



# PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES NEWSLETTER

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## Where Have We Been? Where Are We Going?



Happy New Year 2018! As January gets off to a cold start and the year 2017 fades in the rear-view mirror, I thought it would be useful to take stock of how our Comprehensive Plan has guided us as a community in our growth and improvement. Winston-Salem and Forsyth County is a great place to live, work and enjoy life, but there is unfinished business in making our community all it can be for all of its present and future citizens. The Comprehensive Plan, *Legacy 2030*, describes that future vision of how we can shape our physical spaces to provide a great quality of life to residents, employees, businesses, and visitors---and the steps we can take to get to that vision.

So how has it gone since the plan was adopted four years ago? There will be a more detailed report coming out soon, but of the 285 Action Agenda Items outlined in *Legacy 2030*, over half have had at least some activity or even completion by different City and County agencies, community organizations or private and non-profit sector interests. *Legacy 2030* has been used to launch more detailed planning and design efforts, a new generation of area plans, and new initiatives to revitalize or preserve areas. It is actively used in evaluating all land use and zoning decisions by the Planning Board and Elected Bodies. It is guiding transportation planning and improvements and is being used to evaluate potential capital improvement projects financed by bonds. And it has guided the City-County Planning Board, staff and Elected Bodies in making changes to our Unified Development Ordinances (UDO) so that it helps shape development consistent with the future vision.

Forsyth County is relatively small, and is further limited topographically in the area that can be efficiently served with public sewer. So, in order to accommodate future economic and population growth as well as the changing housing needs of our diversifying population, growth needs to be carefully located and planned so that the various uses can be in the best locations to handle such growth. For example, higher density uses can be focused on our downtown area, activity centers and major corridors, which will help in reserving lower density uses for neighborhood areas. *Legacy 2030* and the various area plans make recommendations for where the different types of growth can best

be handled, and how this new growth can best be designed as it occurs.

Connectivity is another need addressed in *Legacy 2030*. Creating a more robust choice of transportation modes—not just roads, but sidewalks, greenways, bike lanes, and public transit--will help all of our

population connect between where they live, and where they play, work or shop. It will also better promote healthy living, as will connecting the community to the food supply through local foods, community gardens and farmland preservation. Progress has been made, but much more is left to do.

Downtown revitalization has been a real success story, building on the plans that have been done over the last several years. *Legacy 2030* made a number of recommendations as to how future public and private investments can keep this great momentum going. Other efforts are taking shape, such as the initiative to repurpose Whitaker Park, make better use of Smith-Reynolds Airport as an economic asset, reserve land for future business parks, tie education and training into jobs, and bring commercial services into underserved areas. Again, some progress but much more left to do.

Community Character is such an important determinant of our quality of life, and *Legacy 2030* made recommendations on how appearance and historic preservation can set us apart. Great progress has been made in those areas with successful efforts such as Creative Corridors, the adaptive reuse and preservation of historic buildings, the new Public Art Commission, and the continued 15-year implementation of the 2007 on-premise sign regulation changes. More needs to be done, particularly with our public parks.

One more thing on the *Legacy 2030* “do-list” is making our existing UDO more user-friendly, not just for staff but for developers, designers, businesses and citizens. This effort is taking place currently, and the goal is that over the next year or two, the UDO in print or online will be much easier to use and navigate.



So, here’s to 2018---may it be a great year for the community that we love and may good planning make us better prepared for what the future brings!

A. Paul Norby, FAICP

# UDO Update Project: UDO ClearCode



The development ordinance for Winston-Salem and Forsyth County, the *Unified Development Ordinances*, or UDO, was adopted in 1994. This large, complicated document contains most of the development regulations for our community. It has been amended almost 300 times since its adoption.

At the Planning Board's request, staff prepared a memo in 2016 exploring whether our UDO needed a complete overhaul to improve its user-friendliness, or whether strategic changes should be made to the current code. After exploring different options, the Board ultimately directed staff to improve the user-friendliness of the current UDO while also continuing to make periodic UDO changes to implement *Legacy 2030* recommendations.

