

## MEMORANDUM

**Date:** May 28, 2019  
**To:** City Council  
**From:** Christy Carr, AICP  
Senior Planner  
**Subject:** **Ordinance 2019-03: Subdivision Update**

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The Planning Commission's recommended draft of the subdivision update has been discussed at four study sessions on March 19 and April 2 and 16, and May 7, 2019.

The study session on May 7, 2019 focused largely on these topics: natural area, homesite clustering, perimeter and roadside buffers, design diversity, administrative departures, and home size. This memorandum provides an overview of the revisions to the Planning Commission's recommended draft based on City Council input on these topics and staff clarification/correction where needed.

**1. Allocation of Natural Area (BIMC 17.12.050)**

A new figure (Figure 17.12.070-1) is provided to illustrate how natural area is allocated. Basic concepts include:

- All primary natural areas (PNAs) on a site must be included in the natural area, even the amount of PNAs exceeds the required amount of natural area. No community space required.
- If the amount of PNAs on a site is less than the natural area requirement, secondary natural areas (SNAs) are added to achieve the required amount of natural area. No community space required.
- If the amount of PNAs and SNAs combined is less than the natural area requirement, the natural area is limited to what is present on the site. In this case, community space is required.

**2. Homesite Clustering (BIMC 17.12.060)**

An updated table (Table 17.12.060-1) is provided that outlines where clustering applies and how. Applicability is dependent upon zoning, number of lots, and existing site conditions. The option to limit site disturbance instead of cluster homesites is provided in some cases. The City Council may want to consider whether the "either/or" option (clustering or limiting site disturbance) should be a standard from which an applicant can be granted a departure.

### **3. Perimeter Buffers (BIMC 17.12.070.N)**

Creating new standards for perimeter buffers has proved challenging. The City's existing subdivision standards do not include a perimeter buffer requirement for open space subdivisions. Perimeter buffers are required only for cluster subdivisions and range from 10 to 25 feet depending on the zoning district. Since the proposed new subdivision standards are more or less a combination of the existing open space and cluster options, the need for perimeter buffers at all would likely be limited, particularly in the less dense zoning districts (R-0.4, R-1, and R-2). It is also important to differentiate the different functions of perimeter buffers; that is, physical separation (i.e., space) and visual separation. When physical separation is adequate, visual separation is less essential.

As proposed, the perimeter buffer would equal the homesite to exterior plat boundary dimensional standard. In addition, there is the building to homesite boundary standard. These two standards combined would likely create adequate physical separation in most zoning districts. For example, these two standards total 65-100 feet and 35-50 feet in the R-0.4 and R-1/R-2 zoning districts, respectively. Additional planting to create or increase visual separation is likely unnecessary. However, in the denser zoning districts – and in the R-0.4 and R-1/R-2 zoning districts when a departure is granted – these dimensional standards could be smaller. In these cases, and where existing vegetation does not provide a visual screen, additional planting could be required to mitigate off-site impacts of new development.

The intent of the proposed standards is to have perimeter buffers *only where they are needed*. It is proposed that perimeter buffers shall be established in all subdivisions, but in “space only.” Additional planting would only be required if a set of certain conditions are present:

- The homesite boundary to exterior plat boundary is less than the minimum required in accordance with Table 17.12.070-1, as determined by an administrative departure; and
- Existing vegetation does not provide an effective year-round visual screen; and
- In the R-0.4, R-1, and R-2 zoning districts, the abutting property is not capable of being subdivided.

### **4. Roadside Buffers (BIMC 17.12.070.O)**

Roadside buffers were increased from 25 feet to 40 feet. Transit shelters were added as an allowed structure within roadside buffers. [Note: The buffer at Northtown Woods is 40 feet, and was required under a previous set of subdivision standards.]

### **5. Design Diversity (BIMC 17.12.070.P)**

Standards to promote design diversity were added. These include requirements for varied floor plans, home sizes, and front yard setbacks.