



Reference Guide

Draft Land Use Management Ordinance (LUMO)

July 16, 2026

How to learn more about the draft LUMO

This **Reference Guide** is a detailed – but not exhaustive – guide to changes in the draft LUMO.

We've also created a **High-Level Summary** for an overview how our draft LUMO will help achieve Council and community goals, available at chapelhillnc.gov/LUMOupdate.

The **full draft LUMO** is also available for review and comment on that page.

Article 1 – Introduction

Article 1 identifies the source of the Town’s zoning authority and includes other foundational provisions regarding how LUMO is implemented.

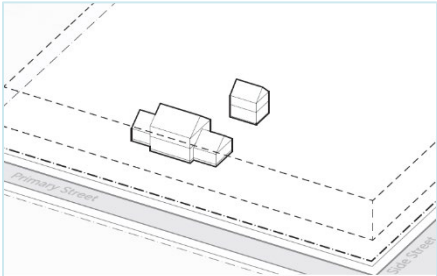
Section	Description	Additional Information/Notes
1.1. General Provisions	This section describes what LUMO is, where it regulates, and how it relates to other laws.	The provisions of this section have not been changed significantly. Two subsections (“Applicability” and “Transitional Provisions”) are still a work in progress and will be updated with the final draft LUMO.

Article 2 – Zoning Districts

Article 2 establishes the conventional zoning districts that will be the most widely used across Chapel Hill and identifies many of the basic dimensional standards that will regulate what development in these districts can look like.

Section	Description	Additional Information/Notes
2.1. General Provisions	Sec. 2.1 defines when the rules of Article 2 apply, and which types of development need to follow which types of rules.	This section sets out different standards for new construction versus renovations and other types of redevelopment. Major differences include ▪ New design-based standards primarily apply to new construction ▪ Some site changes will have new limits on where parking is located ▪ Keep lower requirements for reuse of existing buildings
2.2. Zoning Districts Established	Sec. 2.2 establishes most of the zoning districts used by the draft LUMO. This includes existing zoning districts (e.g., R-1, NC, and TC-1) and several new zoning districts (e.g., R-A, NX-A, and TC-A). The districts are organized into the following categories: ▪ Residential Districts ▪ Residential Mixed-Use Districts ▪ Mixed-Use Districts	The draft LUMO will update development standards for existing zoning districts and set up a new palette of zoning districts that can be used in the future. In many cases, a new district is paired with one or more existing districts. For example, the new R-A district is paired with the existing R-1 and R-1A zoning districts. The draft LUMO will include updated standards for the existing R-1 and R-1A districts that will also be reflected in the new R-A district. But the new R-A district will not automatically be placed on the zoning map.

	▪ Town Center Districts ▪ Industrial Districts ▪ Special Districts ▪ Legacy Districts Each of these categories is explained in more detail below.	When the Town adopts a new zoning map, the R-A district would be the most likely choice to use for most land currently zoned R-1, but it does not <i>have to be</i> used for all property currently zoned R-1. The draft LUMO also creates some new districts that are unrelated to existing districts. For example, the draft LUMO establishes a brand new R-D zoning district that is not related to any existing residential zoning districts. Just like the R-A district, the new R-D district will not be automatically placed on the zoning map if the draft LUMO is adopted. Instead, the R-D district will be available to use when the zoning map is updated in the future.
2.3. Official Zoning Map	Sec. 2.3 states that an official zoning map will be created and maintained by the Planning Department. The zoning map is given the same legal status as the text of LUMO.	Adoption of the new LUMO will not involve any changes to Chapel Hill's existing zoning map. A new zoning map will need to be considered and adopted as part of a separate public process after the new LUMO is adopted. The most significant changes to existing zoning districts will likely occur in areas identified as "Focus Areas" by the Town's Future Land Use Map and in accordance with the Town's Complete Community Strategy.
2.4. Development Allowed Without Conditional Zoning	Sec. 2.4 establishes thresholds for by-right development. Individual projects that exceed these thresholds will require approval from Town Council through a Conditional Zoning. Depending on the zoning district, the thresholds may be based on the number of dwelling units included in a project, residential floor area, non-residential floor area, total floor area, or total land disturbance. In most mixed-use and Town Center zoning districts, these thresholds will be increased to allow at least 30 dwelling units; 30,000 square feet of residential floor area; and 40,000 square feet of commercial floor area.	These rules are an evolution of the LUMO's existing "20/40 Rule" which requires Council approval for any project with over 20,000 square feet of floor area or 40,000 square feet of land disturbance. These thresholds are only relevant for a project if the baseline dimensional regulations for a particular property would support development that exceeds the thresholds. For example, the dimensional regulations for the R-5 zoning district would only begin to allow more than 40,000 square feet of commercial floor area on sites of approximately a half-acre or larger. For a smaller site in the R-5 zoning district, the conditional zoning threshold for commercial development would not be relevant because the baseline dimensional regulations would not support a large enough development.

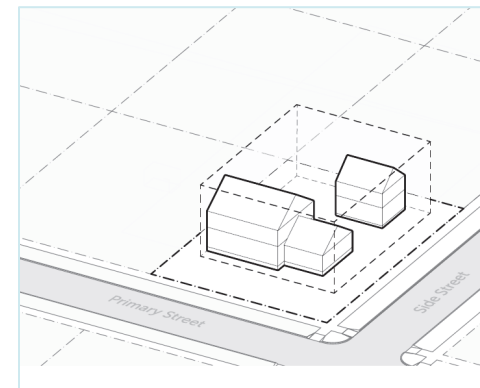
	Some exceptions include the TC-1 and MU-OI-1 districts, which will maintain the existing 20,000 square foot limit on total floor area. Residential zoning districts (e.g., R-1, R-2, R-A, R-B, etc.) will maintain a 20,000 square foot floor area threshold for non-residential floor area. Total residential floor area is limited under a different set of rules for each of the residential zoning districts.	
2.5. Residential Districts	Sec 2.5 includes dimensional and density standards for existing low- to medium-density residential districts: ▪ R-LD5; R-LD1; R-T; R-1; R-1A; R-2; R-2A; R-3; and R-4 Sec 2.5 also includes standards for the new low- to medium-density districts: ▪ R-A; R-B; R-C; and R-D	Intent. These districts are intended to be predominantly residential in nature with some limited opportunities for smaller-scale commercial uses. Key Dimensional Standards. Some of the dimensional standards that have the biggest impact on development in these districts are (1) maximum dwelling units per lot and (2) minimum lot size. These standards vary significantly across the residential districts because the districts themselves are intended to be used in very different circumstances. For example, the R-LD5 zoning district supports the least density with a maximum of 2 dwelling units allowed per lot and a minimum lot size of 5 acres. This district is currently used exclusively in the more rural parts of the Town’s zoning jurisdiction that are outside of Town limits.  R-LD-5

On the other end of the spectrum, the new R-D zoning district supports the most density with 8 – 12 dwelling units allowed per lot and no minimum lot size. Since this is a new district, it is not currently used in Town. It would likely be best used for areas near major commercial centers or other public amenities.



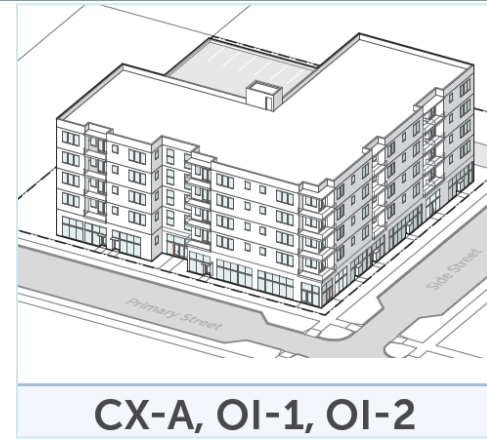
R-D

Meanwhile, the R-1 zoning district – which is the most heavily used residential district in Chapel Hill – currently allows up to 2 dwelling units per lot with a minimum lot size of 10,000 square feet. This baseline density will not change in the draft LUMO. However, along busier roads and near greenway entrances the district will allow up to 4 dwelling units per lot.

