

Planning and Development Glossary of Terms

Accessory Structure: A detached subordinate structure or building located on the same lot as and incidental to the principal structure.

Adverse Impact: A negative consequence to the physical, social, or economic environment.

Affordable Housing: Housing with a sales price or rental amount within the means of a household that may occupy moderate- and low-income housing.

Amendment: A local legislative act changing a zoning ordinance to make alterations, to correct errors, or to clarify the zoning ordinance.

Amenities: Desirable features of a neighborhood, housing development, or condominium, such as nearby parks, playgrounds, shuffleboard courts, swimming pools, community centers, and bocce courts.

Americans with Disabilities Act: Legislation enacted in the United States in 1990 to prohibit discrimination on the basis of physical or mental disability.

Blight: A piece of property, building, or structure in a deteriorated condition, or a neighborhood or area that has generally deteriorated.

Buffering: The use of landscaping or retained native vegetation or the use of landscaping along with berms, walls, or decorative fences that at least partially and periodically obstruct the view from the street or an abutting property in such a manner that vehicular use areas, parking lots, parked cars, detention ponds, and conflicting activity areas will be partially or completely screened.

Build-out: The maximum, theoretical development of land as permitted under zoning regulations. A build-out analysis determines the maximum development of a specific area of community based on current regulations.

Capital Improvement Program (CIP): A proposed schedule of all future projects listed in order of construction priority together with cost estimates and the anticipated means of financing each project. Included are all major projects requiring the expenditure of public funds over and above the annual local government's operating expenses, for the purchase, construction, or replacement of the physical assets for the community.

Closed Session: A governmental meeting or portion closed to everyone but its members and members of its parent body for purposes specified in state law.

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG): A federal entitlement program administered by HUD's Community Planning and Development Office. The purpose of CDBG funds is to improve communities by providing decent housing, a suitable living environment, and expanding economic opportunities—principally for persons with low and moderate incomes.

Conflict of Interest: Occurs when the personal interest of a public official places him or her in a position where he or she cannot execute his or her public duties without affecting his or her private interests, thus denying the public the fair, impartial, and objective judgment to which it is entitled.

Density: The number of dwelling units situated on or to be developed upon a gross acre of land, generally expressed as “x dwelling units per acre.”

Density Bonus: An increase in the number of market-rate units on the site in order to provide an incentive for the construction of affordable housing pursuant to this ordinance.

Design Guideline: A standard of appropriate activity that will preserve the historic and architectural character of a structure or area.

Development Reviews: The process for determining the appropriateness of a proposed development project.

Eminent Domain: The right of a government unit to take private property for public use with appropriate compensation to the owner.

Ethics: A system of moral principles governing the appropriate conduct for an individual or group.

Fiscal Impact Analysis: Estimates the public sector costs to serve projected new development and infrastructure needs.

Floodplain: Areas near rivers and/or lakes that are prone to flooding.

Geographic Information Systems/Science (GIS): Computer technology, tools, databases, and applications that provide spatial (geographic) data management, analysis, and mapping capabilities to support policy evaluation, decision-making, and program operations.

Growth Management: The methodology by which a municipality controls the expansion of the community.

Historic District: An area designated as a “Historic District” by local ordinance or by state or federal designation, which contains within definable geographic boundaries, properties, or buildings that may or may not be landmarks, but which contribute to the overall historic character of the designated area.

Home-based Business: Any business or commercial activity that is conducted, or proposed to be conducted, from property that is zoned for residential use and is clearly incidental and secondary to the use of the dwelling unit for residential purposes.

Industrial: Land use characterized by establishments founded in, among others, manufacturing or research and development.

Infill: Development or redevelopment of land that has been bypassed, remained vacant, and/or is underused as a result of the continuing urban development process.

Infrastructure: Facilities and services needed to sustain industry, residential, commercial, and all other land use activities, including water, sewer lines, and other utilities, streets and roads, communications, and public facilities such as fire stations, parks, schools, etc.

Land Use: How a certain area of land is utilized.

Live/Work Unit: A work space or shop that is integrated with a dwelling unit occupied by the proprietor of the work space or shop.

Low-Income Housing: Housing that is affordable, according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, for either home ownership or rental, and that is occupied, reserved, or marketed for occupancy by households with a gross household income that does not exceed 50 percent of the median gross household income for households of the same size within the housing region or county in which the housing is located.

Master Plan: A comprehensive long-range plan intended to guide growth and development of a community or region and one that includes analysis, recommendation, and proposals for the community's population, economy, housing, transportation, community facilities, and land use.

