



**CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE
City Commission Agenda Memo
REGULAR MEETING**

#26-0650

TO: Honorable Mayor & Members of the
Fort Lauderdale City Commission

FROM: Christopher Cooper, Acting City Manager

DATE: August 18, 2026

TITLE: Public Hearing – First Reading – Ordinance Amending the City of Fort Lauderdale Unified Land Development Regulations (ULDR) Section 47-2.2, Measurements and Section 47-19.5, Fences, Walls and Hedges to Revise the Method for Measuring the Height of Fences and Walls – Case No. UDP-T25007 – **(Commission Districts 1, 2, 3 and 4)**

Recommendation

Staff recommends the City Commission approve an ordinance amending the City of Fort Lauderdale Unified Land Development Regulations (ULDR) Section 47-2.2, Measurements and Section 47-19.5, Fences, Walls and Hedges to revise the method for measuring the height of fences and walls.

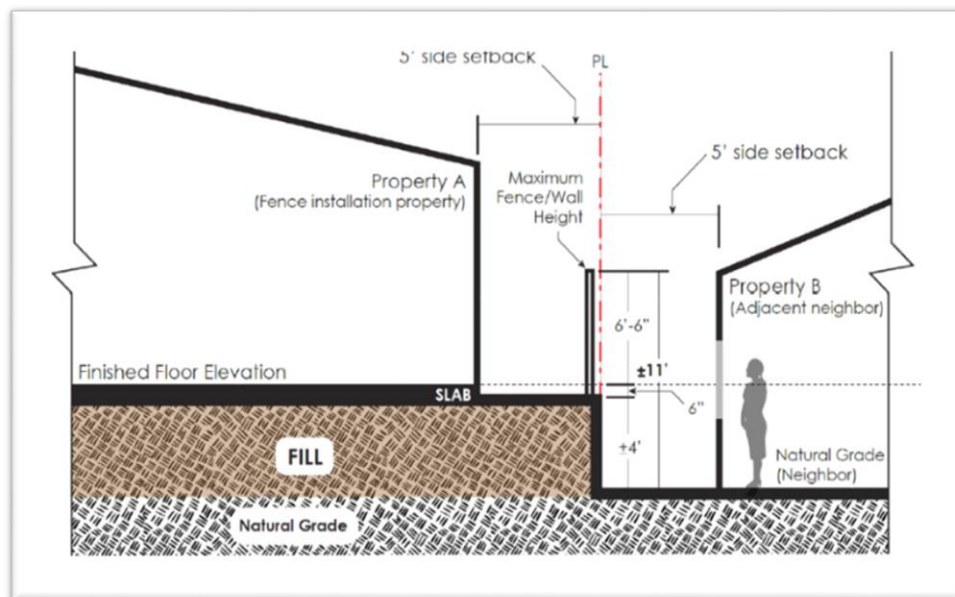
Background

The height of fences and walls are measured from grade, which was previously defined for non-habitable accessory structures as the finished ground level of at the base of the accessory structure. The term grade was updated in 2021 because of changes to the 2021 Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Base Flood Elevation (BFE) requirements and following a communication from the Board of Adjustment (BOA) to the City Commission, which the City Commission discussed at the November 5, 2020 City Commission Conference meeting.

The 2021 ULDR amendment sought to simplify the height disparity by defining the grade of accessory structures as the finished floor elevation of the subject site's principal structure. However, this produced unintended consequences resulting in excessively tall fences and walls. Due to the implementation of the 2021 FEMA BFE requirements, the foundation of a principal structure being raised with nonstructural fill causing fences and walls were either much higher than adjacent properties or much lower than the property at which they were constructed. In some cases, fences and walls would reach heights of ten (10) feet, or more, which impacted privacy for adjacent property owners and increased the number of variance applications to the BOA. This prompted an amendment of the grade definition within the ULDR.

See Diagram 1 for examples referenced above.

Diagram 1.



The current proposed amendment is largely driven by the need to align the City's ordinance with updated FEMA BFE standards and new city regulations concerning nonstructural fill. According to Section 14-13, Floodplain Management – Site Improvements, Utilities, and Limitations, of the Code of Ordinances, any new development is closely reviewed to make sure nonstructural fill does not unnaturally raise the site's elevation. In particular, the grade outside a foundation cannot be more than one (1) foot higher than the average current grade, or the average height of the back-of-sidewalk or crown-of-road, whichever is lower.