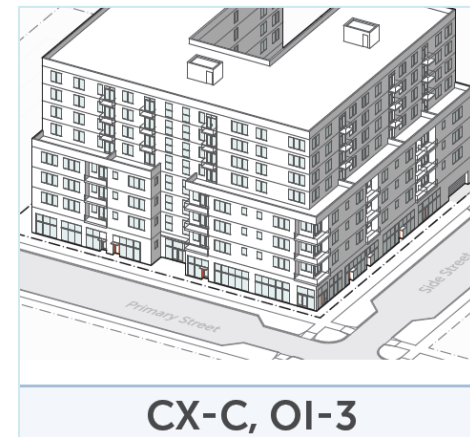


R-A, R-1, R-1A

2.6. Residential Mixed-Use Districts	Sec 2.6 includes dimensional and density standards for existing higher-density residential districts: ▪ R-5 and R-6 Sec. 2.6 also includes standards for the new higher-density residential districts: ▪ RX-A; RX-B; and RX-C	Intent. These districts allow dense residential development and a wide range of commercial uses. They are intended to support walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods. Key Dimensional Standards. To support more pedestrian-oriented streets, these districts require outdoor amenity spaces, regulate maximum building width, and limit the amount of parking allowed between a building and the street. Additional standards regarding the amount of windows and the spacing of entrances on a building’s ground floor also contribute to a more pedestrian-oriented landscape. The dimensional standard that varies the most between these districts is maximum building height: <table><tr><th>District</th><th>Maximum Building Height</th></tr><tr><td>RX-A, R-5, R-6</td><td>60 ft</td></tr><tr><td>RX-B</td><td>75 ft</td></tr><tr><td>RX-C</td><td>115 ft</td></tr></table>	District	Maximum Building Height	RX-A, R-5, R-6	60 ft	RX-B	75 ft	RX-C	115 ft
District	Maximum Building Height									
RX-A, R-5, R-6	60 ft									
RX-B	75 ft									
RX-C	115 ft									
2.7. Mixed-Use Districts	Sec. 2.7 includes the standards for the existing districts that are primarily focused on non-residential or mixed-use development: ▪ NC, CC, OI-1, OI-2, MU-V, MU-R-1, and OI-3 Sec. 2.7 also includes standards for new mixed-use districts: ▪ NX-A, CX-A, CX-B, and CX-3	Intent. These districts are designed to support strong economic activity in walkable, mixed-use developments. Key Dimensional Standards. Like the Residential Mixed-Use Districts, these districts also regulate outdoor amenity spaces, building placement and width, and ground-floor facades in a way that supports pedestrian-oriented streetscapes. These districts also add “active depth” standards that limit how much of the ground floor of a building can be used for parking. Like the residential mixed-use districts, maximum building height is one of the most significant differentiating factors among these districts. The lower intensity districts will allow building heights of up to 60 feet.								

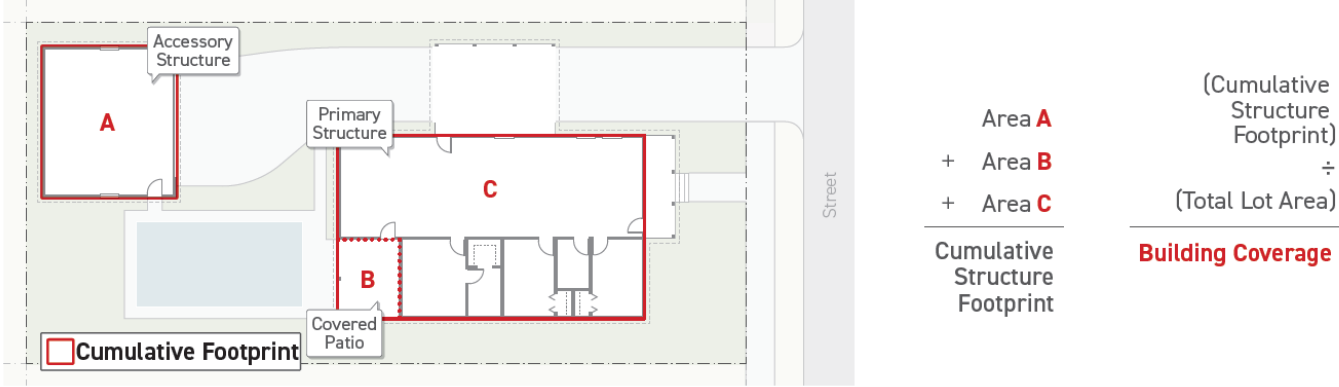


Meanwhile the higher intensity districts will allow building heights up to 115 feet.



These maximum buildings heights allowed under the draft LUMO are all relatively consistent with the maximum building heights allowed under the current LUMO.

2.8. Town Center Districts	Sec. 2.8 includes standards for the existing downtown-oriented districts: - TC-1, TC-2, and TC-3 Sec. 2.8 also includes standards for new downtown-oriented districts: - TC-A, TC-B, TC-C, and TC-I	Intent. The Town Center districts are intended to support a vibrant downtown environment. Key Dimensional Standards. The Town Center districts regulate the same elements of building and site design as do the mixed-use districts but tailored to a downtown context. For example, the active depth requirement (which limits exposed ground floor parking) is more stringent in the Town Center districts than in any other district.  TC-A, TC-1 TC-B, TC-2 TC-C, TC-3
2.9. Industrial Districts	Sec. 2.9 includes standards for the existing Industrial (I) zoning district and the new Light Industrial (IL) zoning district.	Intent. These districts support light industrial and flex spaces like those seen along Millhouse Road in the northern portion of Chapel Hill. Key Dimensional Standards. These districts have the fewest regulations regarding site and building design because they are intended to be used in relatively isolated areas of Chapel Hill. This natural separation from other development reduces the need for stringent site and building design standards. Standards found elsewhere in the LUMO (e.g., RCD buffers and stormwater protection) will still apply to projects in these districts.
2.10 District Specific Rules	Sec. 2.10 defines terms and provides the substantive standards associated with the zoning districts that are established earlier in this Article. For example, Sec. 2.8 simply states that the TC-2 zoning district has a “blank wall width maximum” of 15 ft and an “active depth ground floor width” of 85 percent. Sec. 2.10 establishes what each of those standards means, explains how they should be	Sec. 2.10 includes numerous standards that have not changed significantly from the existing LUMO (e.g., how building height or impervious surface coverage is measured). Some of the more impactful new standards included in the draft LUMO are summarized below.

	measured, and notes an potential exceptions to the rules.	
2.10.4.B. Building Coverage	In some zoning districts, the draft LUMO will regulate overall building massing by limiting “building coverage” instead of establishing a maximum floor area ratio. As illustrated below, building coverage regulations limit the cumulative footprint of all buildings on a site.  Area A + Area B + Area C Cumulative Structure Footprint (Cumulative Structure Footprint) ÷ (Total Lot Area) Building Coverage	
2.10.4.C Floor Area Ratio	Floor area ratio (FAR) is a well-established regulation that limits the amount of floor area that can be built on a site based on the size of the site. The draft LUMO will change how FAR is calculated for properties that include land protected by the Resource Conservation District (i.e., stream buffers). Under existing rules, properties with RCD buffers have to run two separate FAR calculations: one for the portion of the property in the stream buffer and one for the portion of the property outside the buffer. The floor area credits that are generated by the portion in the stream buffer is then transferred to the portion of the property outside the stream buffer. The FAR that is applied to the portion of the property in the stream buffer is significantly lower than the FAR applied to the portion of the property outside the buffer. As a result, a property with a large amount of RCD buffer is limited both in terms of <i>where</i> new construction can happen (new floor area is generally prohibited in the RCD) and <i>how much</i> new construction can happen outside the RCD buffer. The draft LUMO will preserve the prohibition against new floor area in the RCD. However, it will base the allowed buildable floor area outside the RCD solely on the generally applicable floor area ratio for the relevant zoning district.	

