

# Carrboro Unified Development Ordinance

Town Council Work Session 02.11.25



TOWN OF CARRBORO • NC



# Overview

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# OBJECTIVE:

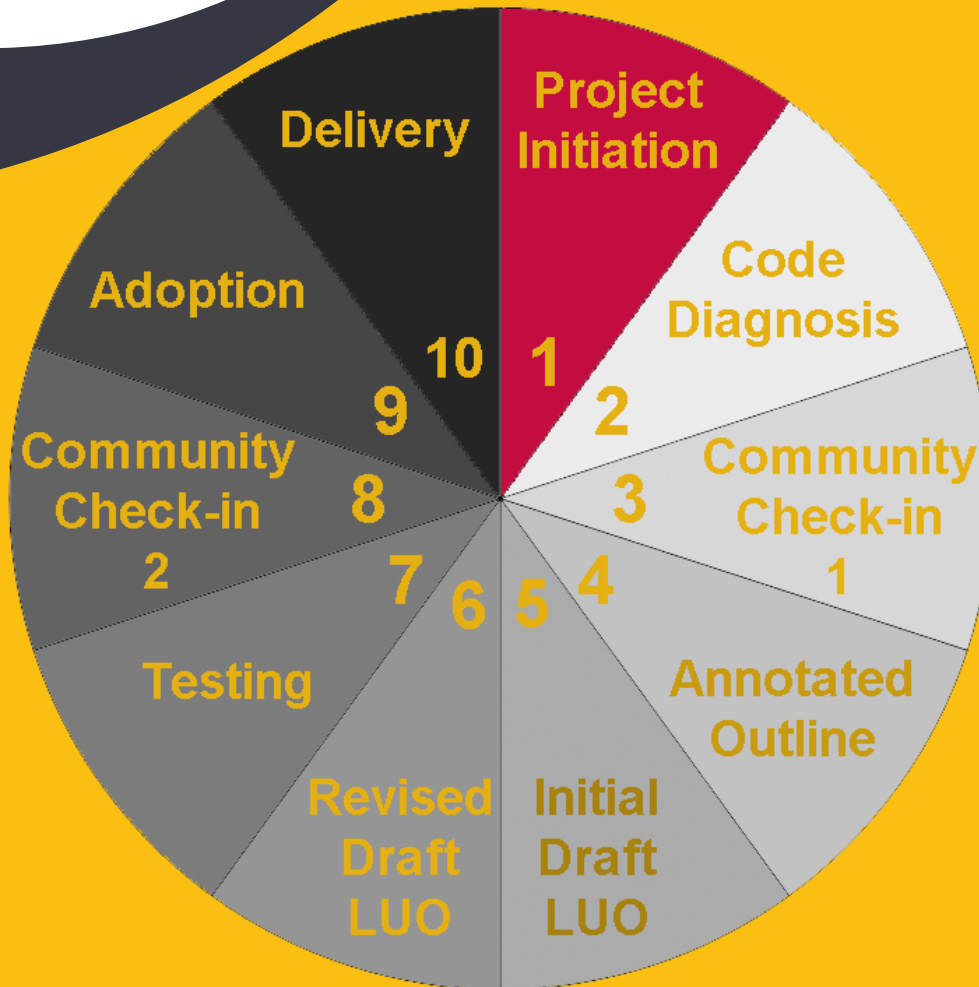
Share our progress thus far  
and hear thoughts about  
the project from Council



# 01 Project Status

## TASK 1. PROJECT INITIATION Near completion

- ✓ Introductory meetings (10)
- ✓ Interviews (9)
- ✓ Social Pinpoint Site
- ✓ Market Analysis



# 02 Input to Date

To: Christina Moon, Town of Carrboro  
From: Chad Meadows, CodeWright  
Date: 2.10.25  
CC: Duncan Dodson, CodeWright Team, file  
RE: Task 1, Project Initiation Meeting Notes



## MESSAGE

These are the meeting notes from the Carrboro LUO update project Task 1 Project Initiation activities conducted in Carrboro and remotely over the period from 11.18.25 through 1.17.25. These notes document the activities conducted during and summarize the discussion. Copies of presentation slides are also included.

The Carrboro Land Use Ordinance Update (or "LUO") project is an effort to update the Town's development regulations to implement the 2022 Carrboro Connects Comprehensive Plan and bring the current LUO into better alignment with State planning law and best planning practice. The project has a special focus on increasing climate resiliency, promoting fairness for everyone, encouraging attainable housing, and ensuring the new LUO is clear and predictable. The relationship of the development regulations to the existing community character is another issue that may get more focus as the project evolves.

