

Carroll County Zoning and Site Development Revisions

TASKS 1 & 2 – AGE
RESTRICTED HOUSING

APRIL 28, 2026





Task 1 – Assessment of Existing Documents and Best Practices: Age-Restricted Housing

Assessment of Age-Restricted Housing Regulations

Due to the ongoing deferment, the current focus of the project with Carroll County is an evaluation of existing zoning and site development regulations related to age-restricted housing, including:

- Retirement Homes
- Retirement Villages

Purpose of Task 1:

- Assess how current regulations align with adopted plans
- Evaluate consistency with contemporary best practices
- Identify opportunities for regulatory improvement

Alignment with Adopted Plans

Plans Reviewed:

- Carroll County Master Plan (2014, amended 2019)
- Freedom Community Comprehensive Plan (2018)
- Finksburg Corridor Plan (2013)

Key Policy Themes Identified:

- Aging population and need for appropriate housing options
- Support for age-restricted housing in appropriate locations
- Emphasis on walkability, amenities, and compatibility

2014 Carroll County Master Plan



Adopted by the Board of County Commissioners

February 26, 2015

Amendment Adopted January 2, 2020

Regulatory Review

County Code Regulations Reviewed:

- Chapter 155: Development and Subdivision of Land
- Chapter 158: Zoning

Key Findings:

- Age-restricted housing is permitted in several districts
 - Permitted by Conditional Use in R-20,000 (villages only), R-10,000 and R-7,500
 - Permitted by-right in the C-1 and C-2 districts.
- Regulations rely heavily on:
 - General residential standards
 - Discretionary review processes
- Limited use-specific requirements for:
 - Site layout
 - Pedestrian connectivity
 - Development amenities
 - Building scale transitions
 - Accessibility / aging-in-place
 - Emergency access

What does this mean?

Development outcomes often shaped through project-specific approvals rather than predictable standards.

Although the County Code provides flexibility, development outcomes that comply with minimum standards may not align with community expectations.

Issues and Direction



Scale and Compatibility: Recent projects (e.g., Snowden Creek) are perceived as out-of-scale relative to surrounding neighborhoods—too tall, too large, or visually incompatible.



Lack of Community Amenities: Developers receive significant density bonuses, yet provide minimal amenities, resulting in dense clusters of units without corresponding community benefits.



Universal Design / Aging in Place: County Code Chapters 155 (Development and Subdivision of Land) and 158 (Zoning) do not require universal design or age-responsive features. Developers often claim to include them, but there is no standard or enforcement mechanism.



Disparity Between Zoning and Expectations: In projects like Nells Acres, areas originally envisioned for low-density single-family homes instead saw high densities (e.g., 150+ townhomes vs. 20 as-of-right) due to the bonus structure.



Emergency Access. Project site design and layout needs to consider requirements affecting emergency access and operations. For example, both Snowden Creek and Nells Acres buildings have possible firefighting operation challenges, and both have one point of ingress/egress.

Overall Direction

Primary Issue Identified:

- Lack of standards addressing age-restricted housing (including 55+ active retirement living needs)
- Heavy reliance on discretionary review of plans
- ***No inconsistencies with past planning documents, but there is room for improvements.***

Best Practices - Age Restricted Housing

RETIREMENT VILLAGES AND
RETIREMENT HOMES



Best Practice Highlights

Master planned communities focused on context-sensitive environmental design and amenities that support the active 55+ lifestyle and market needs

- Promote flexibility in master planning and ensure consistent outcomes through zoning and land development regulations.
- Utilize a Special Overlay District or Planned Residential/Unit Development process in addition to base zoning regulations.
- Establish clear standards for permitted uses, open space and amenity requirements, and design expectations—while still allowing flexibility in the mix or number of uses and housing types.
- Require Conditional Use or Special Exception approvals; not treated as standard residential subdivisions and typically require a master plan to guide development.
- Require amenities and open space elements that enhance community character and align with planning policy goals.
- Define standards for community amenities and provide clear criteria for usable open space to improve development outcomes and ensure consistency with broader planning policy initiatives.

Best Practice Highlights

Use regulations that attract developers who understand the product, market preferences, and master planning expectations

- High-quality best-practice examples typically come from national or regional builders with experience delivering successful 55+ communities and the amenities this market expects.
- Counties and local jurisdictions are increasingly expecting higher standards and better outcomes from these types of developments.

