

CITY-COUNTY PLANNING BOARD STAFF REPORT

DOCKET # UDO-CC1
STAFF: [Gary Roberts, Jr. AICP](#)

REQUEST

This text amendment is proposed by City-County Planning Board staff to amend the use-specific standards of the UDO ClearCode pertaining to Planned Residential Developments (PRDs). Specifically, the amendment focuses on improving the location and design of active open space areas.

BACKGROUND

PRDs are a type of residential subdivision in which the minimum lot size requirement of the underlying zoning district can be removed in exchange for retaining a certain percentage of common open space. PRDs provide the opportunity to live in homes on smaller lots with access to usable, high-quality, shared open space. Compared to a conventional subdivision, a PRD allows for greater site design flexibility and lower infrastructure costs. This benefits the developer up front *and* the public in the long term as it pertains to maintenance costs. PRDs are also recognized in *Legacy* as tools for preserving farmland and rural character throughout Forsyth County.

In 2008, the PRD standards were comprehensively amended. One of the more substantive elements of this amendment was the establishment of three distinct types of open space – 1) active open space; 2) passive open space; and 3) thoroughfare open space. However, over the last several years, it has become evident that the current standards for active open space have not consistently resulted in usable spaces which benefit the residents of PRDs. For example, the current ordinance does not prevent including hidden land located behind homes or land which is otherwise undevelopable (i.e., steep slopes or stormwater management or floodplain areas) as required active open space. While undevelopable (or passive) open space plays a desirable role, particularly from a conservation perspective, it should be balanced with useable, active open space which provides a tangible benefit to future residents. It should be emphasized that this amendment does not change the required minimum percentage of active open space, only its location and design.

ANALYSIS

These revisions place greater emphasis on active open space which is visible, accessible, and functional. While the *quantity* of open space present in PRDs is important, the *quality* is equally significant in shaping the overall character of a neighborhood. To ensure these areas are highly visible and prominent amenities, this amendment states that active open space should be designed in the form of a pocket park, neighborhood green, or square when bordered on multiple sides by streets.

From a neighborhood perspective, active open space areas are to be located no farther than an eighth-mile (660 feet) from at least 90 percent of the homes. To further ensure accessibility, they should not be primarily located behind homes and must have at least 50 feet of street frontage. At the individual site level, active open space areas should contain some element of shade (e.g., large variety trees, picnic shelters, and/or gazebos) along with level open areas to facilitate physical activity.

Passive open space may continue to consist of natural features such as drainage basins, riparian areas (including stream buffers and floodplains), steep slopes, and perimeter bufferyards. While not typically buildable, this type of open space is important, as it provides animal habitat and areas for natural drainage. It can also contribute to a larger, community-wide open space network when linked with parkland or open space on neighboring parcels.

In addition to several non-substantive/clerical updates, this amendment also clarifies that the weekly Interdepartmental Sketch Plan Review meeting shall serve as the required Preapplication Conference. Most subdivision developers already utilize this free service where they can receive feedback from various City and County departments. This gives applicants the opportunity to discuss active open space requirements and design-related recommendations. The applicant would then have the opportunity to incorporate any recommendations into their proposal prior to making an official submittal.

Staff believes the proposed ordinance will positively contribute to the quality of PRDs in Winston-Salem and Forsyth County.

RECOMMENDATION: APPROVAL

**CITY-COUNTY PLANNING BOARD
PUBLIC HEARING
MINUTES FOR UDO-CC1
FEBRUARY 13, 2020**

Gary Roberts gave an overview of UDO-CC1 and addressed inquiries by Planning Board members at the January Work Session.

MOTION: Clarence Lambe recommended approval of the text amendment.

SECOND: Jason Grubbs

VOTE:

FOR: George Bryan, Melynda Dunigan, Jason Grubbs, Tommy Hicks, Clarence Lambe, Chris Leak, Brenda Smith, Jack Steelman

AGAINST: None

EXCUSED: None

Aaron King
Director of Planning and Development Services