

**CITY OF BEAUFORT
PLANNING COMMISSION
WORKSESSION AGENDA**

1911 Boundary Street, Beaufort, SC 29902
Phone: 843-525-7011 ~ Fax: 843-986-5606

Monday, March 2, 2026, 1:00 P.M.

City Hall, Planning Conference Room, 1st Floor – 1911 Boundary Street, Beaufort, SC

Please click the link below to join the webinar:

https: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82517714149?pwd=EmVUXflJmdXdYsB6WrT0bjww5Kk9sr.1>

Password: 070397 Meeting ID: 825 1771 4149 Call in Phone #: 1 309 205 3325

STATEMENT OF MEDIA NOTIFICATION: "In accordance with South Carolina Code of Laws, 1976, Section 30-4-80(d), as amended, all local media were duly notified of the time, date, place and agenda of this meeting."

Please note, this meeting will be broadcast via zoom and live-streamed on YouTube. You can view the meeting at the City's page; City Beaufort SC

I. Public Comment

II. Discussion:

- Chapter 4 Building Design and Infill Standards
- Chapter 2 Lot diversity

III. Adjournment

Note: If you have special needs due to a physical challenge, please call Julie Bachety at (843) 525-7011.



CITY OF BEAUFORT
Community Development Department

SCOTT MARSHALL
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CURT FREESE
Community Development
Director

Date: February 26, 2026

From: Curt Freese, Community Development Director

To: PC

ISSUE: Chapter 4 Major Discussion Items/Chapter 2 Lot Diversity

Chapter 4 Analysis:

The Design Chapter is perhaps the core of the Form Based Code. Staff including Meadors Architecture, both reviewed our code based on practical experience with projects (for Meadors, this includes over 6 years of experience in Beaufort) and then began researching other form based codes and ideas in other jurisdictions.

Core Purpose and Intent

Preserve and require a walkable human-scaled that promote architecture that responds to the Lowcountry climate—using shade, porches, natural ventilation—and reflects regional craftsmanship rather than corporate branding. The idea is to allow innovation but require design standards which ensure simplicity, authenticity, and pedestrian vitality. New buildings must feel like natural extensions of Beaufort’s historic fabric, not corporate architecture from elsewhere. All elevations—front, side, and rear—must be cohesive in scale, detail, material, and color. Buildings must have a clear base, middle, and top (e.g., raised foundation, main body, defined roofline or cornice).

Garages (Single Family):

Commissioners Bardenwerper and Anderson have met, and both offered their thoughts on changes to single family garages. Their ideas and proposed changes are included in this email. Mr. Bardenwerper worked on revising the proposed garage standards, while Ms. Anderson argued that the current garage standards should be retained, and were misapplied by previous Code Administrators.

The proposed garage standards are designed to create traditional, pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods where houses — not garages — dominate the street view. This should make for much nicer streets and neighborhood feel: No “snout houses” with giant garage doors, but frontages that instead feature porches, windows, and entries instead. This is a core form-based code principle to make for a more charming, walkable, and “like a real town” rather than a suburban garage lot. Such traditional



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neighborhoods generally increase property values and help to retain higher values, and also create for safer neighborhoods and more social for kids and pedestrians

The negative impacts of such requirements are:

You can't pull straight into the garage from the street. You must use a rear alley or a side driveway, then walk farther to the house door

- Limited parking options: Only single-bay doors (max 12 ft wide), no double-wide doors, and garage doors can cover only 30% of the front façade. Households with 2+ cars often end up using the driveway, side yard, or street parking more than they'd like.
- Higher cost: New construction usually costs more (alleys add infrastructure expense, recessed/side garages + breezeway connections are more complex, and high-quality paneled doors with real trim are pricier than cheap stamped-metal ones).
- Site constraints: On narrow or oddly shaped lots, it can shrink usable backyard space or force creative (and sometimes awkward) layouts. Some buyers walk away from lots because compliance feels too limiting.
- Buyer pool: Appeals strongly to people who want traditional character; may turn off buyers who prioritize maximum convenience and low cost.
- Administration: Planning Staff would need to review every building plan for garage compliance (this is being done now but was not done in the past).

