



Lumpkin County Land Use and Development Regulations Review Committee

342 Courthouse Hill Planning Commission Meeting Room

August 11, 2026

5:00 PM

Members Present: Rhett Stringer, Bobby Mayfield, Vanessa McGrath, Martin Durand, Chris Adams, Trevor Eudy, Kathy Lacy-Eglian, Megan Mzzola, Greg Hayes, Don Becker

Staff Present: Alan Ours

Meeting called to order at 5:09 pm

Minutes from Aug 3, 2026 were approved by motion and raised hands.

Sewer Service Area, Rock Quarry Vicinity, and Development Constraints

- Discussion on whether the rock quarry area lies inside the sewer service area; sewer reportedly reaches the end of the rock quarry and into Red Oak Flats, raising usability concerns if outside the service boundary.
- Terrain constraints along Long Branch (cliff on one side, floodplain on the other) limit development regardless of zoning.
- Some parcels near Perkins Road are in active site work; questions raised about impacts if maps/overlays change.

Gateway Corridor and Overlay District Alignment (Section 27-3.1.10)

- Clarified distinction between gateway corridors (character areas) and overlay districts (regulatory design standards); overlays impose enforceable design guidelines.
- Historical context: original gateway corridor was broad; overlay created to focus and elevate commercial frontage design.
- Preference to retarget the overlay footprint along parcels fronting the state road from Home Depot entrance to Red Oak Flats and south, rather than extending to the county line on Cleveland Highway.
- Consideration of small parcels (one acre or less) within the Gateway Corridor: debate on whether classifying them as commercial adds assembly value vs. reclassifying to residential to protect homeowners with buffer requirements.
- General agreement to narrow/retarget overlay to align with sewer service and state road frontages; maintain gateway corridor designations grounded in existing conditions; unresolved decisions on one-acre parcel treatment.

Simplifying and Consolidating Land Use Character Areas

- Current system has many “colors” but functionally funnels to “restricted” vs “general” via performance standards and road types.
- Proposals ranged from reducing to three–four categories (General, Restricted, Gateway Overlay, Airport/Transportation) to retaining Agricultural Preservation, Rural Places, and Residential Growth separately due to subdivision standards (e.g., 3-acre minimum in Ag Pres vs 1-acre elsewhere), buffering needs, and distinct allowances (e.g., RV parks prohibited in Ag Pres).

- Noted inconsistencies on maps (isolated color dots; institutional “blue” not in chart; industrial parks not mapped as industrial).
- Suggested middle-ground category between Gateway Corridor and purely Residential to address conflicts and provide clearer development pathways.
- Directional support to simplify to a two-color base (General/Restricted) plus overlays, while retaining Ag Pres and Transportation; public engagement likely needed for larger changes.

Land Use Change Process, Contiguity, and Adjacency

- Reviewed contiguity rule requiring land use changes to be adjacent to desired zoning to prevent “island” zones; fewer categories would simplify application.
- Strategy discussed to re-designate four corners of major intersections as commercial to clean up inappropriately zoned parcels and enable easier adjacent change requests.
- Emphasis on adjacency logic for commercial/industrial expansion next to existing designations, while keeping absolute prohibitions in sensitive areas.
- Use adjacency-based allowances to guide orderly expansion and reduce variance requests; implement incremental corner-first cleanups.

Performance Standards, Buffers, Screening, and Use Allowances

- Reviewed charted use differences between General and Restricted, often limited to screening/buffers or lot size:
 - Animal Facilities (Limited): allowed on arterial/collector/local in both; stricter screening in Restricted; not allowed in planned subdivisions.
 - Call centers: allowed on arterial/collector in Restricted with larger lot size (2 acres vs 1); some buffers/screening in Restricted vs none in General.
 - Car washes: disallowed in Restricted; limited to arterial/collector in General.
- Concern over conflicts between Gateway Overlay screening rules and the use chart; need to avoid contradictions.
- Buffers and setbacks emphasized to protect residential parcels adjacent to intensive uses; need clearer definitions of “buffer” vs “screening.”
- Recognition that clearer, harmonized standards and definitions are needed to reduce ambiguity and conflict and to strengthen residential protections, especially within corridors.

Ordinance vs. Comprehensive Plan and Side-by-Side Use Tables

- Direction to prepare side-by-side comparisons of Restricted vs General uses using the ordinance as the source of truth, highlighting items to remove or align (6–8 bullets each).
- Questioned value of duplicative definitions between comp plan and ordinance; aim to simplify categories while grounding changes in ordinance language and charts.