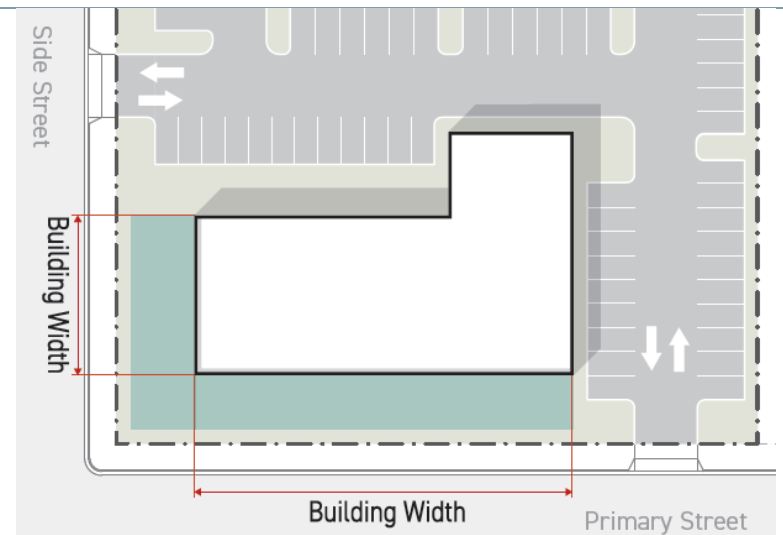
**2.10.4.D
Outdoor Amenity
Space**

Instead of requiring recreation space, the draft LUMO will require multifamily and commercial development to provide a certain amount of outdoor amenity space. The amenity space can be provided in the form of plazas, courtyards, athletics fields, or other outdoor gathering spaces. The LUMO cannot require that these spaces are open to the public, but it will heavily incentivize amenity spaces that are located near the public right-of-way.



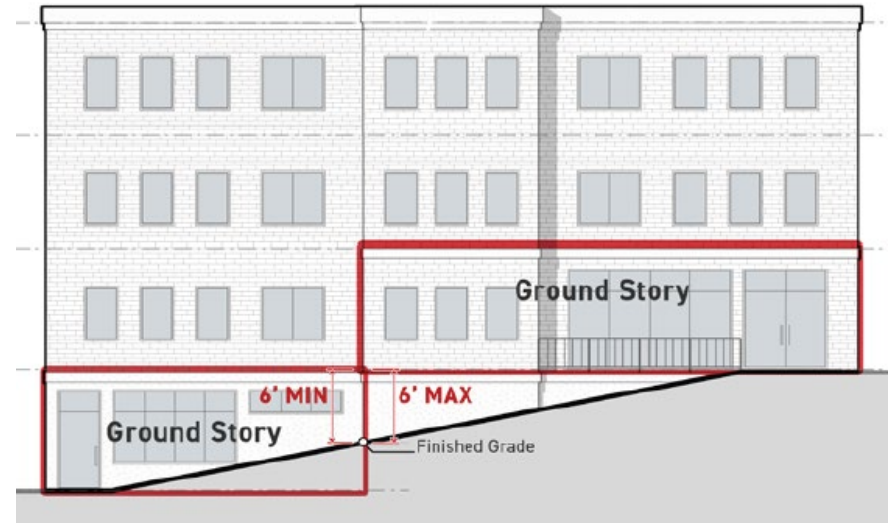
**2.10.6.B.
Parking Between
the Building and
the Street**

To promote a more pedestrian-oriented streetscape, the many zoning districts in the draft LUMO will limit how much parking may be located between the building and the street. Districts with these rules will either fully prohibit such parking (except for ADA accessible parking) or limit the parking to no more than one or two rows of parking spaces.



2.10.7.A.4
Ground Stories

Many of the draft LUMO's standards will apply to the street-facing "ground story" of a building. Because of the Town's hilly topography, the draft LUMO states that first floor that is exposed at least 6 feet above the ground must be considered as the "ground story." This helps to prevent situations in which vast concrete walls or otherwise inactivated space are located along the public realm.



2.10.7.A.4.d
Maximum Height
Without a Stepback

A "stepback" is a horizontal break in a building's façade above which the façade is pushed further away from the street. In most districts that allow taller buildings, the draft LUMO will require a stepback above the 4th floor. To provide flexibility in design, the standard will allow project to meet this requirement through a physical stepback or through a variety of design alternatives such as a change in building material or a decorative band, recess, or cornice.



2.10.7.B Building Width

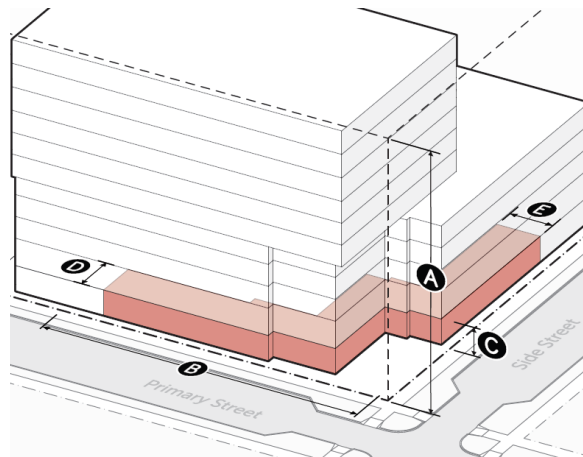
The draft LUMO will limit total building width in many zoning districts. This standard helps to minimize the visual impact of large buildings and provides more opportunities for pedestrian connections through a development site.

To provide some flexibility in the standard, the draft LUMO will allow buildings to exceed the maximum building width if they provide a large enough break in the building's façade.



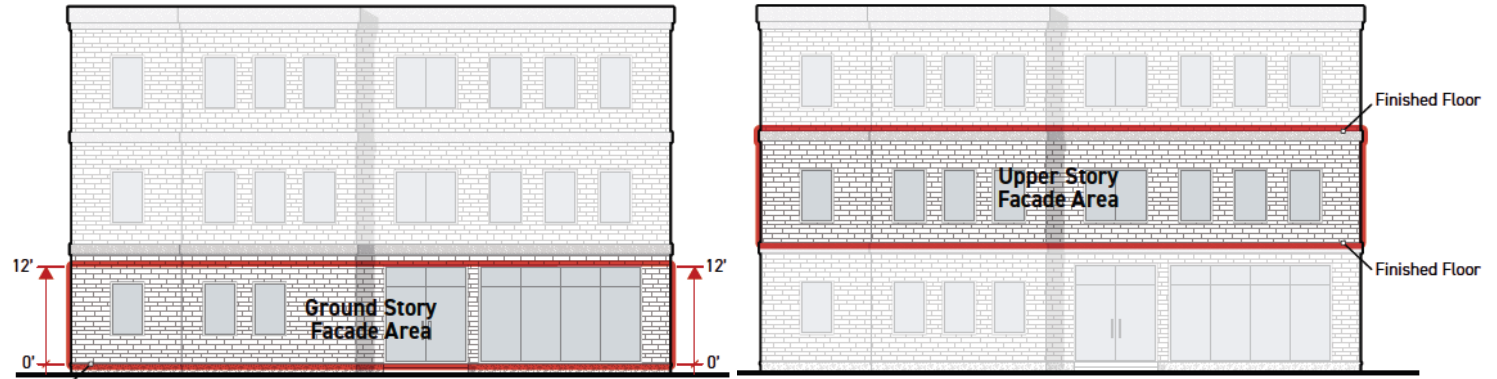
2.10.9. Active Depth

In many zoning districts, the draft LUMO will require that a portion of the street-facing ground floor of a building excludes parking. For example, in the illustration below, the highlighted red area of the building's ground floor could not include parking.



