

MEMO

TO Town Council

FROM Adam Springer, Planner II

THROUGH James Shockey, AICP, Community Development Director

DATE March 17, 2026 – First Reading
April 7, 2026 – Second Reading

RE Amendment to UDC Title 7 – Article 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 Article 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; and
- 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; and
- 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; and
- 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.

5. 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; and
- Retaining wall material requirements within eight (8) feet of structures.

6. 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; and
- Maintaining Winter Park’s alpine character.

§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 12, 2026 there have been no comments.

Planning Commission Recommendation:

The Planning Commission reviewed the proposed Text Amendment at a Public Hearing on March 10, 2026. Following discussion, the Commission unanimously (6–0, with one member absent) recommended approval of the amendment as drafted, with one additional amendment recommended by staff to replace the term “**bufferyard**,” which appears in several sections of the UDC, with terminology that more accurately reflects and aligns with the updated landscaping regulations.

Staff Recommendation

Staff has amended the draft Ordinance as directed by the Planning Commission's recommendation and recommends that the Town Council approve Ordinance 646, Series 2026, an Ordinance of the Town of Winter Park amending Title 7 of the Winter Park Town Code, including Article 3-I Landscaping, Defensible Space, and Screening Standards; Appendix C; and related provisions within the UDC, related to Wildfire Resiliency and Turf Compliance, as described above.

The proposed 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 approve Ordinance 646, Series 2026, an Ordinance of the Town of Winter Park amending Title 7 of the Winter Park Town Code, including Article 3-I Landscaping, Defensible Space, and Screening Standards; Appendix C; and related provisions within the Unified Development Code (UDC), as described, for the purpose of aligning the Town Code with State legislation regarding wildfire resiliency and turf compliance.

Sample Motion for Denial:

I move to deny Ordinance 646, Series 2026, an Ordinance of the Town of Winter Park amending Title 7 of the Winter Park Town Code, including Article 3-I Landscaping, Defensible Space, and Screening Standards; Appendix C; and related provisions within the Unified Development Code (UDC), specifically: **[articulate specific reasons for denial of the ordinance]**.