

TOWN OF LOXAHATCHEE GROVES

155 F Road Loxahatchee Groves, FL 33470



AGENDA MEMO

TO: Planning and Zoning Board

FROM: Community Standards Department - Planning and Zoning Division

THRU: Francine Ramaglia, Town Manager

DATE: May 19, 2025

SUBJECT: Building Height Ordinance

Background:

The Town of Loxahatchee Groves ("Town") defines building height as follows, in Article 10 of the Unified Land Development Code:

Height. For all buildings and structures, except as provided below, the vertical distance from the highest point of finished grade at the location of the building pad to the highest point of the roof surface for a flat roof, to the deck line for a mansard roof, to the mean height level between eaves and ridge for gable, hip, and gambrel roofs, and to the highest point of any non-roofed structure. Sign height is defined within Article 90, "Signs." The height calculation of structures placed on berms shall include the height of the berm".

The Planning and Zoning Board and Town Council reviewed this definition at public meetings, which resulted in a request to limit all development to a maximum of two (2) stories. Presently, the height limitation is 35 feet in the Residential, Commercial, and Institutional and Public Facilities zoning districts, and 25 feet in the Parks and Recreation and Conservation zoning districts.

Analysis:

Height limits are a regulatory control on development found in almost every municipality zoning code in the United States. Zoning codes can regulate the height of new buildings depending specifically on geographic area as well as development types and land uses.

Height limits set the upper boundary of the building envelope for a given zone or parcel. They are typically justified for the following reasons:

1. Protection from fire hazards.
2. Protection against aviation accidents.
3. Protection of view.
4. Protection of the character of the neighborhood.
5. Protection of light and air.

Height limits are a frequent source of contention and controversy during development approval processes and planning and zoning processes, because height limits are a key factor in determining the number of stories a building can contain. Combined with measures of density (like dwelling unit per acre) and development intensity (like floor-area ratio and minimum lot size), height limits are a specific and frequent starting point for debates which is what occurred in the Town.

The proposed zoning text amendment includes additional language for each zoning district to ensure that no more than two (2) stories are permitted in any district regardless of the overall height allowance. As proposed, the lesser of two (2) stories or the overall height dimension would regulate future development plans. For example, the commercial zoning districts allow for up to 35 feet in building height. The height is technically capable of accommodating three (3) stories using standard ceiling heights. However, the revised language would restrict development to two (2) stories within the overall 35-foot allowance.

Recommendation:

Town Staff is requesting the Planning and Zoning Board's consideration and approval of the attached Ordinance.