

Town of Carrboro

301 W. Main St., Carrboro, NC 27510



Meeting Agenda - Final

Wednesday, November 12, 2025

6:00 PM

COUNCIL WORK SESSION

Council Chambers - Room 110

Town Council

TOWN COUNCIL WORK SESSION[25-108](#)

New Carrboro Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) Project Update Follow-Up Work Session

PURPOSE: This work session is to provide the Town Council with an update and continued discussion on the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) rewrite with the project consultant, CodeWright. The session will highlight major findings from the completed code diagnosis and examine recent state legislative changes that influence local land use and development regulations.

Attachments: [A - Carrboro UDO Code Diagnosis Key Themes for Improvement 10-2-25](#)
[B - RE Pocket Questions](#)
[C - CA Pocket Questions](#)



Agenda Item Abstract

File Number: 25-108

Agenda Date: 11/12/2025

File Type: Agendas

In Control: Town Council

Version: 1

New Carrboro Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) Project Update Follow-Up Work Session

PURPOSE: This work session is to provide the Town Council with an update and continued discussion on the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) rewrite with the project consultant, CodeWright. The session will highlight major findings from the completed code diagnosis and examine recent state legislative changes that influence local land use and development regulations.

DEPARTMENT: Planning

COUNCIL DIRECTION:

☐ Race/Equity ☐ Climate ☒ Comprehensive Plan ☒ Other

Developing a new Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) is a key step in implementing *Carrboro Connects*, the Town's Comprehensive Plan, along with related small area plans. Strategy 4.1 in the Land Use Chapter emphasizes the importance of updating the Land Use Ordinance to align with the Comprehensive Plan's goals. A recording of the previous work session and supporting materials are available in the October 14, 2025, Town Council agenda ([25-091 <https://carrboro.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=7699469&GUID=91040AFA-984F-4D6E-8373-CC701C0EEDF2&Options=&Search=>](https://carrboro.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=7699469&GUID=91040AFA-984F-4D6E-8373-CC701C0EEDF2&Options=&Search=>)). The Race and Equity and Climate pocket questions have been reattached for Council's continued consideration.

INFORMATION: This item is part of a series of ongoing updates to the Town Council on the development of the new Unified Development Ordinance (UDO). This item is intended to provide the opportunity to continue to discuss the findings from the code diagnosis with the consultant team in a more informal setting.

During the previous work session on October 14, Council discussion focused on several key themes:

- Prioritization and balance of climate and affordable housing incentives.
- Enhancing predictability and clarity in the ordinance and development process.
- Reducing the reliance on special-use-permits by shifting projects toward conditional rezonings followed by zoning permits.
- Expanding the range and types of commercial uses to help diversify the tax base, reducing tax burden on residential properties, and create more local employment opportunities.
- Identifying tools to strengthen staff capacity in guiding developers and property owners through the development process.

Progress to date can be reviewed at www.engage.carrboronc.gov/udo [<http://www.engage.carrboronc.gov/udo>](http://www.engage.carrboronc.gov/udo). Specific links to summaries by CodeWright and McAdams are linked below for reference.

- Summary Diagnostic Tables of Current LUO (Sep 30, 2025)

[Carrboro_LUO_Section-by-Section_review_table_9-30-25.pdf](https://hdp-us-prod-app-carr-engage-files.s3.us-west-2.amazonaws.com/4617/5933/6328/Carrboro_LUO_Section-by-) <https://hdp-us-prod-app-carr-engage-files.s3.us-west-2.amazonaws.com/4617/5933/6328/Carrboro_LUO_Section-by-

- McAdams Climate & Equity Analysis (Apr 18, 2025)
[2025-04-18_McAdams_Code_Diagnosis.pdf](https://hdp-us-prod-app-carr-engage-files.s3.us-west-2.amazonaws.com/6817/5933/6328/2025-04-18_McAdams_Code_Diagnosis.pdf) <https://hdp-us-prod-app-carr-engage-files.s3.us-west-2.amazonaws.com/6817/5933/6328/2025-04-18_McAdams_Code_Diagnosis.pdf>

- Market Analysis (Sep 26, 2025)
[Town_of_Carrboro_Combined_Draft_9.26.25.pdf](https://hdp-us-prod-app-carr-engage-files.s3.us-west-2.amazonaws.com/6317/5933/6329/Town_of_Carrboro_Combined_Draft_9.26.25.pdf) <https://hdp-us-prod-app-carr-engage-files.s3.us-west-2.amazonaws.com/6317/5933/6329/Town_of_Carrboro_Combined_Draft_9.26.25.pdf>

FISCAL IMPACT: There are no fiscal impacts associated with the discussion of the UDO project.

RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends that the Town Council receive the update, engage with the consultant, and provide feedback or direction as appropriate.

