



development services

MEMORANDUM

TO: Design Review Committee
FROM: Eric Berg, AICP, Senior Planner
THROUGH: Kevin Whaley, AICP, Director of Planning
DATE: June 5, 2025
RE: Proposed [Westlyn](#) Planned Unit Development

The Design Review Committee met on May 6th, 2025. The committee recommended continuance of the petition based upon the comments below. Changes and responses to the comments are as follows:

	<u>Comment</u>	<u>Applicant Response</u>
1.	The committee is concerned with the type of density and development pattern that would be created with the narrow lots and shallow front yard setbacks.	No response.
2.	Due to the number and width of the lots in some areas, the streetscape will include several garage doors, utility transformers, and pedestals.	No response.
3.	The petitioner needs to create a plan for mailbox locations.	Not provided.
4.	The petitioner should provide an exhibit showing building footprints within some of the lots to demonstrate how the subdivision would be affected by building coverage.	Not provided.
5.	The front setback needs to be increased.	Increased from 20 feet to 25 feet.

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A Community of Values

TOWN OF PLAINFIELD

Design Review Committee Role

The Plainfield Zoning Ordinance calls for the Design Review Committee (DRC) to review Planned Unit Developments (PUD) prior to review and recommendation by the Plan Commission and the ultimate decision of the Town Council. There are two primary reasons:

- Provide technical insight into the regulations. As the first public step in the ordinance adoption, the knowledge and experience brought forward by the DRC in the crafting of the regulations is invaluable. It also provides the DRC a knowledge base when final detailed plans are brought to the DRC.
- When the PUD has innovative elements or combinations of uses that have not been brought together in a unified development before, the DRC can provide practical insight and experience to how these can have risks and concerns mitigated while maximizing benefit. In this PUD, there are no particularly innovative elements as this is a traditional subdivision normally achievable through the existing zoning classifications.

Staff has identified discussion where the DRC input would be particularly helpful, some are areas of Staff concern, others are related to design, some are general philosophical issues.

Note: The Planned Unit Development Text was approximately 48 hours before the issuance of the report. As this is within the submittal timeline, there may be additional comments forthcoming as the review continues.

Discussion Topics: Dimensional Standards

1. **Front yard setback.** The applicant has amended the setback to 25 feet.
2. **Minimum garage area.** When adopting the Residential Design Guidelines, the Plan Commission intended for vehicles, lawn/garden equipment, recreational equipment, and similar items to be contained within the garage. Reducing the size of the garages increases the chances of these items being stored outside.

Staff recommendation: The Plan Commission chose 484 square feet for a practical reason. Decreasing the standard while simultaneously decreasing the setback is potentially problematic. The Residential Design Guideline standard should be retained.

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Garage door width ratio. It is interesting that as the applicant seeks the garages to be smaller in size, the ratio of the door to the front of the home is increasing. Instead of choosing to increase the garage door dominance of the front façade, the applicant could instead use an alley-loaded product, but they have chosen not to do so. Shown below is the product they propose to build. While not every garage extends in front of the habitable area, the garage doors are prominent features in all cases.

 EC2H <i>Amberwood</i>	 EC2H <i>Boardwalk</i>	 <i>Continental</i>	 <i>Dakota</i>
 PR2H <i>Fifth Avenue</i>	 PR2M <i>Greenfield</i>	 HR2I <i>Hilltop</i>	 <i>Ivy</i>
 HR2G <i>Linwood</i>	 <i>Mercer</i>	 <i>Mitchell</i>	 <i>Mystique</i>
 <i>Newberry</i>	 NC101 <i>Palmary</i>	 EC2M <i>Park Place</i>	 LC101 <i>Prestige</i>
 <i>Prospect</i>	 LC101 <i>Prosperity</i>	 PR2M <i>Riverton</i>	 <i>Vestry</i>
 <i>Waldorf</i>	 <i>Wall Street</i>	 <i>Waverly</i>	 EC2H <i>Westchester</i>

Why is there a focus on both garage door ratio and garages?

