

Board Duties & Organization and Administrative Review Text Amendments

Mary Kopaskie-Brown, Planning Director

Rachel Phillips, Assistant Planning Director





Background - Purpose

- Shared goal:
 - Staff, City Council, the development community, and state legislators
 - Streamline and improve development review and entitlement processes
- City Council & development community emphasized the need for: predictable, coordinated, and user-friendly processes that support high-quality development and improve customer service
- Recent state legislative updates support this effort by requiring objective standards and more administrative decision-making

What We Heard - City Council

- Improve the development review process to streamline quality development
- Eliminate redundancies in the development review process
- Strengthen interdepartmental review to ensure consistent and timely reviews
- Use data to guide decision-making and enhance transparency
- Enhance the customer experience for applicants and improve the overall business climate
- Expand support for small businesses, including



What We Heard - Development Community

- Expand administrative approvals for site plans, site plan modifications, and plats
- Clarify and adjust thresholds for major vs minor site plan amendments
- Adopt streamlined and flexible infill and redevelopment standards for constrained or unique sites
- Reduce uncertainty in the Design Review process through clearer expectations and consistent comments
- Maintain predictable timelines and continue to publish development review schedules





Changes to State Legislation

- HB 2447 signed by the governor on March 31, 2025
- Changed existing law to require (rather than allow):
 - Administrative approval of certain land use applications (i.e.. site plans, development plans, plats, etc.)
 - Review and approval of design plans to be based on objective standards
 - Without public hearings

Changes to Planning & Zoning - Alternates

- Add three alternates to the Board
 - Ensures quorum
 - Reduces risk of delays for applicants
 - Supports robust discussion and decision-making
 - Builds a pipeline of trained candidates for future full appointments



A photograph of a modern building facade with large windows and a glass entrance, partially visible on the left side of the slide.

Changes to Planning & Zoning - Composition

- Add professional qualifications
 - 3 design related (architect, engineer, landscape architect, contractor/developer)
 - 4 citizens at large
 - 1 alternate with design related background
- Supports a consolidated site plan and design review process
- Provides balance between technical knowledge and community perspective
- Enhances public confidence in the review process

Outcomes

Streamline Processes

- 1) Combine Site Plan and Design Review (“Development Plan Review”) Process
- 2) Align responsibilities of recommending and approving bodies

Planning Director

- Meet all development and design standards
- Not requesting a rezone, PAD, BIZ, CUP, SUP, or other deviation

Design Review Board

- Alternative Compliance
- Municipal Projects
- Planning Director Referral
- Planning Director Appeal
- PC District Matters

Planning & Zoning Commission

- Rezone, PAD, BIZ, CUP, or SUP
- PC District Matters
- Previous Approval Condition
- Project Specific Design Guidelines & Standards

- + . Administrative Review
- o Text Amendments



Proposed Amendments - Overview

- Modify existing development standards to ensure they're objective
- Add new development standards to promote high-quality design outcomes
- Create a consolidated “Development Plan Review” process
- Modify expiration and extension provisions
- Modify Alternative Compliance process
- Reorganize and reword text for clarity and consistency
- Modify and add definitions

A photograph of a modern building with a prominent red metal roof and large glass windows. The building is situated in a landscaped area with some greenery and a concrete walkway in the foreground.

Proposed Amendments - Modify Existing Development Standards

- Add specificity and ensure current requirements are objective, for example:
 - Add a minimum required depth for horizontal articulation in a wall plane
 - Add a minimum required % of primary building materials to use on publicly visible and non-publicly visible façades
 - Clarify that variations in color or texture not a separate material



Proposed Amendments - New Development Standards

- Add development standards (setbacks, heights, etc.) for the MX District
- Add site planning and design standards for the Downtown Districts
- Add a maximum lot coverage for Recreational Vehicle and Manufactured Home Subdivisions
- Add landscape diversity requirements (i.e. maximum % of plant species per tree, shrub, etc.)
- Add requirement for residential amenities based on the number of units
- Add requirement that loading of materials occur from truck dock, loading, and service areas



Proposed Amendments - New Consolidated Development Plan Review Process

- Streamline processes and consolidate Site Plan Review and Design Review
- Applicability largely the same, add Middle Housing to exempt projects
- Add criteria for when the Planning Director can refer a project to Planning and Zoning Board
- Modify minor and major modification criteria
 - Major –
 - Doesn't comply with the MZO and Sub-area Plans
 - Doesn't comply with project specific design guidelines and standards
 - Requires a Rezone, PAD, CUP, BIZ, or SUP
 - Changes the use(s) shown on the approved plans
 - Doesn't comply with conditions of approval (except compliance with final development plan, site plan, or design review)
- Modify review criteria to remove objectivity
- Provide clarity on compliance with final site plan or final development plan condition