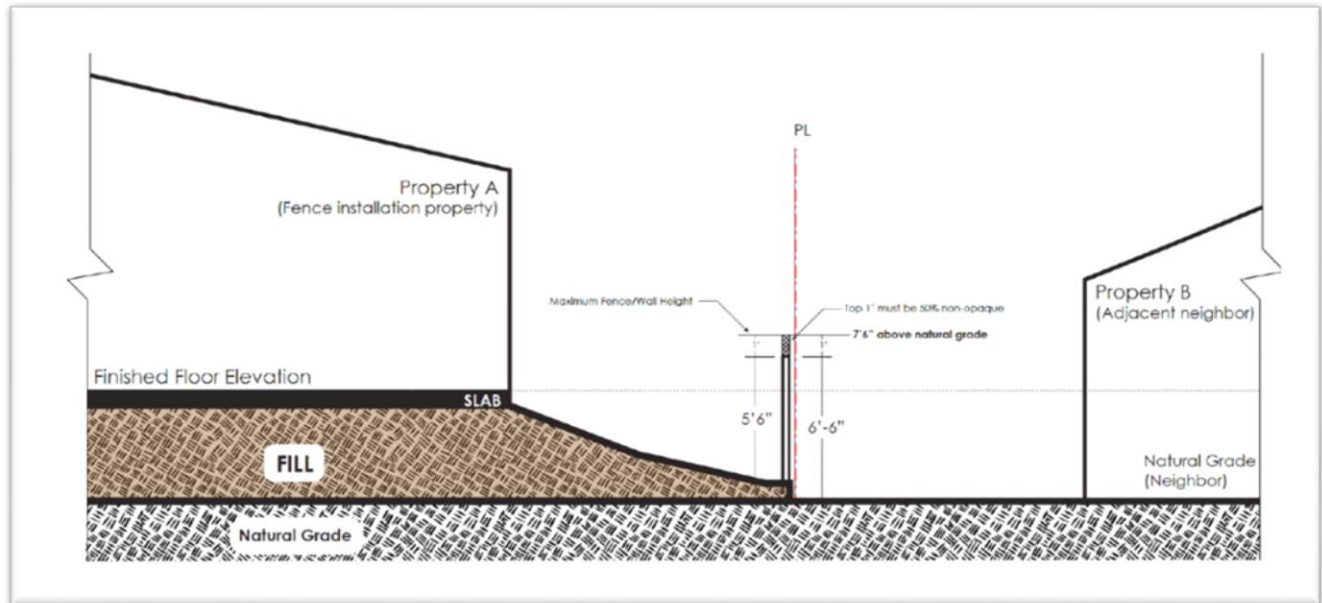
Proposed ULDR Amendment

Below is a summary of the proposed amendment:

Measurement standard: Height shall be measured from the lowest adjacent grade of either the subject property or the abutting property.

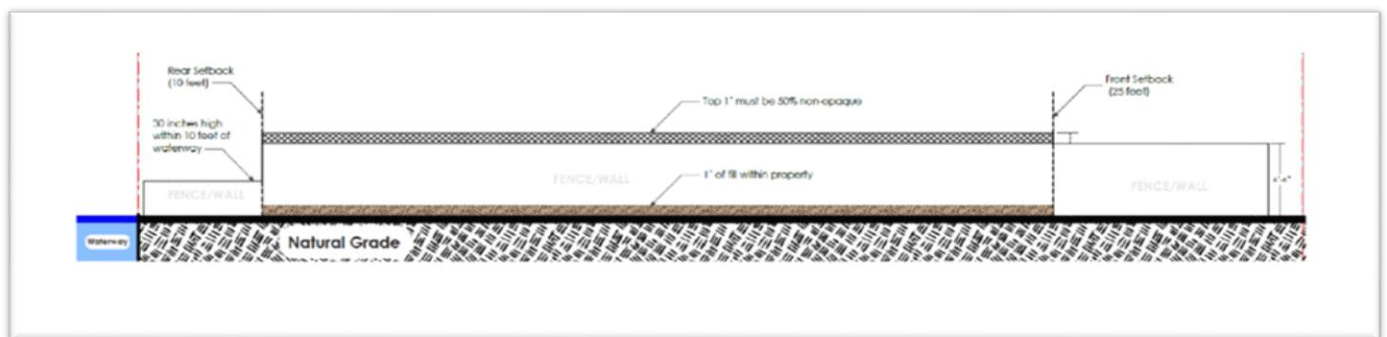
Rear, side and corner yard: The height of a fence or wall along the rear, side, and corner yard shall be installed up to a maximum of seven (7) feet, six (6) inches, where the uppermost one (1) foot of the fence/wall must maintain a minimum fifty percent (50%) transparency starting from the front 25-foot setback. See Diagram 2.

Diagram 2.