Task 1 of the LUO update is Project Initiation. The Project Initiation Task includes the following 12 activities:<sup>1</sup>

1. A Project Kickoff meeting with key Town staff;
2. A Project Introduction Meeting with Town Administration;
3. A discussion of the Public Engagement Plan with the Town's communications staff;
4. A meeting with Planning Department staff;
5. An introductory presentation to the formal Project Advisory Group;
6. A project introduction meeting with the heads of various Town departments;
7. A meeting with representatives of the development community;
8. An introductory presentation to the Town Council;
9. Interviews with each Town Council member;
10. A meeting with the Town's Chief Race and Equity Officer;
11. Four interested party interviews; and
12. A meeting with the Town Attorney.

Additional detail about the status of each of these 12 activities is listed, in order, on the following pages.

<sup>1</sup> NOTE: Task 1 also includes the first Public Forum to be conducted in mid-February, 2025 and summarized under separate cover.



## Carrboro Land Use Ordinance Update

Development Community Interest Meeting Summary February, 2025

The following pages provide a general summary of the comments and questions from the development community. Generally speaking, most of those in attendance expressed concern over the process and frustration with the development review process in Carrboro. The consensus among attendees is that current development review process in Carrboro is unpredictable, expensive, and too lengthy. There also seemed to be consensus that representatives from the development community can and should be involved in the regulatory update process.

The following pages include the comments provided during the meeting. Comments are not in any particular order and are not attributed to any individual attendee. For the sake of clarity comments are grouped into the following five topic areas:

- A. Communication
- B. Development Review Process
- C. Development Standards
- D. Residential Density
- E. The LUO Update Process, Generally

The section below provides five key ideas about the input provided. The end of this report includes copies of the slides provided during the discussion as well as an example of a zoning report from Orange County (which was held up as a potential good example for the Town to emulate).

## KEY IDEAS

1. There appears to be mistrust between the development community and Town staff. There is a feeling that there have been recent improvements, but concern lingers.
2. The development review process is viewed as overly complex, lengthy, and unnecessarily expensive. There is a strong desire for increased predictability in terms of review timeframes.
3. Attendees believe development standards are driving up the costs of development which makes housing more expensive.
4. The Town should look to removing obstacles from the development of preferred forms of development rather than incorporating incentives for preferred development forms.
5. The amount of time necessary for the LUO update is too lengthy.



## Carrboro Land Use Ordinance Update

Interested Party Input Summary February, 2025

### I. WHAT MAKES CARRBORO GREAT

1. **Attainable and flexible housing** options creates the possibility for mixed income communities, which is one of the things that is great about Carrboro. Another great thing about the community is that there are easy-to-reach amenities [Carrboro has a "15-minute downtown," or is sized and configured to allow almost anyone to reach almost any available amenity within 15 minutes from anywhere in the downtown].
2. One great thing about Carrboro is its **core of small homes that are somewhat close together** with amenities that are interspersed throughout the core. The core has a "ring" of apartments, which are in turn surrounded by single-family detached neighborhoods of larger homes.
3. What makes Carrboro great? My community. Knowing my neighbors. Interacting with my neighbors. **My relationships with my neighbors.**
4. What makes Carrboro great? It was great in the '80s and '90s, but not sure Carrboro is great at the moment. It feels somewhat stagnated, regressing, and the regulations are not enabling the community to be what people think it should be.
5. What is great about Carrboro? It is **dense and compact**, and it has the potential to be less auto-centric.
6. What is great about Carrboro? **The scale of town is great.** There are many small and local shops (like Fitch lumber). There is the ability to get around many places by bicycle or bus. There is the chance of living a car-free or almost car-free lifestyle.
7. What is great about Carrboro? **That it still "feels" like a small town.** That it is a pro-environment community (even if maybe it isn't). There are many great events and great event venues [Farmer's Market, Art Center, Car's Cradle, Weaver Street].
8. What is great about Carrboro? **The cultural and music scene.** The affordability of housing permits culture (like music) to remain in Carrboro. At the same time, Carrboro may be losing the things that made it "cool."
9. What is great about Carrboro? **The rural buffer.** However, the fact that it is hard to build houses in Town can put more pressure to develop land in the rural buffer. The lack of density makes it more likely to have urban sprawl.
10. What makes Carrboro great? **The sense of history** - like Carr-Mill, Fitch's. The co-op. There are lots of deer around Carrboro.
11. What's great about Carrboro? It isn't crowded, it doesn't have tall buildings. One interviewee noted that **perhaps what people like about the Town has to be removed in order to meet the Town's goals for the future.**
12. What is great about Carrboro? It is a small town, it was vibrant, it has community spirit and neighborhood integrity. **There are creative people and the community is inclusive.** It begs the question of how Carrboro can remain an inclusive community with such expensive land.

