



MEMO

TO Planning Commission
FROM Adam Springer, Planner II
THROUGH James Shockey, AICP, Community Development Director
DATE March 10, 2026
RE Amendment to UDC Title 7 – Section 3-I Landscaping, Defensible Space, and Screening Standards; Appendix C; and Related Provisions (Wildfire Resiliency & Turf Compliance) (PLN26-012)

Background:

Section 5-C-1 of the Unified Development Code (UDC) authorizes text amendments initiated by Town staff.

These proposed amendments respond to mandatory State legislation adopting the **Colorado Wildfire Resiliency Code (CWRC)** and statutory requirements addressing nonfunctional turf.

The Town of Winter Park is designated as a **Class 2 Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI)** area and is therefore required to implement defensible space and Structure Ignition Zone (Zones 1–3) standards into local regulations.

The proposed amendments:

1. Replace and modernize Section 3-I (Landscaping, Defensible Space, and Screening Standards);
2. Establish ignition-resistant vegetation requirements for Zone 1;
3. Prohibit nonfunctional turf in applicable development contexts;
4. Amend related definitions in Article 7C;
5. Update retaining wall material standards near structures; and
6. Reorganize parking lot landscaping and screening provisions for clarity.

These revisions integrate wildfire resiliency, water conservation, and site design into one coordinated framework.

Staff received comments from the Planning Commission, members of the public, and local design professionals during the February 24, 2026 study session and incorporated appropriate revisions to the draft regulations while maintaining consistency with the Colorado Wildfire Resiliency Code and related State legislation.

Analysis

1. Wildfire Resiliency Integration

Revised Section 3-I incorporates mandatory Structure Ignition Zones directly into the landscaping standards. Key provisions include:

- Defensible space requirements tied to measurable distances from structures;
- Restrictions on new tree planting in Zone 1;



- Required ignition-resistant vegetation within 0–5 feet of structures;
 - Crown spacing and pruning standards in Zones 2 and 3;
 - Required Landscape and Defensible Space Plans demonstrating compliance.
- This approach streamlines administration and ensures local compliance with State law.

2. Ignition-Resistant Plant List (Appendix C – Section D)

A new Section D within Appendix C establishes an approved list of ignition-resistant species for Structure Ignition Zone 1.

The list is:

- Based on CSU Extension ignition-resistance guidance;
- Limited to native or high-elevation adapted species;
- Structured as a living document to allow administrative updates.

This ensures both scientific grounding and flexibility.

3. Nonfunctional Turf Prohibition

Consistent with State legislation, the amendments prohibit nonfunctional turf and nonfunctional artificial turf in:

- New nonresidential development;
- Multifamily development of 12 units or more;
- Projects disturbing more than 50% of existing landscaped area.

Functional turf remains permitted in recreational and civic use areas.

4. Landscape Unit System & Technical Updates

The revised landscape unit system ties required landscaping to the Limit of Disturbance (LOD), improving predictability and reflecting actual site impact. Existing vegetation may be credited where compliant with wildfire standards.

Additional amendments include:

- Updated definitions (LOD, Functional Turf, Ignition-Resistant Vegetation, etc.);
- Replacement of “bufferyard” terminology with “landscape buffer”;
- Reorganization of parking lot landscaping provisions;
- Retaining wall material requirements within eight (8) feet of structures.

5. Consistency with UDC Purpose

The proposed amendments advance the purposes of §1-A-4 of the UDC by:

- Promoting public health and safety;
- Implementing State wildfire resiliency mandates;
- Supporting orderly and attractive development;
- Maintaining Winter Park’s alpine character.

Additional Technical Amendments

Staff has identified several additional minor amendments within the Unified Development Code intended to maintain terminology consistency with the proposed revisions to Section 3-I. These changes are administrative in nature and do not alter the intent or application of the regulations.

Specifically, staff proposes replacing the term “bufferyard(s)” with “landscape buffer” and related supporting terminology in the following sections of the UDC:

- Sec. 2-B-3 – Limited and Special Uses
- Sec. 3-A-7 – Measurements, Computations, and Exceptions
- Sec. 3-H-7 – Vehicle Stacking Areas
- Sec. 3-H-8 – Access Management
- Subsec. 3-C-3-3 – Vegetated Buffers
- Subsec. 3-C-3-5 – Hillside and Ridgeline Design Standards
- Article 7C – Definition of “Open Space”

These amendments are intended to ensure consistent terminology throughout the Unified Development Code and may be incorporated prior to Town Council adoption. Staff considers these updates non-substantive technical corrections.

§5-B-8 Public Notice Requirements

This Text Amendment has been properly noticed pursuant to §5-B-8 of the UDC. A newspaper publication was made in the Sky-Hi News and Middle Park Times on February 25, 2026.

As of March 6, 2026 there has been no comments.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends the Planning Commission forward a recommendation of approval to the Town Council for the proposed amendments to Title 7 of the Unified Development Code, including the additional technical amendments described in this report, finding that the amendments:

- Comply with mandatory State legislation;
- Promote public health, safety, and welfare;
- Advance water conservation objectives; and
- Maintain consistency with the Comprehensive Plan and the purposes of the UDC.

Sample Motion for Approval:

I move to recommend approval of the attached ordinance approving the proposed Text Amendment to the UDC (PLN26-012) related to Landscaping, Defensible Space, and Screening Standards and associated provisions, including the additional technical amendments identified in the staff report, finding that the amendment is consistent with State law and promotes public health, safety, and welfare.

Sample Motion for Denial:

I move to deny recommending approval of the attached ordinance for the proposed Text Amendment to the UDC (PLN26-012) related to Landscaping, Defensible Space, and Screening Standards and associated provisions, finding that the amendment does not adequately meet the purposes of the Unified Development Code and requires substantial modification, specifically: **[articulate specific reasons for denial of the ordinance]**.