

Douglas County Zoning Code Audit

Summary of Recommendations

Background

- The last major update to the Douglas County Unified Development Code (UDC) was in 2004.
- The UDC has been updated through numerous amendments since that time.
- Douglas County was awarded a technical assistance grant through the Community Development Assistance Program (CDAP) of the Atlanta Regional Commission.
 - The purpose of the award was to complete an audit of the current zoning code and provide recommendations on organization, content, and updates to align with adopted policy and best planning practices.

Policy Framework

- The recommendations of this audit align with adopted policies of Douglas County.
 - Douglas County Comprehensive Plan (2018)
 - Lee Road Corridor Study (2019)
 - Sweetwater Master Plan (2017)
 - Highway 92 Corridor LCI Study (2008)
 - Douglas County Housing Market Study and Multi-Family Fiscal Impact Analysis (2017)
- The recommendations of the audit align with regional policy strategies.
 - Metro Atlanta Housing Strategy (2019)

General Recommendations

Modernize and Make User-Friendly

- Modify Document Structure
- Expand Table of Contents
- Update Graphics
- Modify Tables
- Group and Eliminate Definitions
- Update References
- Eliminate Excessive Language and Regulation
- Incorporate New and Revised Sections
- Expand Administrative Approval of Special Exception Variances
- Update Telecommunications, Group Living, Non-conforming Lots and Subdivision Plat sections

General Recommendations

Encourage Quality Development

- Add Purpose Statements
- Eliminate Non-conformities
- Require Quality Materials and Appropriate Screening, Distancing, and Paving
- Consolidate Overlays for Master Planned Developments
- Expand Planned Unit Developments
- Consolidate Commercial Zoning Districts

General Recommendations

Increase Housing Diversity and Affordability

- Consolidate Multi-Family Residential Zoning Districts
- Allow Two Primary Residential Uses per Property in New R-HD
- Expand Multi-Family Residential Uses into R-MD and C-G and/ or C-H
- Expand Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Regulations
- Reduce Lot Development Standards and Off-Street Parking Requirements
- Maintain Conservation Subdivisions

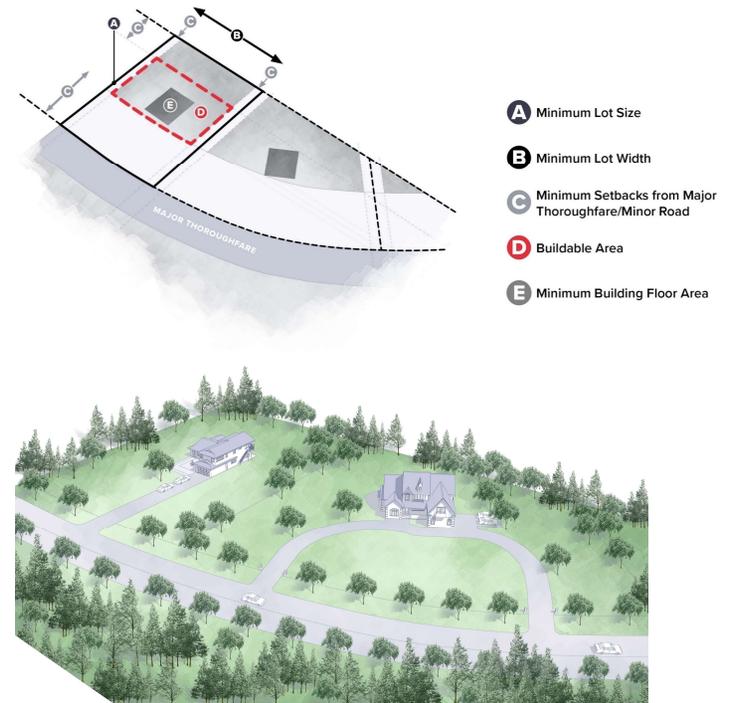
Detailed Recommendations

- Modernize and Make User Friendly
- Encourage Quality Development
- Increase Housing Diversity and Affordability

Modernize and Make User Friendly

Update Graphics

- Graphics should be used extensively to communicate essential information
- Update existing graphics and add new graphics
- Dimensional illustrations and 3-D massings are provided for all zoning districts



