



CLUSTER SUBDIVISIONS - Chapter 155.036

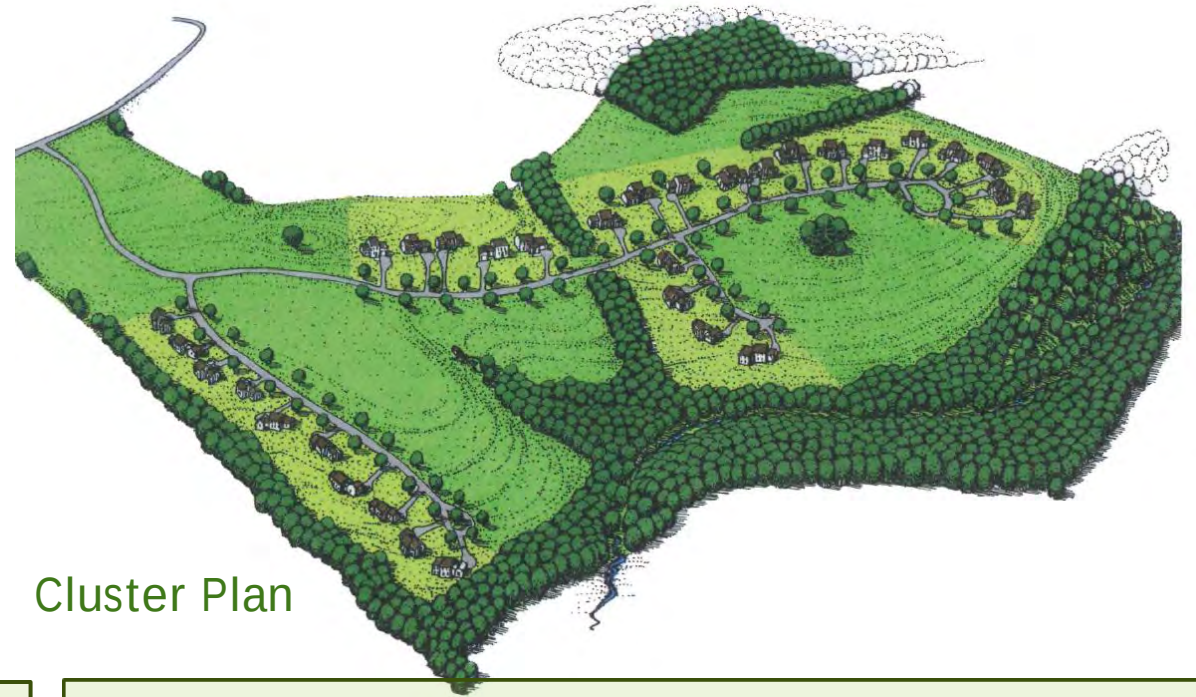
Planning and Zoning Commission

July 8, 2026

WHAT ARE CLUSTER SUBDIVISIONS?



Conventional Plan



Cluster Plan

Cluster Development: Modern Application of an Old Town Form

By Stuart Meck, FAICP

Residential cluster development is a form of land development in which principal buildings and structures are grouped together on a site, thus saving the remaining land area for common open space, conservation, agriculture, recreation, and public and semipublic uses.

2018 Freedom Community Comprehensive Plan:

Cluster development means a development that groups residential uses on a specific portion of a development site in order to provide for a reduction in permitted lot size and an increase in resulting open space, environmental or landscape resources, or recreation or other public facilities for the development.

BENEFITS OF CLUSTERING

- Efficient and cost-effective site design
 - Focuses buildings and infrastructure on most buildable portions of a parcel.
 - Reduces public infrastructure such as streets and utilities.
 - Installation costs/savings - passed on to homebuyers
 - Operation and maintenance costs/savings - passed on to County
- Community Character
 - Enhances sense of community when common areas are created.
 - Improved aesthetics
 - Public amenities
 - Can maintain a rural character by leaving large portions of open space.
- Environmental Benefits
 - Preserves natural drainage systems and vegetation to reduce stormwater runoff and soil erosion.
 - Reduces stormwater management requirements by reducing the amount of impervious area and maintaining natural land cover rather than curtilage areas that are often lawn.
 - Reduces number of easements on residential lots.

NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF CLUSTERING

- Perception of smaller lots being of less value.
- Perception of denser development.
 - If a green field is known to be zoned R-40,000 (1 acre lots), constructing ½ acre lots may be less desirable to surrounding community.
- Maintenance of open space - requires either conveyance to County or maintenance by an HOA.

Board of County Commissioner Concerns

Focused on Residential Zoned Cluster Subdivisions - Not Ag or Conservation Zoning

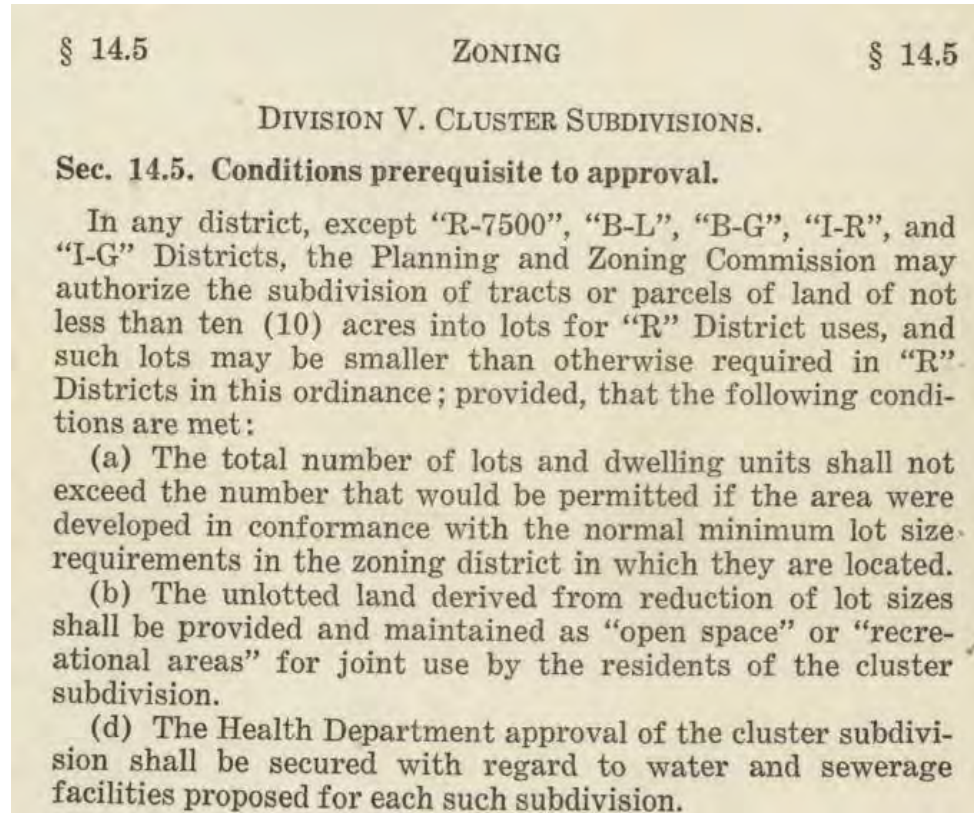
- ▶ Metrics for determining density
- ▶ What is the appropriate amount of open space
- ▶ What qualifies as open space
- ▶ How much active open space should be required
- ▶ What are appropriate amenities
- ▶ What is proper allowable reduction in lot size

Board recognized there is not time for comprehensive overhaul of Cluster Code prior to October 1st, State Vesting law.

Directed staff to focus on evaluation of “recent” code changes.

WHEN WERE CLUSTER SUBDIVISIONS ALLOWED?

