

# GASTON COUNTY TEXT AMENDMENT APPLICATION

TEXT-23-03-21-00008

## STAFF REPORT

### APPLICATION SUMMARY

**Request:**

To amend Chapter 2 (Definitions), Table 2.7-1 - the definition of "Dwelling, Small House" to allow for a structure no greater than 1000 sqft.

**Applicant(s):**

Gaston County Planning Board

### COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN

**Comprehensive Land Use Plan Goal 6: Improve the image of Gaston County both to current and potential residents, focusing on retaining and increasing the population of young professionals.**

Adoption of this text amendment would allow financing for what the UDO defines as "small houses." Small houses are a trending type of dwelling unit as more people want to downsize their homes and "live with less." This type of dwelling unit can also be seen as an affordable housing solution, as the costs to build a smaller home are much less than your average single-family dwelling unit. By allowing this type of dwelling unit, the County will be better able to attract and retain many populations, including young professionals.

**Staff Recommendation:**

The application, as presented, is consistent with the Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

### STAFF SUMMARY

**Prepared By: Jamie Mendoza Kanburoglu, Director of Planning and Zoning**

An amendment to the UDO to allow for "Small Home Communities" was presented and adopted in 2022. Since adoption, the Building and Development Services staff has received several inquiries about this type of development and dwelling unit. A developer recently brought to our attention that the North Carolina Housing Finance Agency requires two (2) bedroom dwelling units to have a minimum of 850 heated square feet. The current definition for small homes restricts the size of the dwelling unit to 800 sqft, which would restrict financing options for homes.

### PLANNING BOARD DECISION

The Planning Board unanimously recommended approval of the proposal as amended as it is a reasonable request and in the public interest because it is consistent with goal 6 of the comprehensive land use plan as it will allow for financing of small house dwelling units, which can be seen as a form of affordable housing and will the County to attract and retain many populations, including young professionals.

The original text amendment proposal had maximum square footage of 850 sqft. After discussion between staff and planning board members, both agreed to a minimum square footage of 1000 sqft. to be more in line with what is allowed for Private Residential Quarters (PRQs).

Staff and planning board members also agreed to remove the "tiny home/house" language from the definition as these terms are more in line with manufactured products that do not meet the definition of small homes in the UDO. Small homes must be built on-site and meet NC residential building code, whereas traditional "tiny homes" tend to be moveable and built to HUD standards.