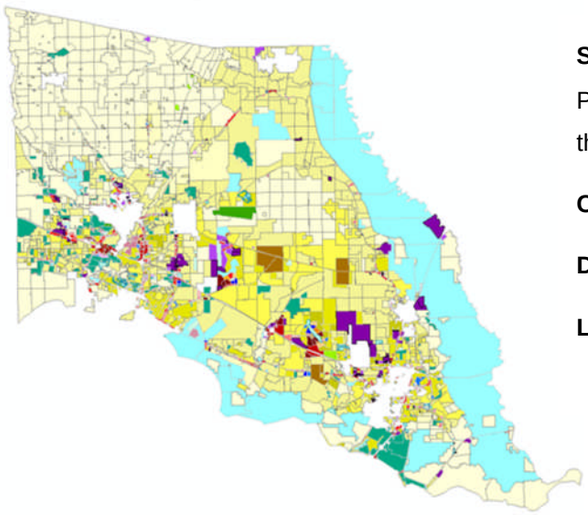
Proposed Changes Key:

Blue, Bold, and Underlined Text – Added Text
~~Red and strikethrough text~~ - Deleted Text

1. Amend Chapter 900 – Infrastructure, Section 900-6.5 Placement of Fill: STAFF REPORT



Staff Report: UDC Amendment # 9 – Sec. 900-6.5: Placement of Fill to add language which regulates the placement of fill in major subdivisions

Commission Hearing: September 8, 2026

Determination: Approved

Location: Parish Wide

OVERVIEW

The proposed ordinance establishes new grading and fill standards for new major residential subdivisions. Although the ordinance is technical, its basic purpose is straightforward: new subdivisions should be designed around the land's existing elevations and natural drainage patterns rather than substantially reshaping the site with fill.

The ordinance does not prohibit development or the use of fill. Instead, it establishes limits on how much the existing ground may be raised or lowered in all proposed subdivisions, expands compensatory storage requirements to properties in a flood zone and those shown to be inundated through an approved inundation model, and carries maximum fill elevations forward to individual residential lots.

WHY THE CHANGE?

Existing subdivision regulations focus primarily on managing the stormwater generated by a development and controlling the rate at which the water leaves the site. While those requirements remain important, they do not always account for how altering the existing topography can affect the way the water naturally moves across, or is stored on the property.

The proposed ordinance proposes a more holistic approach to development by considering both the subdivision's stormwater management system and the site's existing elevations and hydrology. The goal is to allow development while better preserving the natural functions of the land that existed before development occurred.

Notable requirements proposed in the ordinance include:

- Work with the site's existing topography instead of substantially raising or lowering the development site for all proposed new subdivisions.
- Require maximum fill elevations to be recorded on the final as-built plat and require individual building permits adhere to the elevations approved with the recorded subdivision plat.
- Where a home is required to be elevated higher than the allowable fill permits, the home must be raised on piers, pilings, or a vented crawlspace to reach the required finished floor elevation.

CURRENT APPROACH VS. PROPOSED APPROACH

Current UDC

Under the current UDC, major subdivisions are subject to Engineering review including drainage plans, hydrologic analysis, and stormwater requirements. Fill cannot be used in a manner that adversely impacts neighboring properties, and additional fill restrictions apply in Parish determined critical drainage areas, flood zones, and areas of special concern. However, there is not a uniform 24-inch grading limitation specifically governing major residential subdivisions across the flood-zone and modeled inundation areas as addressed by this draft ordinance.

Proposed UDC

The proposed ordinance retains the existing drainage requirements but adds specific grading and fill controls. The result is a combined approach which requires the drainage system to perform properly and respect the site's pre-development elevations and natural drainage patterns.

WHAT THE PROPOSED ORDINANCE REQUIRES:

1. Limits Changes in Ground Elevation to 24 inches

   Major residential subdivisions must maintain existing topography with only minimal grading or fill. Ground elevations cannot be lowered or raised more than 24 inches from the pre-development grade. Pre-development elevations are established using individual points from a 100 foot x 100 foot survey grid, rather than using a site-wide average.

2. Require Zero Net Fill in Applicable Flood-Prone Areas

   For major subdivisions in Flood Zones A and AE, and for subdivisions shown by an Engineering-approved model to be inundated during a 100-year rainfall event, each development must meet a zero-net-fill requirement.