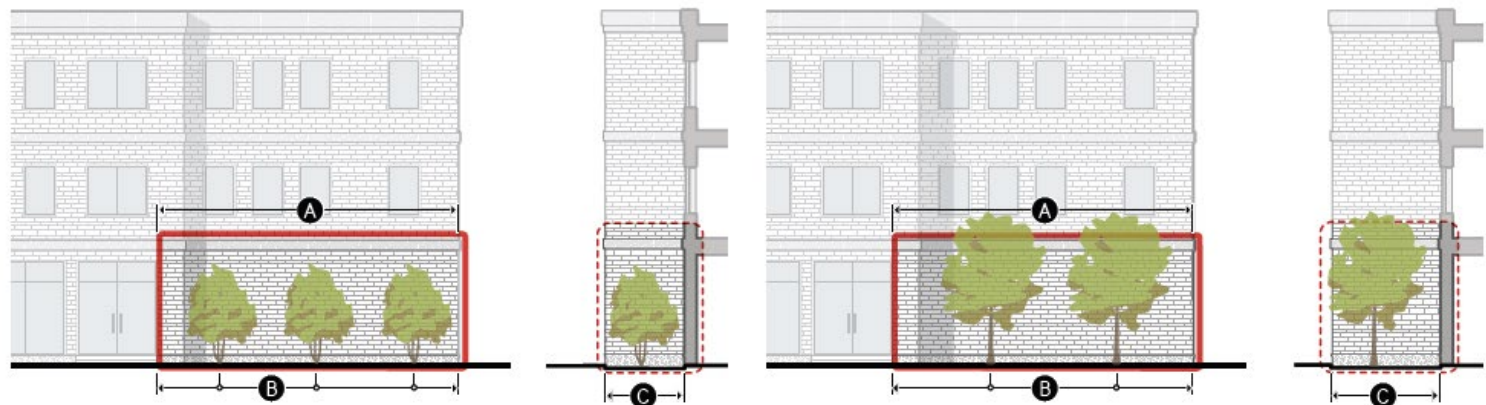
2.10.10.A Transparency

In many zoning districts, the draft LUMO will require a certain amount of transparency (i.e., windows) along the street-facing façade of a building. A building's ground floor will be subject to higher transparency requirements than its upper floors.



2.10.10.B Blank Wall Width

The draft LUMO will include limits on the width of blank walls, which are defined as segments of street-facing walls without doors or windows. To provide some flexibility in the standard, the draft LUMO will allow increased blank wall widths if trees are planted along the blank wall.



Article 3 – Special Districts

Article 3 defines specialized zoning districts that are distinct from the traditional districts established in Article 2. Article 3 also includes provisions related to development incentives, inclusionary zoning, and incentives for projects that voluntarily provide affordable housing.

Section	Description	Additional Information/Notes
3.1. Special Districts	Sec. 3.1 establishes the Historic Rogers Road and Blue Hill Form Districts. The rules and standards for the Historic Rogers Road districts are also included in this section. However, because it is almost a self-contained zoning ordinance, the rules and standards for the Blue Hill Form Districts are located in Appendix A of the draft LUMO.	“Special Districts” are distinct from the conventional zoning districts established in Article 2. They are intended for use in specific parts of Town that represent unique circumstances or were the subject of unique planning processes. The substantive rules for the Historic Rogers Road zoning districts are not changing. Only minor edits have been made to align these rules with the rest of the draft ordinance. Updates to the Blue Hill Form Districts are discussed later in this document in the table regarding Appendix A of the draft LUMO.
3.2. Legacy Districts	Sec. 3.2 identifies four “legacy districts” that should be preserved as-is or have limited relevance for future enforcement of the Town’s zoning. ▪ Mixed-Use Office/Institutional – 1 (MU-OI-1). This district covers several properties in northern Chapel Hill including Carraway Village, the Chapel Hill North shopping center, two manufactured home communities, and land in Chapel Hill’s extraterritorial jurisdiction. ▪ Office Institutional – 4 (OI-4). This district is used exclusively for UNC’s main campus. Because of recent changes in state law, the Town no longer has zoning authority over UNC-owned land.	Rules and standards in the four legacy districts are not changing substantially.

	▪ University – 1 (U-1). This district is used exclusively for Carolina North. Like UNC-owned land, the Town no longer has zoning authority over Carolina North. ▪ Development Agreement – 1 (DA-1). This district is used exclusively for Fire Station 2 and the adjacent office building on S. Hamilton Rd. Because typical LUMO users will rarely need to reference them, the rules for these districts are located in Appendix C of the draft LUMO.	
3.3. Conditional Districts	Sec. 3.3 establishes the conditional districts that are used whenever a project seeks a conditional zoning from the Town Council. These include “parallel” conditional districts that are simply alternate versions of the districts established in Article 2 (e.g. Residential-D and Residential-D-Conditional Zoning District) and purpose-made conditional districts (e.g., the Residential – Community Priority – Conditional Zoning District) that are intended for specific circumstances.	Standards associated with individual conditional districts are not changing significantly.
3.4. Incentive Zoning	Sec. 3.4 establishes incentives for energy efficient buildings and preservation of commercial floor area in the Neighborhood Commercial and Community Commercial zoning districts.	The incentives found in this section are not the only incentives included in the draft LUMO. Incentives for other community benefits such as tree protection, greenway construction, or affordable housing are found in different sections of the ordinance.
3.5. Inclusionary Zoning	Sec. 3.5 – also referred to as the Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance, or IZ – establishes mandatory affordable housing requirements for subdivisions that include at least 5 zoning lots. IZ requires that 20% of lots are reserved for housing that is affordable for low- to moderate-income households.	Under the existing LUMO, IZ applies to subdivisions and for-sale multifamily development. Under the draft LUMO, IZ will no longer apply to multifamily development. Instead, the Town will continue to use Conditional Zoning as its primary tool for securing affordable housing commitments from multifamily development.

	The requirement can be satisfied by reserving lots for affordable housing, providing affordable units, or making a payment to the Town. Subdivisions that comply with the requirement receive a 50% reduction in minimum lot size and other related dimensional standards.	Since the Town began using Conditional Zoning in 2018, it has secured commitments for hundreds of affordable units from both for-sale and rental projects.
3.6. Voluntary Affordable Housing	Sec. 3.6 establishes a new set of incentives for development that voluntarily provides affordable housing. The incentives will apply to both subdivisions and multifamily development. The incentives will include traditional density bonuses such as increased floor area ratios, additional height allowances, and decreased minimum lot sizes. The incentives will also include higher by-right development thresholds. These thresholds define how large a project can be before requiring approval from the Town Council. For example, up to 30 dwelling units will be allowed by-right in many zoning districts. If a project meets the affordability targets included in this section, up to 48 dwelling units would be allowed by-right. If the project meets even more stringent affordability targets, up to 75 dwelling units would be allowed by-right.	Voluntary incentives for affordable housing are a brand new feature of the draft LUMO. The incentives are intended to be very generous (e.g., 60% to 100% increases in Floor Area Ratio) to accommodate the high costs of providing affordable housing. The most generous incentives are available to projects that set aside at least 40% of units as affordable. These incentives should allow a typical Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) project to proceed by-right.

Article 4 – Overlay Districts

Article 4 establishes several “overlay” zoning districts. These districts are used in various parts of Town and impose specific regulations and procedural requirements in addition to those established by the base zoning districts identified in Articles 2 and 3.

