Planning Commission

Residential Buffering Ordinance Amendments

September 29, 2022

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PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

Livable Places Action Committee

The Livable Places Action Committee is creating opportunities within our development standards that encourage housing variety and affordability.

Livable Places Houston

www.HoustonPlanning.com

Proposed amendments include changes to

- Residential buffering standards (Chapter 42)
- Garage screening standards (Section 406 Construction Code)
- Lighting fixture standards (Section 513 Electric Code)
- Bulk container screening standards (Chapter 39)

Residential Buffering Standards

Objective

- Encourage high-rise developments along major corridors and in Major Activity Centers
- Guide compatible developments abutting existing residential development along local and collector streets
- Maintain balance between high density residential development and existing residential development

Approach

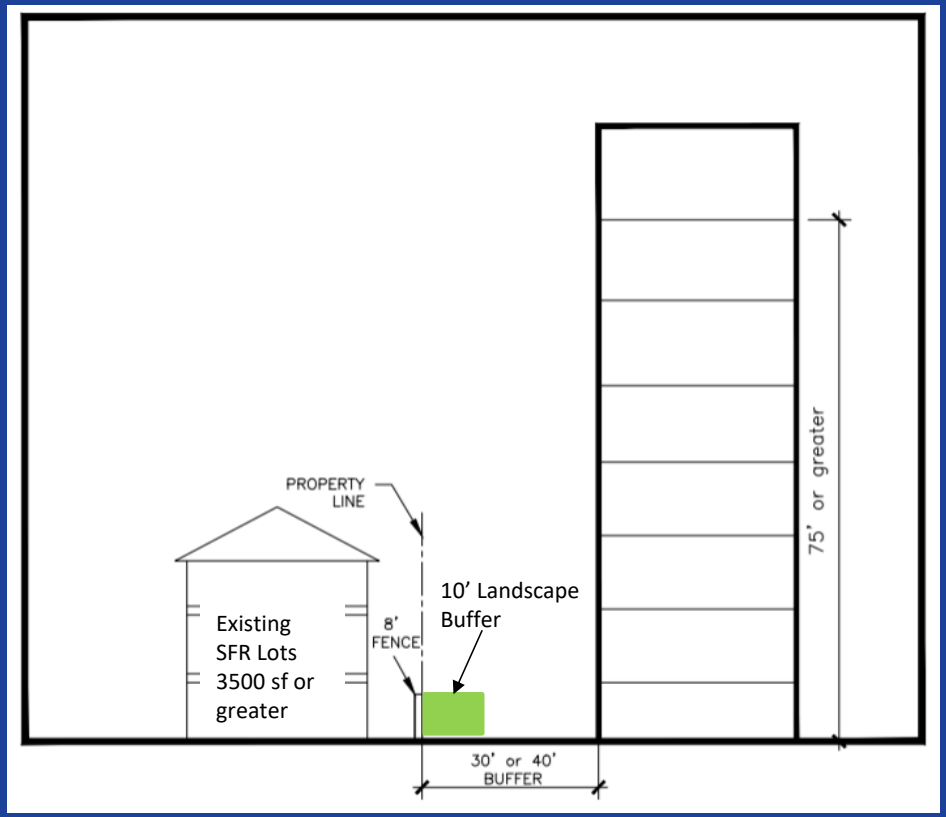
- Require buffer distance from all single family residential and multi-unit residential developments to maintain equity
- Introduce additional category of mid-rise buildings that must provide buffer

Residential Buffering Standards

Current Standards		Proposed Standards	
Applicability Criteria	**Buffer Area Standards**	**Proposed Applicability Criteria**	**Proposed Buffer Area Standards**
1) Adjacent to or taking access from a public street other than a Major Thoroughfare or a Transit Corridor Street	1) Min 30 feet wide buffer area if adjacent to or taking access from a Collector Street 2) Min 40 feet wide buffer area if adjacent to or taking access from a local street 3) Include a 10 feet landscape buffer & an 8' fence/wall 4) No structures or covered parking within the buffer area 5) Vehicular access and surface parking are allowed	1) Adjacent to or taking access from a public street other than a Major Thoroughfare or a Transit Corridor Street	(a) High-rises greater than 75 feet in height (high-rise building height): 1) Min 30 feet wide buffer area if adjacent to or taking access from a Collector Street 2) Min 40 feet wide buffer area if adjacent to or taking access from a local street 3) Include a 10 feet landscape buffer & an 8' fence/wall 4) No structures or covered parking within the buffer area 5) Vehicular access and surface parking are allowed (b) Mid-rises greater than 65 feet in height (actual building height) and the development abuts or takes access from only a local street: 1) Min 15 feet wide buffer area 2) Provide an 8' fence/ wall 3) No structures or covered parking within the buffer area 4) Vehicular access and surface parking are allowed
2) Not located in a Major Activity Center		2) Not located in a Major Activity Center	
3) Greater than 75 feet in height measured from grade to the finished floor of the highest habitable floor or the highest floor of a parking garage		3) Create two building height criteria, one for high-rises & one for mid-rises abutting or taking access only from a local street. (a) High-rises: greater than 75 feet in height (high-rise building height) (b) Mid-rises: greater than 65 feet in height (actual building height)	
4) Majority of the adjacent SFR lots greater than 3500 sqft		4) Majority of the property line abutting existing SFR or small-scale multi-family residential (up to 8 units)	
5) Min 60% of a property line adjacent to SFR lots greater than 3500 sqft		5) Min 60% of a property line adjacent to SFR lots or small-scale multi-family residential (up to 8 units)	