   The calculation must account not only for subdivision roads, but also for the fill reasonably anticipated for future house pads, back slopes, and driveways. The mitigation calculation includes a 1.25 factor.

3. Allow Certain Dry Storage Areas to Count as Green Space

   The additional dry-storage area associated with the newly required 0.25 mitigation factor may count toward the major subdivision green space requirements when it is appropriately amenitized or planted in accordance with the ordinance.

FOLLOW THE LAND

Design subdivisions to work with the land's existing topography and natural drainage patterns.

Limiting substantial changes in elevation helps preserve the way water naturally moves across and is stored on site, while still allowing the necessary grading to develop the property.

HOW THE REQUIREMENTS APPLY TO INDIVIDUAL LOTS

1. Maximum Fill Elevations Are Established Before Homes Are Built - The final plat and as-built plans must include a table which establishes the maximum allowable fill elevation for every lot within the proposed subdivision. Elevations are measured at the center of each lot. The fill anticipated for future homes is included in the subdivision's calculations and the approved lot elevation provides a clear limit when a home is designed.
2. No more than 24 inches of fill above the pre-developed grade can be placed beneath the roof-shed area of the structure for all proposed major subdivisions. If the required foundation height cannot be achieved using the maximum allowable fill, the additional elevation must come

RAISE THE HOUSE, NOT THE LAND

If a home needs to be higher for flood protection, it can still be elevated. The difference is that additional height would come from the foundation design rather than placing additional fill on the property.

from the structure itself through piers, pilings, or a vented crawlspace.

3. 100-Year Rainfall Inundation Areas – For structures subject to the proposed inundation provisions, the lowest floor must be at or above the modeled flood inundation elevation, plus 12 inches.

SUMMARY

The proposed ordinance does not prohibit development in flood-prone areas, nor does it prohibit the use of fill. Instead, it changes the way fill is used in major residential subdivisions by establishing three basic requirements:

- Work with the existing land. Avoid substantially raising or lowering the development site.
- Account for displaced storage. In flood-prone developments, compensate for the volume occupied by fill and plan for the complete development site, rather than addressing fill one lot at a time as homes are constructed. Establishing maximum fill elevations up front provides consistency between the approved drainage plan and the construction of the homes.
- Elevate structures instead of entire sites. Allow homes to meet required flood elevations without unnecessarily raising the land. Where additional height is needed, appropriate foundation methods can elevate the structure while allowing the property below to continue functioning as part of the site's drainage and flood storage system.

The overall goal is to allow residential development while reducing the potential for large scale grading and fill placement, which can adversely affect existing drainage and flood storage conditions.

Proposed UDC Amendment: Amend Chapter 900 – Infrastructure, Section 900-6.5 Placement of Fill to add language which regulates the placement of fill in major subdivisions, to read as follows:

Chapter 900 – Infrastructure

* * *

Sec. 900-6.5 Placement of Fill

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F. **Fill Standards for Fill in Major Subdivisions. The requirements of this section shall not apply to major residential subdivisions where the average lot size of residential lots exceeds one acre or greater in area.**

1. **All major residential subdivisions in flood zone A and AE as established by either the adopted FIRM or Critical Drainage Areas as defined in Section 900-6.5 shall conform to the requirements found in 900-6 of the UDC. Additionally, the proposed development shall follow the natural terrain and hydrology of the site and shall meet the following standards:**
   a. **The proposed development shall maintain the existing topography with only minimum grading permitted. Ground elevation not to exceed 24 inches either from elevating or degrading from pre-developed grade. Pre-developed grade elevations are singular points taken from a 100 feet by 100 feet grid survey and is not an average elevation across the site.**
   b. **Fill shall be limited to 24 inches above existing elevations for areas under proposed roadways and driveways. Roadways may be additionally elevated at intersections with existing roadways, rights-of-way, or drainage crossings in order to meet road grades with approval from the Department of Engineering. Fill is defined as sand, gravel, earth, or other materials of any composition including paving materials and concrete foundations.**

c. This section shall not be applicable when being utilized for stormwater management ponds, fill mitigation areas, or drainage conveyance areas.

d. Each development shall meet the zero net fill requirement. Fill calculations shall include the development's roads and anticipated fill needed for each lot's house pads, back slopes and driveways. The average fill volume for the house pad, back slope and driveway shall be calculated for each lot and used in the overall development net fill calculations. The development fill mitigation calculations shall include a 1.25 factor.

e. The additional 0.25 fill mitigation factor required by this section shall qualify the development for a 10% reduction in lot area or lot width otherwise required by the applicable zoning classification of the property, not to exceed the maximum 20% reduction permitted pursuant to Sec. 600-3.2 – Major Subdivision Incentives.