Ambelbrook at Gettysburg



AMBLEBROOK AT GETTYSBURG

Amblebrook at Gettysburg

[Amblebrook at Gettysburg](#) is a master planned, resort-style 55+ active adult community located in Straban Township, just a few miles from historic downtown Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Spanning a campus designed for "low-maintenance living," the community focuses on a holistic approach to wellness and social engagement.

Developed by CCD Rock Creek and Managed by Crown Community Development. [Crown Community Development](#) is a part of the Henry Crown and Company umbrella of diverse operating and investment companies, established in 1919. Crown Community Development develops and invests in master-planned communities throughout the U.S., including Seattle, Austin, San Antonio, Nashville, Tampa, Chicago, Castle Rock, CO, Indianapolis, and Gettysburg.

Amblebrook at Gettysburg



Location: Straban Township, Adams County, PA

Land Use Regulations: Zoning Code, “Age Qualified Housing” <https://ecode360.com/11626968>

Development Type: Age Qualified Housing is permitted by Special Exception in the Residential High-Density District (R-2) <https://ecode360.com/11626730#11626807>

Purpose: The purpose of any age-qualified housing development is to encourage the development of affordable and market-rate housing for individuals aged 55 and over by allowing for the greater variety of building types at a higher density than would normally be allowed; by allowing greater flexibility in site planning so as to promote the sound development of land which reduces residents' burdens of property maintenance and which reduces demands on municipal services; and to promote flexibility in land use planning in order to improve site layouts, protect natural features and environmental values and utilize land in harmony with neighboring properties.

Amblebrook at Gettysburg

Amenities:

- 24,000 sq. ft. clubhouse with theater, bar and lounge, community hall
- Multi-purpose fitness center w/indoor and outdoor aquatics
- Heartland Market & Café
- Boulevard Welcome Center
- Farmers Market
- Happy Tails Dog Park
- Fishing ponds with dock
- Scenic trail system
- Outdoor amphitheater
- Community Garden
- On-site concierge and lifestyle director
- Local produce and milk delivery



SEE NEARBY PLACES

- Parkview
- Grandview
- Highland
- Greenway
- Woodside
- 1 Model Village
- 2 Welcome Center and Heartland Market & Café
- 3 Rock Creek Clubhouse
- 4 Rock Creek Fitness Center
- 5 Great Lawn
- 6 Fishing Pond and Dock
- 7 Dog Park, Walking Trails, Pickleball & Tennis Courts

