

Background

The following is a summary of the history of how and why the current land development ordinance is being replaced and this new UDO was written:

- December 31, 2010 – Water & Sewer Agreement with City of Greensboro terminated
- 2013 (Fall) thru 2017 – Seventeen (17) text amendments were requested to bring the existing land development ordinance either into compliance with changes to NCGS and/or to address development and other standards that reflect current best planning practices
- 2016 – Seven (7) Area Plans that reflect current and future land use (as referenced in Guilford County's 2006 Comprehensive Plan) were updated in 2016 to reflect development and growth patterns since 2008 in preparation for the UDO project
- 2017 (Fall) – RFP was prepared to solicit firms and associated cost to update and prepare a more user-friendly, illustrative, and modernized UDO
- 2018 - Selected UDO Evaluation Team comprised of development reps., practitioners, Planning Board, and County multi-disciplinary staff to review RFP responses
- 2018 – Funding was approved by the Board of Commissioners to retain The Stewart Group (as recommended by the Evaluation Team) to update and modernize the existing land development ordinance adopted in 1992
- 2018 (June) – 70+ Stakeholders representing 18 different interest groups were interviewed in five different sessions to assess current ordinance and a 17-member multi-disciplinary Steering Committee was formed
- Sep. 2018 – Presentation (status update) to Board of Commissioners
- Oct. 2018 – Public Workshop held
- Oct. 2018 – Present – Several Steering Committee meetings w/staff and consultant; drafting and reviewing UDO
- January 2020 – Presentation (status update) to Board of Commissioners
- June 2020 - Virtual Live Presentation of draft UDO conducted, recorded & posted on project website; open for comment
- July 2020 – Initial draft completed (available on project website)
- September 2020 – Courtesy letters mailed to property owners with a change in zoning designation and/or zoning district nomenclature
- October 2020 – Planning Board Public Hearing for changes to official zoning map and draft UDO (optional); Planning Board recommendation to Board of Commissioners; posted properties, mailed notices and public notice on County website
- Nov. 2020 (Tentative) – Board of Commissioners Public Hearing; public notice on website

Additionally, the project website <https://www.guilfordudoupdate.com/> has been maintained since onset of the project. This website posts all Steering Committee notes, presentations, public workshop(s), citizen survey results, draft UDO, other referenced documents

(e.g., updated Area Plans) and a comment/question portal. Further, staff presentations were conducted for specific stakeholder groups (i.e., Southeast Business Assoc.) on multiple occasions.

Details of Proposed UDO

The public review draft, dated July 7, 2020, was reviewed by both the multi-disciplinary Steering Committee and staff, and has been on the project website (link provided from the Planning & Development staff) since July 2020. The UDO document includes 12 chapters with appendices that govern zoning, signage, environmental, and subdivision regulations. The document is to be a replacement for the County's current development ordinance which was last re-written in 1992.

Briefly (and major highlights), the UDO:

- Incorporates best practices that have evolved in the 28 years since 1992;
- Updates the Permitted Uses Table (SIC system last revised in 1987);
- Reflect changes in policy (e.g., termination of City of Greensboro and County Water and Sewer Policy effective Dec. 31, 2010) that impact development patterns for unincorporated Guilford County and thus influences zoning district designations and associated development densities;
- Reduces the number of zoning districts from 27 to 23; renames some zoning district designations to express density units per acre rather than the minimum lot size (e.g., the new RS-3 zoning district is the same as the current RS-12 zoning district);
- Replaces relatively higher density zoning district designations (i.e., nomenclature and descriptions) to be consistent with those of both the Cities of Greensboro and High Point while maintaining the County's low-density naming designations that reflect historical rural development patterns throughout the unincorporated areas;
- Provides a separate Article for signage that reflects more-recent Supreme Court decision (Reed v. Gilbert) with a focus on content neutrality;
- Updates environmental regulations and processes (i.e., watershed/stormwater) to be more consistent with modern requirements and reorganizes for ease of reference;
- Incorporates flow charts, tables and figures to list, explain and illustrate zoning and planning concepts;
- Adds additional resources (e.g., Performance Guarantee Agreement template) that is readily available to assist customers;
- Provides expanded housing choices aimed at promoting more housing options;
- Decreases transaction time by increasing transparency and flexibility; and
- Includes commentaries throughout the document to assist in interpretation and memorializing special legislation specific to Guilford County.

As mentioned earlier, there are some instances where some zoning districts have been renamed and/or consolidated as part of this modernization. Thus, the official zoning map supports this effort and also is being requested to be approved upon adoption of the UDO.

The goals of the UDO are achieved through changes such as: enhanced structure and organization, clarification and codifying and streamlining development review procedures (where feasible), adding commentaries to assist customers, and including tables, figures, and flow charts to illustrate concepts.

Analysis

The new UDO achieves the goals that were identified as part of the stakeholder interviews, citizen survey and workshop activities, and Code Assessment identified at the beginning of the project.

Consistency with Adopted Plans: The proposed Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) reflects and is consistent with the most recent 2016 updates of the following 8 Area Plans [Liberty Road/Woody Mill Road Vicinity Small Area Plan was not updated] that canvass the unincorporated areas of Guilford County:

- Alamance Creek Area Plan
- Liberty Road/Woody Mill Road Vicinity Small Area Plan
- Northeast Area Plan
- Northern Lakes Area Plan
- Northwest Area Plan
- Rock Creek Area Plan
- Southern Area Plan
- Southwest Area Plan

The proposed UDO also is consistent with current Comprehensive Transportation Plans, and reflects the goals and objectives of the 2006 Guilford County Comprehensive Plan. Further, the proposed UDO is more user-friendly, protects existing rural development patterns, promotes more housing choices, adds flexibility, and promotes agriculture as a land use activity reflective of the more than \$52M in revenue of market value of agricultural products sold, and will be consistent with NCGS 160D new planning legislation. Subsequent updates to Area Plans since the 2016 update will be forthcoming and will reflect changes (if any) to the Future Land Use Compatibility Matrix based on the Proposed Revisions to Zoning District Designations Table (Zoning District Transition Table).

Reasonableness and In the Public Interest: The proposed Unified Development Ordinance is reasonable and in the public interest because: 1) the UDO implements and reflects input from the 18 identified stakeholder groups that met on June 19, 2018 (see UDO Assessment Report on project website); 2) incorporates the review and input from the 18-member UDO multi-disciplinary Steering Committee (including various Guilford County staff) that actively participated throughout the drafting of the UDO document; 3) reflects responses to the citizen survey and comments from the public workshop conducted as part of this project to solicit broad public input; and, 4) the proposed UDO document is consistent with current policy (e.g.,

termination of Water and Sewer Agreement with the City of Greensboro) that influences growth and development patterns in the unincorporated area of Guilford County.

Staff Recommendation

Staff Recommendation: Staff recommends that the proposed UDO be adopted. Further, staff recommends that upon adoption, that the County will allow applicants to either use the new UDO or the old development ordinance for a period of one year from the effective date. This assists with transition to the new UDO by providing options in case some unforeseen circumstances arise with the new UDO that could unintentionally delay an applicant from moving forward with a proposed development project.