
Residential Buffering Amendments FAQ

Livable Places Action Committee



**PLANNING &
DEVELOPMENT
DEPARTMENT**

1. What are the residential buffering amendments?

The amendments help mitigate the effects of commercial developments on single-family and multi-unit residential developments. If approved by city council, the following requirements will apply to commercial developments:

- A 15-40 foot buffer distance between mid-rise or high-rise structures and single-family or small scale multi-family residential developments. No structures or mechanical equipment is allowed in the buffer area. The existing buffering ordinance encourages high-rise developments to be located on major thoroughfares or in high-density, mixed-use areas designated as Major Activity Centers ([Link to MAC areas](#)). The amendments will strengthen the existing standards to include mid-rise structures. They will also protect single-family houses on small lots and small scale multifamily (3-8 units) structures.
- Enhanced exterior screening for parking garages to prevent car headlights and garage ceiling lights from shining on adjacent residential properties. Enhanced requirements for outdoor light fixtures mounted on the sides of commercial buildings or on poles in parking lots to make sure they do not shine onto the adjacent residential homes or public streets.
- Screening for bulk containers, also called dumpsters, located along all public streets and residential developments, so they are not visible at ground level.

2. How tall is a mid-rise structure?

A mid-rise is at least 65 feet or greater measured from the ground to the roof.

3. If approved by City Council, when would the ordinance be effective and would it apply to existing developments?

The ordinance will become effective within 30 days from the date it is signed or as determined by the City Council. It will apply to new developments that have not yet submitted plans for review by the City. The new requirements will only apply to projects submitted for plan review after the council passage date. All permit applications in the system prior to the effective date would be grandfathered under the old ordinance.

4. Will any recommended changes to the Chapter 42 Code of Ordinances supersede deed restrictions in Houston neighborhoods?

The City cannot enforce requirements that would violate deed restrictions on private property.

5. Will there be an opportunity for public input?

Planning Commission held a public hearing which included a 30-day comment period. These comments are available [here](#). There were also multiple opportunities for public input while the ordinance concepts were being drafted, including during monthly Livable Places Action Committee meetings, the Department's on-line public engagement site, or writing to

LivablePlaces@houstontx.gov. City Council will hold a final public hearing on Wednesday, January, 11, 2023, at 9:00 a.m.

6. Where do I go to learn more about Livable Places and follow the committee's work?

You can go to [LetsTalkHouston](#) website which is a community engagement platform we are using to keep community involved in the process or [Livable Places Action Committee](#) webpage and get more information and sign up for updates.