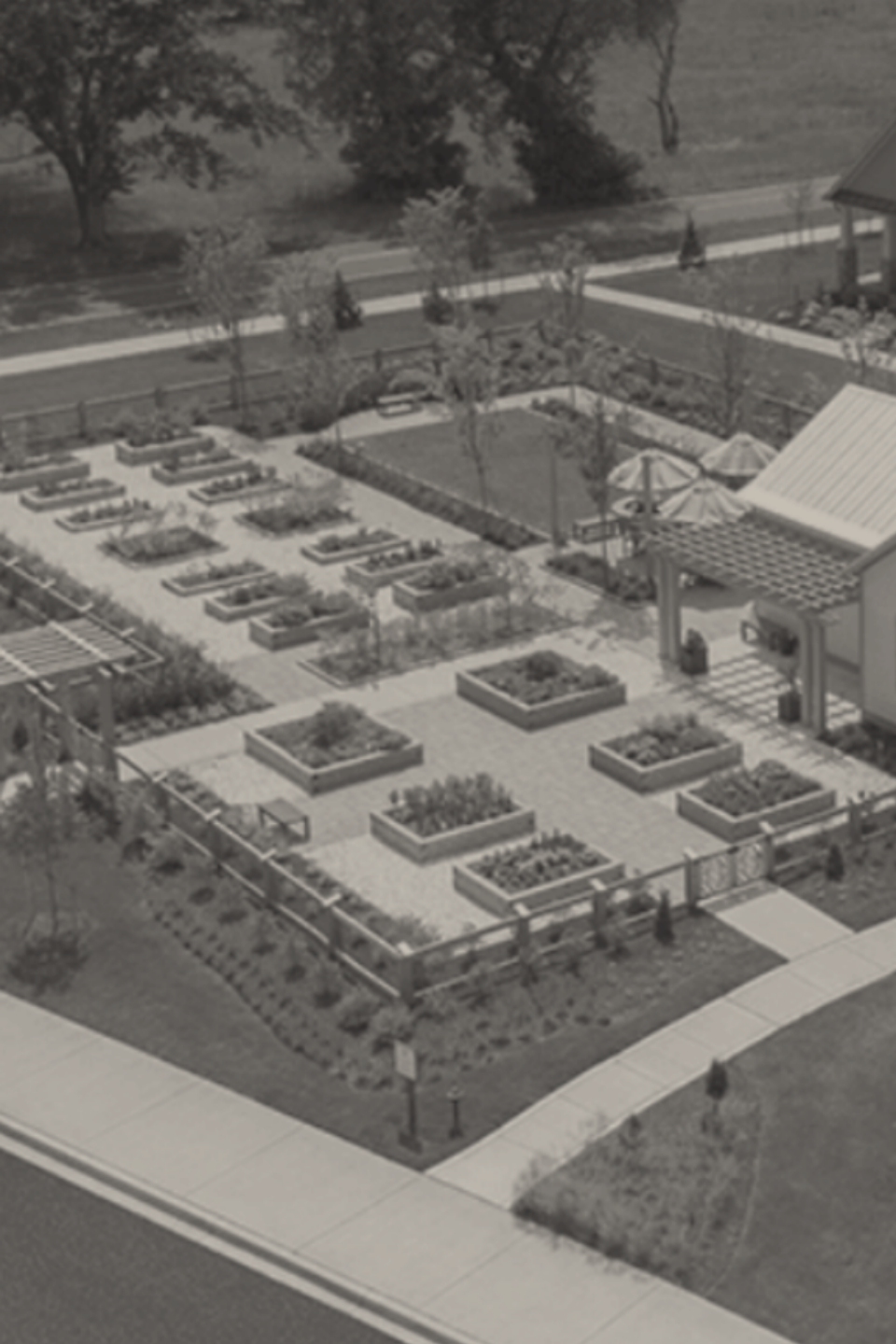


Best Practice Example – Amblebrook at Gettysburg



Best Practice Example – Amblebrook at Gettysburg

Bloomfields at Frederick



Bloomfields at Frederick

Bloomfields is a 520-acre active-adult **55+ community** located in the northern countryside of **Frederick, Maryland**, on the grounds of the historic Crum Farm. Developed by [Natelli Communities](#), it is planned to include over 1,300 new homes, including single-family homes, villas, and cottages.

Bloomfields offers a low-maintenance, active adult lifestyle with a stunning collection of brand new cottages, villas, and single-family homes built by distinct home builders, NVHomes and Ryan Homes.

Bloomfields at Frederick



Location: City of Frederick, Frederick County, MD

Land Use Regulations: Governed by a combination of the City of Frederick's Land Management Code (LMC) and specific development standards established through its master plan and annexation resolutions.

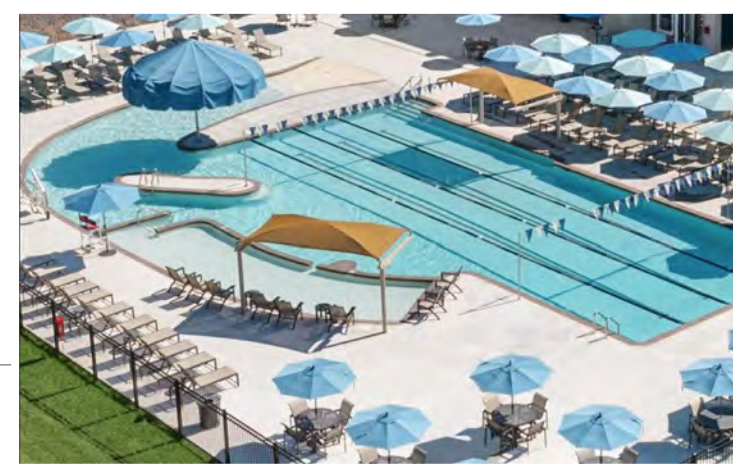
- **Base Zoning (MU-1):** The property is primarily zoned **Mixed-Use (MU-1)**, which typically requires a balance of residential, nonresidential, and open space uses.
- **Age-Restricted Community Development (ARCD):** The community is developed under the [ARCD provisions \(Section 412 of the LMC\)](#). This overlay provides the "active adult" framework and allows for flexible design specifically for retirement-oriented communities.