Current Residential Buffering Standards

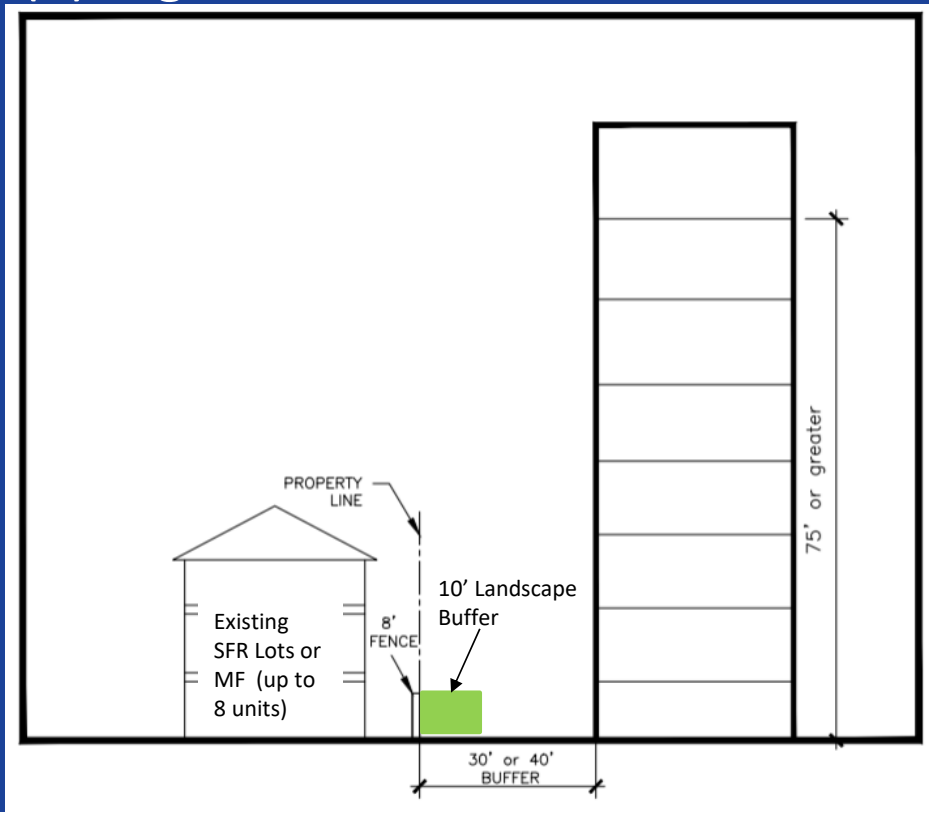
Current Buffering Standards for developments meeting all the compliance criteria:



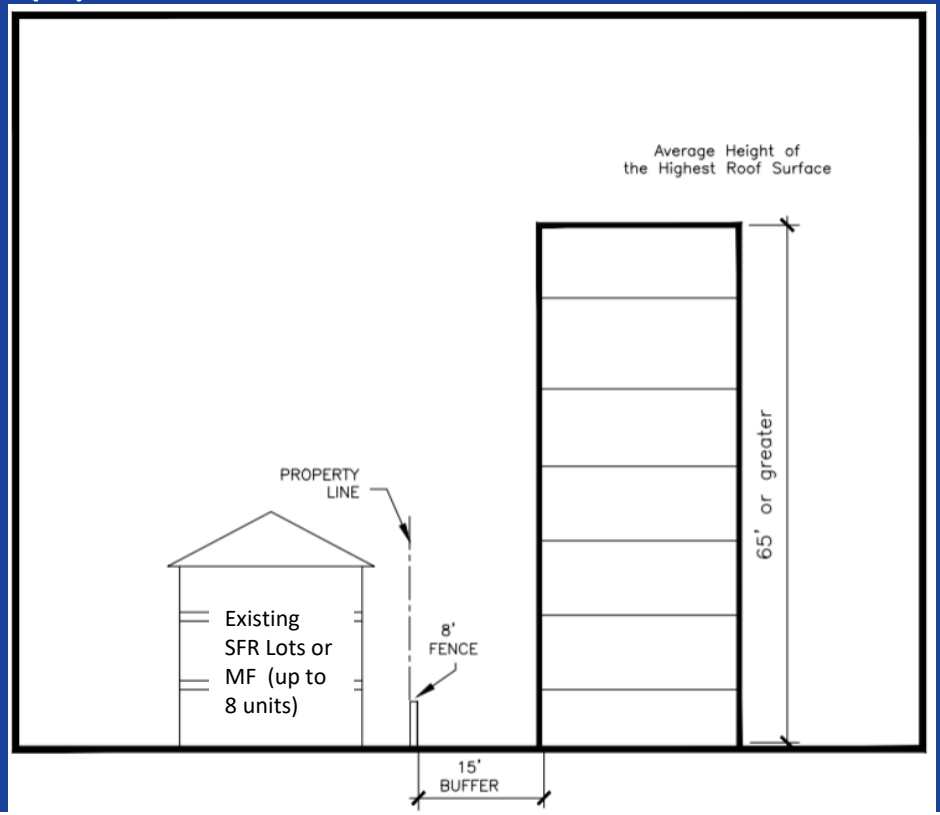
Proposed Residential Buffering Standards

Proposed Standards for developments meeting all the compliance criteria:

(1) High-rises



(2) Mid-rises



Definitions

Abutting development: A development located on property not in use for or restricted to single-family residential use or multi-unit residential use that is either directly abutting or within 30 feet of property that is in use for or restricted to single-family residential use or multi-unit residential use.

