



MEMORANDUM

TO: PLANNING COMMISSIONERS
FROM: LUCY KEMPF, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE METRO NASHVILLE PLANNING DEPARTMENT
SUBJECT: URBAN DESIGN OVERLAY DEVELOPMENT REVIEW PROCESS UPDATE
DATE: AUGUST 13, 2026

BACKGROUND

The purpose of this memo is to clarify existing procedures and standardize the Urban Design Overlay (UDO) compliance thresholds and the development review processes across UDOs. This will allow for consistent application of the UDO standards and provide clarity for the development community, general public, and planning staff.

Metro Nashville currently has 33 UDOs, established at various points over the past 25 years. Some UDOs contain factional guidance on the application of UDO standards and development review processes. Having incorporated lessons learned, the below guidance standardizes UDO compliance thresholds, minor modification review, and the applicability of overlapping SP and PUD zoning districts for all existing and future UDOs when the UDO is silent on it.

I. Compliance Thresholds and Application Review Process

Unless otherwise defined by Metro Council approved legislation, or contained within the official UDO document itself, UDO standards shall apply as follows:

New development:

- Full Compliance with all standards of the UDO
- Final Site Plan application review process

An addition (or new structure) of twenty-five percent or greater of the square footage of the existing building:

- To the greatest extent feasible, the addition, or new structure, shall be in compliance with applicable standards of the UDO and shall not increase any degree of non-conformity
- Building Permit review process

An addition (or new structure) of less than twenty-five percent of the square footage of the existing building:

- The addition, or new structure, should strive for compliance with applicable standards of the UDO and shall not increase any degree of non-conformity

- Building Permit review process

II. Minor Modifications to UDO Standards

The Metro Zoning Code, in Section 17.40.130, grants the Metro Planning Commission the authority to approve Final Site Plans and make modifications to an approved UDO. The Executive Director is authorized to act on behalf of the Commission to approve or approve with conditions any final site plan submitted pursuant to Section 17.40.170 B of the Metro Code that the Executive Director determines to be (1) consistent with the enacting ordinance approved by the Metro Council and (2) eligible for approval pursuant to all relevant provisions in the Metro Code. If the Executive Director finds that the final site plan should not be approved, or where the Director, in his/her judgement, feels that consideration by the Planning Commission is warranted, then the final site plan may be submitted to the Commission for action.

Unless otherwise defined by Metro Council approved legislation or contained within the official UDO document itself, the Executive Director **may** grant minor modifications, defined as follows:

- Modifications of 20% or less for numerical standards; or
- Modifications for minor deviations in non-numerical standards, including but not limited to: architectural appurtenances, roof types, materials, glazing, awnings, canopies, mechanical equipment, signage, garage entry locations, landscaping, fences, walls, screening, facade articulation, and standards impacted by non-buildable areas necessary for compliance with other metro agencies and regulations.

UDOs with Design Review Committees (DRCs) shall require DRC comments/recommendation for any modifications, including minor modifications reviewed by staff. In cases of minor modifications, email review may be allowed. An applicant may appeal a minor modification staff decision to the Planning Commission for a final determination.

All other modifications shall be considered major modifications and shall require Planning Commission action.

III. Overlapping Specific Plan (SP), Corridor Design Overlay (CDO), or Planned Unit Development Zoning (PUD)

- The UDO standards apply to any standards not addressed in the SP, CDO, or PUD.