2008

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.
  - Enhanced wastewater treatment

- 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>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minimum Setbacks:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Front</strong></td>
<td>0-5 feet</td>
<td>5-10 feet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Side</strong></td>
<td>0 feet</td>
<td>0-5 feet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Rear</strong></td>
<td>10 feet</td>
<td>20 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: 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.
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.