



Date: November 24, 2025

To: Claudia Hager, County Manager
Through: Maurice Jones, Deputy County Manager
From: Sara M. Young, AICP, Planning & Development Director
Subject: RTP 3.0: A Privately Initiated *Unified Development Ordinance* (UDO) Text Amendment

Executive Summary

TC2500001 is a privately-initiated text amendment request to amend multiple sections of the *Unified Development Ordinance* (UDO) in order to expand the existing University and College District (UC and UC-2) standards to create a new zoning district ("UC-3") and facilitate the inclusion of "large scientific and technical research parks" within the UC districts framework. This application will coincide with a zoning map change request that aligns with the existing Research Triangle Park (RTP) covenants (case number Z2500025). This request was heard by the Durham Planning Commission on October 14, 2025 and received a recommendation for approval (9-0); written comments from the Planning Commission can be found in *Attachment A*.

Motions

To conduct a public hearing to receive comments and consider the following motions:

Motion 1: To adopt an ordinance amending the Unified Development Ordinance, incorporating revisions to Article 4, *Zoning Districts*, Article 5, *Use Regulations*, Article 6, *District Intensity Standards*, and Article 7, *Design Standards*.

Motion 2: To adopt a Consistency Statement as required by N. C. G. S. Sec. 160D-605.

Background

Travis Crayton, on behalf of the Research Triangle Park Foundation, is seeking to amend multiple sections within the UDO in order to create the new UC-3 zoning district to accommodate planning efforts within the existing RTP Boundary.

The existing University and College (UC) Districts were established in order "to allow for the growth and development of colleges and universities, while protecting the larger community" ([Section 4.4.2](#)). These districts are established by a zoning map change, which must delineate the bounds of the proposed district and provide a campus master plan to the appropriate governing body. Once approved, these districts employ a tiered approach to land use regulation by establishing both internal campus and transitional use area (TUA) designations:

- The **internal campus** designation has reduced zoning regulations in order to accommodate planning efforts denoted within an adopted campus master plan;

- The **transitional use area (TUA)** designation reduces the impact of development on adjacent parcels by establishing a transitional buffer of either 75 feet (in the UC-2 district) or 150 feet (in the UC district) in depth around the entire boundary of the proposed campus. The TUA retains stricter zoning standards to ensure compatibility with neighboring properties.

Any area included within the campus master plan that is not designated as a TUA is considered to be within the internal campus. Both Duke University and North Carolina Central University have campuses which currently operate within one of the UC zoning districts. The proposed master plan for the RTP campus can be found in *Attachment C: Campus Master Plan*.

This request is part of a larger effort to align cross-jurisdictional zoning regulations with the long-range planning goals within the Research Triangle Park Boundary ("RTP 3.0") conducted by the Research Triangle Foundation. The RTP 3.0 planning effort seeks to replace the existing low-density corporate campus style of development within RTP with greater density and a wider range of land uses. As part of this effort, the Research Triangle Foundation has updated the privately held land covenants for RTP and is now seeking the requisite zoning changes needed from both Wake and Durham counties to employ this endeavor. To that end, Wake County recently adopted amended zoning regulations for RTP in June of 2025.

Durham Planning & Development staff have coordinated with Research Triangle Foundation members and determined that the regulatory framework provided by the UC districts presents an implementation pathway which can provide the zoning flexibility needed to execute developments which meet the recorded covenants while still providing protection for neighboring properties. The full draft of proposed amendments to the UDO are denoted in *Attachment D: Proposed Ordinance Language*, with a summary of proposed changes as follows:

Article 4, Zoning Districts

- Establishes that the UC Districts can also allow for "large scientific and research park" campuses (in addition to traditional university and college campuses).
- Creates a new zoning district ("UC-3") in order to facilitate the creation of a UC District within the Research Triangle Park Boundary.

Article 5, Use Regulations

- Establishes by-right use allowances for the UC-3 District within the Agricultural, Residential, Public and Civic, Commercial, Office, and Light Industrial use categories (see: Sec. 5.1.2, Use Table, within *Attachment D: Proposed Ordinance Language* for a complete list).