Purpose and Intent: The Age Restricted Community Development (ARCD) option is intended to provide flexible design of active adult/retirement-oriented communities within the City. The City recognizes that age-restricted or active adult communities have inherent design characteristics and needs that require alternative regulatory standards. The ARCD option is consistent with the policies of the Comprehensive Plan. It will be implemented in a manner that recognizes this alternative and accommodating approach to land design and development, in an effort to provide housing options for the City's aging residents.

Bloomfields at Frederick

Amenities:

- Community Clubhouse with Club Room, Game Room, Card Room and more
- Community Fitness Building with state-of-the-art equipment, Yoga Studio and Trackman Golf Simulator room
- Elaborate Outdoor Swimming Pool
- Outdoor Pavilion
- Pickleball, Tennis, Bocce Courts, Basketball
- Putting Green
- Outdoor Fireplace Settings
- Playground for the Grandchildren
- Community Herb Garden
- Potting Shed
- Dog Park
- Park and Trail System









Bloomfields

55+ Effortless Living

KEY

-  Community Park
-  Clubhouse
-  Fitness Center
-  Swimming Pool
-  Bocce Ball
-  Pickleball
-  Tennis
-  Open Air Pavilion
-  Tot Lot
-  Basketball
-  Putting Green
-  Gathering Green
-  Dog Park
-  Firepit
-  Herb Gardens, Potting Shed, Firepit
-  City of Frederick Linear Park

-  Single Family Homes
-  Cottage Homes
-  Single Family Homes
-  Villa Homes



Rendering is an artist's representation for illustrative purposes only. Details are subject to modifications without notice. The information and designs contained in this artwork are not part of a legal contract, and cannot be used or reproduced without prior written consent of Natelli Communities.

Traditions of America at Lititz



Traditions of America at Lititz

[Traditions of America at Lititz](#) is a 55+ active adult community situated just beyond the historic heart of Lititz, Pennsylvania. Designed as a well-organized, low-maintenance neighborhood, it offers a blend of comfort, convenience, and lifestyle-focused living that supports wellness, recreation, and social engagement.

The [community](#) includes a variety of age-appropriate homes with options for aging in place. Residents have access to a private clubhouse, swimming pool, fitness center, outdoor recreation areas, and an interconnected network of walking trails.

Traditions of America, Lititz



Location: Warwick Township, Lancaster County, PA

Land Use Regulations: Zoning Code - [R-2 Medium Density Residential](#)

Development Type: Conditional Use – [Age Restricted Moderate Density Development](#)

Regulations:

- Architectural Design – During the conditional use process, proposed buildings within the moderate density housing for age-restricted development shall incorporate architectural treatments acceptable to the Township.
- Density – The maximum permitted density of a moderate density housing for age-restricted development shall be 4 dwelling units per acre, but can be increased to 4.5 dwelling units per acre if the development fronts along a collector or special collector road.
- Housing Mix – Minimum 70% single family, maximum 30% duplex
- Open Space – Thorough open space and common space requirements

Traditions of America, Lititz

Amenities

- Within walking distance to downtown Lititz
- Clubhouse
- Fitness Center
- Aerobic Studio
- Sauna
- Ballroom
- Heated Outdoor Pool
- Homes include first-floor bedroom, optional second floors, and attached garages across both detached and attached models
- Community includes walking trails and riparian buffer restoration





Adjacent to a
Hospital

Best Practice Example – Traditions of America at Lititz



Retirement Homes

Ashlynn Ridge



Ashlynn Ridge

[Ashlynn Ridge](#) is a modern 55+ active adult and independent living community located in Newnan, Georgia, designed to provide affordable, maintenance-free housing for older adults seeking to age in place while remaining active and connected. The [development](#) offers one- and two-bedroom apartment homes with contemporary finishes such as granite countertops, vinyl plank flooring, walk-in closets, and private patios or balconies, all within a secure, elevator-served building environment.