Section	Description	Additional Information/Notes
4.1 Historic District	Sec. 4.1 establishes the Town’s historic districts and outlines the procedural requirements for development in those districts.	Standards in the historic districts have not changed significantly.
4.2 Neighborhood Conservation District	Sec. 4.2 recognizes all previously created neighborhood conservation districts (NCDs) and redirects to their substantive rules in Appendix B of the draft LUMO.	The draft LUMO maintains all existing NCDs. Unlike the existing LUMO, the draft LUMO no longer includes an official process for creating new NCDs.
4.3 Watershed Protection District	The Watershed Protection District (WPD) implements state-mandated rules that are designed to protect drinking water supplies. Sec. 4.3 redirect to the substantive WPD rules found in Article of the draft LUMO.	The Watershed Protection District is a critical tool for environmental protection. However, placing consequential environmental rules in a portion of the zoning ordinance entitled “Overlay Districts” oftentimes led to confusion under the existing LUMO. The draft LUMO moves the content of the WPD regulations to the “ Environmental Protection ” portion of the ordinance to make it easier to find.
4.4 Resource Conservation District	The Resource Conservation District is the Town’s primary regulatory tool for protecting stream buffers and associated habitats. Sec. 4.4 redirects to the substantive RCD rules found in Article 7 of the draft LUMO.	Just like the WPD, the RCD is an overlay district. But placing its substantive rules in the Environmental Protection portion of the ordinance helps to make the draft LUMO a more intuitive document to navigate.

Article 5 – Use Provisions

Article 5 defines the various uses that are regulated by the LUMO, identifies the zoning districts in which the uses are permitted, and sets additional standards for certain uses.

Section	Description	Additional Information/Notes
5.1. General Provisions	Section 5.1 establishes the scope of the LUMO’s use regulations.	The scope of the LUMO’s use regulations is not changing substantially.
5.2. Use Permissions	Section 5.2 includes the Permitted Use Table, which identifies the uses that are allowed in each zoning district. The table designates uses as prohibited, permitted by-right, allowed with a special use permit, or allowed only as an accessory use.	Some notable additions/changes to the use permissions include: ▪ Missing middle housing. Housing types like triplexes, fourplexes, cottage courts, and small apartments will be permitted in more zoning districts. In lower-density districts (e.g., R-1 and R-2), these uses will only be allowed near greenways and along higher capacity roads. ▪ “General food and beverage (up to 3,000 SF)” and “General retail (up to 3,000 SF)”. Food/beverage and general retail uses are not new in and of themselves. The new feature added by the draft LUMO is a distinction between different sizes of these uses. The draft LUMO will allow these smaller-scale commercial uses in most residential districts used within Town boundaries. For lower intensity districts like R-1, R-2, R-A, and R-B, these uses will only be allowed along collector or arterial streets. ▪ “Emergency housing (up to 8 beds).” These small-scale shelters for people experiencing homelessness will be allowed in most zoning districts. ▪ “Day Care Home.” The draft LUMO establishes this home-based daycare use as something distinct from a typical “home occupation.” This change will allow day care homes to operate without some of

		the restrictions placed on other home occupations, such as a prohibition on “external evidence” of the business. Day care homes will be allowed in all zoning districts. ▪ Drive Thru Windows. Drive thru windows associated with a retail use (e.g., a grocery store or pharmacy) will no longer require a special use permit. Instead, they will be allowed by-right. Drive-thru windows associated with a restaurant will continue to require a special use permit.
5.3. Use Definitions	Section 5.3 defines each of the uses listed in Section 5.2. Where possible, the draft LUMO defines uses in relatively broad terms. This can make it easier for the LUMO to keep up with new types of business or other novel land uses.	Some notable changes to the use definitions include: ▪ Occupancy Limits. Except in the Northside and Pine Knolls Neighborhood Conservation Districts, single-family homes, ADUs, cottages, and duplexes will no longer be classified as “rooming housings” if occupied by more than four unrelated people. ▪ Emergency Shelters. The intermittent use of a building to provide overnight shelter during inclement weather or other emergencies will be considered an accessory use to any other permitted use. This change will create significantly more opportunities for “white-flag shelters” or other types of shelters that are only rarely activated. ▪ Manufactured Homes. The draft LUMO no longer defines manufactured homes as being distinct from other types of site-built or modular homes. This change will mean that a manufactured home can be used as an ADU, a cottage, or placed anywhere else that a site-built or modular home could be built.
5.4. Specific Use Standards	Section 5.4 imposes additional standards on certain uses. The goal of these additional standards is to proactively identify the unique impacts of a particular use and manage them in a more targeted manner than the LUMO’s generally applicable standards are able to.	Some notable changes to the specific use standards include: ▪ Daycares. Daycare centers in the R-1 and R-2 zoning districts are no longer limited to arterial and collector streets. If located on a local street, they will be limited to a maximum size of 1,500 square feet. ▪ Home Occupations. The draft LUMO will ease some restrictions on home-based occupations. The changes include allowing up to 3

	Depending on the use, these additional standards may address a variety of issues like environmental controls, maximum floor area limits, hours of operation, street-frontage requirements, etc.	non-resident employees and allowing some modest outdoor signage associated with the home occupation.
5.5. Wireless Communication Facility	Section 5.5 is dedicated exclusively to regulation of wireless communication facilities.	The vast majority of regulations related to wireless communication facilities are not changing. One notable change includes: ▪ Increased maximum height. New and replacement towers are allowed to be up to 200 feet in height in non-residential districts. The previous maximum height was 120 feet. A Special Use Permit is still required for these towers.

Article 6 – Development Standards

Article 6 establishes a variety of standards that apply to new development. These standards cover topics such as bicycle and pedestrian mobility, vehicular access and parking, landscape buffers, outdoor lighting, recreation space, and outdoor signage.

Section	Description	Additional Information/Notes
6.1. General Provision	Sec. 6.1 includes the introductory language for Article 6 and identifies which types of development activity (e.g., new construction; additions; or change of use) are subject to which standards.	The standards in this section are not changing substantially.
6.2. Bicycle & Pedestrian Mobility	Sec. 6.2 establishes requirements for new developments to provide bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure that is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. The infrastructure must be provided along any new roads within the development and along any existing roads adjacent to the development. The requirements will apply to all new development except for residential development with 4 or fewer units and commercial development which adds less than 1,500 square feet of new floor area.	By requiring that new developments install infrastructure in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan, this section can support the implementation of major Complete Community priorities like the Every-to-Everywhere Greenway Network.
6.3. Vehicle Access	Sec. 6.3 regulates how new development ties into existing streets. It requires new development to assess impacts on existing roads through a traffic impact analysis (TIA) and sets thresholds for when a new development must implement the recommendations of the TIA. These recommendations typically involve roadway improvements such as additional turn lanes or updated traffic signal timing.	Most of the standards in this section have not been changed significantly. One notable change is the addition of clearer standards regarding traffic impact analyses (TIA's). The draft LUMO establishes clear rules about when a new development is responsible for making improvements to adjacent roads or intersections.

	The section also requires that new developments connect to adjacent developments.	
6.4. Vehicle Parking	Sec. 6.4 regulates the type and amount of parking that is provided in new development.	Town Council adopted a major shift in parking regulation when it repealed mandatory parking minimums as part of the 2026 omnibus text amendments. Some additional changes to parking regulations in the draft LUMO include: ▪ Mandatory electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure. Depending on the type and size of development, the draft LUMO will require that some parking spaces include EV chargers or are capable of supporting installation of EV chargers in the future. ▪ More stringent planting standards. More canopy trees will need to be planted in new parking lots. Under the current LUMO no parking space can be more than 75 feet from a canopy tree. The draft LUMO will reduce this distance to 65 feet. ▪ Landscape standards for parking decks. Canopy or understory trees must be planted along at least 75% of the street-facing facades of any standalone parking decks. ▪ Front-yard parking restrictions. Parking standards that currently only apply to single- and two-family homes, will apply to triplexes and fourplexes as well. Just like single-family homes, triplexes and fourplexes will be allowed to include parking in the front yard. However, no more than 40% of the front yard may be used for parking.
6.5. Vehicle Loading	Sec. 6.5 requires off-street loading spaces for retail, wholesale, and industrial uses.	The standards in this section have not changed significantly.

