



## ATTACHMENT 4:

### LOT AREA: PROPOSED CONCEPT AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

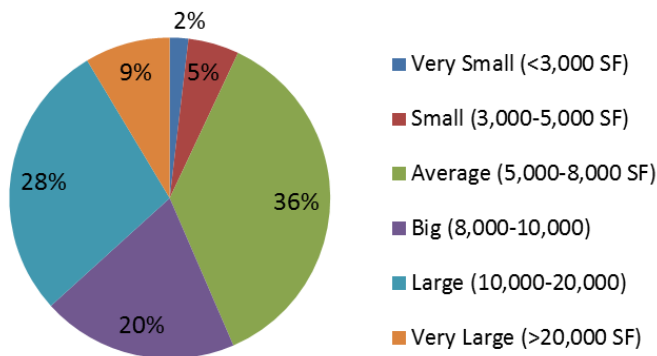
#### What is lot area?

The Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) establishes the minimum size of a platted lot in order to ensure sufficient space on site for the intended land use, and to create or maintain a consistent character of development. In Durham's UDO, lot area is dependent on both the Zoning District and the Housing Type.

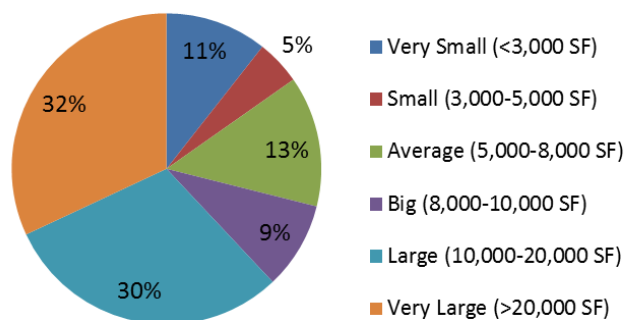
#### Existing conditions

An analysis of the Urban Tier demonstrates that just over half (57%) of the lots in residential zoning districts are over 8,000 SF. In the Suburban Tier, there are a higher percentage of small lots less than 5,000 SF, but a greater percentage (71%) of lots in residential districts are over 8,000 SF.

Urban Tier Lot Area for Residential Zoning Districts



Suburban Tier Lot Area for Residential Zoning Districts



#### Summary of Existing Zoning Regulations

- Minimum lot area is a function of both zoning district and housing type, and applies to both infill development and subdivision of land.
- Several options exist to reduce lot area or allow flexibility:
  - **Affordable Housing Bonus.** When using the Affordable Housing Bonus, the lot area, width and yard requirements can be reduced up to 20 percent for single-family and duplex developments.
  - **Lot Averaging.** In subdivisions reductions to minimum lot area are possible where the average size of all of the residential lots meets minimum standards, but individual lots can only be reduced up to 15%.
  - **Cluster Subdivisions.** Where allowed (project area must be greater than 4 acres), cluster subdivisions offer flexibility for lot layout and size in exchange for the preservation of open space.
- The table below is an example of existing minimum lot area standards using the various single-family detached housing types currently available in the UDO. For simplicity, conventional subdivision requirements are shown (lot averaging and cluster subdivisions are not shown).<sup>1</sup>
- The zoning regulations also regulate by density limits. Thus, if a lot could be subdivided with lots that meet base zoning dimensional standards, it may not be allowed based upon density limits.

Minimum Lot Area for Housing Types by Zoning District							
	RS-10	RS-8	RS-M	RU-5/(2)		RU-M	RC
Single-Family Detached	10,000	8,000	5,000	5,000		3,500	5,000
Zero Lot Line	10,000	8,000	5,000	5,000		3,500	5,000
Traditional	--	--	--	5,000		2,975	4,250
Patio	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000		3,000	3,000
Semi-Attached	7,000	7,000	7,000	7,000		7,000	7,000
Duplex	--	--	7,500	--	7,000	7,000	7,000
Townhouse	--	--	*	--	**	*	*
Multiplex	--	--	*	--		*	*
Apartment	--	--	*	--		*	*

\* Lot Area not specified. Determined by building size, lot width, setbacks and other site development standards like parking.

\*\*Pending Omnibus 12. Townhouses were inadvertently removed from the RU-5(2) zoning district sometime around 2010.

## Case Study Comparisons

<sup>1</sup> The 5,000 square foot minimum lot sizes are historically consistent zoning regulations. The 1940 zoning ordinance required a minimum lot size of 5,000 square feet for single-family ("Residence zone 'A'") and two-family ("Residence zone 'B'") zones.

- Olympia, WA. In most equivalent zoning district to RU-5, minimum lot area for a single family house = 3,000 SF
- Richmond, VA. In most equivalent zoning district to RU-5, minimum lot area for a single family house = 3,600 SF
- Asheville, NC. In most equivalent zoning district to RU-5, minimum lot area for a single family house = 4,000 SF

### **Considerations**

- In existing neighborhoods, reducing the minimum lot area could allow property owners to more easily subdivide their lot into two lots and add to the stock of housing. There are justifiable concerns about encouraging teardowns, particularly in neighborhoods with relatively small homes. However, market forces are already incentivizing this trend.
- Additionally, the relatively large lot development pattern has allowed for big backyards with mature trees important for wildlife, reducing the urban heat island, sequestering carbon, and improving the aesthetic of the community. Adjusting lot sizes to allow for more rooftops will impact impervious surface and the tree canopy.
- For new subdivisions, reducing the minimum lot areas could allow for a greater number of units to be built; however, the development would still be required to meet density standards.
- Approximately 1,050 properties within the Suburban Tier are zoned with urban zoning. See Attachment 3, Duplexes, for additional information regarding duplexes

### **Summary of Proposed Concept: Modify Existing Regulations**

- Consider reducing minimum lot area for the single-family housing types, considering zoning, infill standards, and tiers (primarily Urban and Suburban)
- Consider removing or adjusting the regulatory relationship between density caps and minimum lot dimensional standards.