Example graphics for the R-A Zoning District

Lot Development Standards Tables

- Combine all lot development standards into one table per zoning district
- Use footnotes when appropriate
- Add standards for impervious surface coverage
- Add minimum distance between accessory and principal buildings

Table CG

LOT DIMENSIONS	
Minimum Lot Area, Sewered ¹	10000 SF
Minimum Lot Area, Non-Sewered ¹	1 AC
Minimum Lot Width, Sewered ²	60 FT
Minimum Lot Width, Non-Sewered ²	60 FT
Minimum Lot Frontage ³	50 FT
Maximum Density	N/A
MINIMUM SETBACKS	
<i>Principal Building</i>	
Front setback, Major Thoroughfare ⁴	50 FT
Front setback, minor street, min ⁵	30 FT
Side setback, min ⁴	10 FT
Rear setback, min ⁴	10 FT
<i>Accessory Building (≤ 144 sf)</i>	
From Principal Building	N/A
Front	N/A
Side	5 FT
Rear	5 FT
<i>Accessory Building (≤ 144 sf)</i>	
From Principal Building	N/A
Front, Major Thoroughfare ^{5, 7}	50 FT
Front, Minor Thoroughfare ^{5, 7}	30 FT
Side ⁴	10 FT
Rear ⁴	10 FT
MAXIMUM HEIGHT ^{8, 9}	
Principal ¹⁰	40 FT
Accessory ¹⁰	40 FT
Impervious Surface Coverage	N/A
Minimum Building Separation	N/A
Maximum Floor Area	N/A

Land Use Tables

- Format land use tables to make referencing simple and straightforward
- Use of letters instead of symbols will make referencing quicker and easier
 - A = Allowed by right
 - R = Allowed with restrictions
 - S = Requires a Special Use Permit

Table PU

NAICS Code	PRINCIPAL USES	AG	R-A	R-LD	R-MD	R-HD	C-N	C-G	C-H	LI	LI-R	HI	See Also:
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting													
111	Crop Production, except Greenhouse, Nursery, and Floriculture Production	A	A										
1114	Crop Production: Greenhouse, Nursery, and Floriculture Production	A	A	S									
Animal Production :													
1121	Cattle Ranching and Farming, except Feedlots	R	S										§ 319
112112	Cattle Feedlots	R	S										§ 319
112120	Dairy Cattle Farming	R	S										§ 319
1122	Hog and Pig Farming	R	S										§ 319
1123	Poultry and Egg Production	R	S										§ 319
1124	Sheep and Goat Farming	R	S										§ 319
1125	Animal Aquaculture	R	S										§ 319
1129	Other Animal Production, such as Horses, Bees, Rabbits, etc.	R	S										§ 319
113	Forestry and Logging	R	R										§ 312
114	Commercial Fishing, Hunting and Trapping	A	A										
1151	Support Activities for Crop Production	A	A										
1152	Support Activities for Animal Production	A	A										
1153	Support Activities for Forestry	A	A										
42259	Livestock Sale Pavilion and Auction Facility	S	S							A		A	

A (Use is Allowed by Right in the District Indicated)
 R (Use is Allowed with Restrictions)
 S (Use Requires Special Use Approval)
 Blank (Use is Not Allowed)

Group and Eliminate Duplicate Definitions

- Place all definitions in Article 15
- Remove duplicate terms in Article 15 (e.g. “Regulated Stream” and “Stream, Regulated)
- Cross reference to terms listed in the Douglasville UDO for continuity between the jurisdictions
- Move definitions to the beginning of the UDC

Update References

- Use one, consistent reference for UDC, Articles, Departments, etc
- Use one, consistent reference for the Comprehensive Plan, and any other plan, (e.g. Thoroughfare Plan)
- Update references to external regulations, requirements or review entities, and where possible eliminate specific references in favor of a general statement
- Update references for “designees” and replace specific titles with a general statement where possible
- Use a uniform system to describe zoning classifications
- Clearly delineate a uniform notation of time, distance, etc
- NAICS codes should be updated to reflect 2017 standards
- Update gendered terms and use consistently

Incorporate New and Revised Sections

- Heavy Truck Parking Facilities
- Short-Term Rentals
- Sign Regulations
- Telecommunications
- Group Living
- Non-conforming Lot
- Subdivision Plats
- Administrative Approvals of Special Exception Variances