Where the additional 0.25 fill mitigation requirement is satisfied through the use of dry storage, the dry storage area may also count toward the major subdivision greenspace requirements of Sec. 900-2.3, when amenitized as approved by the Planning and Zoning Commission or planted in accordance with the following:

i. Where a dry detention pond is planted, a planting plan stamped by a Louisiana registered Landscape Architect must be submitted and shall provide a minimum of 50 caliper inches of Class A or Class B trees per acre of dry storage area proposed to receive green space credit. A minimum of 50% of required caliper inches must be provided through the use of Class A trees. Required plant material shall consist of native or indigenous, flood tolerant species suitable for the hydrologic conditions of the site. Plantings may be grouped or distributed throughout the credited area as appropriate to accommodate drainage function, maintenance access, slopes, utilities, and other site conditions, as approved by the Planning and Zoning Commission.

f. The final plat and as-builts plans must include a table detailing maximum allowed fill elevation for all lots referenced in this section. Elevations shall be taken at the center of each lot.

g. Coastal areas inundated by tidal events and areas enclosed by levees under forced drainage shall be exempt from this section unless otherwise required.

2. All major residential subdivisions in flood zone C, X, B, and X500 as established by the adopted FIRM shall conform to the requirements found in 900-6 of the UDC. Additionally, the proposed development shall follow the natural terrain and hydrology of the site and shall meet the following standards:

a. The proposed development shall maintain the existing topography with only minimum grading permitted. Ground elevation not to exceed 24 inches either from elevating or degrading from pre-developed grade. Pre-developed grade elevations are singular points taken from a 100 feet by 100 feet grid survey and is not an average elevation across the site.

b. Fill shall be limited to 24 inches above existing elevations for areas under proposed roadways and driveways. The 24-inch maximum fill limitation shall not include the height or thickness of slabs or foundations. Roadways may be additionally elevated at intersections with existing roadways, rights-of-way, or drainage crossings in

order to meet road grades with approval from the Department of Engineering. Fill is defined as sand, gravel, earth, or other materials of any composition placed or deposited by humans, but shall not include slabs or foundations for purposes of the 24-inch maximum fill limitation established by this section.

c. This section shall not be applicable when being utilized for stormwater management ponds, fill mitigation areas, or drainage conveyance areas.

d. Coastal areas inundated by tidal events and areas enclosed by levees under forced drainage shall be exempt from this section unless otherwise required.

3. All major residential subdivisions shown to be inundated as demonstrated by an inundation model approved by the Department of Engineering in a 100-year rain event shall conform to the requirements found in 900-6 of the UDC. Additionally, the proposed development shall follow the natural terrain and hydrology of the site and shall meet the following standards:

a. The proposed development shall maintain the existing topography with only minimum grading permitted. Ground elevation not to exceed 24 inches either from elevating or degrading from pre-developed grade. Pre-developed grade elevations are singular points taken from a 100 feet by 100 feet grid survey and is not an average elevation across the site.

b. Fill shall be limited to 24 inches above existing elevations for areas under proposed roadways and driveways. Roadways may be additionally elevated at intersections with existing roadways, rights-of-way, or drainage crossings in order to meet road grades with approval from the Department of Engineering. Fill is defined as sand, gravel, earth, or other materials of any composition including paving materials and concrete foundations.

c. This section shall not be applicable when being utilized for stormwater management ponds, fill mitigation areas, or drainage conveyance areas.

d. Each development shall meet the zero net fill requirement. Fill calculations shall include the development's roads and anticipated fill needed for each lot's house pads, back slopes and driveways. The average fill volume for the house pad, back slope and driveway shall be calculated for each lot and used in the overall development net fill calculations. The development fill mitigation calculations shall include a 1.25 factor.

e. The additional 0.25 fill mitigation factor required by this section shall qualify the development for a 10% reduction in lot area or lot width otherwise required by the applicable zoning classification of the property, not to exceed the maximum 20% reduction permitted pursuant to Sec. 600-3.2 – Major Subdivision Incentives.

