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Douglas County seeks public feedback about proposed changes to zoning regulations

Community meetings scheduled in October; feedback form available online

LAWRENCE, KS – The Douglas County Zoning and Codes Department is hosting several meetings in October about proposed changes to the Zoning and Subdivision Regulations for unincorporated Douglas County. During the meetings, staff will provide an overview of the changes and then encourage residents to share feedback.

The meetings will be:

- **Thursday, Oct. 10**, 6:30-8:30 p.m., at the Historic Taylor Barn, 1827 E 1150 Road.
- **Thursday, Oct. 17**, 6-8 p.m., at the Lawrence Virtual School (formerly Wakarusa School), 1104 E. 1000 Road.
- **Thursday, Oct. 24**, 6:30-8:30 p.m., Douglas County Public Works and Zoning and Codes Building, 3755 E. 25th St.

The current zoning regulations were first adopted in 1966 and have been updated through the years with text amendment changes. The proposed changes are intended to: update the terminology and uses, clarify the various processes, and align the regulations more closely with recommendations in “Horizon 2020: The Comprehensive Plan for Lawrence and Unincorporated Douglas County.”

Horizon 2020 promotes the maintenance of a distinction between the urban and rural areas of the county. The plan states that new residential development in Douglas County should protect and enhance the rural character and quality of unincorporated portions of the county. Specifically, the pattern of rural residential development should be to cluster residences to minimize impacts on the rural character of Douglas County and to protect existing agricultural and natural uses in those areas beyond the Urban Growth Areas of Lawrence and the other incorporated cities of Eudora, Baldwin City and Lecompton.

The revised zoning regulations plan to meet this goal by:

- Directing rural residential development to cluster residential parcels in or adjacent to existing subdivisions and growth centers and to be in near proximity to transportation corridors to reduce the costs associated with the extension of public services.

- Directing non-farm residential development to urban areas.
- Encouraging higher density rural residential development to locate with the Urban Growth Areas.

Zoning is a method of land use regulation designed to minimize the negative impacts of certain types of land use by separating them from one another. This is achieved by restricting uses to classified districts such as: residential, agricultural, commercial and industrial zones. Currently, there is no distinction between agricultural and residential uses in the zoning regulations. The proposed regulations add zoning districts to identify agricultural and residential land uses.

“The proposed regulations are intended to allow different land uses to be located and organized in a manner that promotes the health, safety and general welfare of residents, conserves property values and facilitates the adequate provision of transportation, water, sewer and other public requirements,” Zoning Director Tonya Voigt said. “The ideal outcome of these updates would be a set of regulations that allow Zoning Department staff to administrate regulations that support the comprehensive plan and to maintain a planning process that reflects the evolving needs of Douglas County.”

Douglas County Commissioner Nancy Thellman said the proposed regulations are not intended to shut down development in rural Douglas County. “This is about having a process that’s thoughtful, public and transparent,” she said.

The proposed zoning regulations can be reviewed on the Douglas County’s website: <http://dgcoks.org/zoningregs>, where residents can also provide feedback.

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