

Staff Report

Subject: Ordinance – Buffers
Author: Chelsie Fernald, Planning Manager
Department: Development Services
Meeting Date: October 21, 2025
Item Description: Consideration to approve an amendment to the Effingham County Code of Ordinances, Part II, Article III – General Provisions, Section 3.4 – Buffers.

Executive Summary/Background

- At the November 7, 2023, Board of Commissioners meeting, the Board approved an updated Buffer ordinance.
- Since that time, several developments and circumstances have emerged that have highlighted the need to amend the Buffer ordinance again.
- Moreover, the Steering Committee focused on the zoning districts ordinances, has recognized areas where the ordinance can be refined for greater clarity and effectiveness.
- The amendments to this ordinance include the following:
 - The intent statement was updated to reflect a more concise purpose of the ordinance.
 - Language was added to address major subdivisions that have rear or side-facing homes. This includes a 50-foot vegetative buffer requirement with the ability to install a 6-foot berm.
 - AR-3, R-2, PD, and I-1 were all added back to the buffer chart.
 - Language has been added to reflect that the more intense zoning district will be responsible for providing the required buffer.
 - A vegetative buffer will be required for railroad right-of-way to residential and commercial zoning districts.
- An enforcement section was added to specifically require buffer protection at the pre-construction phase of the development. As well as specific penalties for removing or disturbing the required buffer to include:
 - A stop work order being issued
 - A minimum monetary penalty of five hundred dollars (\$500), plus an additional five hundred dollars (\$500) for every one-quarter (.25) acre.
 - The buffer shall be replaced at a density of three (3) times greater than the originally required plantings.
 - A landscape plan shall be prepared and submitted to staff prior to planting.

Department Review: Development Services, County Manager, Steering Committee, &

County Attorney

FUNDING: N/A

Attachments: 1. Current Buffer Ordinance