Beyond individual residences, Ashlynn Ridge features a strong amenity package that supports social interaction and healthy living, including a clubhouse, fitness center, theater room, beauty salon, library, community kitchen, and outdoor walking paths with landscaped gathering areas. The property participates in an income-restricted affordable housing program, expanding access to quality senior housing and is conveniently located near shopping, healthcare, and regional transportation corridors, making it a practical and well-rounded retirement living option in the Newnan area.

Ashlynn Ridge



Location: Newnan, GA

Land Use Regulations: [Zoning Code](#) – Residential Multiple Family – High Density (rezoned from Community Shopping Center District as part of the development)

Development Type: Apartment – including Section 42 that provides tax credits for affordable housing as an Allowed use.

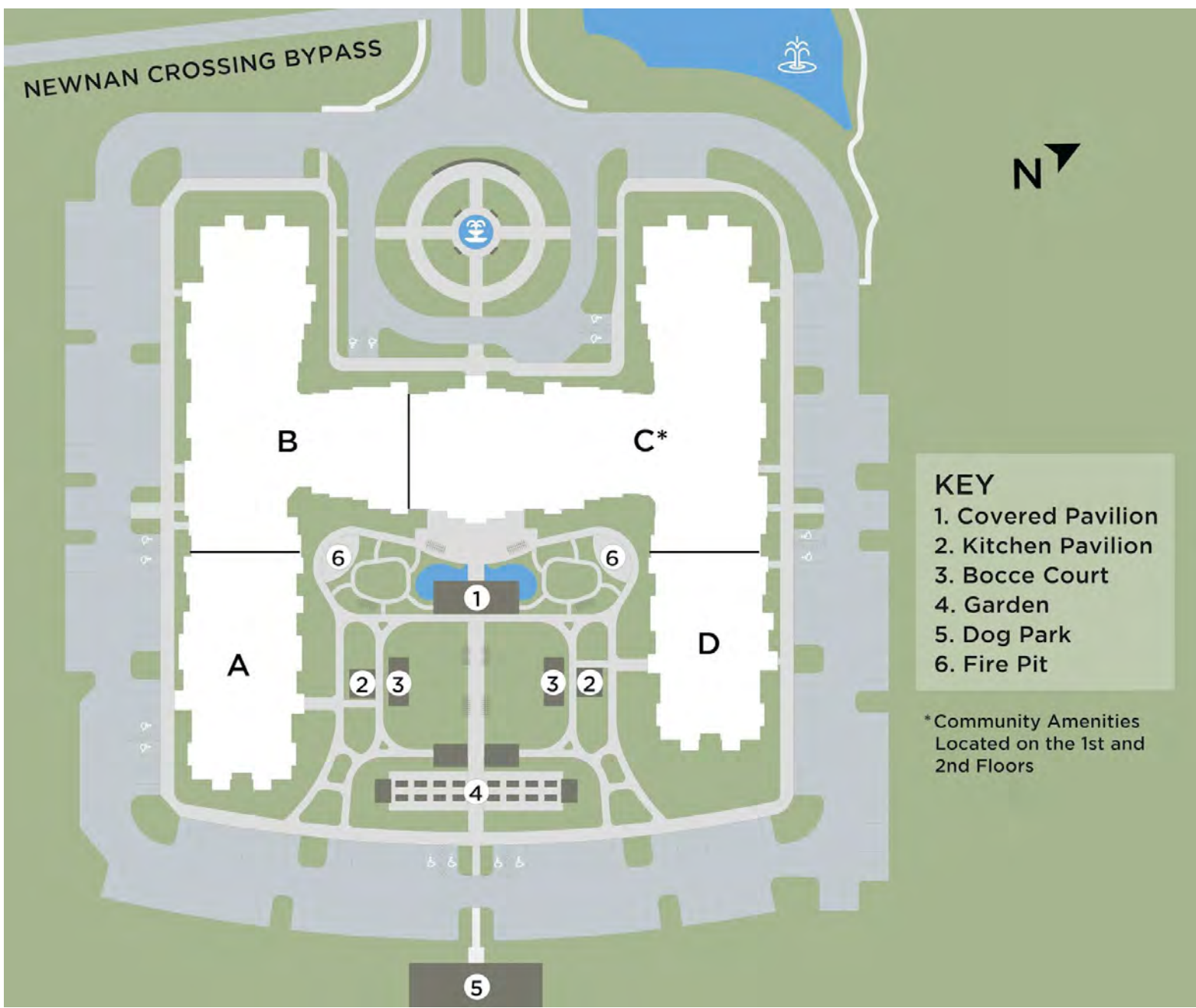
Purpose: The RMH, Residential Multiple Family Dwelling-Higher Density District, is intended to provide for higher density multiple-family dwellings which may have a relatively intense concentration of dwelling units ***served by large open spaces consisting of common areas and recreation facilities***, thereby resulting in medium gross densities.