Patio Homes

Mr. Bardwenwerper raised whether changes to Section 4.5.5 Rowhomes/Townhouses, should be included to allow for patio homes, which are increasingly popular around the country. These are often one story attached homes, generally four homes attached together, marketed and built for older residents. The current townhouse and rowhouse standards, clearly reflect a more urban townhouse two stories in height. See Mr. Bardenwerper's comments attached.

Multi-Family Housing Affordability

Please see the lot diversity standards for how said standards would effect large multi-family complexes. Again, to recap, the changes include large apartment buildings must read as a collection of individual houses, not a single block. Every street-facing ground-floor unit needs its own direct entry



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from the sidewalk via stoop or porch—no breezeways allowed. Facades longer than 40 ft require vertical breaks (offsets, porches, roof changes). At least 70% of active frontage should have porches or stoops. Upper floors over 3 stories must step back to preserve street-level scale

Staff did meet with the Housing Trust and discussed options for affordable housing. Recommendations include the following:

- 1) Reducing design standards for qualified workforce or affordable housing.
- 2) Making design standards administrative, instead of discretionary.
- 3) Considering a streamline approach, such as administrative approvals or a more expedient process for affordable/workforce housing.

At the January meeting, some concerns were raised over some of these proposals, ranging from favoritism, to incentivizing bad design for the most fragile citizens. Staff believes this discussion should be considered, and continued discussion and brainstorming of ideas should be considered.

Chapter 2:

Revised Lot Diversity:

In previous Worksession meetings, there was concern about the proposed lot diversity standards in Chapter 2. These standards would require a diversity of building or use types in larger developments or lots, to require a more mixed use or neighborhood concept desired by the Form Based Code. Staff has revised its diversity standards to only T-4 N and RMX as per the PC meeting. Staff has also rescaled the standards for total residential units, rather than acreage, as this complies with future Beaufort Development patterns which rely on more density on limited area lots. As for the zones selected, T-4 N is located in many transitional areas, but has an urban form required per code, which has been challenging. Adding lot diversity ensures monolithic unconnected design doesn't proliferate. RMX is commercial and also in more suburban and transitional areas with the same type of issues as T4-N. Requiring a mixed use element sets an urban foundation for such a district. Added the lot diversity requirement to the Chapter 3 table.

Port Royal developed and adopted similar standards months ago, which have some variations. These standards are attached for reference. Staff strongly recommends some form of lot diversity to break up large multifamily or commercial projects.

Post PC-Meeting (Feb 18, 2026) discussion notes on changes to Chapter 4 (Building Design and Infill Standards)

In general:

- Better define what “Lowcountry vernacular” means. (Suggested definition to be provided by Benjie Morillo: “.....”)
- Do not refer to Beaufort as a “village” but rather use the term “city” (see Sec. 4.3.1 – page 3, end of first paragraph)
- Omit the usage of the expression “Atlantic seabord” (see Sec. 4.3.1 – page 3, fourth paragraph under C. Findings – second sentence)
- Revisit whether low country design standards need to be placed into each section of Chapter 4, or whether one section of Chapter 4 on said standards would be more effective.
- Revisit whether the transect and conventional district design standards should be merged.
- Revisit the LI design exception.

Specifically:

- Sec. 4.4 (table) & Sec. 4.5. (table): Complete tables by including photographs (in some instances better ones) as well a (better) diagrams for all specific frontage and building types; also, include “appropriate” and “inappropriate” examples for all
- Sec. 4.5.4 (Single-family detached house), Sec. 4.5.5 (2-3 Unit house), Sec. 4.5.6 (Rowhome/Townhouse), Sec. 4.5.7 (Apartment house):
 - > Redefine what “Housing Model Diversity” means and/or implies (Suggested language to be provided by Bill Bardenwerper: “.....”)
 - > also, may want to include a separate relaxed standards section per residential housing type, specifically for “Workforce/Affordable Housing”?
 - > revisit garage placement, façade and size requirements for single-family detached & 2-3 Unit-houses (Suggested provisions to be provided by Bill Bardenwerper: “.....”); may also want to include diagrams/pictures!
- Sec. 4.5.6 (Rowhome/Townhouse; page 23): allow for rowhomes/townhouses in T4-NA (Artisan district in vicinity of Depot Rd.) as a “Conditional Use” (also reflect change in Uses Table in Sec. 3.2)