Heavy Truck Parking Facilities

- Sections 302 and 331, will be amended to cover **truck stops and heavy truck parking facilities as principal or accessory uses**
 - Currently also regulates gasoline stations and convenience stores with fuel pumps
 - Circulation and parking area for heavy truck parking must be 200 feet from any residential property.
 - The site shall have 125 feet of frontage on a major collector or arterial street
 - Curb cuts, drives and access shall be no greater than 40 feet wide; shall be 40 feet from a street intersection and 40 feet from another driveway

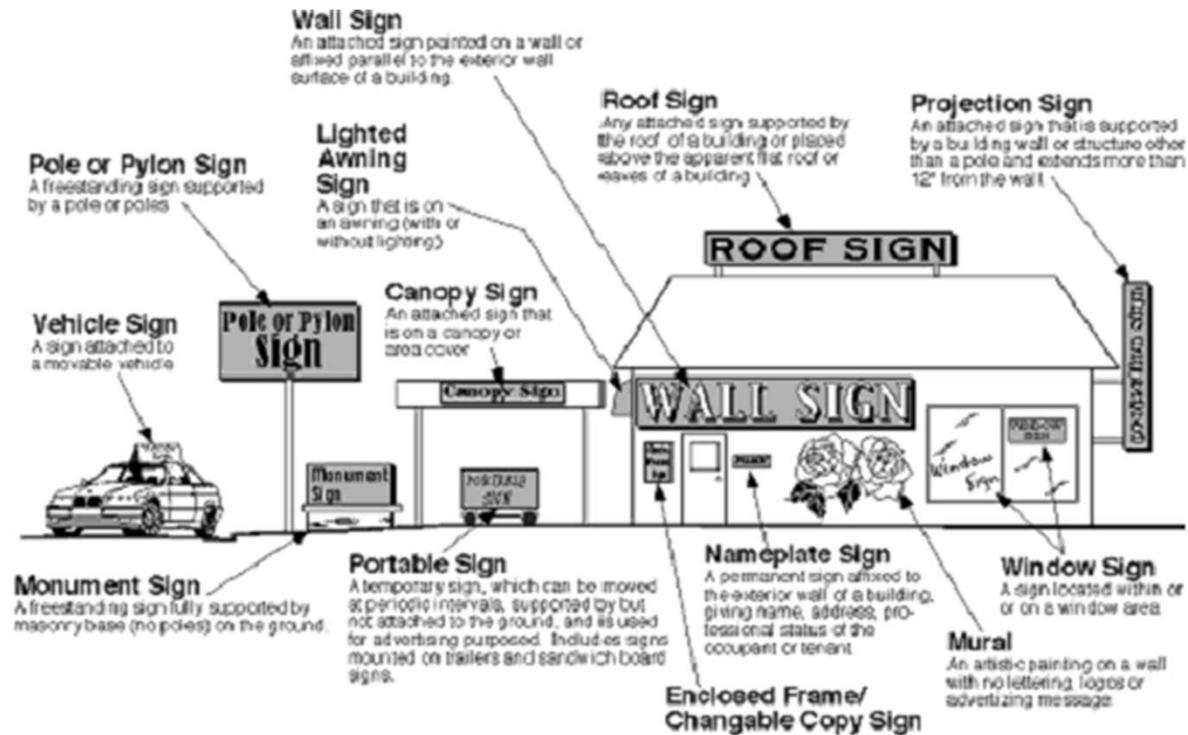
Heavy Truck Parking Facilities

- Section 331 will be amended to address **heavy truck parking facilities** (with no truck stop)
 - Parking for no more than one week per vehicle
 - Applies to heavy trucks, semi-trailers, and truck tractors
 - Allowed only on or within 1/4 mile of state maintained highways
 - On-street truck parking is prohibited
 - Gravel lots are allowed if they meet certain requirements
 - Overflow lots are allowed if they meet certain requirements
 - Screening, perimeter fencing and exterior site lighting is required
 - No sales or repairs are allowed on site
 - Proposed to be allowed in the CH, LI, HI, with restrictions