1965



68 Cluster Subdivisions recorded since the adoption of code regulating Development and Subdivision of Land in Carroll County with close to 1,775 acres of Open Space

Residential Zoning Cluster Code - 1993

DIVISION V - Cluster Subdivisions

Sec. 14.5 Conditions prerequisite to approval

Sec. 14.5.1

In the "R-40,000", "R-20,000", "R-10,000", and "H" Districts, the Planning and Zoning Commission may authorize the division of tracts or parcels of land of not less than ten (10) acres into lots for "R" District uses, and such lots and yards, may be smaller than otherwise required in the "R" Districts in this Ordinance; provided that the following conditions are met:

- (a) The total number of lots and dwelling units shall not exceed the number that would be permitted if the area were developed in conformance with its topographic characteristics and the normal minimum lot size requirements in the zoning district in which they are located.
- (b) The land derived from reduction of lot size shall be provided and maintained as "open space" or "recreational areas" for joint use by the residents of the cluster subdivision or offered to the County as agreed to by the Planning Commission, except where such additional reduction of lot size occurs as a result of utilizing TDR's pursuant to section 14.46 and 14.5.1(e).
- (c) Public water and sewerage facilities shall be available to serve the cluster subdivision.
- (d) Common "open space" shall not be less than fifteen percent (15%) of the gross acreage of any tract submitted for cluster subdivision.
 - (1) A maximum of fifty percent (50%) of the required open space may be steep slopes, streams, ponds, watercourse, and flood plain.
 - (2) A minimum of ten percent (10%) of the required open space or 1.5 acres, whichever is greater, shall be suitable for active recreational use and may not exceed a grade of three percent (3%).
- (e) A cluster subdivision receiving TDR may increase density at two TDR's for every ten lots created in accordance with Section 14.5.1(a).

(Ordinance No. 111 - 1993)

Residential Zoning - Current Code

§ 155.036 CLUSTER SUBDIVISIONS.

(A) Conditions requisite to approval in R and H Districts. In the H, R-40,000, R-20,000, and R-10,000 Districts, the Planning and Zoning Commission may authorize the division of tracts or parcels of land into lots for R District uses, and lots and yards may be smaller than otherwise required in the R Districts in Chapter 158, provided that the following conditions are met:

(1) The total number of lots and dwelling units may not exceed the number that would be permitted for the zoning district based on the gross area of the parcel or tract being subdivided;

(2) Individual lots shall be a minimum of 20,000 square feet in the R-40,000 District, 10,000 square feet in the R-20,000 District, and 7,500 square feet in the R-10,000 District;

(3) The land derived from reduction of lot size shall be provided and maintained as open space or recreational areas for joint use by the residents of the cluster subdivision or offered to the county as agreed to by the Planning and Zoning Commission, except where such additional reduction of lot size occurs as a result of utilizing TDRs pursuant to § [155.090](#)(D) and division (A)(5) of this section:

(4) Cluster subdivisions must be served by public water and sewerage facilities;

(5) Common open space shall not be less than 15% of the gross acreage of any tract submitted for cluster subdivision.

(a) A maximum of 50% of the required open space may be steep slopes, streams, ponds, watercourses, and floodplains;

(b) A minimum of 10% of the required open space or one and one-half acres, whichever is greater, shall be suitable for active recreational use and may not exceed a grade of 3%; and

(c) For tracts or parcels less than ten acres, the Planning and Zoning Commission may approve deviations from these percentage requirements.

(6) A cluster subdivision receiving TDRs may increase density at two TDRs for every ten lots created in accordance with division (A) above; and

(7) In order to be eligible for clustering, all lot yield from the entire property shall be included on the preliminary subdivision plan.

Changes from 1993 to 2022

- ▶ Determination of number of lots
 - ▶ 1993 – Required conventional plan to determine lot yield
 - ▶ 2022 – Maximum lot yield determined by gross acreage
- ▶ Minimum lot size
 - ▶ 1993 – No minimum lot size
 - ▶ 2022 – Minimum lot size is half the size allowable by zoning district
- ▶ Minimum parent parcel size
 - ▶ 1993 – Parent Parcel must be a minimum of 10 acres
 - ▶ 2022 – No Minimum. Planning Commission may allow for variance on open space requirements for lots less than 10 acres.
- ▶ 2022 Addition – All lot yield must be used.