached to an accessory structure such as detached garage.

c. Small Wind Energy Systems

Small wind energy systems would be permitted in all zoning districts except Downtown Business. Towers or poles for these systems must be setback at least one-times its total height from public roads, overhead utility lines, and property lines. The setback could be reduced if the affected landowner or utility grants written permission. The height limit for towers is 75 feet. Systems taller than 75 feet would require approval through the specific use permit process.

d. Vertical Axis Wind Turbine Standards

A vertical axis wind turbine (VAWT) is a type of system where the rotating shaft is set vertically, as opposed to horizontally like a traditional windmill. These types of systems are allowed in all districts, including Downtown Business.

- *Residential districts.* One VAWT is allowed per lot. If mounted on a building, the height may not exceed 40 feet. If mounted on a tower, the maximum height is 75 feet. Towers or poles for these systems must be setback at least one-times its total height from public roads, overhead utility lines, and property lines. The setback could be reduced if the affected landowner or utility grants written permission.
- *Nonresidential districts.* Building mounted VAWTs may not exceed 40 feet in height. It may also be mounted on a light pole, provided it does not exceed 25 feet above the top of the pole. If mounted on a tower, the maximum height is 75 feet. Towers or poles for these systems must be setback at least one-times its total height from public roads, overhead utility lines and property lines. The setback could be reduced if the affected landowner or utility grants written permission.

e. General Standards for Small Wind and VAWT

There are a number of general standards that would apply to both small wind energy systems and VAWTs.

- *Lighting.* No lighting is permitted unless required by the Federal Aviation Administration.
- *Decibel levels.* Noise should not exceed 60 decibels as measured at the closest neighboring dwelling.
- *Signs.* They are not permitted except for manufacturer or installer identification or other required warning signs.
- *Code compliance.* Requires compliance with applicable construction and electric codes.
- *Screening.* Ground-level equipment associated with the system must be screened in accordance with other utility standards in Article 5.
- *Other.* Requires compliance with any applicable Federal Aviation Administration requirements and any State of Texas regulations. Standards for the repair and removal of systems are recommended.

f. Geexchange Systems

Geexchange systems are commonly known as “heat pumps”. The standards in this section require the system to be closed loop, so that no fluid is removed or introduced into the ground.

g. Geothermal Direct Heat Systems

This type of system removes steam or dry heat from the ground to provide building heating for commercial or industrial buildings. The proposed UDC would allow for this type of system upon proof of receiving any required state or federal permits.

DIMENSIONAL STANDARDS (ARTICLE 4)

Article 4 contains rules and guidelines for the measurement of certain standards in a single location for ease of reference. These standards include density, lot area and dimensions, living area, lot coverage, and setbacks. It also includes references to allowed changes to setbacks in specific situations, permission for encroachments, and limited height exceptions.

SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS (ARTICLE 6)

The existing subdivision regulations remain largely intact, but are consolidated within the draft UDC. Several changes are proposed, as described below.

- The procedural requirements for subdivision plats were moved to Article 10 with all the administrative processes related to the code. Specific application submittal requirements for plats were removed and will be handled administratively.
- All definitions related to subdivisions were moved to Article 12, *Definitions*.
- Terminology and department references were updated as necessary, e.g., Zoning Administrator, City Engineer, Public Works and Transportation Department, and Community Development and Planning Department.
- Language was updated to clarify when a plat is required and what constitutes adequate public facilities. Duplicate provisions that are found in other codes were removed and cross-referenced as needed, such as water utilities and public works requirements.