Short Term Rentals

- Section 347 addresses Short Term Rentals
 - Allows for private residences or their accessory dwellings to be used as a short term rental
 - The property must be owner-occupied
 - The use is allowed only with a Special Use Permit and requires a business license, if approved
 - Special Use Permits shall only be valid for five years and must be renewed
 - The Special Use Permit is conditioned to the owner and must be re-applied for when ownership changes
 - Only one permit will be issued per property, and only one party is allowed to use the property at a time for no longer than 90 consecutive days
 - Only allowed in the residential zoning districts and shall not interfere with the residential character of the neighborhood
 - Limitations on parking
 - Restaurants and/ or food service are not allowed

Sign Regulations



Sign Regulations

Table 7.1: Permitted Freestanding Signs—By Land Use Category

	Agricultural Property	Residential Uses	Nonresidential Uses within Residential Districts	Commercial & Office Districts	Industrial Districts	Institutional Property
Freestanding Sign – One Tenant or Use on Property:						
Max. Number	1 per lot	1 per lot ⁱ	1 per street frontage	1 per street frontage	1 per street frontage	1 per street frontage
Maximum area of each sign	75 sq. ft.	6 sq. ft.	16 sq. ft.	75 sq. ft.	75 sq. ft.	32 sq. ft.
Maximum height	6 ft.	6 ft.	12 ft.	20 ft.	20 ft.	8 ft. ²
Illumination	External only	Not allowed	External only	Internal or External	Internal or External	Internal or External
Freestanding Sign – Planned Center – Multiple Land Uses or Tenants						
Max. Number	N/A	N/A	N/A	1 per 300 feet of street frontage	1 per 300 feet of street frontage	
Maximum area of each sign				300 square feet	300 square feet	
Maximum height				12 feet ²	25 feet	
Illumination				Internal or External	Internal or External	
Project Entrance and Monument Entrance Sign:						
Max. Number	2 per entrance drive ^a	2 per entrance drive ⁱⁱⁱ	2 per entrance drive ^v	2 per entrance drive ^v	2 per entrance drive ^{vi}	2 per entrance drive
Maximum sign face or sign structure area ¹	64 square feet	64 square feet	64 square feet	100 sq. ft.	200 sq. ft.	32 sq. ft.
Maximum height	12 feet	12 feet	12 feet	20 feet	30 feet	8 ft.
Illumination	Internal or External	Internal or External	Internal or external	Internal or external	Internal or External	Internal or External

¹ Ground (i.e., "monument") sign only.

² Applies to any institutional property located within a Residential zoning district.

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Telecommunications

- No further changes recommended to the County's small cell regulations
- The County's existing "Radio, Television, and Telecommunications" regulations do appear to conflict with the Telecommunications Act of 1996, but the UDO should be updated to incorporate provisions mandated by the Spectrum Act (2012) and accompanying rules.
- See Appendix A of the technical memo – County already processes modification requests within a very short number of days-sometimes hours-in compliance with the newer federal regs.

Group Living

- In order to bring the County's UDC into alignment with the Fair Housing Act and American's with Disabilities Act:
 - Allow group homes for protected classes in all zoning districts that permit single-family dwelling units
 - Change the definition of "family" and/ or "personal care home"
 - Delete "Residential Mental Retardation, Mental Health and Substance Abuse Facilities" from the ordinance and instead regulate as personal care homes
 - Remove the 1,000-foot separation requirement
 - Remove the prohibition on personal care homes serving as drug rehabilitation facilities
 - Establish a reasonable accommodation approval procedure that would permit case-by-case approval of reasonable accommodate requests using FHA criteria

Article 1 – Applicability and Non-conforming Status

- Updated Zone District Comparison Table and Comp Plan Table
- Updated District Categories and Purposes for each district
- Moved Corridor Overlay District standards to Article 4
- Moved Definitions to Article 15
- Governmental Exemption Effect on Unified Development Code
- Nonconforming development; purpose and intent of provisions.
 - Registration and recording.
 - Re-establishment of a discontinued nonconforming use.
 - Use gross floor area instead of cost as the basis for allowing replacement.

