

Putting it All Together: the Unified Land Development Code

Matt Trepal, Principal Planner for Charlotte County Community Development Department

The County is currently in the process of revising its land development regulations and preparing a Unified Land Development Code (ULDC) that collects all of the various ordinances that govern and control the development of land and presents them in a single document. There are several reasons for this revision and the development of the ULDC.

The existing land development regulations were prepared at various times, and are spread throughout the Charlotte County Code of Laws and Ordinances. In many cases, these regulations were prepared without a full review of how they might work with or against other existing regulations. By consolidating all of the regulations into a single code, the ULDC works to eliminate conflicts between sections and standardize procedures and definitions.

Many of the existing regulations are old. The zoning regulations, for example, were first prepared in the 1980s, and have only been updated on a piecemeal basis. Before now, there has been no comprehensive attempt to modernize the land development regulations or to incorporate current best planning and zoning practices into them. The ULDC includes many current planning and zoning practices to modernize and streamline the procedures, practices, and standards included.

The ULDC works to improve the quality of development in the County. Many development standards were raised, even as many other standards were relaxed. The Smart Charlotte 2050 comprehensive plan introduced many new planning concepts to the County, such as increased walkability and more mixed-use development, and the ULDC implements these comprehensive plan policies.

The draft ULDC is still a work in progress, with some sections incomplete or unfinished. The incomplete sections are still being developed, and will be made available for review when they have been fully developed.

Public input meetings on the draft ULDC have begun, and the County has received comments that the review and comment schedule is too aggressive while the input format is inadequate. One change that has been made subsequent to the first meeting on August 9 is that all meetings will now be roundtable meetings, allowing for discussions. The next set of public input roundtable meetings are scheduled for September 6 and 18, to discuss Chapters 4, 5, and 6, although additional meetings may be scheduled. These meetings are open to the public, and anyone interested in the draft ULDC is invited to attend.

Besides the meetings, however, there are many other avenues for public comment on the draft ULDC. The document is available online for review at the County's website. Visit www.CharlotteCountyFL.gov and click "Unified Land Development Code (ULDC)" in the Hot Topics list on the left. Comments may be submitted by email at any time to uldc@charlottefl.com. Finally, Planning and Zoning staff are available to discuss the code. The County intends for this process to be transparent, inclusive, and as collaborative as possible, given the three main motives behind this revision. All residents are invited to submit

comments on the draft ULDC and are invited to attend the roundtable meetings. All submitted comments will be considered during the review and revision process.

The County's land development regulations directly affect the County's future appearance and development. A site developed now will retain its form and appearance for twenty years or more. The ULDC will establish a framework for getting higher-quality development while streamlining processes and allowing greater flexibility for developers.