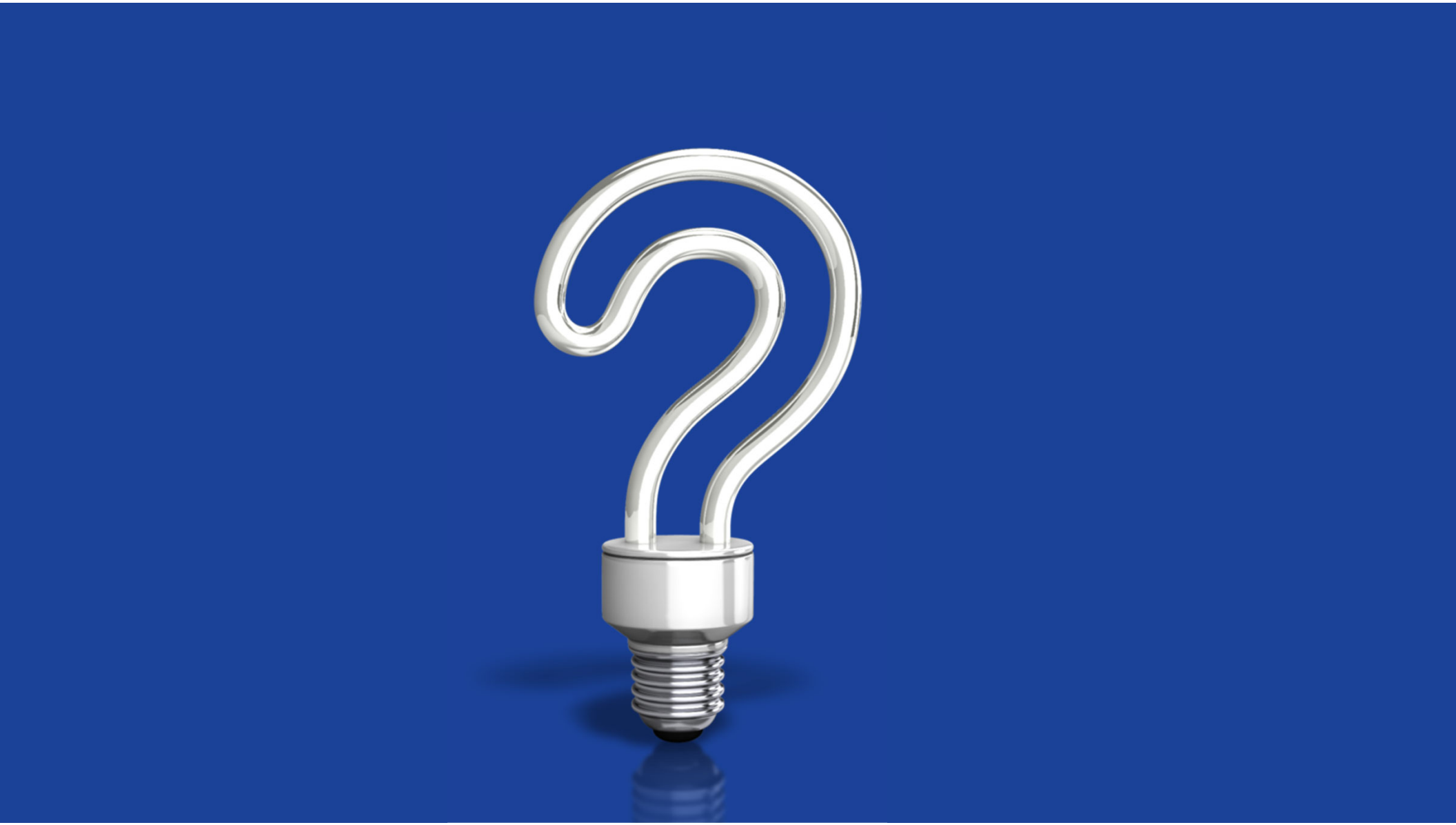
Buffer area: The area measured from the property line of lots or tracts in use for or restricted to single-family residential use or multi-unit residential use as required by division 8 of article III of this chapter.

Campus-style development: An integrated development of commercial or multifamily structures, or a combination thereof, located on a single building site, under common ownership or reciprocal agreement for parking, access easements, or other shared interests.

High-rise: A structure greater than 75’ in height measured from grade to the finished floor of the highest habitable floor or the highest floor of a parking garage.

Mid-rise: A structure between 65’ and 75’ in height measured from grade to the top of the structure, but less than the high-rise.

Multi-unit residential (MUR): The use of property with one or more buildings on a tract designed for and containing an aggregate of three to eight dwelling units. Multi-unit residential includes multiple duplexes, triplexes, quadruplexes, apartments and condominiums.



Garage Screening Standards

Objective

- Protect all residential developments from intrusive lighting
- Address lighting from car headlights and garage ceiling fixtures

Approach

- Provide opaque exterior cover for all garage faces on all tiers
- Require exterior cover for all tiers where parking occurs