- Proceed with ordinance-driven comparisons and a simplified glossary for key terms (overlay district, gateway corridor, character area, restricted/general).

Institutional and Transportation Categories; Group Assembly Uses

- Transportation category includes airport; functions as discrete.
- Institutional uses (e.g., churches) need explicit inclusion and clarity for adaptive re-use (e.g., church to wedding venue); group assembly classification may require refinement.
- Retain Transportation; add Institutional to the use chart, likely within restricted/residential contexts given where they are currently located.

Industrial, Data Center Siting, and Economic Development vs Rural Preservation

- Data center eligibility tied to industrial character area and acreage thresholds, with few parcels currently qualifying; industrial parks not uniformly designated.
- Desire to diversify economy beyond tourism with light industrial where appropriate; tension remains between rural preservation and business/job growth.
- Keep industrial category to preserve options; correct mapping to reflect actual industrial parks; continue balancing economic development with rural character through siting, buffers, and clear standards.

Map History, Short-Term Rentals, and Regulatory “Black Boxes”

- Noted map lineage (base 2008; updates through 2022), with past revisions sometimes applying uniform corridor widths rather than parcel lines.
- Short-term rental restrictions (e.g., two-acre minimum) did not necessarily reduce complaints; subdivision covenants often outdated and hard to change.
- Highlighted need to avoid overly restrictive “black box” denials while preventing hazardous or incompatible uses near residential areas.
- Pursue measurable standards (e.g., building and sign heights from stable reference points) and clearer pathways for approval in gray areas.

Gateway Corridor Parcel Clean-Up and Multifamily Siting

- Identification of ~80 one-acre or smaller parcels within the Gateway Corridor, many in subdivisions; debate on reclassifying to residential to trigger buffers or keeping commercial to enable assembly for larger projects.
- Broad support to confine high-density multifamily to the sewer service area; need to define “high-density multifamily” (e.g., consider 16-occupant IBC threshold; septic-based bedroom limits; support for duplexes/single-story units for aging and workforce housing).

Process Clarity, Variance Handling, and Public Notification

- Desire for clearer process to prevent public dissatisfaction and improve accountability; frustration over perceived staff responsibility vs process constraints.

- Idea to build a public-facing website tool/flowchart for parcel-based notice of nearby proposals (e.g., Iron Mountain–type uses), without mandates.
- Clarify internal guidance on variance pathways for substandard-width lots and septic-constrained parcels; example of an ~80-foot-wide parcel needing variance for a single-family home.

Meeting adjourned at 7:10 pm

Next Arrangements

- ☐ Produce a simplified two-color land use map (General vs Restricted) plus overlays (Gateway, Airport/Transportation), and distribute to the board.
- ☐ Reconcile screening/buffer standards with the performance standards chart to remove conflicts; add explicit definitions and visual examples distinguishing “buffer” vs “screening.”
- ☐ Draft proposed boundary adjustments for the Gateway Corridor Overlay to align with target state road frontages and the sewer service area.
- ☐ Inventory and correct mapping inconsistencies (isolated color dots; institutional category absent from chart; industrial parks not mapped as industrial).
- ☐ Confirm and correct industrial park designations to industrial; review data center siting criteria and list parcels meeting industrial and acreage requirements.
- ☐ Prepare side-by-side tables of Restricted vs General uses using the ordinance; create a simplified glossary for key terms.
- ☐ Propose buffer standards for Agricultural Preservation, especially adjacent to commercial/industrial; identify specific prohibited uses in Ag Pres vs allowed-with-conditions in Restricted Residential.
- ☐ Draft adjacency/contiguity rules for commercial expansion next to existing commercial/industrial parcels; outline measurable criteria (distance, frontage, road class).
- ☐ Determine the new, condensed set of land use categories and consider a middle-ground category; compare “Residential Growth” and “Rural Places” for potential consolidation without down-zoning.
- ☐ Define clear, measurable building and sign height standards from stable reference points; revisit outdated rules (e.g., centerline-based sign height).
- ☐ Develop a public engagement plan and schedule for comprehensive plan amendments tied to character area reductions or re-mapping; document grandfathering and transition rules for in-motion projects.
- ☐ Clarify internal variance guidance for substandard-width lots and septic-constrained parcels.
- ☐ Send out one-page definitions for Rural Places, Residential Growth, Agricultural Preservation/funds, and multifamily housing regulations for

committee review; define “high-density multifamily” and its sewer area confinement.