

City of Philadelphia



Philadelphia, January 22, 2025

CERTIFICATION: This is to certify that Bill No. 250804-A was presented to the Mayor on the eleventh day of December, 2025, and was not returned to the Council with their signature at a meeting held January 22, 2025 (being more than ten days after it had been presented to them).

THEREFORE, Pursuant to the provisions of Section 2-202 of the Philadelphia Home Rule Charter, the ordinance becomes as effective as if the Mayor had approved it.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elizabeth McCollum".

Elizabeth McCollum
Chief Clerk of the City Council

(Bill No. 250804-A)

AN ORDINANCE

Amending Title 14 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled "Zoning and Planning," by amending certain provisions of Chapter 14-500, entitled "Overlay Zoning Districts," by creating the "/UCO, University-Community Overlay District"; and by making related changes, all under certain terms and conditions.

THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA HEREBY ORDAINS:

SECTION 1. Title 14 of The Philadelphia Code is hereby amended to read as follows:

TITLE 14. ZONING AND PLANNING.

* * *

CHAPTER 14-300. ADMINISTRATION AND PROCEDURES

* * *

§ 14-301. Reviewers and Decision Makers.

* * *

(3) City Planning Commission.

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* * *

(c) Review and Prerequisite Approval Authority.

(1) The Commission provides prerequisite approvals for:

* * *

(.w) Applicable zoning permits and building permits within the /UCO, University-Community Overlay District. See § 14-545(5) (Planning Commission Approval).

* * *

§ 14-303. Common Procedures and Requirements.

* * *

(12) Neighborhood Notice and Meetings.

(a) Applicability.

This subsection (12) applies to applications that:

(1) Require Zoning Board approval of a special exception under § 14-303(7) (Special Exception Approval);

(2) Require Zoning Board approval of a zoning variance under § 14-303(8) (Zoning Variances);

(3) Meet the requirements for Civic Design Review in § 14-304(5) (Civic Design Review); or

(4) Are subject to the provisions of § 14-504 (/NCO, Neighborhood Conservation Overlay District) and for which the applicant requests a review of building permit by the Commission pursuant to the provisions of § 14-504(3)(b)(.2); or

(5) Require Planning Commission approval pursuant to the provisions of § 14-545 (/UCO, University-Community Overlay District).

CHAPTER 14-500. OVERLAY ZONING DISTRICTS

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§ 14-545. */UCO, University-Community Overlay District.*

(1) Purpose.

The /UCO, University-Community Overlay District, is established to ensure a transparent planning and community engagement process when college or university campus-related properties are decommissioned.

(2) Definitions.

(a) For the purposes of this section, a “college or university” is defined as an institution of higher learning that offers courses of general or specialized study leading to a baccalaureate degree or higher.

(b) For the purposes of this section, a “college or university campus” is defined as a parcel or group of parcels, whether contiguous or non-contiguous, that are principally developed and operated for the educational, research, residential, cultural, or recreational purposes of a college or university where zoned uses are primarily intended for students, faculty, or staff of the college or university. A campus may consist of non-contiguous parcels, provided that such parcels function and are branded in a coordinated manner as part of the institution’s spatial identity and facilities.

(3) Applicability.

(a) The University-Community Overlay District shall apply to applicable properties located within the area bounded by the Schuylkill River, Haverford Avenue (extended), 46th Street, Farragut Street, Spruce Street, 47th Street, Kingsessing Avenue, a SEPTA Railroad Right-of-Way, and 47th Street (extended).

(b) The provisions of this Overlay shall apply to any lot within the boundaries described in subsection (a) that contains an institutional use principal to or affiliated with a college or university, as whole or part of a college or university campus, including but not limited to: educational facilities, libraries, research laboratories, dormitories or student housing, administration or faculty offices, parking, religious assemblies affiliated with an educational institution, community centers or cultural facilities operated by or for an academic institution, community garden, museum, parks and open spaces, and indoor or outdoor athletic and recreational facilities.

(c) The requirements of this Overlay are triggered when a zoning permit or building permit is filed on a lot larger than 5,000 square feet that satisfies criteria set in subsection (a) and (b) for a proposed use that no longer meets the definition of being whole or part of a “college or university campus” as defined in (2)(b).

