

Why is a Land Development Code (LDC) important? In the State of South Carolina, as in many states, municipalities and counties have adopted ordinances and regulations regarding the way people may use their property. These ordinances are primarily designed to protect citizens from activities that might be unsafe or disruptive, but they are also designed to improve efficiencies and reduce unnecessary costs to the community.

What makes up an LDC? In South Carolina, all Land Development Codes must have two parts – written rules and a zoning map. But before those rules and map are adopted, the community must create and adopt a community master plan or comprehensive plan as set forth in the South Carolina State Code.

Before this process, when was Richland County’s LDC last updated? Before November 2021, the County’s LDC was last updated in 2005. In 2015, Richland County Council adopted an update to the County’s Comprehensive Plan titled “Richland County: Putting the Pieces in Place.” One of the key elements of the Plan was a recommendation to update the County’s LDC within five years.

In 2016, County Council directed the County Administrator and his staff to prepare an update to the 2005 Richland County LDC as recommended in the Comprehensive Plan. This process was substantially completed when the coronavirus pandemic occurred in early 2020 but was put on hold so resources could be dedicated to that effort.

In November 2021, County Council approved the written portion of the new LDC, but not the Zoning Map.

Why was the zoning map not adopted at the same time? The Planning Commission-recommended zoning map did not exactly follow the translation table in the 2021 LDC text, and instead included “proactive” property rezonings recommended by the County Comprehensive Plan. The Council decided it wanted a zoning map that followed the translation table exactly and did not include proactive zoning changes, so it approved only the text and sent the map back to the Planning Commission.

What was the next step in the process? In March 2022, the County Council directed the County Administrator and his staff to “restart” the zoning map design process. In addition, it recommended the Planning Commission consider and recommend amendments to the previously adopted 2021 Land Development Code text.

In November 2022, the Planning Commission completed its portion of the restart process and recommended a new Zoning Map and several LDC text amendments to Council.

When was community input received? From February 2023 through April 2023, the Community Planning and Development staff held public information meetings throughout Richland County informing the community of the proposed zoning map amendments.

What happened after the education meetings? On April 4, 2023, County Council received a presentation from the Planning Commission on the proposed Zoning Map and LDC text amendments. At the same meeting, Council Chair Overture Walker assigned the proposed zoning map and LDC text amendments to the D&S Committee for consideration and a recommendation to the full Council.

What did the D&S Committee do?

The D&S Committee reviewed the proposed Zoning Map and the proposed LDC text amendments, and based upon the procedural advice of the County attorney, forwarded the proposed Zoning Map to the Council for consideration and held back the proposed text amendments.

Why didn't the D&S Committee also recommend the proposed text amendments?

County Council has not yet completed the LDC Ordinance it started in November 2021. To complete that process and begin a new text amendment ordinance, Council must first adopt a Zoning Map as required by South Carolina State Code.

Did Council approve the Zoning Map?

Yes, County Council gave final approval (third reading) to the Zoning Map on Oct. 3, 2023.

When will the 2021 LDC and Zoning Map go into effect?

Council approved an effective date of March 1, 2024, for both the LDC and the Zoning Map. The reason for the delay was so Council could consider and adopt text amendments recommended by the Planning Commission prior to the effective date, and so staff and community members would have time to familiarize themselves with the new LDC.

Where can I view the adopted zoning map and the proposed text amendments? The adopted zoning map and the list of text amendments recommended by the Planning Commission are available for viewing on the County website.

What is in the newly adopted zoning map?

The PC-recommended zoning map translates zoning classifications from the 2005 LDC to their equivalent in the 2021 LDC, based on the "translation table" in the adopted 2021 LDC. The Planning Commission directed staff to follow the translation table exactly, with one exception and one note. First, the Commission recommended that Council add the M-1 Zone back into the 2021 LDC text instead of following the translation table. Second, the translation table had more than one possible translation for rural zones, so the Commission had to create a metric for determining whether rural properties should be classified as AG, HM or RT. The rule was applied to rural and rural residential zones and is based on size/acreage:

- 35 acres or larger = AG
- 3 to < 35 acres = HM
- 0 to < 3 acres = RT

What text amendments did the Planning Commission recommend?

The following is a summary of the Planning Commission-recommended changes to the adopted November 2021 LDC:

- In the 2021 LDC as adopted, the RT Zone currently has a density equal to 1.3 acres per lot; the Planning Commission recommended a density equal to 1.0 acre. The HM Zone currently has a density equal to 3 acres per lot; the Planning Commission recommended a density equal to 1.5 acres per lot. The AG Zone currently requires a density equal to 6.7 acres per lot, and the Commission recommended a density equal to 3 acres per lot.
- The Planning Commission recommended removing two-, three- and four-dwelling unit structures and manufactured homes from the R-2, R-3 and R-4 zones. The Commission also recommended removing townhouses from the R-4 zone.

- Both the prior 2005 LDC and the 2021 LDC allow a property owner to subdivide property into residential building lots that are smaller than was possible prior to 2005 as long as certain “clustering” criteria are met. The adopted 2021 LDC restricted this to a certain extent, and the Planning Commission’s current recommendation further reduces the ability to reduce minimum lot sizes and/or increase density without rezoning the property.
- The prior 2005 LDC carried over the “M-1 Manufacturing Zone” from the previous LDC, but the 2021 LDC did not. The Planning Commission recommended reinstating the M-1 Zone but limiting it to existing properties.

When will the LDC Text Amendments be adopted, and when are public hearings scheduled?

Below is the most current schedule, which may change depending on actions of Council:

May 23, 2023	D&S Committee discussed proposed Zoning Map and Land Development Code (LDC) text amendments and requested the preparation of Zoning Map revisions and/or text revisions for consideration at a future Committee meeting
June 27, 2023	D&S Committee forwarded the Zoning Map proposed by the Planning Commission to full Council
July 11, 2023	County Council discussed procedures and requested a work session
July 25, 2023	Council held work session to discuss Zoning Map
Sept. 12, 2023	Council passed first reading and held public hearing for Zoning Map
Sept. 19, 2023	Council passed second reading of Zoning Map
Oct. 3, 2023	Council passed third reading of Zoning Map and first reading of text amendments
Oct. 24, 2023	Council to hold work session on text amendments
Nov. 7, 2023	Council to hold public hearing and consider second reading of text amendments
Nov. 14, 2023	Council to consider third reading of text amendments
March 1, 2024	Zoning Map, 2021 LDC, and proposed text amendments scheduled to become effective