- **Sec. 4.5.6 (Rowhome/Townhouse; page 23) & Sec. 4.5.7 (Apartment House; page 25):** Do we want to encourage “forecourts” as permissible frontage type for these building types?
- **Sec. 4.5.9 (Liner Building; pg. 35 et seq.):**
 - > Should Liner Buildings be generally required in the RMX district, or should they be required in conjunction with a specifically sized Large Footprint Building (of more than 10,000/20,000 sq. ft. in size)? (also see Sec. 4.5.10.B.3 – Large Footprint Building, Special Requirements)
 - > Revisit provision for 2-story height requirement of liner buildings within 250 feet of any Significant Intersection (also see Sec. 2.6.3 & Street Hierarchy Diagram in Appendix C.3),
 - > Pedestrian activation of liner buildings (see Sec. 4.5.9.B.9 & 4.5.9.B.13 – pages 36/37): if liner buildings implement pedestrian activation by including public plazas/outdoor patio areas, can the minimum required depth of those liner building be decreased to at least 20ft. (change from the min. 25 ft. required in Sec. 4.5.9.B.9 – Depth)?
- **Sec. 4.5.12 (Gas/Fuel Stations and Car Washes) &**
 - > Add new/better stacking & queuing requirements & provisions
 - > Add better diagrams/photographs (esp. as an example for drive-thru facilities),
 - >Remove blank wall requirement, as too vague, not needed.
- **Sec. 4.5.13 (Drive-Thru Facilities):**
 - >Remove Starbucks building as example
 - >Add: “a stacking study shall be made to substantiate the proposed stacking design.”
 - >Add: *TIA REQUIRED AT THE DISCRETION OF THE ADMIN IF UNDER 50 TRIPS* wordsmith later.
 - >Rewrite Corporate Identity regulations: reword to “Corporate identity must be adapted to lowcountry vernacular”
- **Sec. 4.5.14 Churches and Institutional**
 - >Better define institutional in rest of the code.
 - >Remove description in purpose section.
 - >Reconsider Civic Buildings and new section, in light of institutional comments.

- **Sec. 4.6 General Design:**

- >Remove 4.6.1 proposal “structure only if the primary structure is one story tall and the accessory structure is not visible from a public right-of-way, or is placed as far away as possible in the case of a corner lot.”

- >Rewrite Color requirements of Section 4.6.1 G: **Colors:** Buildings and additional site elements — e.g., bollards, arbors, drive-thru canopies, sign posts — shall not be painted in a color or pattern that expresses corporate identity, to the extent that the paint color or pattern is not consistent with the design standards of the district. Fluorescent colors, such as ASHTO safety yellow, are also prohibited except where required by a public agency. Building elements shall use soft, muted palettes (pastels, neutrals, weathered wood tones) with a maximum of three primary colors per façade. For all developments, there shall be no more than two similarly colored structures placed next to each other along a street or major walkway. *CLARIFY?*

- >Add to Section 4.6.2 H : only be located on the property and not on a public right-of-way,

- >Section 4.6.3: Consider whether it is a good idea to keep the transect/non-transect approach for design standards

- >Section 4.6.3: remove smooth finish requirement as unnecessary outside of historic district

- >Section 4.6.3: remove vinyl window prohibition

- >Section 4.6.3: research EFIS to see if it should be prohibited.

- >Section 4.6.3 allow Tabby as a material, not a prohibition.

- >Section 4.6.3: consider rewriting color requirements: ii. Nontraditional colors such as orange or purple *MATCH THIS TO OTHER COLOR RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE CODE*.

- >Section 4.6.3 Windows: clarify requirements are only for commercial uses

- >Section 4.6.3: Add this section to window requirements: The Planning Commission may consider design exceptions of this requirement to include spandrel glass and/or higher percentage opacity in cases where the applicant proves these are critical functional (privacy?) areas. *WORDSMITH*

- >Section 4.6: Industrial (LI) should be exempted from design requirements