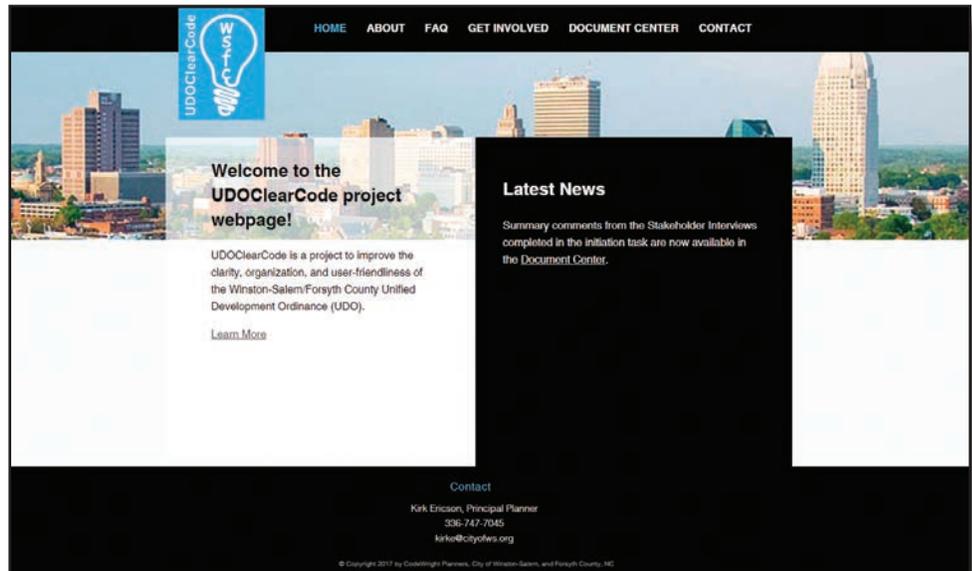
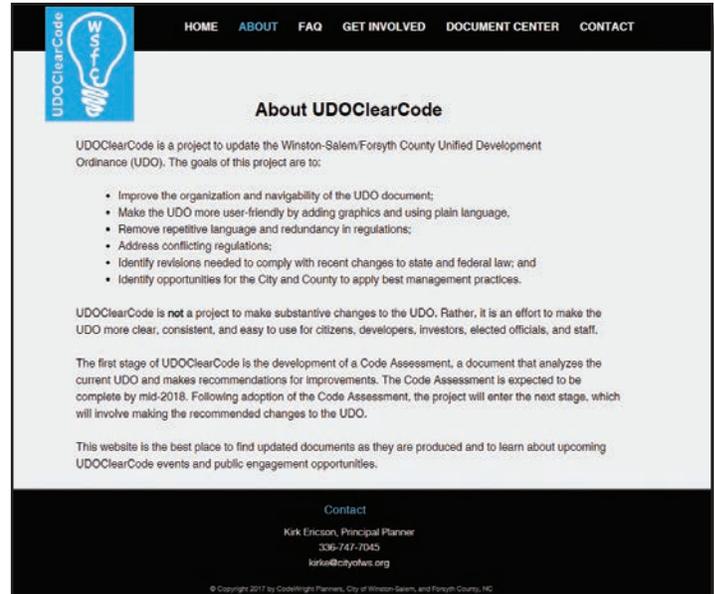
In spring 2017, staff presented this recommendation to the elected bodies, who agreed with the Planning Board and added \$40,000 to our 2017-18 budget to undertake the first step in the code update process. In the fall of 2017, staff selected CodeWright Planners, a consulting firm from Durham, NC, to complete a code assessment of the UDO. This code assessment will make recommendations on improving the organization, appearance, and functionality of the UDO, but it is not intended to substantively change development regulations which were negotiated through deliberate community involvement processes.

The code assessment project, branded *UDO ClearCode*, includes a deliberate public involvement component. Two days of stakeholder interviews were conducted in December 2017, and nearly 30 individuals participated. Additional public involvement opportunities will be scheduled in 2018. The UDO ClearCode project also has a website ([www.udoclearcode.com](http://www.udoclearcode.com)) where interested citizens can find out more information on the project.

CodeWright will continue working on the project in the coming months and expects to have a final code assess-

ment report completed in the spring. The consultants will present their findings to the Planning Board in May 2018.

Planning staff will request funding for a second phase of the UDO update as part of next year's budget (FY 2018-19) to hire a consultant to prepare a set of unified graphics for the UDO and to explore options for improving the online UDO experience.



## Want more information?

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