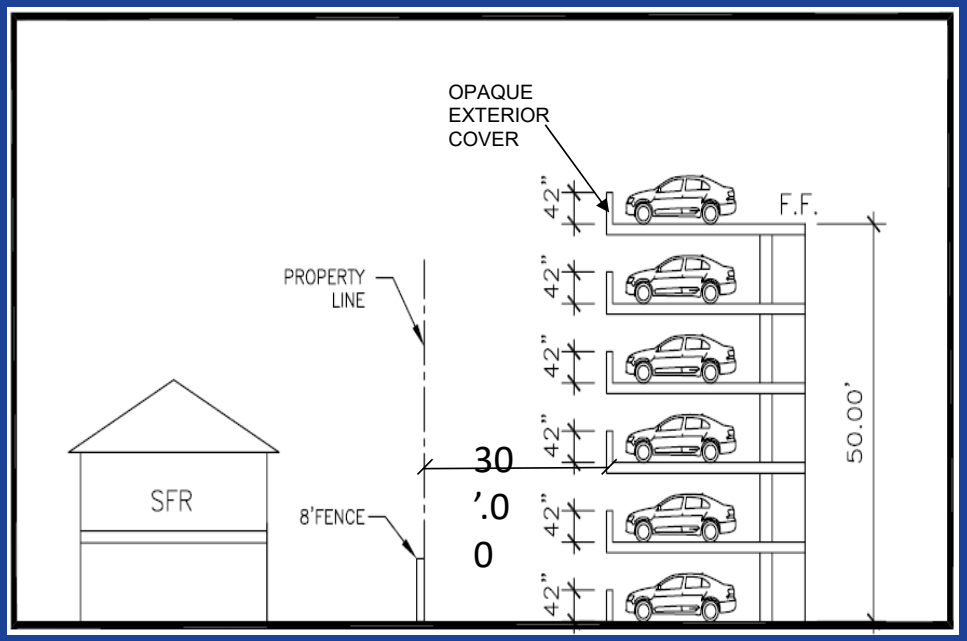
Garage Screening Standards

Current Requirements		Proposed Amendments	
Applicability Criteria	**Garage Screening Standards**	**Proposed Applicability Criteria**	**Proposed Garage Screening Standards**
Any part of an abutting development used as parking garage structure	1) Provide an exterior cover for each floor directly facing single family residential development within 30' 2) The exterior cover shall be: a) An opaque surface or screen mesh of sufficient rating to block headlights b) At least 42 inches in height from finished floor per tier c) Positioned to block headlights shining into adjacent properties from ramps and other sloped surfaces d) Not required for a finished floor over 50 feet from grade	Any part of a commercial or multi-family development used as parking garage structure	To address lighting from car headlights: 1) Provide an exterior cover for each floor of the structure where parking occurs except for garage faces interior to the site on campus style developments. 2) The exterior cover shall be: a) An opaque surface or screen mesh of sufficient rating to block headlights b) At least 50 inches in height from finished floor per tier c) Positioned to block headlights shining into adjacent properties from ramps and other sloped surfaces d) Screening must meet the "openness" and ventilation requirements of the city of Houston building code.
		When a parking garage structure abuts a public street or a residential development, one of the followings is required to minimize light trespass from internal garage ceiling fixtures:	To minimize light trespass from internal garage ceiling fixtures: select one of the following: a. Provide a photometric plan for all internal garage lights to show that no light trespass occurs beyond the property line that exceeds 0.2-foot candles measured at grade on the property line OR; b. Provide screening for the entire height of the garage facing street or abutting residential development to prevent light trespass beyond the property line that exceeds 0.2-foot candles measured at grade on the property line. Provide an acknowledging note on the plans for compliance.