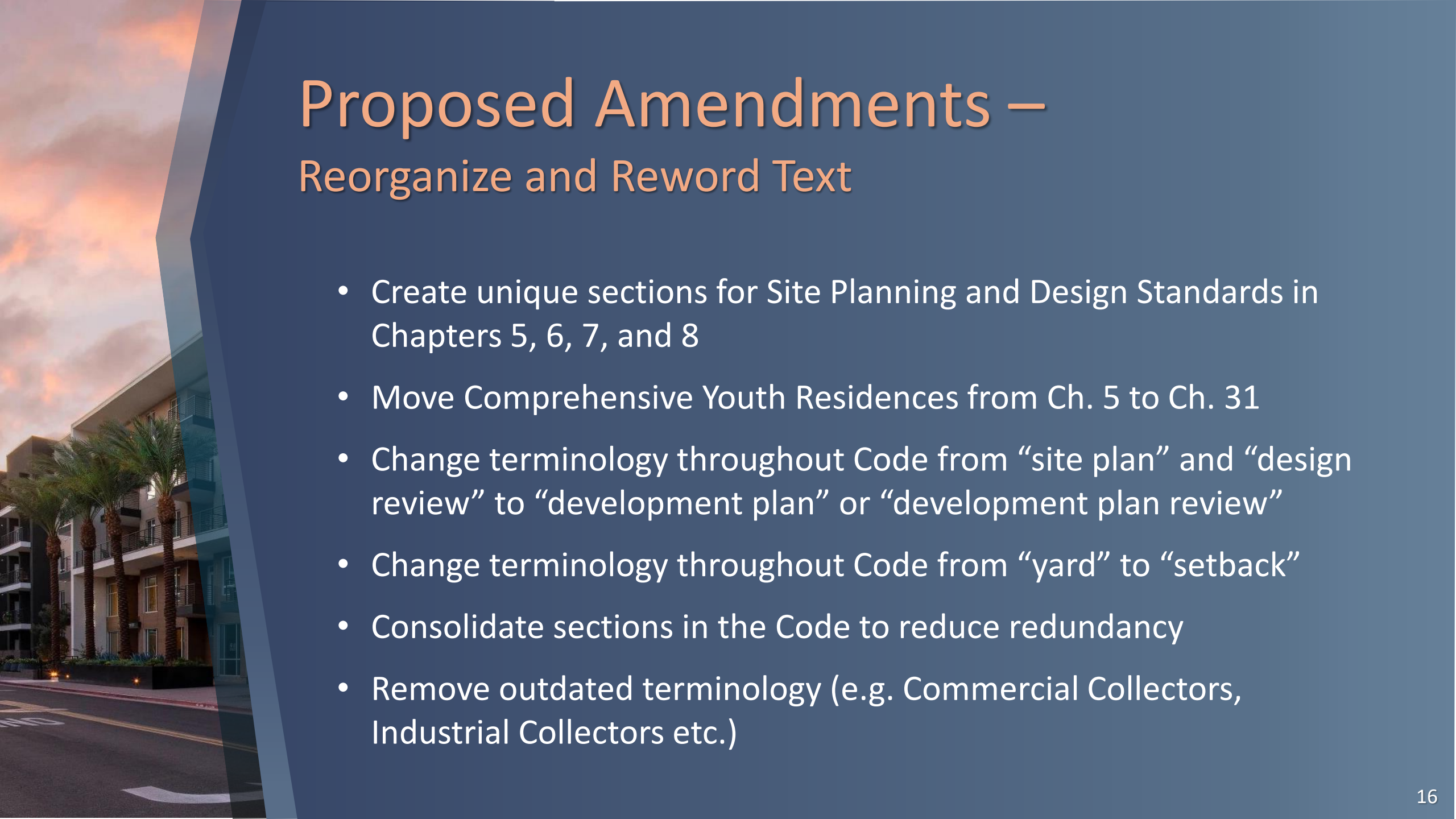
Proposed Amendments - Modify Expiration and Extension Provisions

- Make expirations consistent across all land use application types
- Change the criteria for when an approval is exercised:
 - Remove requirement for construction to have commenced
 - Retain issuance of a building permit
- Change the expiration from 2 years to 5 years
- Change the extension allowances:
 - From a 1-year extension from the Planning Director to a 1-year extension from the approving body
 - Allow for the submission of a retroactive request- no later than 90 days after the expiration



Proposed Amendments - Modify Alternative Compliance Process

- Require applicants to more clearly specify the requested deviation, proposed alternative, and justification
- Amend the approval criteria:
 - The alternative does not create adverse impacts on safety, access, visibility, glare, privacy, noise, drainage, heat island effect, and does not reduce pedestrian comfort or accessibility
 - The proposed alternative or tradeoff is the minimum necessary to achieve the intent while maintaining overall compliance with all other applicable standards
 - The proposal either:
 - Provides equivalent or superior quality and functionality; or
 - Provides offsetting public benefits (e.g., improved streetscape, enhanced shade/canopy, open space, sustainability features)
- Require recommendation from the Design Review Board



Proposed Amendments – Reorganize and Reword Text

- Create unique sections for Site Planning and Design Standards in Chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8
- Move Comprehensive Youth Residences from Ch. 5 to Ch. 31
- Change terminology throughout Code from “site plan” and “design review” to “development plan” or “development plan review”
- Change terminology throughout Code from “yard” to “setback”
- Consolidate sections in the Code to reduce redundancy
- Remove outdated terminology (e.g. Commercial Collectors, Industrial Collectors etc.)



Proposed Amendments – Modify and Add Definitions

- Add definitions for terms currently used in the code- “Change of Use,” “General Plan Amendment,” “Good Neighbor Policy,” and “Plan of Operation”
- Add definition of “Development Plan Review”
- Add a definition of “Kitchen Area” to clarify requirements for Accessory Dwelling Units
- Add a definition for “Setbacks” to replace the term Yard used in Code
- Modify the definition of “Yard”

Questions?





mesa·az