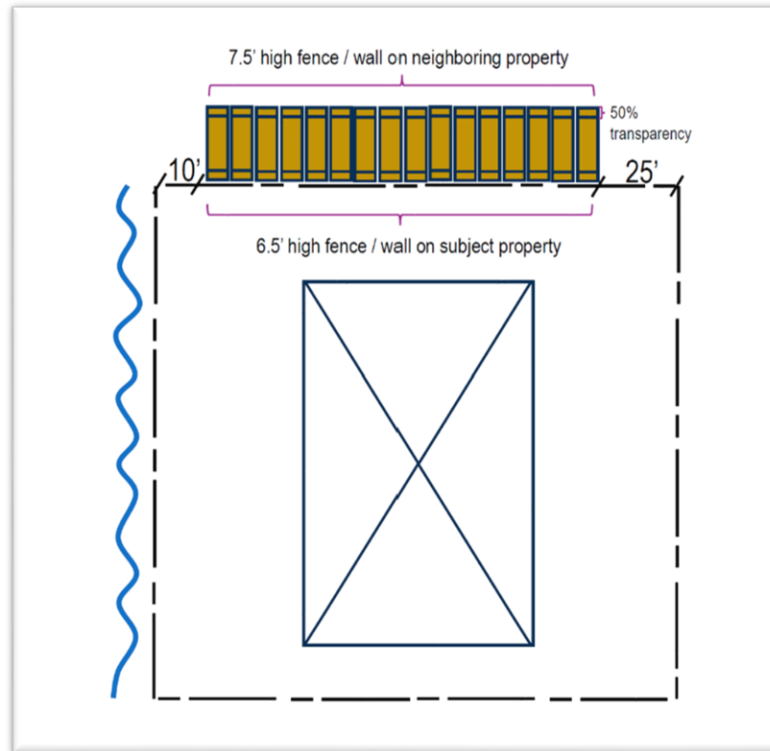
Properties on Waterway: For properties adjacent to a waterway, the proposed standard applies to the entire fence segment between the front and rear setback lines and is reduced to the standard height when located within ten (10) feet of the edge of waterway. See Diagram 3.

Diagram 3.



Front Yard: Fences and walls that are installed within the twenty-five (25) foot setback line will be limited to six (6) feet, six (6) inches. See Diagram 4.

Diagram 4.



On May 20, 2026, the Planning and Zoning Board (PZB), acting as the local planning agency (“LPA”) reviewed the proposed ordinance and recommended approval (8-0), finding the proposed amendments consistent with the City of Fort Lauderdale Comprehensive Plan. The May 20, 2026 PZB Report, and meeting minutes are attached as Exhibit 1 and Exhibit 2, respectively.

Subsequent to the May 20, 2026, PZB meeting, staff identified the need to clarify the method for measuring fences and walls within the front yard and how the height of fences and walls are measured as referenced in Table 1 for Fences, Walls and Hedges. The draft presented to the PZB was inadvertently unclear regarding this requirement. The following changes are reflected in underline and strikethrough format. This clarification is consistent with what was approved by PZB:

Section 47-19.5. Fences, walls, and hedges.

3. The height for a fence or wall constructed along or parallel to a street shall be measured from the lowest adjacent grade of either the subject property or the immediately adjacent right-of-way.

TABLE 1

FENCES, WALLS AND HEDGES (Note D)	HEIGHT MAX.	PERCENT TRANSPARENT (Note B)	SETBACK (Note A & G)
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	Grade According to Section 47-2.2-G		
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See Exhibit 4 to review the proposed ordinance.

Resource Impact

There is no fiscal impact associated with this action.

Strategic Connections

This item supports the *Press Play Fort Lauderdale 2029* Strategic Plan, specifically advancing:

- The Infrastructure Focus Area, Goal 3: Be a sustainable and resilient community

This item advances the *Fast Forward Fort Lauderdale 2035* Vision Plan: We Are Community

This item supports the *Advance Fort Lauderdale 2040 Comprehensive Plan* specifically advancing:

- The Neighborhood Enhancement Focus Area
- The Urban Design Element
- Goal 1: The City of Fort Lauderdale shall promote high-quality and sustainable building design elements which complement the public realm.
- Objective UD 1.1: Design Guidelines
- Policy UD 1.1.2: Enhance the quality of development throughout the city over time through the review and application of design standards and guidelines. Update and implement design standards and guidelines to ensure the quality of development throughout the city is enhanced over time and is responsive to changing conditions.

Attachments

Exhibit 1 – May 20, 2026, PZB Staff Report

Exhibit 2 – May 20, 2026, PZB Meeting Minutes

Exhibit 3 – Business Impact Estimate

Exhibit 4 – Ordinance

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