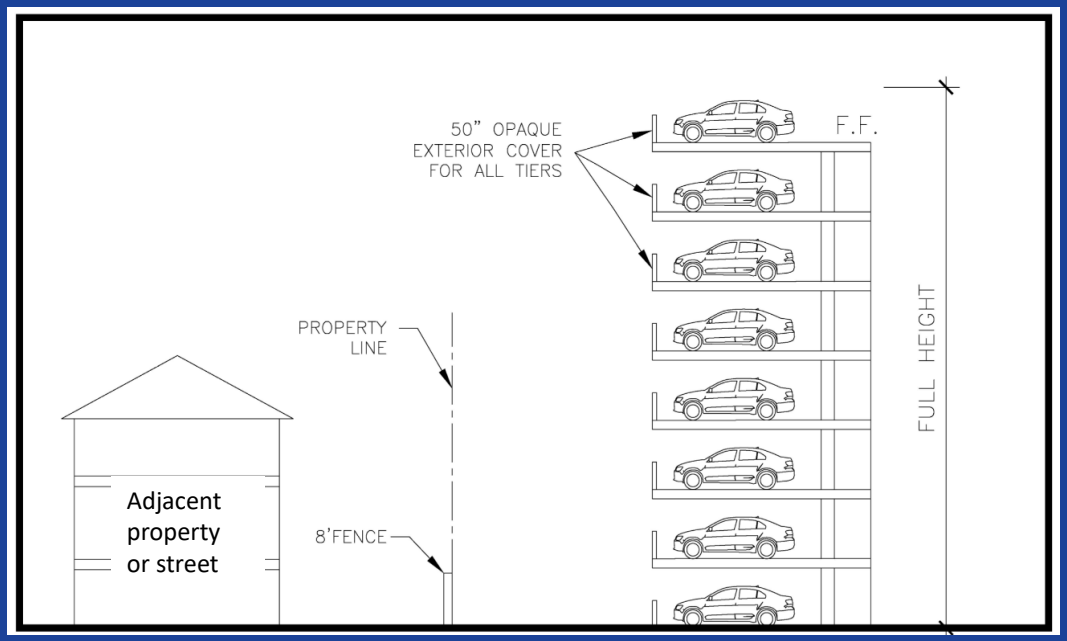
Proposed Garage Screening Standards

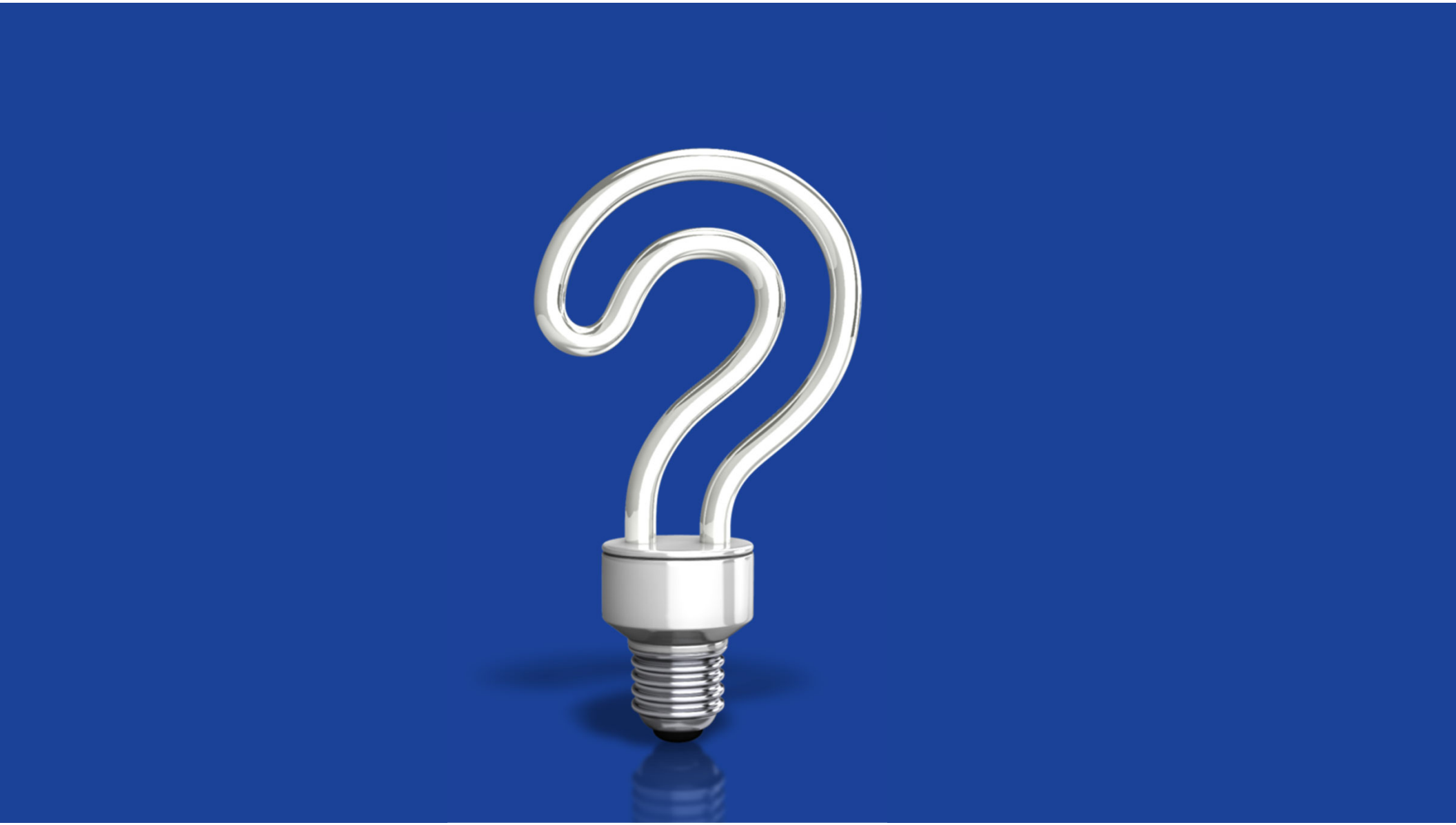
To address lighting from car headlights:

Current Standards



Proposed Standards





Lighting Fixture Standards

Objective

- Minimize light trespass and keep unnecessary direct light from shining onto abutting residential properties or public streets

Approach

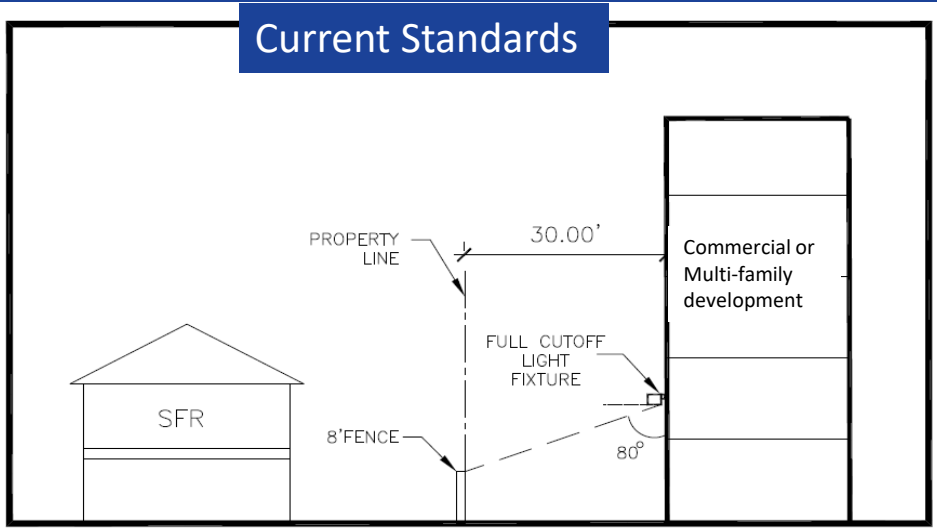
- All outdoor fixtures on commercial and multi-family developments must be full cutoff with house side shields

