



Chatham County Planning Board Agenda Notes

Date: March 5, 2013

Agenda Item:

Attachment #:

Subdivision

Conditional Use Permit

Rezoning Request

Other: Zoning Text Amendment

Subject:	Public hearing request by the Chatham County Board of Commissioners to amend Sections 7.2, 10.5, 10.6, 10.7, 10.8, 15.4, and 15.11 of the Zoning Ordinance to (1) establish standards for off-premise directional signs in the zoned areas of the county for businesses, churches, parks, historic properties, schools, and other places of public assembly and (2) provide a reduction in building setbacks in business zoning districts with permission of the adjoining property owner and when the adjoining property has the same zoning classification.
Action Requested:	
Attachments:	1. Revised proposed amendment to the Zoning Ordinance.

Introduction & Background

The Planning Board discussed this item during their February 5 meeting and voted to forward the off-premise sign amendments to the Board of Commissioners and requested additional information about the setback reductions. Revised language for the setbacks is provided in the attachment and additional discussion is below. After the Planning Board meeting, staff contacted the School of Government faculty to determine if the plan consistency statement is required for text amendments, as well as zoning map amendments. It was advised that the statement does need to be adopted for text amendments and a draft has been included in the Discussion & Analysis section of the notes.

Discussion & Analysis

During the February meeting, several board members had questions about the impact of the setback reductions to adjoining property owners and requested additional information. Planning staff spoke with the Building Inspections Supervisor and confirmed that the NC Building Code allows buildings to be constructed to a property line with the proper fire rating. Staff also spoke with the Fire Marshal and confirmed that a fire apparatus access road/drive that is 20 feet wide must extend

to within 150 feet of all portions of a non-residential building. Staff reviewed the landscaping provisions of the Zoning Ordinance and the landscaping width requirements listed in the Landscape Buffer Requirements table are the minimum required. The landscaping buffer applies to the perimeter of a project boundary, but does not apply when the zoning is the same on adjoining properties. The landscaping buffers could require that a non-residential structure be moved to accommodate landscaping when the zoning on the adjacent property is different. Staff also reviewed the off-street parking requirements and confirmed that the required parking spaces for different uses may be combined in one parking lot or structure.

Concern was also expressed about the visual impact to adjoining business properties that had to meet the building setbacks and that were not part of a larger common development plan and whether they would be at a disadvantage if someone used the setback reduction. Staff has proposed revised language that would address this concern by limiting the reductions to the interior setbacks for projects developed under a common development plan, such as a shopping center. A new definition for common plan of development is proposed and the revisions to the setbacks are also included in the attachment. The proposed wording would require that the minimum building setback would apply to the perimeter of a common development plan, but allow flexibility internal to the project.

As noted in the Introduction & Background, a plan consistency statement needs to be recommended to the Board of Commissioners for text amendments for off-premise signs and setback reductions in the business zoning districts. The statement could include that the Chatham County Land Conservation and Development Plan encourages these amendments by supporting continued development within areas currently zoned commercial or industrial (p. 28) and agricultural and home based businesses that meet performance standards (p. 28),

Recommendation

The Planning Board needs to recommend a consistency statement to the Board of Commissioners for the Zoning Ordinance text amendments for off-premise directional signs and setback reductions in the business zoning districts. Planning staff recommends approval of the Zoning Ordinance text amendments for setback reductions.