



Legislation Text

File #: 040007, Version: 4

Cluster Subdivision Definitions and Criteria (B)

On May 24, 2004, the City Commission made a referral to the Community Development Committee to review the cluster subdivision ordinance. The cluster subdivision ordinance allows developers to create subdivisions with smaller lots than would normally be allowed within the zoning district, and in turn to set aside open space. One of the issues being reviewed is to make the cluster subdivision ordinance clearer that the open space set aside should be above and beyond the normal set-asides of wetland buffers, creek buffers and other types of required buffer areas.

This is an opportunity for the City to review generally the issue of how small the City wants lots to be allowed in zoning districts that normally require larger ones. Under Gainesville's zoning code, all districts allow relatively small lots - RSF-1 is the most restrictive: it requires at least 8,000-square-foot lots and caps density at 3.5 units per acre. So the issue is how far the City wants to go in allowing smaller lots than that, which may result in significantly more compact developments than in the surrounding neighborhoods.

The Community Development Committee discussed this issue on June 24, 2004, September 20, 2004 and November 4, 2004. Staff presented several working drafts of proposed ordinance revisions, and discussed the issues. One of the issues discussed was to revise the ordinance to be clearer that there are really two kinds of cluster subdivisions - one type being cluster developments where the goal is to cluster the houses away from environmental features and to protect the open space around those features, and the other type being developments where there are not unusual environmental features but the developer is simply wanting flexibility to build smaller lots, set aside other space as open, and have the flexibility to do this without following the usual regulations regarding lot dimensions.

Developers or developers' agents offered several suggestions to the Committee, including allowing cluster subdivisions on properties as small as one acre; clearly allowing zero lot line developments; not requiring in all instances that the open space include environmentally protective features; allowing some flexibility as to how many Heritage trees must be protected; and not including an absolute minimum on how small the lot sizes can go.

If the Commission wishes to proceed with changes to the cluster ordinance, the next step will be to initiate a petition to the City Plan Board.

None

Community Development Committee to the City Commission: 1) Hear a report from staff; and 2) remove this item from the referral list.