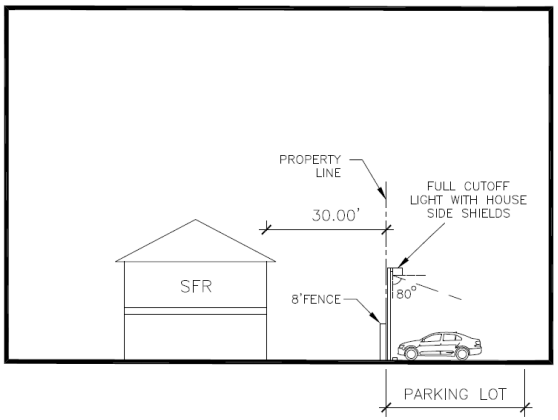
Lighting Fixture Standards

Current Standards	Proposed Standards
Full cutoff shall be required for any wall mounted outdoor fixtures installed on an abutting development installed within 30 feet of an abutting single-family residential property. All pole mounted fixtures installed on an abutting development within 30 feet of an abutting single-family residential property shall be full cutoff fixtures with house side shields.	All outdoor fixtures on commercial or multi-family developments must be installed to minimize light trespass onto abutting residential properties or public streets. The light source must be fully enclosed in the fixture housing. Wall mounted fixtures or pole mounted fixtures that abut residential property or public streets, the following standards apply: a. All outdoor fixtures must be designed to prevent light trespass beyond the property line that exceeds 0.2-foot candles measured at grade on the property line and provide a photometric plan for compliance. b. Full cutoff fixtures and house side shields as needed may be used to meet the criteria. c. All outdoor fixtures must have a maximum Correlated Color Temperature of 3,500 Kelvins and a minimum Color Rendering Index of 70. An applicant must provide fixture specifications for compliance and an electronic IES photometric file of the fixture evidencing compliance. d. Accent lights that are directed upwards are exempted from the above requirements
Full cutoff fixture shall mean a light fixture that prevents more than ten percent (10%) of the light it emits from emitting at all angles beginning at 80 degrees up from the nadir to less than 90 degrees, and no light (0%) from emitting at 90 degrees (horizontal plane) and above. This applies to all horizontal angles around the light fixture.	Full cutoff fixture: Light fixture that prevents more than ten percent (10%) of the light it emits from emitting at all angles beginning at 80 degrees up from the nadir to less than 90 degrees, and no light (0%) from emitting at 90 degrees (horizontal plane) and above. This applies to all horizontal angles around the light fixture. *Accent lights:* Lights used to accent architectural elements, display or ornamental lights, landscaping, or art lights. *Color rendering index (CRI):* The measurement of how colors look under a light source when compared with sunlight. *Correlated color temperature (CCT):* The gauge of how yellow or blue the color of light emitted from a light source appears. *Light trespass:* The excess light produced by a luminaire encroaching unto abutting properties beyond the property line and above the horizontal plane on which it is located and desired, as measured at the property boundary. *Luminaire:* The entire construction around a light source, including the lamp mounting, holder, reflector, shade, glass cover.

