

Planned Residential Development

The Legacy Toolkit

Forsyth County is an urban, rapidly developing county, particularly in outlying suburban and rural areas. If current sprawling development patterns continue, the County may lose its distinction between urban and rural areas. To help prevent this loss, a need exists to promote the preservation of usable, connected open space throughout the County. Planned Residential Developments (PRD) provide a means for preserving open space by allowing greater design flexibility than conventional subdivisions.

What Are PRDs?

PRDs are recommended in *Legacy* as a tool for preserving open space and rural character. PRDs are an alternative to conventional subdivisions that allow the use of smaller lots, provided the overall density of the underlying zoning district is not exceeded. Research across the country has shown that many people prefer to live in homes on smaller lots if they have access to usable, high-quality, shared open space. The benefits of this open space can be enjoyed by everyone in the community. Compact development can also lead to lower infrastructure costs for the developer and can save communities money by encouraging more efficient service delivery.

PRD Requirements

Before submitting a PRD site plan, a petitioner must meet with Planning staff for a [preapplication conference](#). The petitioner must submit a scaled sketch site plan showing the existing cultural, historic, and physical features of the site for review by staff. Staff may ask for additional information such as the location of prime agricultural soils, historical structures, archeological/cultural elements, the depth of viewshed as seen from existing public rights-of-way, the location of rock walls and other "unique" features on site, and the location and general specifications of any proposed septic systems.

In exchange for flexibility in lot size and setbacks, a minimum of 15-20% of the total development site must be set aside as open space in urban and suburban PRDs, and a minimum of 45-50% must be set aside in rural PRDs. **Three types of open space must be present:** [active](#) open space; [passive](#) open space; and [thoroughfare](#) open space.

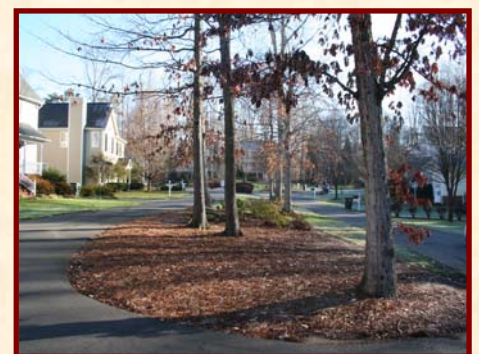
- [Active open space](#) consists of occupiable features such as pocket parks and neighborhood greens. A minimum of 15% of total open space in urban and suburban zoning districts should be active open space. In rural zoning districts, a minimum of 5% of total open space should be active open space. Pedestrian access to Active open space is required, and this open space should be connected to open space in existing PRDs, parks, and greenways where possible.
- [Passive open space](#) consists of natural features such as drainage basins, riparian areas, and steep slopes. This type of open space functions as animal habitat, provides areas for natural drainage, and contributes to the creation of a larger open space network in Forsyth County.
- [Thoroughfare open space](#) preserves roadside view corridors and protects residential areas from negative impacts. This open space is required where PRDs are adjacent to thoroughfares in GMAs 3-5, and consists of a 50' Type III bufferyard in GMA 3 and a 100' Type III bufferyard in GMAs 4 and 5. Where a PRD is adjacent to an existing meadow, tree stand, or similar natural feature, a formal bufferyard may not be required.
- Additionally, where perimeter lots in PRDs are adjacent to existing single family zoning and do not meet the area and dimensional requirements of the underlying zoning district, a minimum 30' Type II bufferyard is required between the new and existing development. This buffer minimizes the stark transition between larger and smaller lots and must be on commonly owned land. Where these requirements are met, no bufferyard is required.



Copperfield



Long Creek Village



Winding Ridge