The principal use of land may be one or several dwelling types, ranging from manufactured homes to low-rise multiple-family dwellings, and including two-family dwellings, garden apartments, apartment buildings, condominiums and townhouses

Ashlynn Ridge

- Convenient access to shopping, healthcare, and regional roadways including I-85
- Mix of one- and two-bedroom apartment homes featuring modern finishes such as granite countertops, vinyl plank flooring, walk-in closets, and private patios or balconies
- Includes:
 - Clubhouse
 - Fitness center
 - Theater room
 - Beauty salon
 - Library
 - Community kitchen
 - Landscaped outdoor spaces with walking paths and a pond





Best Practice Example – Ashlynn Ridge

The Baldwin



The Baldwin

[The Baldwin](#) is a nationally recognized life plan retirement community that exemplifies best practices in senior housing design by blending traditional neighborhood form with modern senior living amenities. Rather than a conventional campus layout, The Baldwin is organized as a walkable, mixed-use environment with individual residential entrances, small blocks, and shared civic spaces that mirror the scale and feel of a New England town center. [The development](#) supports independence, familiarity, and daily social interaction while reducing the institutional character often associated with retirement communities.

Outdoor space is a defining feature of the community, with central greens, landscaped courtyards, and pedestrian-oriented streets that encourage walking, informal gatherings, and connection to nature. Indoor and outdoor amenities are intentionally integrated to promote wellness, lifelong engagement, and intergenerational interaction. The Baldwin has been recognized through the AIA Design for Aging Review for its innovative urban design approach, high-quality public realm, and ability to create a vibrant, age-friendly community that supports aging in place while remaining connected to the surrounding neighborhood

The Baldwin



Location: Londonderry, NH

Land Use Regulations: [Zoning](#): Woodmont Commons Planned Unit Development District

Development Type: Planned Unit Development (Multi-Family or Assisted Living Facility)

Purpose: A Planned Unit Development (PUD) allows a landowner to propose his/her own development project largely independent from current land use regulations otherwise applicable to that property. A PUD master plan is akin to a special zoning district designation for a particular tract of land in terms of uses, dimensions, and other development standards.

The purpose of this ordinance is to promote *flexibility* in large scale development by considering project proposals based upon a comprehensive, integrated and detailed plan rather than the specific constraints applicable to piecemeal lot-by-lot development under conventional zoning. A PUD should improve the quality of new development by encouraging aesthetically attractive features and promoting quality site and architectural design.

The Baldwin

- Fully integrated into the Woodmont Commons master-planned, mixed-use development rather than a standalone senior housing campus.
- Mix of one- and two-bedroom apartment homes featuring multiple buildings, individual entrances, active ground floors, and pedestrian-oriented streets.
- Features a main street layout, internal sidewalks, and direct connections between buildings and amenities, encouraging daily movement and social interaction
- Amenities:
 - Restaurants
 - Café
 - Art Gallery
 - Salon
 - Fitness Spaces
 - Gathering Rooms





Best Practice Example – The Baldwin



Task 2 - Recommended Amendments

Purpose of Recommendations

- Developed based on Task 1 findings and best-practices research
- Intended to better align:
 - Adopted planning policies
 - Best practice research
 - Existing regulatory framework
- Subject to Planning Commission review and County Commissioners' approval
- Draft code language to be developed in Task 3

Standalone Age-Restricted Housing Section

Recommendation: Consolidate all age-restricted housing regulations into a single section of the Zoning Code

Examples:

- “Section 158.X: Age-Restricted Housing Developments” established as a standalone section.
- All use, design, density, and performance standards applicable to age-restricted housing shall be located within this section and cross-referenced where applicable.