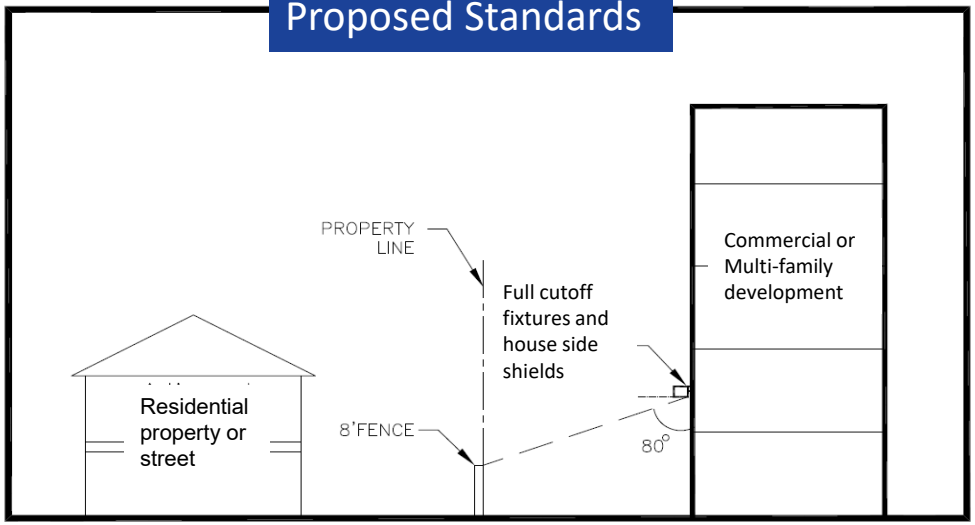
Lighting Fixtures Standards

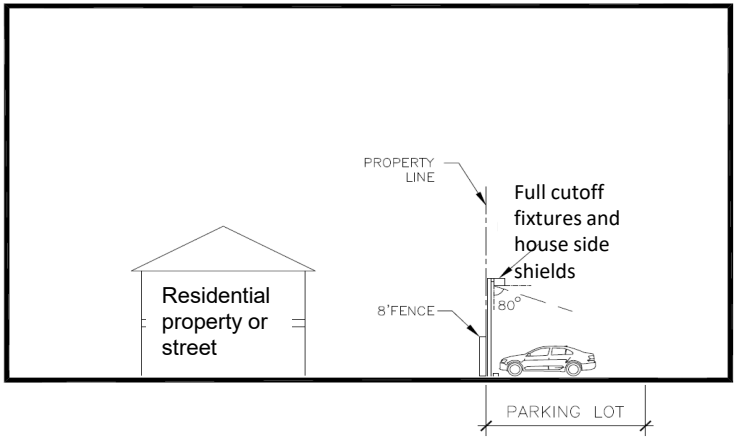
Current Standards





Proposed Standards





Definitions

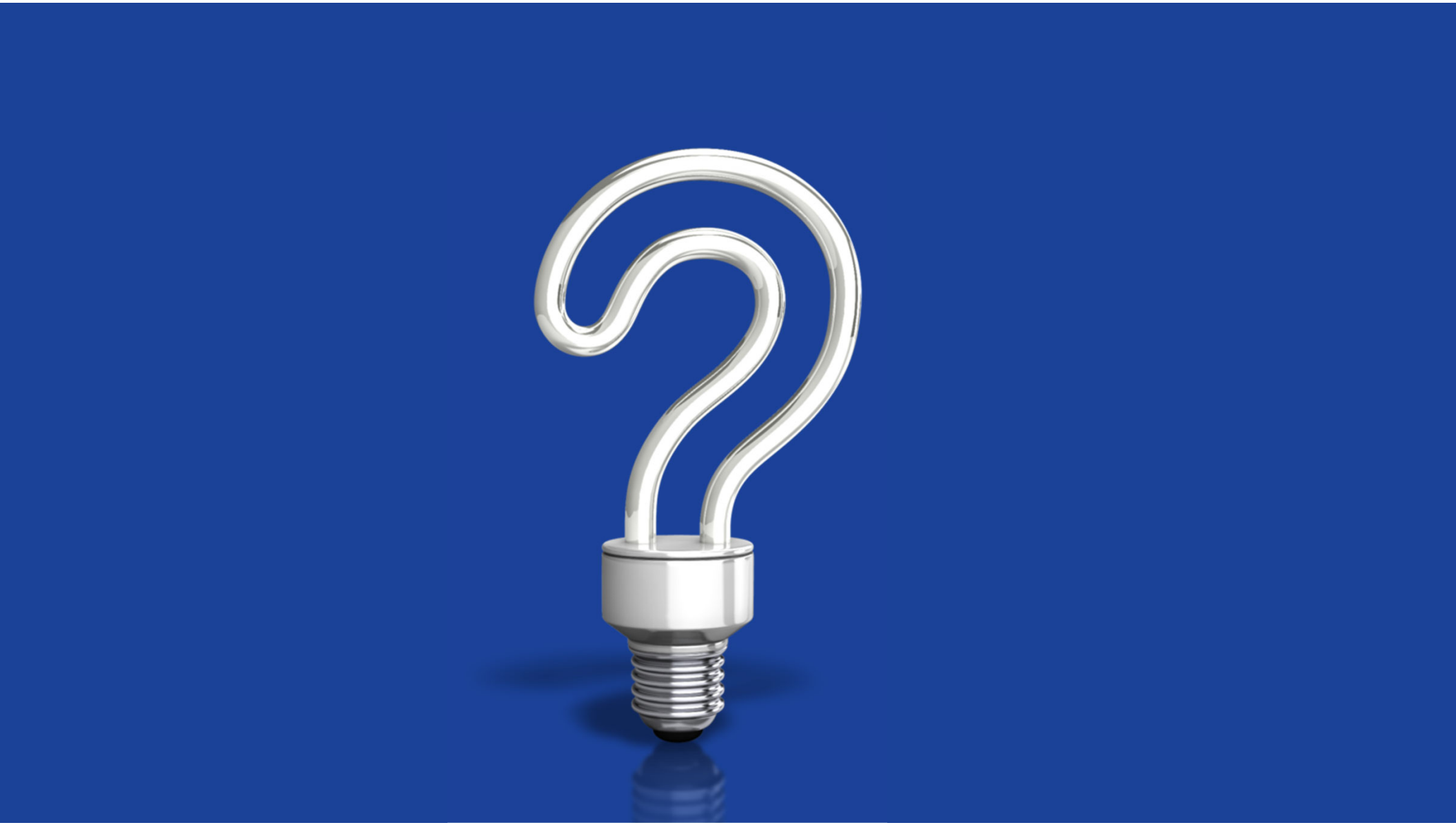
Accent lights: Lights used to accent architectural elements, display or ornamental lights, landscaping, or art lights.

Color rendering index (CRI): The measurement of how colors look under a light source when compared with sunlight. 21

Correlated color temperature (CCT): The gauge of how yellow or blue 23 the color of light emitted from a light source appears.

Light trespass: The excess light produced by a luminaire encroaching unto abutting properties beyond the property line and above the horizontal plane on which it is located and desired, as measured at the property boundary.

Luminaire: The entire construction around a light source, including the lamp mounting, holder, reflector, shade, or glass cover.



Bulk Container Screening Standards

Objective

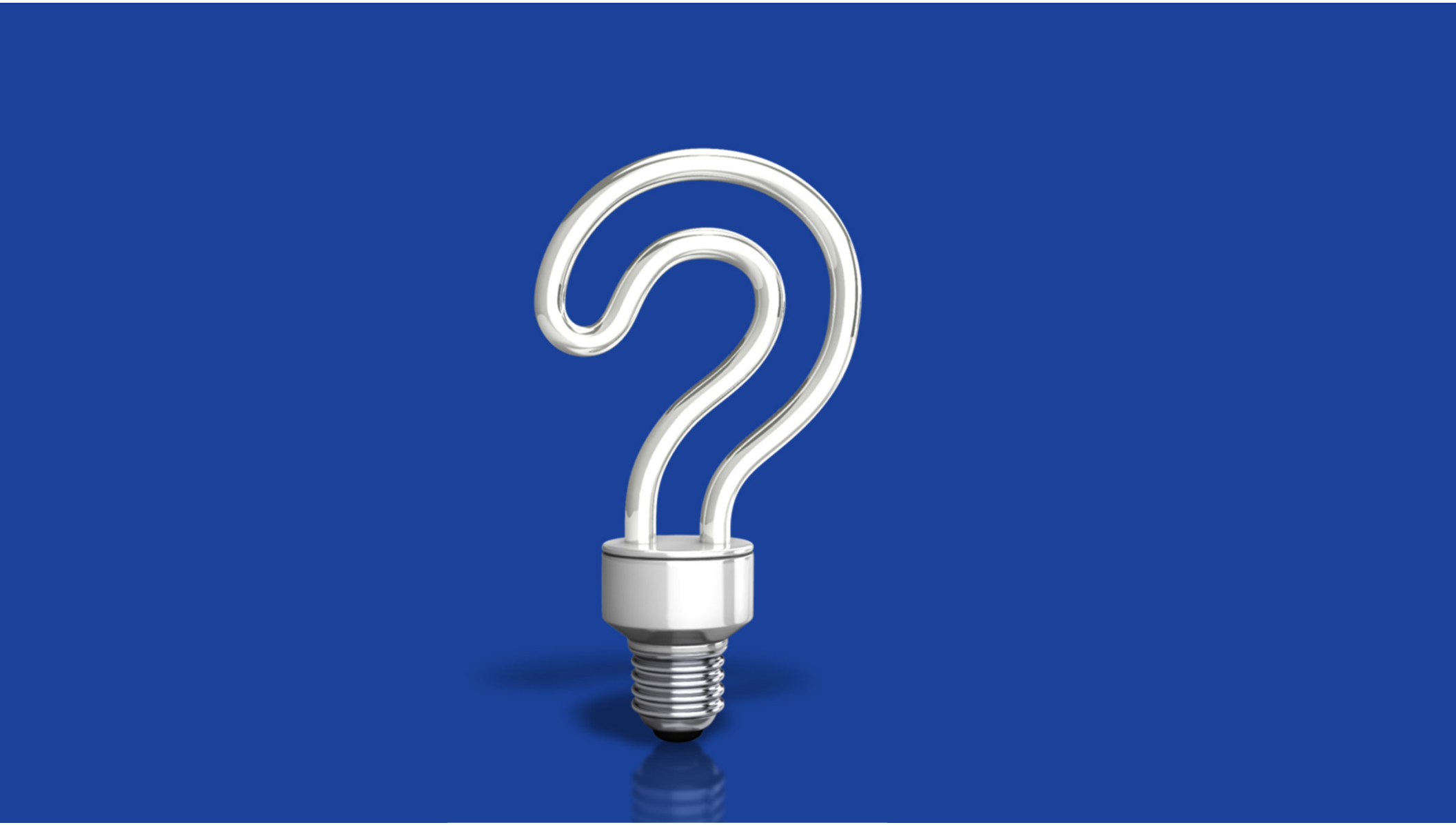
- Protect all residential developments from an unsightly view of bulk containers
- Improve the view along all public streets

