Village Center Districts: A New Approach to Zoning for Sustainability (April 30, 2008 Meeting)

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Village Center Districts

A New Approach to Zoning for Sustainability
Why do it?

- Livelier and more interesting downtown
- Incentive for property owners to invest
- Creates diverse housing choices in town
- Creates village-scale infrastructure opportunities
What are Village Center Districts?

- Medium to high density, compact, or clustered development where infrastructure already exists.
- Mixed use – allows some mix of housing and commercial uses, such as apartments on a second story while retail stores might be on the first floor.
- Reduced lot sizes and setbacks.
- More walkable streets
  - Parking behind buildings
  - Fewer curb cuts, buildings closer together
- Share utilities like parking, driveways, wastewater and drainage systems.
Some Benefits of Village Center Districts

- Cluster development with shared utilities can address existing water quality issues such as:
  - Tie-in existing failed Title 5 systems.
  - Better maintenance and monitoring.

- Can support open space protection with a TDR program or down-zoning of the rural areas.

- Mixed-income housing opportunities.

- Promotes economic development & sustainable neighborhoods.
Some Challenges of using Village Center Districts

- **Zoning regulations** - Local land use regulations often limit mixed-use, density, dimensional setbacks, parking requirements, and shared utilities.
- **Anti-growth sentiment** - No net increase in growth usually requires a TDR program.
- **Wastewater treatment** – Local Board of Health regulations and disposal constraints, especially for on-site systems.
Typical Zoning in our Traditional Village Centers

Existing Village Center Zoning:

Core: light pink
Edge: dark pink
Industrial: light gray
## Conventional Dimensional and Density Requirements in Village Centers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Core</th>
<th>Edge</th>
<th>Ind</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Min Lot Area</strong></td>
<td>15,000 s.f.</td>
<td>30,000 s.f.</td>
<td>40,000 s.f.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Frontage</strong></td>
<td>80 feet</td>
<td>125 feet</td>
<td>160 feet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minimum Setbacks:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Front</td>
<td>15 feet</td>
<td>20 feet</td>
<td>25 feet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Side</td>
<td>5 feet</td>
<td>10 feet</td>
<td>20 feet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rear</td>
<td>10 feet</td>
<td>20 feet</td>
<td>25 feet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Max Height</strong></td>
<td>2.5 story</td>
<td>2.5 story</td>
<td>2.5 story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mixed-Uses</strong></td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shared Parking</strong></td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Traditional Dimensional and Density Requirements in the Village Center

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Core</th>
<th>Edge</th>
<th>Ind</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Min Lot Area</strong></td>
<td>5,000 s.f.</td>
<td>10,000 s.f.</td>
<td>20,000 s.f.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Frontage</strong></td>
<td>50 feet</td>
<td>80 feet</td>
<td>160 feet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Minimum Setbacks:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Core</th>
<th>Edge</th>
<th>Ind</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Front</strong></td>
<td>0-5 feet</td>
<td>5-10 feet</td>
<td>5-10 feet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Side</strong></td>
<td>0 feet</td>
<td>0-5 feet</td>
<td>10 feet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rear</strong></td>
<td>10 feet</td>
<td>20 feet</td>
<td>25 feet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Max Height</strong></td>
<td>3 story</td>
<td>2.5 story</td>
<td>2.5 story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mixed-Uses</strong></td>
<td>by-right</td>
<td>special permit</td>
<td>SP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shared Parking</strong></td>
<td>by-right</td>
<td>special permit</td>
<td>SP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Using Advanced Wastewater Systems in Village Centers

- Supports cluster development.
- Allows a higher density of development.
- Allows for higher level of treatment.
- Maintains open space along the perimeter.
- System requires inspection every three years.
- Users responsible for operation & maintenance construction.
Leaching fields for individual Title 5 Septic Systems

Conventional Title 5 Systems
Village-Scale Shared Treatment Systems

Leaching field for shared septic system serving multiple homes
Village-Scale Shared Treatment Systems

Leaching field for private sewage treatment plant
Village Center District Zoning Considerations and Next Steps

- Geographically redefine the traditional Village Center area by carefully assessing the land use patterns, infrastructure capacity, and community character interests.
- Recalibrate the local land use, density, and dimensional requirements to support better site design for land use, building placement and design, pedestrian circulation, open space and parking.
- Add flexible design review criteria specific to the Village Center District under Site Plan Review.
- Consider a TDR program to address growth issues and open space protection in rural areas.
Transfer Development Rights Zoning

Another New Approach to Zoning for Sustainability
Why do it?

- To achieve both economic development and open space goals and objectives.
- Allows the zoning regulations to remain density neutral.
- Can also be used effectively to protect cultural or historic resources.
What is TDR Zoning?

- Innovative land use tool that uses market forces to meet two main smart growth objectives - open space protection and economic development:
  1. It is used to preserve sensitive open space areas within the community for long term protection by providing a transfer mechanism to shift the development rights from the sensitive areas to more suitable locations.
  2. In doing so it provides a market-based incentive to make these suitable areas more attractive for economic development through increased density.
What are Sending & Receiving areas?

- “Sending” areas are identified for long term open space protection and usually include:
  - Sensitive natural resource areas such as municipal water supply zones, wetland, habitat areas,…
  - Historic landscapes, agricultural uses, scenic views and other unique open spaces.

- “Receiving” areas are identified for compact or clustered development.
  - Mixed-use, higher density development
  - Within existing infrastructure and service areas
Identifying Sending and Receiving Areas: Existing Conditions
Identifying Sending and Receiving Areas: Full Build-out with Existing Zoning
Identifying Sending and Receiving Areas: Delineating Service Areas and the Edges
Identifying Sending and Receiving Areas: Alternative Plan using TDR
Identifying Sending and Receiving Areas: Existing Conditions
Identifying Sending Area: 
Existing Conditions
Identifying Sending Area:
Full Build-out with Existing Zoning
Identifying Sending Area: Alternative Plan using TDR
Identifying Receiving Areas: Existing Conditions
Identifying Receiving Areas: Alternative Plan using TDR
Some Benefits of using TDR Zoning

- Compact development within the receiving areas can address existing water quality issues such as:
  - Tie-in existing failed Title 5 systems.
  - Better maintenance and monitoring.
  - Limiting impervious areas
  - Enhanced stormwater and wastewater treatment

- Provides market-based subsidy for local open space protection without the challenges of down-zoning.

- Voluntary participation.

- Density neutral.

- Promotes long term economic vitality of existing service areas and environmental protection of outlying rural areas.
Some Challenges of using TDR Zoning

- Local land use regulations often limit mixed-use, density, dimensional setbacks, parking requirements, and shared utilities.
- Formal designation of the receiving areas can be a challenging experience.
- Many folks will not believe the open space or sending areas will be protected with the TDR program.
- Many communities lack the administrative capacity to make the program work.
Summary of TDR Zoning & Next Steps

- Zoning tool used to direct growth away from sensitive areas generally unsuitable or inappropriate for development to those areas deemed suitable for development.
- Challenge is to carefully analyze the potential receiving areas and work with RPAs to assist with the mapping and site analysis exercises required.
- Review a range of TDR models used in other communities.
- TDR is one of the best zoning tools for protecting community character and our water resources while stimulating the rebirth of our traditional village centers.