10 Meetings with Staff

12 Development  
Community Reps.

23 Interested Parties

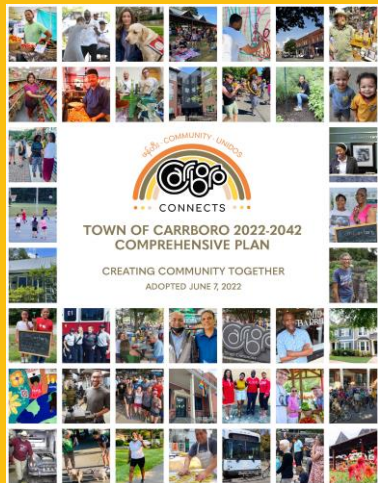


# 02 Input to Date

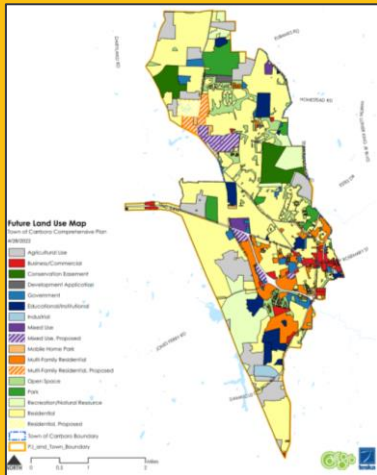
- **A good start, but more to do**
- **Most input aligns with policy guidance**
- **Some comments raised more questions**
- **Use tonight's input, Public Forum 1, and the Code Diagnosis to frame the discussion about how to improve the UDO**

# 03 Project Pillars - Context

## Policy Guidance

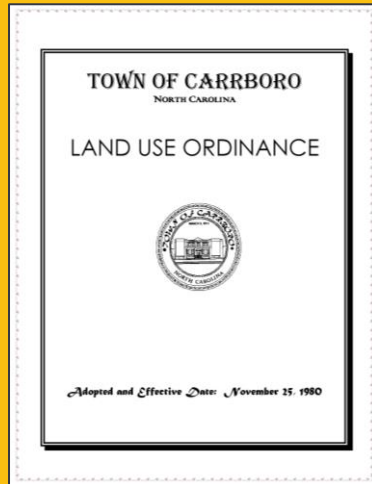


1. Shared vision for the future
2. List of actions to achieve the vision

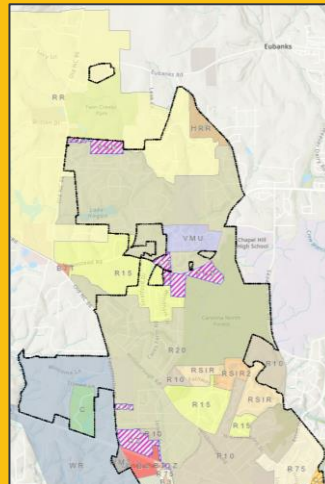


3. Future Land Use Map – where we take the actions

## Implementation Tools



Land Use Ordinance ("LUO")



Zoning Map



Outside LUO

# 03 Project Pillars

## Climate Action



Protecting the  
Town from a  
changing climate

## Race & Equity



Addressing  
disparities,  
reparative  
steps

## Attainable Housing



More density  
& variety of  
housing  
options

## Predictable Processes



Adding clarity  
& efficiency

## Community Character



Retaining what  
makes Carrboro  
special





# Climate Action

- Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Conserve ecosystems
- Green stormwater infrastructure
- Increase energy efficiency
- Compact development patterns
- Reduce vehicle miles travelled