Approach

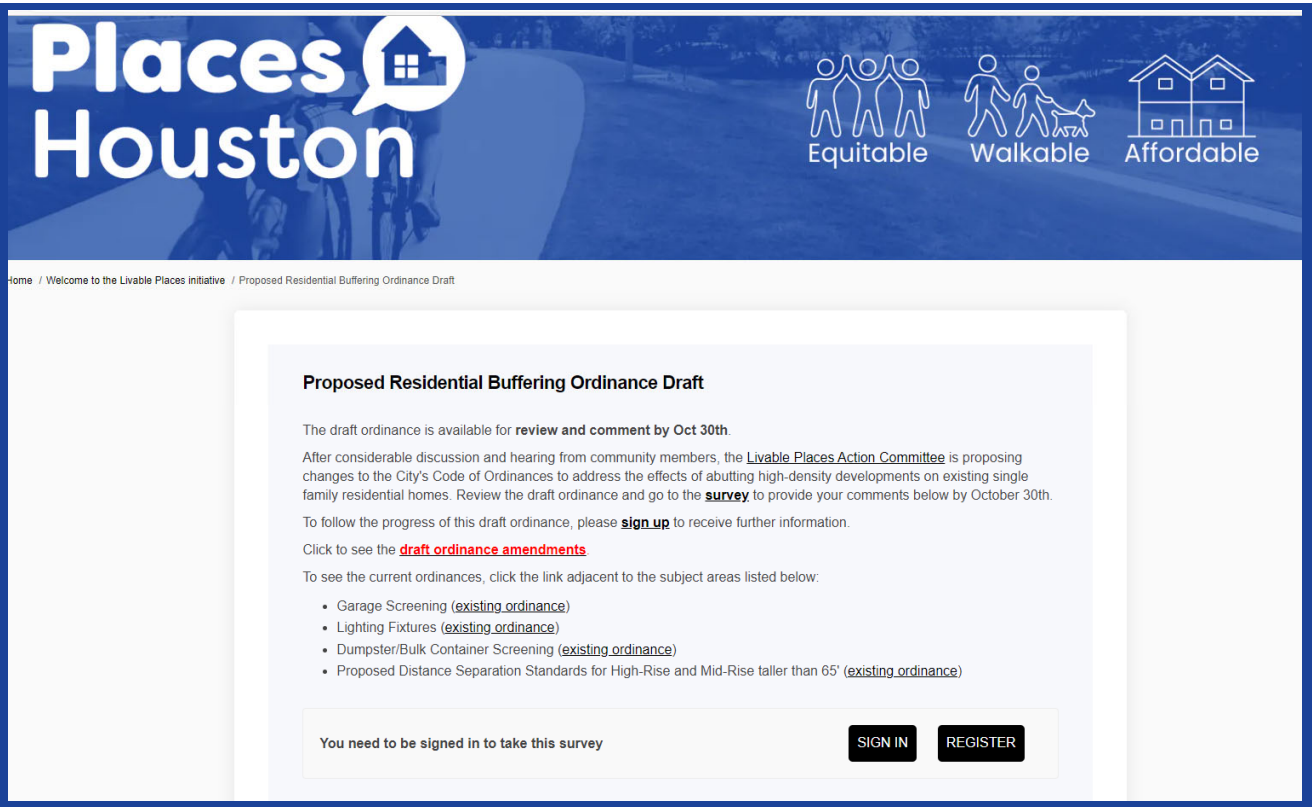
- Require screening for the bulk containers adjacent to residential development and all public streets

Bulk Container Screening Standards

Current Standards	Proposed Standards
	Applies to all new developments located within the City that produce trash and are not serviced by the city of Houston Solid Waste Department. Identity location of the service area or the bulk container along with screening when applicable on the site plan
Bulk container must not be visible from the street right-of-way on the address side of the property.	Bulk container must not be visible from the public street right-of-way
A berm, building, fence, wall, gate, shrubbery, or a combination can be used for screening	A berm, building, fence, wall, gate or a combination can be used for screening
A dumpster located on a service drive behind a building on said property shall not be deemed visible from the street right-of-way.	Provide screening of minimum 8 feet high for all bulk containers located in a service area abutting residential property Provide screening of minimum 6 feet high for bulk containers that are located between a building and the street. Bulk containers housed inside the building are exempt



Public Comment Survey



Link to the survey: https://www.letstalkhouston.org/livable-places/survey_tools

Survey end date: Oct 30th

Next Steps

30-day comment period	Sep 29 – Oct 30, 2022
Planning Commission action	Nov 10, 2022
Council Committee presentation	November
City Council public hearing	December

Contacts and Resources

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For details, videos, and other materials visit project webpage at
www.houstontx.gov/planning/livableplaces
www.letstalkhouston.org/livable-places

Questions?

Thank You

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

832-393-6600 www.houston.tx.gov/planning