Article 6, District Intensity Standards

- Establishes that the UC-3 District can only be created on lands with at least 4,000 acres that are included within the recorded covenants specific to the RTP campus master plan, as recorded in Plat Book 7559, pages 1-64 (see: *Attachment E: Recorded Covenants*).
- Establishes a 150-foot-wide transitional use area for the UC-3 District and denotes that the TUA will not apply to any parcel outside the boundaries of Durham County (in order to facilitate the

implementation of the campus master plan across both Durham and Wake Counties).

- Denotes that the maximum height for any structure within the internal campus of the UC-3 District shall be 300 feet.
- Removes the requirements within Sec. 7.3, *Design Standards*, from the proposed TUA, and removes all requirements within Article 7, *Design Standards*, from the internal campus.
- Establishes that the UC-3 District will be held to a total of 10% tree coverage for the entirety of the bounds, which can be met through demonstration that existing vegetation exists within the UC-3 District.
- Removes all landscaping standards from Article 9, *Landscaping and Buffering*, within the internal campus, but retains them within the TUA.
- Establishes that the TUA will follow all standards within Article 10, *Parking and Loading*, while internal campus will retain only the design standards for parking spaces, parking lots, and handicapped accessible parking spaces located in Sec. 10.4.2 and Sec. 10.4.3, respectively.
- Removes all signage requirements from Article 11, *Sign Standards*, within the internal campus, but retains them within the TUA.
- Within both the TUA and the internal campus, the UC-3 District shall be exempted from the following infrastructure standards: Sec. 12.2, *Ingress and Egress Requirements*, Sec. 12.3, *Streets*, Sec. 12.4, *Pedestrian and Bicycle Mobility*, 12.5, *Recreation Land*, and 12.6, *Railroad Corridors* – with the exception that the street naming standards in Sec. 12.3.2 shall still apply, in order to ensure compliance with Durham’s emergency management protocols.
- Establishes that sidewalks shall be provided in accordance with an approved alternative pedestrian plan (*in progress*).
- Retains all standards from Article 13, *Additional Requirements for Subdivisions*, within the TUA, but exempts the internal campus from Sec. 13.8, *Ownership Alternatives*, and 13.9, *Phased Development*.
- Sec. 13.4, *Block Standards*, and Sec. 13.6, *Street Connectivity Standards*, will not apply to expansions of existing development or redevelopment efforts approved prior to the effective date of this amendment.

Article 7, *Design Standards*

- Removes housing type design standards for the UC-3 District, which instead allows design to be determined through architectural review by the Board of Design, as established by the recorded covenants.

Should the County Commissioners elect to approve this text amendment and its associated zoning map change, Planning & Development staff will ensure that these changes are incorporated within the proposal for the new UDO rewrite.

Consistency with the *Comprehensive Plan*, Reasonableness, and in the Public Interest.

Since this is a privately initiated text amendment, please see *Attachment B, Comprehensive Plan Alignment, per the Applicant*, for the Comprehensive Plan alignment justification included within their application.

Alternatives

A. *Modify and Approve the Proposed Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) Text Amendment.*

The Durham Board of County Commissioners may elect to modify the text of the proposed UDO text amendment prior to approval. Any proposed changes may also necessitate requisite changes to the associated zoning map change request (Z2500025).

B. *Deny the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) Text Amendment.*

The Durham Board of County Commissioners may elect to deny the UDO text amendment. Should the Durham Board of County Commissioners elect to deny the text amendment, they will also be required to deny (or propose substantial changes to) the associated zoning map change request (Z2500025), since that request is dependent upon approval of this amendment.

Staff Contact

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Attachments

Attachment A - Planning Commission Written Comments

Attachment B - Comprehensive Plan Alignment, per the Applicant

Attachment C - Campus Master Plan

Attachment D - Proposed Ordinance Language

Attachment E - Recorded Covenants