Article 2 – Uses of Land and Structures

- Updated the recommended zone district lists and purposes
- Moved the Overlay standards into Article 4 with graphics and tables
- Updated the Table of Uses allowed in each zone district

- Requesting combining CN and CC into CG and combining CR into CH
- Combining Multiple Corridor Overlays to a single overlay
- Combining R-D, R-TC and R-MF into R-HD
- Combining OI-L and OI-H into OI
- Adding PRD, PUD and PSP

Article 3 – Restrictions on Particular Uses

- Items highlighted in red text include substantive changes; all others are minimal changes
- Section 302: Agricultural and residential use separation
- Section 303: Environmentally Hazardous Uses
- Section 304: Outdoor display areas
- Section 305: Outdoor storage
- Section 307: Standards for single-family and two-family dwellings
- Section 313: Accessory buildings, uses and structures
- Section 316: Automobile storage yards and wrecker services
- Section 317: Automotive repair or maintenance
- Section 318: Bed and breakfast inns, country inns
- Section 319: Boarding and breeding of animals
- Section 328: Day care
- Section 331: Gasoline Stations, Truck Stops and Convenience stores
- Section 334: Home occupations
- Section 336: Manufactured home parks
- Section 344: Recreational vehicle and travel trailer parks
- Section 348: Temporary Events
- Section 351.1: Mobile Food Vendors

Article 4 – Lot and Building Standards Revisions

- Division I: Residential/ Agricultural Districts
 - 4.01 General Provisions
 - 4.02 Interpretation Graphics and Legend
 - 4.03 Agricultural (AG)
 - 4.04 Residential – Agricultural (RA)
 - 4.05 Low Density Single Family Residential (R-LD)
 - 4.06 Medium Density Single Family Residential (R-MD)
 - 4.07 High Density Residential (R-HD)
 - 4.08 Manufactured Home Residential (R-MH)
 - 4.09 Planned Residential District (PRD)
- Division II Commercial/ Mixed Use Districts
 - 4.10 General Provisions
 - 4.11 Interpretation Graphics and Legend
 - 4.12 Planned Unit Development (PUD)
 - 4.13 Office-Institutional (O-I)
 - 4.14 General Commercial (C-G)
 - 4.15 Heavy Commercial (C-H)
 - 4.16 Public/ Semi-public (PSP)
- Division III Industrial Districts
 - 4.17 General Provisions
 - 4.18 Interpretation Graphics and Legend
 - 4.19 Light Industrial (LI)
 - 4.20 Heavy Industrial (HI)
- Division IV Overlay Districts
 - 4.21 General Provisions
 - 4.22 Interpretation Graphics and Legend
 - 4.23 Highway Corridor Overlay
 - 4.24 Quality Growth Development Overlay
 - 4.25 Mixed Use Master Planned Developments
 - 4.26 Master Planned Developments
 - 4.27 Conservation Subdivisions
- Division V Supplemental Development Standards

Article 4 – Lot and Building Standards Revisions

- Each district will include a purpose statement, lot development standards, and supplemental regulations
- PRD district will provide allowances for density bonuses based on certain desired development standards (e.g. Earthcraft certification, solar supplemental, transit oriented, amenities, etc)

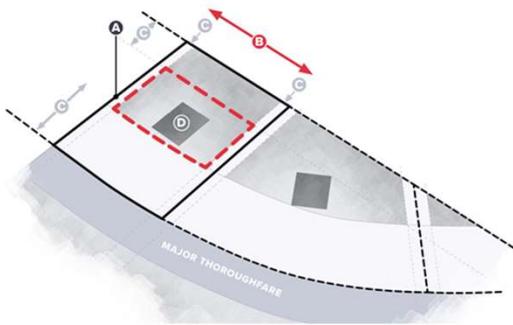
Article 4 – Lot and Building Standards Revisions

- **Sec. 4.04 R-A Residential-Agricultural.**
- **Purpose**
- The R-A Residential-Agricultural District is established to protect and promote a suitable environment for rural or "large lot suburban" family life, agriculture including the raising of livestock and poultry, and the development of natural resources and other uses requiring extensive areas of land. This District is required to protect the future development of land in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan of the county as amended.
- **Lot Development Standards**

A. Lot Development Standards

Lot Dimensions	
Minimum Lot Area	1 acre on sewer or septic
Minimum Lot Width	150' at building setback line on sewer or septic
Minimum Lot Frontage on ROW	50' is the standard, 25' is permissible for lots over 5 acres either by direct access to a right-of-way or as a recorded easement connecting the lot to a public right-of-way 35' if fronting on a cul-de-sac
Maximum Density	.85 Dwelling Units per acre on sewer or septic
Minimum Setbacks	
<i>Principal Building</i>	
Front	100' from Major Thoroughfare or 35' from a Minor Street"
Side	15'
Rear	60'
<i>Accessory Building</i>	
From Principal Structure	
Front	Not-Permitted unless 100' from the street right-of-way
Side	5' if less than 144 sf
Rear	Same as principal if greater than 144 sf
Maximum Height	
Principal	2.5 stories or 35'
Accessory	20'
Minimum Floor Area	
Single Family Detached	1,800 sf
Minimum Dimension	
Single Family Detached	16' in width
Maximum Impervious Surface Coverage	
	Within the Dog River Primary Basin 15%, and Dog River Secondary Basin 25%, within the Bear Creek Basin 25%, within all other Basins no restrictions