- *Garages serve an important function, but they should not be the architectural centerpiece of a home. Garages are accessory to the residential use and should be a subordinate feature when attached to the principal structure.*
- *By placing the garage at the leading edge of the structure, the builder is conveying a storage-focused design which can make the homes feel less welcoming and more utilitarian.*
- *In the past the Town Council has been supportive of density when accompanied with quality. Neighborhoods with garage-forward homes tend to negatively impact the neighborhood streetscape and walkability. By contrast, communities with homes that emphasize architectural style and active frontages (like porches or stoops) create a stronger sense of place and identity. This can help foster resident pride and community engagement.*

Below is a comparison of proposed Pulte product and their side loaded alternative not proposed.

Front Load	Name	Side Load
	Hilltop	
	Greenfield	
	Riverton	
	Westchester	
<p>Pulte also has alley loaded product that they could have used.</p>	 Portland	 Summerfield
		 Woodview

These products, interspersed with the other proposed product, could have helped create a place with distinctive character. Instead, visitors will gaze upon a vista of garages and garage doors, which is hardly a distinctive character.

Discussion Topics: Signage

1. **Permanent Ground Sign(s).** The ordinance allows for a 6-foot overall height and 48 square feet of sign area.



Staff question: Does the aesthetic quality of the sign above merit an increase in sign height and sign size over the ordinance?

2. **Temporary Signs.** The applicant has put together a temporary sign package that is beyond what is allowed under the ordinance.

They argue that they will be unfamiliar to their potential customers and will need such signage. However, every business is unfamiliar to their customers at one time or another and is not permitted such a vast amount and variety of temporary signs. Like other businesses, they have a multitude of other means by which to make their potential customers aware of their product.

The *Reed v. Town of Gilbert (2015)* U.S. Supreme Court decision necessitated a large-scale revision to zoning ordinances nationwide. The case centered on the Town of Gilbert, Arizona having differing regulations for temporary signs that were based upon the content of that sign type. For instance, political speech was regulated differently from commercial and non-commercial speech. Clyde Reed, the pastor of a small church, was forced to follow different temporary sign regulations than other types of free speech.

Reed sued and appealed the case to the U.S. Supreme Court and the Court determined that the ordinance "singles out signs bearing a particular message" and "reiterated the long-standing principle that a content-based regulation is valid only a compelling state interest and is narrowly tailored to achieve that interest." (*Virginia Municipal League's Reed v. Gilbert update*). While there was a majority opinion, there were also three separate concurring opinions filed.

The Town Attorney and his firm reviewed the Town's sign regulations to ascertain changes that would be needed to reduce the chance that the Town would run afoul of the decision and risk litigation. The decision to modify regulations to be based upon zoning classification, sign height, size, number, spacing, and construction were put forth and approved by the Town Council.

The Town's sign regulations for residential temporary signages are as follows:

Excerpt From Table 7.3.J:

- Type of sign: Ground Sign
- Maximum Sign Surface Area: 6 square feet
- Maximum Height: 6 feet

From Article 7.3.J

1. Number of Signs

- a. General. Two (2) *Temporary Signs* shall be permitted per *Lot*. However, no more than one (1) *Ground Sign* shall be permitted per *Street Frontage* of a *Lot* and temporary ground signs must not be within one hundred (100) feet of each other.
 - b. *Sidewalk Sign*. One (1) *Sidewalk Sign* is permitted per business use on a property.
2. Minimum *Setback From Proposed Right-of-Way. Temporary Signs*:
- a. May not interfere with a Vision Clearance Area as specified in Article 4.14; and,
 - b. Must be set back from the *Proposed Right-of-Way* a distance equivalent to the height above grade.

Staff recommendation: The Town's temporary sign regulations are designed to apply to all residential signs in a content-neutral manner while being duly respectful of the First Amendment. There is no compelling reason that the Town's temporary sign regulations should be replaced by the ones proposed in this PUD to the benefit of a single business endeavor.