6.6. Buffers & Screens

Sec. 6.6 includes standards for:

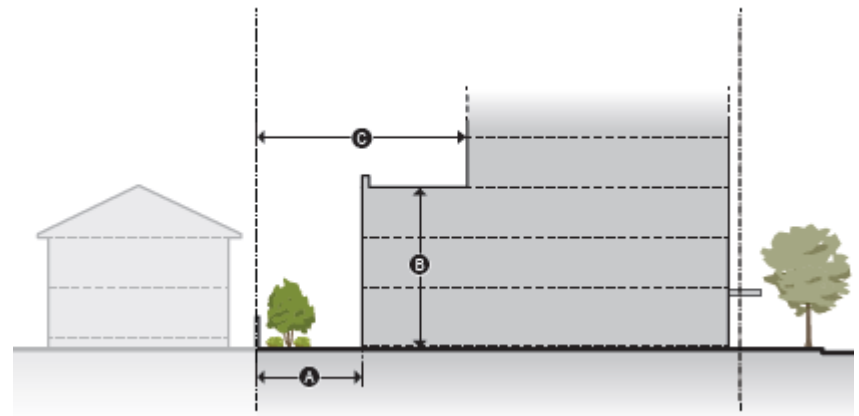
- Landscape buffers;
- District boundary transitions;
- Street trees; and
- Screening of certain features on a development site (e.g., trash enclosures and roof-mounted HVAC equipment).

Landscape buffers. In general, the draft LUMO will only require landscape buffers between properties that are in different zoning districts.

This is a significant change from the current LUMO which requires landscape buffers between all developments except for single-family and two-family homes. The existing LUMO even requires landscape buffers when two adjacent developments include the exact same uses (e.g., an apartment complex next door to another apartment complex).

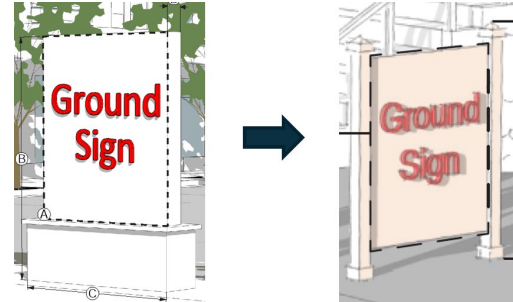
District boundary transitions. These are a set of new standards that acknowledge that landscape buffers alone are not sufficient to provide gentle transitions between some zoning districts. District boundary transitions will be required between districts that represent a significant difference in development intensity (e.g., Residential-1 next to Town Center).

The district boundary rules will regulate (A) building setbacks; (B) maximum height without a step-back; and (C) step-back distance. The rules will also prohibit certain – potentially noisy – site features within the step-back area. These will include swimming pools, dog parks, and other similar recreation spaces.



Street trees. Street tree requirements are an important evolution of the existing LUMO's landscape buffer requirements. The draft LUMO will

		require trees to be planted or preserved in or near the public right-of-way. The requirements will apply to all new non-residential development and residential development with more than 4 units.
6.7. Fences & Walls	Sec. 6.7 includes basic standards for the location and construction of walls and fences (e.g., cannot be constructed of tires or junk) and rules for how the height of walls and fences will be measured.	This section does not impose any major new restrictions on fences and walls.
6.8. Outdoor Lighting	Sec. 6.8 regulates outdoor lighting. Standards found in this section include: ▪ Minimum and maximum outdoor lighting levels ▪ Standards to minimize glare and light pollution	The draft LUMO makes several adjustments to the Town’s lighting standards. Minimum lighting levels. These standards specify minimum lighting levels that must be maintained at certain areas of a development (e.g., building entrances, walkways, parking areas, etc.). These standards are intended to add objective criteria to existing provisions in LUMO that require certain areas of a development to be “sufficiently lighted to ensure the safety” of occupants. Maximum lighting levels. Maximum lighting levels have been adjusted to accommodate a less suburban development pattern in which buildings are closer to property lines and the right-of-way. The new maximum lighting levels are proposed to be 0.5 foot-candles at property lines and 2 foot-candles at the right-of-way. The existing limit is 0.3 foot-candles. Maximum lighting levels at RCD boundaries. The draft LUMO adds new restrictions on lighting levels at Resource Conservation District (RCD) boundaries. These restrictions are intended to support the RCD’s role in protecting natural habitats. Limits on uplighting. The LUMO combats light pollution by limiting the brightness of “non-cutoff lights” (fixtures that allow light to shine upward from the light source) and by requiring downward facing lights in most instances.
6.9. Recreation	Sec. 6.9 establishes recreation space requirements for new subdivisions.	A few notable updates to the recreation space requirements include:

	Providing a greenway in accordance with the Comprehensive plan can fully satisfy a project's recreation space requirements.	Higher applicability thresholds. Recreation space requirements previously applied to subdivisions that created 5 or more lots. To allow for more efficient use of space, this threshold will be increased to 15 lots. No longer applicable to multifamily development. The draft LUMO will only apply recreation space requirements to subdivisions. Multifamily development will be subject to the “amenity space” requirements outlined in Article 2 of the draft LUMO.
6.10. Signs	Sec. 6.10 regulates the type, size, location, and design of signage.	Updates to Sec. 6.10 are primarily focused on making the LUMO's sign regulations easier to understand and eliminating overly proscriptive rules. For example, the existing LUMO requires that most freestanding ground-mounted signs are “attached to a contiguous structural base or planter box the same width or greater” than the sign (as illustrated below). This requirement adds significant additional cost to new signs. The draft LUMO will remove this requirement and allow signs mounted to posts or columns. 

Article 7 – Environmental Protection

Article 7 includes a wide range of environmental protection regulations covering topics like tree protection, stormwater management, stream protection, and limits on disturbing steep slopes.

Section	Description	Additional Information/Notes
7.1. Tree Protection	Section 7.1, also referred to as the “Tree Protection Ordinance,” establishes multiple rules associated with tree canopy coverage and protection of existing tree on or near developing land.	Section 7.1 has been heavily revised to provide stronger protections for trees on developing land and to better support the Town’s tree canopy. Each of the subsections of Section 7.1 are summarized below.
7.1.2. Life Safety Protection	Sec. 7.1.2 establishes new standards to protect buildings near development sites. Proactive protections: On all development sites, on-site trees that could pose a risk to neighboring buildings must be identified and either protected or proactively removed. A tree will be considered to pose a risk to neighboring buildings if its height exceeds the distance between its trunk and the building. A tree is considered to be “protected” if the developer ensures that no more than 15% of its critical root zone will be impacted by construction activities. Protecting off-site trees: On larger development sites (1 acre or larger) developers will also need to protect larger off-site trees that could damage neighboring buildings.	
7.1.3. Tree Canopy Conservation Standards	Sec. 7.1.3 establishes a new requirement that projects on sites 1 acre or larger must conserve a portion of existing tree canopy. The standards will incentive conservation of rare and specimen trees and of significant tree stands. The standards will not apply in some higher-intensity zoning districts that are intended to support dense development in downtown or other critical commercial or transit hubs.	
7.1.4. Tree Canopy Coverage Standards	Sec. 7.1.4 updates the Town’s existing tree canopy coverage standards. New single-family homes will now be subject to tree canopy cover requirements. To support smaller units, single-family homes smaller than 2,000 square feet will be exempt from the requirement.	