Article 4 – Lot and Building Standards Revisions



- A** Minimum Lot Size
- B** Minimum Lot Width
- C** Minimum Setbacks from Major Thoroughfare/Minor Road
- D** Minimum Building Floor Area



Article 5 – Subdivisions and Planned Developments

- Propose eliminating Mixed-Use Master Planned Development and Master Planned Development categories in favor of new PUD standards and PRD District as options.
- Existing planned developments would be offered option of developing under existing approvals as legacy status or rezoning into PUD status

Article 7 – Sign Regulations

- Added text to correct definitions and adjust for constitutional compliance.
- Added graphics and pictures to identify more clearly what's being defined.

Sign Regulations

	Agricultural Property	Residential Districts	Commercial and Office Districts Single Use	Industrial Districts Single Use	Planned Centers
Wall, awning, under-canopy, projecting & permanent window signs on a building:					
Maximum number of building signs except under canopy and projecting signs	1	1	1 per tenant for each of the tenant's walls facing a street ³	1 per tenant for each of the tenant's walls facing a street	1 per tenant for each of the tenant's walls facing a street
Maximum sign face area—total for each tenant	2 sq. ft.	2 sq. ft. ⁱ	15% of the area of the wall facing a street	15% of the area of the wall facing a street	25% of the area of the wall facing a street
Maximum sign face area for each sign	n.a.	n.a.	100 square feet per sign	200 square feet per sign	200 square feet per sign
Additional Under-Canopy Sign or Projecting Sign	Not Allowed	Not Allowed	1 per tenant, up to 6 sq. ft. in area	1 per tenant, up to 6 sq. ft. in area	1 per tenant, up to 6 sq. ft. in area
Illumination	n.a.	n.a.	Internal or External	Internal or External	Internal or External
Signs on a freestanding canopy:					
Max. number of all canopy signs	Not Allowed	Not Allowed	1 per canopy face	1 per canopy face	1 per canopy face
Maximum sign face area			10% of the area of each canopy face	10% of the area of each canopy face	10% of the area of each canopy face
Maximum sign face area of largest sign			9 sq. ft.	9 sq. ft.	9 sq. ft.
Illumination			Internal or External	Internal Only	Internal Only

Sign Regulations



- K. Changeable Copy Sign:
 1. Automatic Changeable Copy Sign: A sign on which the copy changes automatically on a lamp bank, digital screen or through mechanical means, e.g., electrical or electronic control. Copy shall mean words, symbols and numbers.
 2. Manual Changeable Copy Sign: A sign on which copy is changed manually in the field, e.g., reader boards with changeable letters. Copy shall mean words and numbers.
- L. Digital Billboard: A billboard, the sign face of which is composed of LED or other electronic units that, when displayed, constitute the sign face of the sign.

Sign Regulations

VV. Vehicle signs. A vehicle sign in excess of one and one-half square feet painted on or wrapped on a currently licensed, legally-operating vehicle that is used daily in the normal course of operation of a business establishment for transportation may be authorized as provided below.



2. Ground Sign: A freestanding sign in which the entire bottom of the sign face or structure is in contact with the ground, providing a solid and continuous background for the sign face from the ground to the top of the sign. Also referred to as a "monument sign."