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(d) *The following shall be considered exempt from the requirements of this Overlay:*

(i) *Any lot on which the principal use is healthcare or a group medical and health practitioner even if part of the use includes a teaching or learning component, including but not limited to, hospitals, inpatient and/or outpatient care, emergency services, surgical procedures, specialized treatments, diagnostic imaging, and residential facilities that provide medical or personal care services to individuals such as nursing homes and assisted living facilities;*

(ii) *Surface parking lots not adjacent to or contiguous with other lots with principal campus uses;*

(iii) *Lots continuously operated as part of a college or university campus;*

(iv) *Properties with development plans already approved via permit or legislation prior to the enactment of this Overlay or any properties permitted or developed in accordance with a Unified Development Plan;*

(v) *projects for which an economic opportunity plan has been approved by the Office of Economic Opportunity prior to the enactment of this Overlay.*

(vi) *Any permit that applies to less than twenty-five percent (25%) of gross floor area of a building that already has an approved zoning permit for its principal use.*

(4) *Building Requirements to Prevent Vacant Lots.*

(a) *No zoning or building permit shall be issued for the demolition of a principal building located within the /UCO Overlay District that meets the criteria of 14-545(3) unless a building permit has been issued for the construction, expansion, or alteration of a new or existing principal building on the same lot.*

(b) *Subsection (a) shall not apply if such demolition is necessary to abate an imminently dangerous condition as determined by the Department of Licenses and Inspections; or such demolition is necessary to abate an unsafe condition impacting the right of way or any adjacent property as determined by the Department of Licenses and Inspections.*

(5) *Planning Commission Approval.*

L&I shall not issue a zoning or building permit for the erection or demolition of a building or the alteration of a façade of a building located within the /UCO Overlay District that meets the criteria of 14-545(3) until the Philadelphia City Planning Commission has reviewed site plans and determined, in the majority opinion of the

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Commission, that the proposed site plan demonstrates or fulfills the requirements of (a) and (b), and one of (c), (d), (e) or (f) below:

(a) Whether the proposed site plan is consistent with or not adverse to the City's latest Comprehensive Plan for the geographic area in which the lot is located;

(b) Whether the site plan submission adequately depicts, at a minimum: existing and proposed uses, ground-floor layout and primary entries to the building(s), pedestrian and bicycle connections, loading and curb cut locations, and, if applicable, a phasing diagram;

(c) Whether the site plan is in harmony with the surrounding commercial and residential areas and pedestrian-oriented environment;

(d) Whether the proposed site plan strengthens connections between the lot and nearby residential communities to the extent the subject lot(s) are adjacent to a residential community;

(e) Whether proposed uses on the building ground floors provide benefit and enjoyment to campus as well as broader community population and contribute to active streetscapes; and

(f) Whether preservation or adaptive reuse of existing institutional buildings has been considered prior to the proposed demolition.

The Commission has 120 days after receipt of the application from L+I to approve or disapprove the application in accordance with this Section (5), after which its approval will be presumed. If the Commission does not act within 120 days and the applicant has otherwise participated in good faith, the application shall be deemed recommended for approval, and L&I may proceed if all other Code requirements are met.

(6) Neighborhood Notice and Meetings Required.

(a) L&I will determine whether a zoning or building permit application meets the criteria of 14-545(3) and therefore is required to complete Planning Commission approval per 14-545(5). In these cases, the applicant is required to comply with the neighborhood notice and meeting requirement in 14-303(12) (Neighborhood Notice and Meetings).

(b) The applicant must meet the applicable requirements of 14-303(12), regardless of whether those provisions would otherwise apply.

(c) If the applicant is already required to comply with the neighborhood notice and meeting requirement in 14-303(12) because the application meets another one of the

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applicable triggers listed in 14-303(12)(a), then the applicant may satisfy both requirements in a single notice and single meeting as long as they present all the materials required by the Code for each review.

(d) If the zoning or building permit application includes new construction or expansion that creates more than 25,000 square feet of gross floor area, then before the notice and meeting required in this section, the district Councilmember whose district includes the applicant's property must convene a committee of overlapping Registered Community Organizations, block captains, and community organization leaders with a presence in the particular neighborhood, to review all materials required under 14-545(5). This committee must consist of no fewer than five (5) community representatives. This meeting must be scheduled for a date that is within 30 days after the district Councilmember receives notification of the particular application and meeting requirement.

(7) Relationship with Other Ordinances.

The provisions of this section supersede any other limitations or authorizations related to the demolition of any building located within the /UCO Overlay District.

(8) Severability.

If any paragraph, subsection, clause, provision, or exception of this Section shall be declared by a court of competent jurisdiction to be invalid, such decision shall not affect the validity of this Section as a whole or any part thereof. It is the intention of City Council that the remainder of this Section would have been adopted as if such invalid paragraph, subsection, clause, provision, or exception had not been enacted.

* * *

SECTION 2. Effective date. This Ordinance shall take effect immediately.

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CERTIFICATION: This is a true and correct copy of the original Bill, Passed by the City Council on December 11, 2025.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Elizabeth McCollum". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "E".

Elizabeth McCollum
Chief Clerk of the City Council