	Missing middle development with 2 to 12 units will have slightly lower canopy coverage requirements than single-family or larger multi-family development. To support smaller units, duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes smaller than 4,000 square feet will be exempt from the requirement. Protection of rare or specimen trees and significant tree stands will be heavily incentivized.
7.1.5. Installation, Maintenance, and Prohibited Activities	Sec. 7.1.5 updates the Town’s standards for how trees are installed and maintained and establishes new restrictions on activities that are likely to harm trees. New trees must be planted in accordance with the specifications outlined in the Chapel Hill Design Manual. These specifications are intended to promote healthy tree growth and increase the chances that new trees survive until maturity. To promote biodiversity, at least 50% of new trees must be native or adapted species and no more than 25% of new trees may be of the same species. For any trees that are planted or retained in order to satisfy a requirement of the LUMO, certain harmful activities like stockpiling of dirt or mulch around tree trunks or overly aggressive pruning will be prohibited.
7.1.6. Landscape Protection Plan	Sec. 7.1.6 requires developers to submit a landscape protection plan that identifies significant trees on a developing property and indicates which trees will be protected. The section also establishes rules for implementing the landscape protection plan. These include requirements for protective fencing, coordination with Town staff, and on-site supervision by individuals that have received relevant training from the Town.
7.1.7. Significant Tree Stands	Sec. 7.1.7 heavily incentivizes the protection of significant tree stands.
7.1.8. Rare and Specimen Trees	Sec. 7.1.8 defines rare and specimen trees and requires developers to identify any such trees on or near the developing portion of their project site. Other provisions of the ordinance create standards that incentivize – or in some cases, require – the protection of rare and specimen trees.
7.1.9. Trees in Public Right-of-Way	Sec. 7.1.9 allows private property owners to plant trees in the public right-of-way under certain circumstances.
7.1.10. Public Hazards	Sec. 7.1.10 sets rules for trees located on private property that may damage public infrastructure and trees located in the right-of-way that may damage private property.

7.1.11. Administrative Mechanisms	Sec. 7.1.11 establishes the maximum penalties that can be assessed for violations of the Tree Protection Ordinance.	
7.2. Erosion/Sedimentation Control	Section 7.2 incorporates the Town’s erosion and sedimentation control regulations into the LUMO. The rules are primarily intended to control runoff from developing sites. These regulations are part of the Town Code so referencing them in LUMO is a helpful way to make sure they are not accidentally overlooked.	The standards in this section have not changed significantly.
7.3. Steep Slopes	Section 7.3 establishes protections for steep slopes, which are defined as areas of land with a 25% or steeper slope. A 25% slope is equivalent to a 5-foot rise over a 20-foot run. If a property includes steep slopes, these rules limit the extent to which they can be disturbed.	The standards in this section have not changed significantly.
7.4. Stormwater Management	Section 7.4 establishes the Town’s rules for stormwater management. These rules require that new development control how stormwater runoff leaves a property.	Section 7.4 has been heavily revised. Each subsection of the updated section is summarized below.
7.4.1. Purpose	Sec. 7.4.1 identifies the purpose of the Town’s stormwater rules.	
7.4.2. Applicability	Sec. 7.4.2 states that the Town’s stormwater management rules apply to most new development or redevelopment. A few exceptions include: ▪ Logging and agricultural activity that complies with other applicable federal, state, and local rules; ▪ Single-family homes with less than 12,000 SF of land disturbance; ▪ Duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes with less than 20,000 SF of land disturbance and less than 50% impervious surface; ▪ Repairs to stormwater control measures deemed necessary by the Town; and ▪ Residential subdivisions that create fewer than 4 zoning lots.	

7.4.3. Design Manual & Standard Details	Sec. 7.4.3 incorporates technical design standards into the LUMO and requires that stormwater control measures be built in accordance with those standards. The standards are available here .
7.4.4. Application Submittal Requirements	Sec. 7.4.4 authorizes the Town Manager to establish application requirements for developers to demonstrate that they are complying with the stormwater management standards in Section 7.1.
7.4.5. Waivers for SCM Requirements	Sec. 7.4.5 identifies certain circumstances in which a new development that is subject to the general requirements of Section 7.1 does not need to provide a stormwater control measure. These circumstances include: ▪ Development that uses approved alternative methods of on-site or off-site stormwater management; ▪ Development that adds less than 500 square feet of impervious surface; ▪ Development with existing stormwater control measures that have unused storage capacity; and ▪ Development that does not add impervious surface or significantly change the existing flow of water across the site.
7.4.6. General Performance Criteria for Stormwater Management	Sec. 7.4.6 sets performance criteria related to: ▪ Water quality treatment ▪ Runoff volume control ▪ Runoff rate control This subsection is notable because it expands the scope of development that must address the 100-yr storm. The subsection will require that subdivisions resulting in 4 or more lots and any development with more than 40,000 square feet of land disturbance address the 100-yr storm. Sec. 7.4.6 also establishes standards for where stormwater control measures and related infrastructure can be placed on a property.
7.4.7. Downstream Impact Analysis	Sec. 7.4.7 creates a new requirement that certain developments analyze and prevent negative impacts on downstream properties . This is achieved by requiring the development to identify downstream conveyances (such as pipes or culverts) and ensure that they will not be overwhelmed by runoff leaving the development.
7.4.8. Integrated Management Practices	Sec. 7.4.8 notes that a variety of practices may be used to meet the stormwater standards of Section 7.4.

7.4.9. Bonds, Warranties & Inspection Fees	Sec. 7.4.9 establishes requirements for bonds, warranties, and inspection fees related to stormwater control measures. These tools that help the Town ensure that SCMs are built and maintained appropriately.	
7.4.10. As-Built Plans & Final Approvals	Sec. 7.4.10 requires developers to submit certified “as-built” plans of any stormwater control measures that are built to satisfy the standards of Section 7.4. As-built plans are a way to ensure that an SCM was built according to the designs approved by the Town.	
7.4.11. SCM Hand-Off Meeting	Sec. 7.4.11 requires that the developer, the entity responsible for long-term maintenance of a new SCM, and Town staff all meet after a new SCM is completed. The purpose of the meeting is to provide a smooth transfer of SCMs from the developer to the responsible entity, and to provide an opportunity for the entity to better understand their obligations under the LUMO.	
7.4.12. Maintenance	Sec. 7.4.12 establishes responsibility for the long-term maintenance of an SCM.	
7.4.13. Inspection	Sec. 7.4.13 requires property owners to receive annual inspections of their SCMs from a certified professional and to submit inspection reports to the Town.	
7.4.14. Violations & Enforcement	Sec. 7.4.14 establishes the various enforcement mechanisms available to the Town and identifies the maximum penalties the Town may impose on developers or property owners that violate the Town’s stormwater management requirements.	
7.4.15. Appeals of an Administrative Decision	Sec. 7.4.15 notes that penalties assessed pursuant to Section 7.4 may be appealed to the Town’s Board of Adjustment.	
7.5. Jordan Watershed Riparian Buffer	Sec. 7.5 implements state-mandated regulations that protect certain streams draining into Jordan Lake. The rules establish a 50-foot buffer around applicable streams and limit the type and amount of activity that is allowed within the buffer.	The standards in this section have not changed significantly.
7.6. Jordan Watershed Stormwater Management	Sec. 7.6 includes rules for stormwater management within the Jordan Lake watershed.	The standards in this section have not changed significantly.

	These rules are currently not being enforced due to limitations imposed by the State.	
7.7. Watershed Protection District	Sec. 7.7 implements state-mandated regulations that protect watersheds of lakes that are used for drinking water. The rules establish vegetated buffer requirements around certain types of streams and control development density in areas outside of stream buffers.	The Watershed Protection District has been modified to reflect updated standards issued by the State. Of note, the rules now recognize and regulate the University Lake watershed. The rules previously only recognized the Jordan Lake watershed because preliminary mapping suggested that the Town’s zoning jurisdiction only included the Jordan Lake watershed. However, updated mapping demonstrates that a small portion of the University Lake watershed is also located in the Town’s jurisdiction. The rules regarding the University Lake watershed will only apply once the zoning map is amended to include the updated boundaries of the University Lake watershed.
7.8. Resource Conservation District	Sec. 7.8 establishes protections for streams and waterbodies. Depending on the type of stream involved, the rules establish buffers ranging from 50 feet to at least 150 feet. The rules limit the type and amount of activity permitted within these buffers.	The Resource Conservation District (“RCD”) provisions of the LUMO have not been significantly altered. RCD buffers have not been reduced. However, as summarized below, a few key provisions have been updated. ▪ The draft clarifies that culverts are not subject to RCD regulations. ▪ The draft incorporates language from older versions of RCD regulations that define stream buffers for zoning lots that were established before 2003. This does not change the stream buffers for these properties. It only makes it easier for property owners to understand what size of stream buffer applies to their property. ▪ The draft establishes an exemption for small projects on residential zoning lots. The exemption will apply to projects that involve less than 30 square feet of impervious surface and less than 60 square feet of land disturbance. This exemption would simplify permitting for incidental work like installation of a backup generator, a small garden shed, or new air conditioning equipment.