Why Do This:

Consolidating all the age-restricted housing regulations into a single section of the Zoning Code will allow for an easier understanding of the ordinance and a more straightforward review process.

Establish Structured Density Frameworks

Recommendation: Replace open-ended density determinations with base average density ranges by zoning district and clearly identified criteria for density bonuses.

Examples:

- Base Average Density: “Maximum average of 3.5 dwelling units per acre in the R-20,000 District.”
- Density Bonus: “Up to 20% additional density may be permitted for provision of a minimum 10% enhanced open space or on-site community facility exceeding 5,000 square feet.”
- “Retirement villages shall contain a minimum tract area of 20 acres.”

Why Do This:

A structured density system increases predictability while allowing flexibility where justified.

Linking density bonuses to clear benefits ensures that additional development aligns with community expectations.

Reassess Density Calculations

Recommendations:

- Calculate density as an average units per acre.
- Replace uniform maximum application across site.

Examples:

- Permitted density shall be calculated as the total number of dwelling units divided by the “net developable acreage”.
- “Net Developable Area/Acreage” should be clearly defined in the County Code to identify which features are removed from the Gross Tract Area and excluded from the developable area.
- Density may be clustered within the development, provided the overall site density does not exceed the permitted average.

Why Do This:

Using an average density approach allows more thoughtful site planning and clustering, which can preserve open space, protect environmental features, and improve overall neighborhood design.

Context-Sensitive Design Standards

Recommendations:

- Require height and massing transitions for retirement homes
- Internal placement of larger buildings
- Enhanced buffering near lower-density neighborhoods
- Improve pedestrian circulation and building connections

Examples:

- Buildings exceeding 35 feet in height shall be setback an additional 20 feet from any property line adjoining a single-family district.
- A minimum 30-foot landscaped buffer with Type B plantings shall be provided along shared property lines with lower-density residential uses.
- Primary pedestrian routes shall directly connect residential buildings to community amenities.

Why Do This:

Context-sensitive standards help mitigate visual and functional impacts on adjacent neighborhoods.

They promote compatibility, preserve community character, and create more walkable, cohesive development patterns.

Universal Design / Aging-in-Place Site Design and Exterior Standards

Recommendations:

- Step-free access
- Accessible pedestrian routes
- Mobility-accommodating unit layouts

Examples:

- At least one zero-step entrance shall be provided for each dwelling unit.
- Sidewalks shall have a minimum width of 5 feet and a maximum cross slope of 2%.
- Ground-floor dwelling units shall include doorways with a minimum 36-inch clear width.

Why Do This:

Incorporating baseline aging-in-place features supports long-term independence and safety for residents.

Reduces the need for costly retrofits and ensures that housing remains functional as residents' mobility needs change over time.

Refine the Approval Process

Recommendations:

- Establish objective conditional use criteria
- Consider Planned Unit Development type approval requirements (allows for more flexibility in the site design, bulk and area standards that are adopted with the approved land development plan)
- Provide clearer guidance to the County's review and approval bodies

Examples:

- Require a community amenity package (outdoor pavilions/gazebos, walking trails, useable open space as minimums, and encourage sports courts, gyms/exercise rooms, community rooms, etc. for active adult lifestyles).
- Require internal pedestrian circulation plan
- Maximum building height transition standards when adjacent to R-10,000 or Agricultural districts
- Two points of access for developments unless waived by Fire/Rescue

Why Do This:

Clear, objective review criteria improve transparency and fairness in the approval process.

Reduce ambiguity, support defensible decisions, and provide applicants and staff with clearer expectations early in the process.

Parking Design & Minimum Standards

Recommendations:

- Balance strict legal accessibility requirements with "senior-friendly" enhancements that go beyond basic code requirements
- Update garage and driveway dimensions
- Ensure adequate guest and overflow parking
- Prevent internal street spillover

Examples:

- Increased Parking Stall Width – Some senior-focused designs recommend 10-foot wide stalls to allow residents more room to maneuver in and out of vehicles safely
- Clearly marked, flush-level walkways (at least 5 feet wide) should connect parking to building entrances, minimizing the need for residents to walk behind parked cars
- Visitor Parking – should be located throughout the development instead of being placed in a few or segregated locations to allow for ease of access to dwelling units.
- Minimum garage dimensions shall be 20 x 20 feet for a two-car garage.
- Define parking areas that may count toward parking requirements. Industry standard is to count garages, driveways, and on street parking toward tabulations, while also requiring some off-street guest parking areas.
- Driveways shall have a minimum length of 18 ft from garage door to sidewalk
- Lighting and Visibility – High-intensity, glare-reduced lighting is essential for nighttime safety.

