



Highlights of Draft Zoning and Subdivision Changes

Mission Statement

The mission of the Housing Oversight Task Force (HOTF) is to make housing more available to people of a range of income levels and backgrounds while preserving our town's unique character and scale and continuing to protect our treasured natural environment.

This mission statement is derived from the Woodstock Comprehensive Plan which states:

“By supporting the creation of a variety of housing options through changes to the zoning law and proactively planning for an expanded mix of housing types in Woodstock, the town will be addressing one of the most important needs identified by the community in the development of this plan. ... Zoning is the backbone of efforts to maintain quality and character of the town that Woodstock's residents and visitors find so appealing ... especially those environmentally sensitive areas and open space...”

Process

The HOTF employed a process that gathered input from all elements of the community, including town government leaders, town employees and committees, faith communities, business owners and workers, homeowners and renters, diverse age populations, educators, environmental organizations, arts organizations, social service groups and housing organizations, builders, and engineers.

- The Town Board formed the HOTF in July 2021, drawing members from the boards and committees that were working on housing or had oversight on town housing regulations to develop zoning changes that would implement the Comprehensive Plan goals.
- The Town hired an expert planner with the help of the Woodstock Housing Committee.
- The planner worked with the HOTF to analyze the existing laws in light of best practices and led the HOTF through a process to determine the best options for Woodstock's unique character.
- The HOTF developed Version 1 of the proposed changes to the zoning and subdivision codes that would support the mission and submitted it to the Town Board on May 31, 2022.
- The Woodstock Town Board asked the Planning Board to review and comment and also distributed Version 1 to all other boards, committees, and departments for comment. It was also posted to the town website to solicit public comments, along with the HOTF PowerPoint presentation and other documents about the proposed changes.
- The HOTF analyzed and categorized the comments and developed a revised document to address the community's recommendations in the form of a draft Law for Zoning and Subdivision updates. This document was reviewed by a land use lawyer and UC Planning Dept. In addition, the HOTF developed a list of action items and policy recommendations that cannot be addressed through either zoning or subdivision laws.
- Based on these processes and goals, on April 18th, 2023, the HOTF is submitting a Draft Law to the Town Board for consideration and action. The list of non-zoning-related action items and policy recommendations will be submitted shortly thereafter.

Community Outcomes

The HOTF believes that the recommended changes to the Subdivision and Zoning Codes will have a significant positive impact on the community. Specifically:

- There will be more affordable housing for people who work in Woodstock and for those who give their time and energy through volunteering in Woodstock.
- Young people who grew up in Woodstock and young families will be able to find more affordable housing options.
- There will be more affordable senior housing options.
- The Subdivision Code changes and environmentally based siting requirements will encourage and allow increased conservation areas and help protect our town's natural beauty.

Policy Outcomes

Changes to the Subdivision Code, which determine how the land can be divided:

- Protect the environment by requiring that all Major Subdivisions be Conservation Subdivisions. This means that at least 50% of the land in a Major Subdivision must be preserved through a permanent conservation agreement.
- Support the reduction of disturbed areas by allowing average lot sizes instead of minimum lot sizes for individual lots in a subdivision.
- Restrict inappropriate development in scenic and environmentally sensitive areas.
- Require the identification of Building Envelopes on the Plat when creating a new subdivision.

Changes to the Zoning Code, which determine the types of uses that are permitted:

- Bring all housing-related elements into a new Housing Chapter.
- Simplify the development of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), which can increase the available housing stock while applying strict environmental siting criteria.
- Promote additional Long-Term Rentals (LTRs) by allowing additional ADUs that must be designated affordable.
- Encourage the development of more affordable housing by allowing 3- and 4-unit structures with the approval of the Planning Board, with no STRs allowed and one deed-restricted affordable unit required.
- Allow development projects with more units, contingent on the approval of the Town Board, using the new Floating Residential District.
- Require affordable housing to be included in certain types of development.
- Promote affordable housing and environmental protection through density bonuses.
- Create specific standards on size, scale and siting that reflect our town's character for approval of multi-family buildings.
- Clarify and simplify planning requirements for ease of use by applicants and the Planning Board, as follows:
 - Required pre-sketch plan review meetings for property owners, to ensure that projects support town goals and help property owners avoid premature costs.
 - Modified (expedited) Site Plan Review (MSPR) for 3- and 4-plex buildings.
 - Clarified the language throughout the Subdivision and Zoning codes.