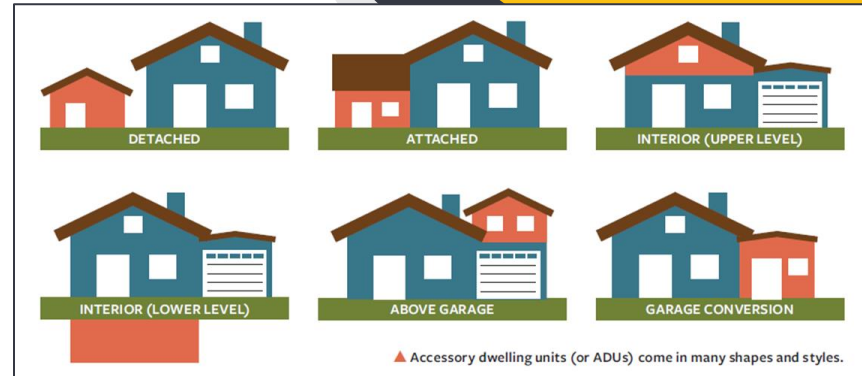
# Race & Equity

- More housing and lot size options
- Multi-generation housing
- Density impacts in historically Black neighborhoods and to BIPOC residents
- Micro / affordable commercial uses
- Review Conditions, Covenants, & Restrictions (CCR) for affordability
- Process improvements, clear language, office hours



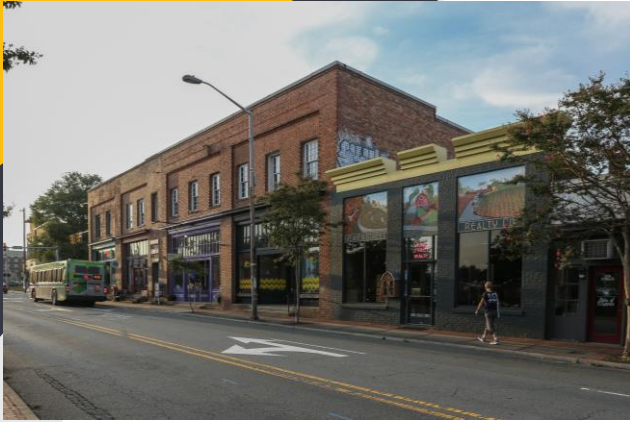
# 🏛️ Attainable Housing

- Increase number of attainable units
- Increase densities, especially in infill areas
- Expand housing options
- Increase incentives for private sector supply of units
- Affordable Housing for whom?





# Community Character



- Many different contexts (characters)
- Core and inner neighborhoods are compact with small lots and buildings
- Compatible development
- Mixed-use core
- Many describe the Town as 'quirky' and 'organic' – and they like it that way





# Predictable Processes

FIGURE 2.2.1: ADMINISTRATIVE ADJUSTMENT PROCEDURE	
Step	Action
1	Pre-application Conference
	See <u>Section 2.3.2, Pre-application Conference</u>
2	File Application
	See <u>Section 2.3.3, Application Filing</u>
3	Completeness Determination
	See <u>Section 2.3.3.G, Determination of Application Completeness</u>
4	Planning Director Review and Decision
	See <u>Section 2.3.5, Staff Review and Action</u>
5	Notification of Decision
	See <u>Section 2.3.9, Notification of Decision</u>

- Codify rules to avoid discretionary review
- Preferred development forms as path of least resistance
- Measurable review criteria
- Timeline for Staff AND Applicants
- Decision authority staff
- Incorporate flexibility, incentives, and ‘safety-valves’



# 04 Public Forum One

Thursday, February 20<sup>th</sup>  
6P – 7:30P @ Town Hall

Saturday, February 22<sup>nd</sup>  
11:30A – 1P @ Town Hall

- Introductory Video
- 4-5 Stations Based on Pillars
- Inform and Inquire
- How the UDO Impacts You
- Samples of Development Codes
- Discussion and Ideas Area

[ENGAGE.CARRBORONC.GOV](https://engage.carrboronc.gov)



## NEW UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE (UDO)

The Town of Carrboro is rewriting our land use ordinance, the Town's set of development regulations.



[Home](#)

## PROJECT OVERVIEW

The current Land Use Ordinance consists of the rules and regulations that govern the use and development of land in the Town of Carrboro. Adopted in 1980, the current ordinance has been updated and revised multiple times over its forty-five year history. The Town has hired [CodeWright Planners](#) and their team of consultants to assist the Town in the two-year process of researching and writing a new ordinance to address and implement many of the goals and objectives identified in *Carrboro Connects*, the Comprehensive Plan adopted in 2022.