Article 15 – Definitions

- Updated the definitions sections
- Placed all definitions from the various Articles into Article 15
- Moved the interpretation text sections into Article 1

Subdivision Plats

- Amend the UDC to define “exempt” land division activities that are not required to follow the normal subdivision plat approval process:
- **Any division of land to heirs through a judicial estate proceeding, or any division of land pursuant to a judicial partition, or any division of land occurring from the foreclosure of a deed of trust; provided, however, that such exemption shall not require the city to issue permits if the resulting lots or parcels fail to meet any applicable regulations of the local jurisdiction concerning lot size, lot width, and other dimensional requirements.**
- **Need administrative approval of “Minor Subdivisions”**

- Articles 8-14 will be a separate review and recommendation

Encourage Quality Development

Include Additional Purpose Statements

- Examples include:
 - Foster mixed use development
 - Encourage dense development along corridors, as appropriate
 - Encourage dense development adjacent to the City of Douglasville, as appropriate
 - Preserve rural character through appropriate development of sensitive areas
 - Reference policies of adopted plans, as appropriate

Convert the O-ED to a base zoning classification

- Convert the current O-ED (Estate Density Overlay District) into a base zoning classification of R-AE that bridges the gap between current AG and AR zoning classifications.

Consolidate Corridor Overlays

- Combine Highway 92 Village, Post Road Village, and Highway 78 Corridor Overlays, and evaluate the Highway 5 overlay to determine if it needs to be distinct from the other three overlays.
- Replace existing Corridor Overlays with a new O-HC Highway Corridor Overlay

Revise Quality Growth Development Overlay

- Update the language of the Quality Growth Development Overlay

Master Planned Developments

- Combine the Master Planned Development and Mixed Use Master Planned Development into Legacy Status and use the PUD district
- Developed and implemented new PUD district standards
- Retain the conservation subdivision provisions

Expand Planned Unit Developments (PUDs)

- Revised Purpose and Intent statement for re-establishing the PUD
- Allow for PUDs under 5 acres with certain conditions
- Specify a requirement for a minimum of 20% open space
- Require a statement of intent as part of the application
- Provide additional zoning review considerations for a PUD

Consolidate Commercial Zoning Districts

Name	Abbreviation	Total Parcels	Total Acreage	% of Total County Acreage
Community Commercial	C-C	16	32	<1%
General Commercial	C-G	345	683	<1%
Heavy Commercial	C-H	423	890	<1%
Neighborhood Commercial	C-N	124	174	<1%
Regional Commercial	C-R	2	29	<1%

For Context:

- Douglas County is approximately 128,640 acres
- Douglas County is comprised of 54,553 parcels
- Summary above includes zoning classifications with and without conditions

Consolidate Commercial Zoning Districts

- Consolidate C-N, C-C and C-G districts into one C-G district
- Consolidate C-H and C-R into one C-H district
- Revise uses and dimensional requirements as appropriate

Consolidate Office Zoning Districts

Name	Abbreviation	Total Parcels	Total Acreage	% of Total County Acreage
Low Density Office/ Institutional	OI-L	51	93	<1%
High Density Office	OI-H	0	0	0

For Context:

- Douglas County is approximately 128,640 acres
- Douglas County is comprised of 54,553 parcels
- Summary above includes zoning classifications with and without conditions

- Introduce new Public Use District

Miscellaneous

- Eliminate Non-conformities
 - Introduce moderate reductions in timeframes and thresholds
- Require Quality Materials
 - Eliminate vinyl as a permitted material in favor of composite and fiber cement
- Require Appropriate Screening, Distancing and Paving
 - Update mechanical screening requirements to address topographical changes
 - Distance requirements between parking lots and residential structures
 - Curb cut paving requirement to reduce gravel discharge onto county roads

Increase Housing Diversity and Affordability

Consolidate Multi-family Residential Zoning Districts

Name	Abbreviation	Total Parcels	Total Acreage	% of Total County Acreage
Duplex Two-Family Residential	RD	108	81	<1%
Multi-Family Residential	R-MF	78	290	<1%
Townhouse Condominium Residential	R-TC	842	231	<1%

For Context:

- Douglas County is approximately 128,640 acres
- Douglas County is comprised of 54,553 parcels
- Summary above includes zoning classifications with and without conditions

Consolidate Multi-family Residential Zoning Districts

- Create a new High Density Residential (R-HD) District
- Allow for a variety of housing types, including duplexes, apartments, townhouses and small single-family dwellings either by right or with restrictions
- Do not require Special Use Permit approval
- Allow two primary residential uses per property

Expand Accessory Dwelling Unit Regulations

- Allow accessory apartments by right in all agricultural and residential zoning districts, except R-MH
- Reduce required acreage for accessory dwelling units
- Section 313 changes for ADUs