Where the additional 0.25 fill mitigation requirement is satisfied through the use of dry storage, the dry storage area may also count toward the major subdivision greenspace requirements of Sec. 900-2.3, when amenitized as approved by the Planning and Zoning Commission or planted in accordance with the following:

i. Where a dry detention pond is planted, a planting plan stamped by a Louisiana registered Landscape Architect must be submitted and shall provide a minimum of 50 caliper inches of Class A or Class B trees per acre of dry storage area proposed to receive green space credit. A minimum of

50% of required caliper inches must be provided through the use of Class A trees. Required plant material shall consist of native or indigenous, flood tolerant species suitable for the hydrologic conditions of the site. Plantings may be grouped or distributed throughout the credited area as appropriate to accommodate drainage function, maintenance access, slopes, utilities, and other site conditions, as approved by the Planning and Zoning Commission.

f. The final plat and as-builts plans must include a table detailing maximum allowed elevation for all lots with fill as defined in these regulations. Elevations shall be taken at the center of each lot.

g. Coastal areas inundated by tidal events and areas enclosed by levees under forced drainage shall be exempt from this section unless otherwise required.

4. All residential structures and their accessory structures constructed within a major residential subdivision approved after the adoption of this regulation where a portion of the structure is either in flood zone A or AE as established by adopted FIRM or the Preliminary D Firm delivered July 30, 2008 shall conform to the requirements found in 900-6.7 of the UDC and shall be developed as follows:

a. A maximum of 24 inches of fill from pre-development grade may be placed under the roof-shed area of any structure and shall not exceed the volume required to prepare an adequate building footprint pad. Maximum fill elevation includes concrete foundations, see table for maximum allowed fill elevation on approved development plat.

b. The regulatory height shall have the lowest floor (including basement) at or above the BFE plus 12 inches as determined by the St. Tammany Parish Flood Zone Administrator, established by either the adopted FIRM or the Preliminary D FIRM. The more stringent elevation on either FIRM shall be applicable.

c. If the proposed foundation height cannot be achieved using the maximum allowable fill height, the structure shall be constructed with the use of piers, pilings, or vented crawlspace.

5. All residential structures and their accessory structures constructed within a major residential subdivision approved after the adoption of this regulation where a portion of the structure is shown to be inundated as shown by an inundation model approved by the Department of Engineering in a 100-year rain event shall conform to the requirements found in 900-6.7 of the UDC and shall be developed as follows:

a. A maximum of 24 inches of fill from pre-development grade may be placed under the roof-shed area of any structure and shall not exceed the volume required to prepare an adequate building footprint pad. Maximum fill elevation includes concrete foundations. See table for maximum allowed fill elevation on approved development plat.

b. The regulatory height shall have the lowest floor (including basement), as determined by an inundation model approved by the Department of Engineering in a 100-year rain event at or above the level of flood inundation plus 12 inches.

c. Enclosures - new construction with fully enclosed areas below the lowest floor that are usable solely for parking of vehicles, building access or storage in an area other than a basement and which are constructed below the regulatory height shall be designed to automatically equalize hydrostatic flood forces on exterior walls by

allowing for the entry and exit of floodwaters. Designs for meeting this requirement must either be certified by a registered professional engineer or architect or meet or exceed the following minimum criteria:

i. A minimum of two openings on separate walls having a total net area of not less than 1 square inch for every square foot of enclosed area subject to flooding shall be provided.

ii. The bottom of all openings shall be no higher than 1 foot above grade.

iii. Openings may be equipped with screens, louvers, valves, or other coverings or devices provided that they permit the automatic entry and exit of flood waters.

d. If the proposed foundation height cannot be achieved using the maximum allowable fill height, the structure shall be constructed with the use of piers, pilings, or vented crawlspace.

~~F.~~ **G. Procedures**

* * *

~~G.~~ **H. Administration and Enforcement**