Minimum Lot Size: A provision of a zoning ordinance stipulating the minimum dimensions of a lot necessary for the construction of a building, for example, two-acre lots for each residence.

Mixed Use Development: Development that is created in response to patterns of separate uses that are typical in suburban areas necessitating reliance on cars. Mixed use developments include residential, commercial, and business accommodations in one area.

Multiple Family: A land use categorized by three or more families living independently of one another within the same building.

Nonconforming Use: A use (or structure) that lawfully existed prior to the adoption or amendment of an ordinance but that fails to conform to the standards of the current zoning ordinance.

Notice: An announcement containing information pertaining to a future event typically required for certain planning and zoning activities, such as a public hearing.

Open Space: A substantially undeveloped area, usually including environmental features such as water areas or recreational facilities.

Ordinance: A statute enacted by a governmental body.

Outreach: A service that includes involvement in activities designed to educate participants and assist those seeking information on a topic, such as growth and development, strategic planning, environmental protection, community participation, and others.

Park-n-Ride Lots: A public parking lot that accommodates ride sharing or public transit.

Pedestrian Links: Sidewalks and pathways designed for people who walk or bike that connect frequently visited destinations.

Planned Unit Development (PUD): A tract of land developed as a unit under single ownership or unified control, which includes one or more principal buildings or uses, and is processed under the Planned Unit Development provisions of the ordinance.

Planning Commission: A group of appointed residents who give guidance to the land use, zoning, and planning process in the community.

Public Hearing: A meeting announced and advertised in advance and open to the general public wherein the public has an opportunity to comment and participate.

Public Participation Program: A formal framework for public participation and informative communication in the planning process through coordination with local neighborhood organizations, citizens, media, and government officials.

Redevelopment: Any proposed expansion, addition, or major façade change to an existing building, structure, or use. Also refers to neighborhood and larger scale development within established neighborhoods, including rehabilitation, rebuilding, and new construction.

Residential Development: Areas that provide homes for local residents. Residential development can be categorized differently depending on the number of families per building, density, property rights, price, and architectural style.

Rezoning: An amendment to a zoning map or zoning ordinance that changes the zoning district designation of a property or properties.

Rights-of-way: Land owned by a local, state, or federal governmental entity, or privately owned by the abutting and benefitting properties, dedicated to streets and similar transportation related functions, generally for the purpose of providing access to private land.

Roundabouts: A roundabout (or “rotary”) is a type of road junction (or traffic calming device) at which traffic streams circularly around a central island after first yielding to the circulating traffic.

Senior Housing: Housing that is restricted to seniors which generally contains limited or no medical supportive services.

Single Family: Land use characterized by lots containing individual residential homes surrounded by yards.

Site Plan Review: Establishes criteria for the layout, scale, appearance, safety, and environmental impacts of multiple family, commercial, or industrial development.

Site Plan: A scaled plan showing proposed uses and structures for a parcel of land, including such details necessary to illustrate the final proposed use and development.

Smart Growth: An approach to land use planning and growth management that recognizes connections between development and quality of life. Smart Growth stresses guidelines and incentives for growth instead of regulations, to encourage development that is sensitive to quality of life factors.

Sprawl: A low-density land use pattern that is automobile dependent, energy and land consumptive, and requires a very high ratio of road surface to development served.

Sustainable Development: Development that maintains or enhances economic opportunity and community well being while protecting and restoring the natural environment upon which people and economies depend. Sustainable development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Traffic Calming: A concept fundamentally concerned with reducing the adverse impact of motor vehicles on built-up areas. Usually involves reducing vehicle speeds, providing more space for pedestrians and cyclists, and improving the local environment.

Transportation Corridor: A combination of discrete, adjacent surface transportation networks (e.g., freeway, arterial roads, rail networks) that link the same major origins and destinations.

Transportation Plan: A document that provides the rationale, goals, objectives, strategies, and standards for the implementation of transportation improvements.

Unnecessary Hardship: A unique and extreme inability to use a property in conformance with the use requirements in the zoning district.

Urban Growth Boundary (UGB): The boundary or line marking the limit between the urban growth areas and other areas such as rural and resource areas where urban growth is not encouraged, as designated by appropriate entities.

Utilities: Any structures or facilities used for production, generation, transmission, delivery, collection, or storage of water, sewage, stormwater, electricity, gas, or electronic signals.

Variance: A relaxation of dimensional or use standards by a local zoning board in compliance with statutory criteria.

Zoning: Classification of land in a community into different areas and districts, generally to separate land uses into appropriate locations.