Why Do This:

Right-sized and functional parking standards improve daily usability and help prevent conflicts within developments.

This can help reduce spillover parking, enhances safety, and protects neighborhood aesthetics.

Minimum Housing Type Mix

Recommendations:

- Encourage or require variety of unit types (e.g., Winifred Manor in Eldersburg)
 - Single Family Detached
 - Duplex/Triplex/Quads
 - Townhomes

Examples:

- Developments exceeding 100 units shall include at least two distinct housing types.
- No single housing type shall comprise more than 70% of the total dwelling units.

Why Do This:

A mix of housing types increases flexibility for residents with varying needs and income levels.

Enhances visual interest, improves compatibility, and supports long-term market adaptability within retirement villages.

Revise Community Amenities Requirements

Recommendations:

- Establish baseline amenity expectations
- Require amenities proportional to development size
- Or require a Community Amenity Plan

Examples:

- Developments exceeding 75 units shall provide a minimum 3,000 square foot indoor/outdoor community space.
- A Community Amenity Plan shall be submitted detailing recreational facilities, gathering spaces, and maintenance responsibilities.

Why Do This:

Clearly defined amenity expectations ensure that developments contribute to residents' quality of life.

Thoughtfully designed communal spaces foster social interaction, physical activity, and a stronger sense of community.

Open Space Calculations

Recommendations:

- Base open space areas on net (not gross) developable area to remove undevelopable areas (precludes developers from counting these as open space)
- Establish a clear definition for “Common Open Space” (permanent protection; common ownership and accessibility; active, passive, and natural areas; excluded areas, etc.)

Examples:

- Required open space shall equal 25% of the net developable area.
- Environmentally constrained lands (floodplains, wetlands, steep slopes) shall not count toward required active open space.

Why Do This:

Aligning open space requirements with actual developable land ensures more practical and equitable standards.

Promotes allocation of useable open space and preservation, ownership and maintenance standards

Emergency Access Standards

Recommendations:

- Codify emergency access regulations based on applicable NFPA and Fire Code standards.

Examples:

- Based on NFPA 1 and Fire Code standards, including:
 - Access Road Location Requirements (maximum access distances)
 - Access Road Design Specifications (minimum width, turning radii, etc.)
 - Obstructions (designated fire lanes)

Why Do This:

Early and clear emergency access planning enhances public safety and reduces response times.

Coordinated review helps prevent costly redesigns later in the development process.

Sidewalk & Pedestrian Standards

Recommendations:

- Require pedestrian connectivity (sidewalks, trail, pathways, etc.) in Growth Areas consistent with the County's 2019 Bicycle-Pedestrian Master Plan
- Allow administrative waivers for certain site constraints (need for relief and burden of proof must be clearly demonstrated by the applicant)

Examples:

- Sidewalks shall be installed on both sides of internal streets (if on one side, then ADA-compliant crosswalks need to be provided for connection points)
- Sidewalk widths – While 36 inches (3 ft.) is the absolute ADA minimum, a width of 60 inches (5 ft.) is recommended to allow two wheelchair users to pass, or a wheelchair and a walker.
- Pedestrian connections shall be provided to adjacent public sidewalks or trails where feasible
- Waivers may be granted upon demonstration of topographic or environmental constraints

Why Do This:

Improved pedestrian connectivity supports mobility, health, and independence for aging residents.

Flexible waiver provisions ensure standards remain practical where site limitations exist.

Next Steps

Task 3 Code Amendments

- Draft Code amendments (Chapters 155 and 158)
- Review with County Staff
- Present to County Planning and Zoning Commission (Meetings 1 – 6)
- Present to Board of County Commissioners
- Attendance at a public hearing and discussion by the Board of County Commissioners for enactment