1	SIMPLIFY THE UDO Restructure from 21 to 11 chapters; Use more-intuitive chapter names in alphabetical order; Place 'like' material together in the document; Update the page layout with more navigational aids for the reader; Use numbered statements instead of prose; Increase use of summary tables; Add more illustrations and flow charts; Replace 'legalese' with plain English; and Self-codify the UDO
2	ADDRESS HOUSING CHOICE Remove SUP requirements for subdivisions meeting affordability targets; Add requirements for maintaining existing affordable units (NOAH); Exempt deed-restricted affordable housing and "micro" units from density counts; Allow "middle" housing by-right in all districts; Establish maximum dwelling unit sizes or minimum densities for detached dwelling developments; Simplify ADU requirements generally; Add more small-lot options (like courts and pocket neighborhoods); and Allow single-room occupancy developments
3	ADAPT TO CLIMATE CHANGE Replace cluster and 'AIS' subdivisions with conservation subdivisions; Limit plants to native species and add species diversity standards; Limit new stormwater infrastructure to "green" options; Ease review process for renewable energy structures; Prioritize passive/undisturbed open space over impervious recreation features; Prohibit new development (including fill) in the Special Flood Hazard Area; Require parking provided beyond minimums to be impervious; Disincentivize mass grading and mandate contour grading; prioritize greenways and multi-use trails over sidewalks; and Add voluntary sustainable development options and incentives
4	SAFEGUARD EQUITY Where possible, reduce application review times & uncertainty to ease development; Explore differential AMI ranges for rental (80%) versus ownership (60%); Add relevant definitions (diversity, equity, etc.) to the UDO; Soften standards on short-term rentals and integrated ADUs; Delegate a staff member as an ombudsman with respect to development rules; Ensure required notice is multi-lingual; Broaden range of districts where manufactured/mobile homes/moveable tiny homes are permitted; Soften limitations on home occupations, micro-retail, and "social service" uses; and Explore increased use of community benefit agreements for larger developments



5

INTEGRATE POLICY GUIDANCE

Explore abolition of minimum off-street parking standards; Review and update fee-in-lieu provisions for pedestrian infrastructure; Reduce open space set-aside amounts when available to the public; Explore greater use of development agreements for expansion of rental housing; Consider converting non-residential districts to mixed-use districts; Rely on public participation for identifying preferred forms of development and for consideration of applications that seek to deviate from codified standards

6

INCREASE PREDICTABILITY

Add clarity on measurement rules; Increase definitions (to around 100 pages); Identify review criteria for all procedures and decisions; Reduce reliance on SUP in favor of codified standards and limit to one review authority; Use pre-application conferences for efficiency; Streamline/delegate advisory body reviews and abolish the Appearance Commission; Add administrative adjustment and determination procedures; Remove the ability to convert by-right applications to discretionary reviews; Ensure all districts list dimensional standards and reduce caveats; and Simplify the open space provisions

7

ENSURE LEGAL SUFFICIENCY

Address new downzoning limitations; Remove criminal penalties; Remove content-based sign regulations; Clarify that unlisted uses are not prohibited and vested rights may not be withheld; Remove references to obsolete terms (special exceptions, conditional use permits, etc.); Remove advisory board review of quasi-judicial applications; Abolish the construction management plan process; Application review process or review criteria may not be revised after application submittal; Clarify authority for schools adequate public facility standards; and remove the COA procedure since the Town has no local historic districts

8

INCORPORATE INCENTIVES

Exclude affordable housing units from density counts; Allow by-right reviews for developments meeting affordable housing or “middle” housing targets; Allow accelerated landscaping credit for retained trees; Exclude structured parking from building height calculation; Include a conservation subdivision option with smaller lots/setbacks for more open space; Add density bonuses for voluntary compliance with single-family design guidelines; Allow mixed-use development by right in non-residential districts; and Add incentives for sustainable development features



Race and Equity Pocket Questions

Title: New Carrboro Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) Worksession

Purpose: *This agenda item is designed to provide the Town Council with an opportunity to receive an update from CodeWright, the consultant team preparing the New Carrboro UDO, and to ask questions and provide comments in an informal setting.*

Department: Planning

1. What are the root causes of inequity in Carrboro and/or overall as it pertains to this subject area?

- Nationally and locally intersectionality and inequities include but are not limited to:
 - Wealth and income disparity affecting access to land and fair housing,
 - Intersection of income with race, gender, and other demographic dimensions
 - Disproportionate negative health outcomes of underrepresented communities that live, or lived, near hazardous land uses (major highways, landfills, industrial sites, for example).
 - Systemic racism
 - Policies that have excluded marginalized communities and from planning theories that do not adequately recognize, or address, disparity.
- Not all these historic land use decisions occurred in Carrboro, but this landscape impacts the ability of people to move to Carrboro as well as current residents' economic mobility and social vulnerability.
- More information regarding the respective inequities, unintended consequences, and mitigation strategies can be found within *Carrboro Connects*, and the Race and Equity Action Plan.