[READ THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN](#)



[READ THE CURRENT ORDINANCE](#)

The Town is in the process of gathering information and reaching out to the public to understand the needs and desires of the community. The results of this outreach will be summarized in a comprehensive Code Diagnosis, along with a thorough

## CONTACT US

Have questions or want to learn more about a project, contact us below:

 Name Tina Moon  
 Phone 919-918-7325  
 Email [cmoon@carrboronc.gov](mailto:cmoon@carrboronc.gov)

 Name Duncan Dodson  
 Phone 919-918-7340  
 Email [ddodson@carrboronc.gov](mailto:ddodson@carrboronc.gov)

## WORK PLAN

See where we are in the process of updating the Ordinance. The outline below details the work happening at each stage of the project.



### Task 1. Project Initiation

WINTER 2025

Kick-off and introductory meetings with staff, residents, and community partners, concluding with a Public Forum

SESSION LAW	TOPIC	DESCRIPTION	NOTES
SL2023-142	Expedite Plan Review/At-Risk Permitting	Requires local governments to review and decide commercial building plans within 45 days. Allows applicants to utilize private plan review for commercial development. Creates the ability for an applicant to commence construction "at-risk" without securing other local, state, or federal permits. Local governments may not deny draft soil erosion control plans on the basis of the need for the applicant to secure other approvals first.	
<b>2024 SESSION LAW</b>			
SL2024-1	Airport uses in the floodplain	Modifies NCGS§143-215.57A to allow airports to locate within a special flood hazard area with no need for a floodplain development permit provided the airport can furnish a no-rise certificate that has been accepted by NCDEQ.	
SL2024-15	Vegetation clearing for outdoor advertising	Modifies NCGS§136-133.1 to increase the distance within which existing vegetation may be cleared in front of outdoor advertising based on the design speed of the roadway. Removes prohibition against thinning redbud trees.	Essentially doubles the area that may be cleared of vegetation
SL2024-45	Public water/sewer system rules;	Modifies NCGS§162A-900 to bar local governments from requiring or accepting conditions not authorized by law (such as compliance with design standards) from applicants for serving residential development with water or sewer service. Also bars use of design provisions, min. unit sizes, larger parking spaces, or more access roads from being used as part of a scoring system for water or sewer allocation systems.	This language is identical to language included in SL2024-49
	CAMA permit rules for docks & piers, aquaculture;	Changes CAMA rules in NCAC to allow existing docks, piers, and walkways (of less than 800 sf or 6 feet in width) to be repaired or replaced without need of a CAMA minor permit and allows such replacement to increase width by the lesser of 5 feet or 5% and allows the structure to be higher above the water.  Modifies NCGS§113A-103 to exclude aquaculture from the definition of development as pertaining to CAMA permits.	CAMA rules for increasing height remain unfettered

# 05 Legislation & Compliance

- North Carolina is a 'Dillion Rule' State
- The General Assembly adds new planning-related legislation every year
- Local government autonomy has diminished
- We may see more existential legislation in 2025



# 06 Discussion

Questions? Comments? Suggestions? Concerns?

## Ramifications of SB382 for local governments...

SB382 affects the ability of local governments to initiate changes to some of their development regulations by requiring prior consent from affected landowners in some (but not all) instances.

### Prior consent from affected landowners is **REQUIRED** before adopting amendments that:

- 1 Reduce in the range of allowable uses within existing zoning districts
- 2 Change prior 'by-right' development to now require special use permit approval
- 3 Reduce maximum density within existing zoning districts
- 4 Increase setbacks or dimensional requirements within existing zoning districts
- 5 Increase development standards that change existing conforming development to nonconforming development on lots in non-residential zoning districts

### Prior consent from landowners is **NOT REQUIRED** for:

- 1 Text amendments that maintain or expand the range of allowable uses in current zoning districts
- 2 Text amendments that maintain or reduce setbacks or dimensional requirements in current zoning districts
- 3 Text or map amendments that maintain or that reduce current development standards
- 4 Text amendments that establish new unmapped zoning districts
- 5 Increases in development standards applied to developed lots in residential districts; even if such changes create nonconforming development
- 6 Increases in development standards on undeveloped lots in residential or non-residential districts
- 7 Application of voluntary incentives even when incentives result in a reduction of allowable uses or densities, increases in setbacks or dimensional requirements, or increases in development standards