

Denton Planning Commission
Public Information Meeting Minutes

April 8, 2025

Planning Commission Members:

William Quick, Chairperson*

David Burroughs, Vice Chairperson*

Kevin Waterman*

Dona Sorce*

James Guay, Alternate*

* Those Present

** Excused

*** Absent

Participants:

Peter Johnston, Town Planner

Frank Taylor, Town Councilman

Scott Getchell, Town Administrator

Wes Jones

J. L. Gannon

Recording:

Donna Todd, Director of Planning & Codes

George Bacorn, Jr., Chief of Police

PROCEEDINGS

Call to Order:

The Planning Commission Public Information Meeting was called to order by Chairperson Quick at 6:00 p.m., on April 8, 2025, at the Wharves of Choptank Visitor & Heritage Center.

This meeting was made available to the public via Zoom video conference, and access was made available on the Town website.

Draft Zoning Ordinance:

Chairperson Quick introduced the Members of the Planning Commission and Town Staff to the Public.

Peter Johnston, Town Planner, led the discussion regarding the Draft Zoning Ordinance and discussed the updates to the Zoning Ordinance for the Town and the importance of implementing the Comprehensive Plan's recommendations. The Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision regulations are the primary tools in which the Town must implement the goals and objectives that are outlined in the Comprehensive Plan. They are focusing on accommodating future population and housing within the corporate zones. The update aimed to make the ordinance more flexible and streamline review processes, particularly for economic development projects.

Additionally, the implications of House Bill 538 are the Housing Expansion and Affordability Act, which requires jurisdictions to allow manufactured homes in any district that allows detached single-family homes. The jurisdictions are required to allow up to a 30% increase in base density. There is a limitation on the number of hearings that are allowed for the process. At least 25% of the units must be considered affordable to low-income and workforce housing and must be maintained as affordable units for forty years. Also mentioned was House Bill 233

regarding the Critical Area program. The Town's Zoning Ordinance was updated to address climate change impacts and ensure equitable mitigation measures.

Mr. Johnston stated that most of the current Zoning Ordinance has not changed, and some of the key changes include the following.

- All design guidelines are now in one place for reference. This makes it easier to navigate per type of zone.
- Accessory dwelling units will now be more accessible to property owners and increasing eligibility.
- Cottage Housing Development option, where 8-12 cottage units can be clustered on a minimum of one (1) acre of land.

J. L. Gannon questioned if it would be allowed on lots in a subdivision as well as auxiliary dwelling units.

Mr. Johnston explained if they had a large parcel, they could cut out a portion of the subdivision for a Cottage Housing Development but stated it is not a fee simple lot ownership that you could have multiple of in a subdivision. Each Cottage Housing Development must require common ownership where there is a shared community center and a common responsibility between all owners for maintenance.

- Recreation and Park (RP) properties have been returned to their original zoning classifications.
- A new (UR) Urban Residential District Zone to the east of MD 404 permits a variety of housing options, including four-story townhomes and apartments in some areas of the (MR) Mix Residential District and (SR) Suburban Residential District.
- The (IRD) Infill and Redevelopment Overlay Zone is a designated district aimed at encouraging suitable infill and redevelopment within older communities, supporting initiatives that are in line with the objectives of the Comprehensive Plan, even if they do not completely conform to conventional zoning regulations. The (RDE) Redevelopment Floating Zone is being replaced with an (IRD) Infill and Redevelopment Overlay Zone. This overlay gives the Planning Commission more flexibility to approve context-appropriate projects without requiring variances.

- The Draft Zoning Ordinance revises standards for Planned Unit Development (PUDs) currently permitted in Chapter 128 and makes it clear the Town Council is the approving authority.
- Appendix III – Design Guidelines has been added. This Appendix outlines design guidelines for development within the Town of Denton. It consolidates and adjusts the design guidelines from Chapter 128 into a single appendix. It is divided into three sections:
 1. Community Appearance
 2. Residential Infill and Redevelopment
 3. (PN) Planned Neighborhood Design Guidelines.

Wes Jones, a Town Resident, asked if the height adjustments would reflect on an accessory dwelling unit (ADU).

Mr. Johnston stated the sixty-foot height was only for four-story townhomes and apartments in the UR District. An accessory structure cannot be taller than the principal structure and that would be inconsistent with the design guidelines. Mr. Johnston advised Mr. Jones that he could appeal the Planning Commission's decision to the Town Council or Board of Appeals for variances.

Frank Taylor, Town Councilman, invited residents to submit written comments or attend the Town Council meeting on May 1, 2025, to provide input on the proposed zoning ordinance changes.

Adjournment: The Meeting adjourned at 6:39 p.m.