		The draft will require stormwater control measures (SCMs) located in the RCD to be designed and constructed as green stormwater infrastructure (GSI). The rule provides flexibility in situations where land within the RCD is not suitable for GSI due to poor soil conditions or a high water table.
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Article 8 – Infrastructure and Public Improvements

Article 8 primarily identifies standards for new subdivisions. It also includes rules regarding public utilities and school capacity.

Section	Description	Additional Information/Notes
8.1. General Provisions	Sec. 8.1 includes the basic introductory language for Article 8.	The standards in this section have not changed significantly.
8.2. Zoning Lot Design Standards	Sec. 8.2 establishes standards for new zoning lots created as part of a subdivision. The standards include: - Responsibility for improving infrastructure when new lots are adjacent to existing streets; - Rules for flag lots and lots with no street frontage; - Opportunities to modify setback requirements; and - Rules for creating cluster subdivisions.	The Town Council adopted multiple improvements to the standards found in Section 8.2 as part of the 2026 omnibus text amendments. These improvements included updated infrastructure requirements for subdivided lots and new allowances for flag lots and zero-frontage lots. Rules for creating cluster subdivisions represent a major new addition in the draft LUMO. Cluster subdivision rules allow for smaller lot sizes (and thus more residential density) in exchange for land conservation and provision of other community benefits like stormwater management.

		The cluster subdivision standards in the current LUMO only allow smaller lot sizes in exchange for additional recreation space.
8.3. Streets and Connectivity	Sec. 8.3 establishes standards for new streets that are constructed as part of a subdivision. The standards include: ▪ Requirements that all new streets must be publicly accessible; ▪ Requirements for subdivisions of 15 or more lots to include stub streets that connect to adjacent lots; and ▪ Requirements that subdivisions connect to adjacent bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.	The draft LUMO will allow subdivisions to include privately owned streets so long as they are open to public access. To help reduce infrastructure costs associated with smaller subdivisions, these privately owned streets will only be required to meet Town standards if they serve more than 15 zoning lots.
8.4. Utilities	Sec. 8.4 includes requirements regarding water and sewer service and other utilities.	The standards in this section have not changed significantly.
8.5. Adequate Public-School Facilities	Sec. 8.5 requires new residential development to demonstrate that there is enough capacity in the local school system to accommodate new students.	The standards in this section have not changed significantly. The new LUMO must include these provisions because of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools and the Town. However, because of declining public-school enrollment, there is not significant concern that new development will strain the system's capacity. If the MOU is revised, these provisions could be removed from the LUMO.

Article 9 – Administration

Article 9 establishes the rules for how land use decisions are made under the LUMO. It identifies the various decision-making bodies within the Town government and defines the various procedures they are responsible for.

Section	Description	Additional Information/Notes
Sec. 9.1. Review Authority	Sec. 9.1 outlines the authority of the various entities that are responsible for making decisions under the LUMO. These include: ▪ Town Council; ▪ Planning Commission; ▪ Board of Adjustment; ▪ Historic District Commission; ▪ Appearance Commission; and ▪ the Town Manager.	Sec. 9.1 renames the Community Design Commission as the “Appearance Commission.” This change is meant to align the Commission’s name with the state law that authorized its creation. Sec. 9.1 also includes provisions that sunset the Appearance Commission within six months of the adoption of the new LUMO. The sunset provision was added because the draft LUMO removes the Appearance Commission’s role in approving projects in the Blue Hill District. With this change, the Appearance Commission would not retain a major role in reviewing new development. Instead, its only LUMO-related function would be to review permits for new signs in certain existing developments (e.g., Southern Village) and to review modifications to building facades in projects with older Council approvals. If the Council chooses to maintain the Appearance Commission as an advisory board (rather than a regulatory body) it could do so outside of LUMO.
9.2. Applications and Permits	Sec. 9.2 identifies which Town entity is responsible for each of the different development approvals established by LUMO.	The draft LUMO will make the Board of Adjustment responsible for all new Special Use Permits. Some major updates to the approval authority of various Town entities were adopted as part of the 2026 omnibus text amendments. These earlier changes included: ▪ Eliminating Concept Plan Review and Site Plan Review. ▪ Making the Town Manager responsible for all subdivision approvals.

9.3. Approval Processes	Sec. 9.3 lays out the formal steps involved in each of LUMO's approval processes.	The draft LUMO expands a permitting exemption that was previously only available to small residential projects. Under the draft LUMO, small commercial projects will be exempt from the requirement to receive a zoning permit. The exemption will be available to projects that are relatively small (less than 500 square feet of impervious surface; 1,500 square feet of land disturbance; and 1,000 square feet of floor area) and outside of environmentally sensitive areas such as RCD buffers, floodplains, and steep slopes. The draft LUMO also improves the overall organization of the various approval processes. Like the earlier changes in approval authority, major updates to some approval processes were adopted as part of the 2026 omnibus text amendments. These earlier changes included: ▪ Streamlining the conditional zoning process. ▪ Updating the subdivision approval process.
Sec. 9.4. Nonconformities	Sec. 9.4 establishes rules for nonconformities. Nonconformities are uses or physical features of a development that were legal when they were established but – because the rules subsequently changed – are no longer consistent with LUMO.	The standards in this section have not changed significantly.
Sec. 9.5. Enforcement	Sec. 9.5 includes options for the Town to enforce the LUMO and impose fines or other penalties for violations.	The standards in this section have not changed significantly.

Article 10 – Definitions

Article 10 provides definitions for a variety of terms used in the draft LUMO.

Section	Description	Additional Information/Notes
10.1. Rules of Interpretation	Sec. 10.1 lays out general rules for interpreting commonly used – but potentially ambiguous – terms in the LUMO.	Provisions of this sort are standard practice in zoning ordinances. This section does not include any unique or atypical rules of interpretation.
10.2. Definitions	Sec. 10.2 provides definitions for a variety of terms included in the draft LUMO.	To improve the organization and usability of the ordinance, definitions related to different land uses have been moved out of the definitions section and into Article 5 of the draft LUMO. Similarly, the remaining definitions have been edited to remove detailed performance standards wherever possible. The current LUMO oftentimes causes confusion because meaningful performance standards are buried in the definition of a term. Other major changes included in this section (e.g., updating the definition of a manufactured home) implement improvements that have been discussed earlier in this summary.

Appendix A – Blue Hill Form District

Appendix A includes the unique standards and development review processes used for projects in the Blue Hill Form District.

As discussed earlier in this summary, the most significant proposed change in the Blue Hill standards is the removal of the Community Design Commission's role in approving projects in the district.

Overall, Blue Hill standards have not changed significantly. The code has received light edits to make it easier to administer and more aligned with the rest of the draft ordinance. Some notable changes include:

- Multifamily projects will no longer be required to provide both recreation space and amenity space. To mirror the shift in the rest of the ordinance, multifamily projects will only be required to provide outdoor amenity space.
- The minimum building height requirement has been removed. The Blue Hill code previously required all buildings to be at least 2 stories tall. However, in practice, this rule has not had the desired effect. To comply with this rule, some buildings resorted to purely ornamental second floors.
- Mandatory minimum parking standards have been removed.

Appendix B – Neighborhood Conservation Districts

Appendix B includes the rules for each of the Town's existing Neighborhood Conservation Districts (NCDs).

As stated earlier in this summary, none of the rules of the individual NCDs are changing. However, the draft LUMO no longer includes an official process for creating new NCDs.

Appendix C – Legacy Districts

Appendix C includes the rules for the four legacy districts identified by the draft LUMO.

As stated earlier in this summary, none of the rules for these districts are changing.