

PLANNING COMMISSION

The charge of the Planning Commission is to assist the Council in achieving the Town's Comprehensive Plan for orderly growth and development by analyzing, evaluating, and recommending responsible town policies, ordinances, and planning standards that manage land use and involving the community in long-range planning.

RECOMMENDATION FOR OMNIBUS TEXT AMENDMENT TO THE CHAPEL HILL TOWN CODE AND THE LAND USE MANAGEMENT ORDINANCE

October 7, 2025

Recommendation: **Approval** ☒ **Approval with Comments** ☐ **Denial** ☐

Motion: Mitchell, seconded by McMahon, moved to recommend Resolution A, finding the proposed text amendments consistent with the Town's Comprehensive Plan.

Vote: 4 – 0

Yeas: Elizabeth Losos (Chair), Jonathan Mitchell (Co-Chair), Wesley McMahon, Chuck Mills

Nays:

Abstain: Libby Thomas

Recommendation: **Approval** ☐ **Approval with Comments** ☒ **Denial** ☐

Motion: Mitchell, seconded by McMahon, moved to recommend that the Town Council adopt the proposed text amendments with the following modifications:

- Planning Commission recommends the removal of site plan review for the Northside and Pine Knolls Neighborhood Conservation Districts;
- Planning Commission recommends keeping the requirement to open the hearing and close the hearing at separate meetings for conditional zonings;

The Planning Commission also authorized Chair Elizabeth Losos to provide additional context on the Commission's discussion and considerations to Town Council.

Vote: 5 – 0

Yeas: Elizabeth Losos (Chair), Jonathan Mitchell (Co-Chair), Wesley McMahon, Chuck Mills, Libby Thomas,

Nays:

Prepared by: Josh Mayo, Planner II

Planning Commission Summary of Concerns on Proposed LUMO Omnibus Amendments

October 7, 2025

1. Site Plan Review

Commission members generally agree that the Planning Commission should not review site plans. However, they oppose the proposed exception for Neighborhood Conservation Districts (NCDs). The same limitations that apply outside NCDs—an inability to alter or deny compliant applications—would apply within them. Retaining Commission review for NCDs risks confusing residents, who may expect influence over site outcomes that the Commission cannot provide. This communication would be better handled by the Planning Department, which can explain the process without creating false expectations.

2. Conditional Zoning

Members generally support efforts to streamline conditional zoning but some question allowing legislative hearings to open and close in a single meeting. This could limit meaningful public input and restrict Council's ability to obtain and consider responses from staff or applicants (or their experts) who may not attend the same meeting. Members also cautioned that drafting or revising ordinances "on the spot" may lead to unclear or inconsistent stipulations. Maintaining a two-meeting minimum would balance efficiency with transparency and accuracy.

3. Two-Family Housing Options

The Commission supports expanding two-family housing options. However, several members doubted that removing the four-car parking maximum for duplexes would meaningfully increase development potential, noting that excess cars could shift to street parking. No member expressed strong opposition, but the benefit of this specific change was questioned.

4. Dimensional and Lot Regulations

Members were broadly supportive of easing lot size minimums, street frontage and flag-lot restrictions to improve flexibility in subdivision design. However, several members noted that while canopy cover and impervious surface tradeoffs were acknowledged, they were not evaluated with data. The Town has sufficient information to assess how these changes could affect stormwater, sustainability, and tree canopy. Some Commission members recommend that this analysis be conducted before adoption, and tracked over time.

5. Concept Plan Review

The Commission was divided (3–2–1) on removing concept plan review. A slim majority supported removal. It was noted that concept plan requirements were recently reduced and streamlined; the Town does not yet have the data to determine whether these adjustments have already addressed developer's concerns about their onerous burden. Completely eliminating concept plans would remove an early opportunity for developers to receive feedback from the Commission and public before investing resources and becoming vested in any particular option. This early engagement would be especially valuable if conditional zoning hearings were to be condensed into a single Council meeting (see #2 above). Some Commission members recommend retaining the streamlined concept plan step until its value can be properly evaluated.