2. Who is experiencing community burden now? Who will experience community burden if this action is passed? Will others experience community burden if this action is NOT passed?

- Residents currently burdened by the Land Use Ordinance, due to difficulties accessing or using the code, may continue to experience burden until the new development code is adopted
- More information about rewriting the ordinance for consistency with the Comprehensive Plan and the possibility of burdens incurred by the new ordinance will become clearer as the project moves forward.
- There is no action at this meeting; instead, this is an opportunity for Council discussion.

3. Who is experiencing community benefit now? Who will experience community benefit if this action is passed? Will others experience community benefit if this action is NOT passed?

- Residents and developers who are familiar with the current Land Use Ordinance, currently experience benefit, as they understand how to navigate the document and design according to presumptive standards.
- There is no action at this meeting; instead, this is an opportunity for Council discussion.
- Key elements of the vision and goals established by the community in the Comprehensive Plan will be advanced through the impact of the changes this project is scoped to make.
- The project identifies a series of steps designed to craft a new development code that is more predictable, more accessible, and more equitable.
- More information about rewriting the ordinance for consistency with the Comprehensive Plan and the benefits offered by changes the project will seek to implement will be reported on at a later date.

4. What might be the unintended consequences of this action or strategy?

- Community members may find information about the project more technical in nature, or confusing as related to ongoing work on other priority projects.
- Impacts from changes to land development regulations have long time scales and may be hard to measure immediately or soon-after project completion.
- There will be a period of time where permit applications submitted before changes to the Land Use Ordinance will operate with permit-choice, which could lead to confusion for applicants until all applications are submitted post-adoption of the rewritten ordinance.
- As the New UDO moves from the diagnostic phase into the drafting phase, the Town will seek to understand potential unintended consequences and design a code that mitigates them, and make tweaks to the ordinance where necessary.

5. What steps has your department taken to mitigate any burdens, inequities, and unintended consequences? What strategies might your department take to address these in the future? NOTE: This does not reflect a formal commitment by the Town of Carrboro.

- Identification of impacts, burdens, and benefits will continue to be considered and reflected in the changes to the text.
- The project team has conducted a series of small interviews with a variety of community members and stakeholders, and held community-wide meetings to help address potential questions and confusion.
- Staff continue to work to keep the website up to date and be available for Council and community member questions
- Staff and the Consultant team will continue to prepare materials for community members and council members that effectively distill technical information and connections among this project and other ongoing work, to preempt confusion.
- Staff will continue to monitor land development patterns and usage of the ordinance after the adoption of the rewritten code, to understand where there may still be opportunities for improvement.

Climate Action Pocket Questions

Title: New Carrboro Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) Worksession

Purpose: *This agenda item is designed to provide the Town Council with an opportunity to receive an update from CodeWright, the consultant team preparing the New Carrboro UDO, and to ask questions and provide comments in an informal setting.*

Department: Planning

1. How will this action impact the Town's or the community's greenhouse gas emissions?

- a. Will REDUCE greenhouse gas emissions
- b. Will not reduce or increase greenhouse gas emissions
- c. Will INCREASE greenhouse gas emissions
- d. Not applicable

2. Please explain.

- The goal of this project is to create a new Unified Development Ordinance that aligns with the Comprehensive Plan.
- The worksession is designed for the consultant to report on findings from the current Land Use Ordinance and discuss strategies for the new development code.
- More information about rewriting the ordinance and benefit and impacts offered by changes the project will seek to implement will be clearer as the project moves to the drafting phase.

3. Does this action impact:

- a. Water quality
- b. Erosion and Surface run-off
- c. Flooding
- d. Air quality
- e. Heat islands or extreme heat
- f. Biodiversity
- g. Solid waste
- h. Hazardous waste
- i. Other
- j. This action does not impact the environment

4. Please explain.

- The new UDO will create regulations that, pursuant to state statute, control and set forth requirements for developments to mitigate environmental impacts.
- More information about rewriting the ordinance and the impacts of changes the project will seek to implement will be clearer as the team begins drafting.

5. How is your department planning to mitigate any climate or environmental impacts?

NOTE: This does not reflect a formal commitment by the Town of Carrboro.

- The project currently includes scoped work that specifically highlights climate analyses and impacts that drive, in part, the draft of the new document.
- Staff and the Consultant team will continue to prepare materials for community members and council members that effectively distill technical information and connections among this project and other ongoing work.
- Staff will continue to monitor land development patterns and usage of the ordinance after the adoption of the rewritten code, to understand where there may still be opportunities for improvement.