

ORDINANCE NO. 2025-02

AN ORDINANCE CREATING THE TOWN OF LAUREL PARK
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE

WHEREAS The Town of Laurel Park first adopted a Land Use Plan in 1988, with significant updates in 2005; and

WHEREAS Land use plans serve as the cornerstone for long-range planning efforts including establishing a vision and goals for the future and policy statements to guide future development and land uses within the community; and

WHEREAS North Carolina General Statute 160D states that a local government shall adopt and reasonably maintain a comprehensive plan as a condition of adopting and applying zoning regulations; and

WHEREAS The Town Council adopted a Comprehensive Land Use Plan in 2016 with a 10-year period of review; and

WHEREAS The adopted a Comprehensive Land Use Plan suggests needing to be updated every 5 to 10 years in response to land use trends, changes in population, or any major events that may affect Laurel Park's future meaning it is now time to update the Comprehensive Land Use Plan with new census and community data; and

WHEREAS The Town Council is looking for volunteers to be appointed to a new Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee; and

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED THAT:

A. Purpose: The Town of Laurel Park utilizes active and informed citizen volunteers per the Vision Directions in the Town of Laurel Park 2016-2026 Comprehensive Plan, which reads: “We are a caring community working together. We have high levels of volunteerism, a strong sense of identity, and pride in our community’s story.” This ordinance exists to provide guidance, leadership, and standard operating policies and procedures to the Council-appointed Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee. The Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee is a representative body created by the Laurel Park Town Council for the purpose of directing the development of the comprehensive plan and subsequent updates.

B. Member Appointment and Terms: The ordinance intent is to engage a wide variety of citizen participation in local government by appointing members who represent community diversity. The town does not discriminate on the basis of gender, age, ethnic, or socio-economic background. The following rules apply:

1. Applications for steering committee membership shall be forwarded by the Town Clerk or Town Manager to the Town Council to evaluate and/or interview each applicant in a timely manner and shall then make appointments.
2. Each member is expected to serve for the duration of the Comprehensive Plan Update.
3. A non-resident of the town may be appointed when the Council presumes the service to be especially beneficial, including business owners.
4. A Council member may only serve in an ex-officio (see “Definitions”) capacity.
5. When the steering committee has completed its mission or is no longer functioning productively, the Town Manager may recommend to the Council that the steering committee be disbanded in its entirety after reasonable notification to the full steering committee.
6. Steering committee service is critical to how the town functions. Members sacrifice valuable time that could be devoted to their families, homes, hobbies, and other interests and they make significant contributions to our community.

C. Membership Composition: Membership shall include up to 12 members and 3 ex-officio members (the Mayor and Town Manager). Other ex-officio membership may be granted as approved by Council, but does not count toward the 0 voting member maximum.

D. Member Compensation: Steering committee members will not be compensated for their volunteer time while serving on the steering committee. In appreciation of the volunteered time, talent, knowledge, and efforts, steering committee volunteers will be recognized. All steering committee members will be invited to an annual volunteer appreciation event, as budgeted.

E. Steering Committee Duties and Responsibilities: Advise on all aspects of the comprehensive plan update including: long-range planning efforts, vision and goals, policy statements, future development, and recommendations for land use regulations.

F. Organization, Rules, Records, and Meetings

1. **Organizational Meeting:** A steering committee organizational meeting shall be held at the inception of the comprehensive plan update to elect officers and adopt a regular meeting schedule.
2. **Officers:** The steering committee shall have the following organizational structure: Chair, Vice-chair, and Secretary. An ex-officio member cannot serve as an officer. Each position is described as follows:
 - a) **Chair:** Responsible for setting steering committee agenda and organizing and running steering committee meetings and activities. The Chair shall provide an oral or written report to Council at each regular Council meeting.
 - b) **Vice-Chair:** Responsible for fulfilling the duties of the Chair if the Chair is unable or unavailable to fulfill the role.
 - c) **Secretary:** Responsible for taking required minutes of all meetings. If the Secretary is not available for a meeting, then it is the Chair's responsibility to delegate the role to ensure required minutes are completed.
3. **Minutes:** Minutes shall be taken of all meetings.
4. **Meeting Notice:** Each steering committee shall establish a regular meeting schedule noting meeting date, time, and location and make every effort to not deviate from the schedule. Additional meetings or changes to meeting dates shall be made at least two weeks in advance. Special meetings shall be utilized as little as possible and must be called at least three business days in advance, except in extraordinary circumstances. Notice of any additional or special meetings shall be forwarded to the Town Clerk and Town Manager as soon as possible after the meeting is called. The Town Clerk will post all meeting notices at Town Hall, on the Town's website, and will inform Council of all meetings.
5. **Meeting Conduct:** The steering committee shall make every effort to conduct its business in a professional and timely manner, that all representatives have the opportunity to contribute, and that all sides of an issue are investigated to the best of the steering committee's ability. Parliamentary procedure shall follow the *Suggested Rules of Procedure for Small Local Government Boards* (second edition) publication produced by the UNC School of Government's Institute of Government.
6. **Quorum:** Every effort will be made by members to attend all steering committee meetings. Virtual meeting participation may be allowed as long as the member participating remotely can hear and participate effectively. The minutes should reflect any remote participation.

If a steering committee member misses more than 25% of the regular meetings within any twelve-month period, the Chair will inform the Town Manager with a recommendation for either removal or continuance on the steering committee. Any request for removal must be in writing and cite dates missed along with any special circumstances pertaining to absences. The circumstances of each individual will be taken into account before a recommendation to remove is forwarded to Council.

A quorum shall be determined by dividing the total number of voting members minus any vacant positions in half (rounding down), then adding one. *Example #1:* a 12-

member committee with no vacant seats = $(12/2) + 1 = 6 + 1 = 7$, so 7 members are required for a quorum. *Example #2:* a 12-member committee with 1 vacant seat = $(12-1)/2 + 1 = 5 + 1 = 6$, so 6 members are required for a quorum.

G. Ethics and Conflicts of Interest: Each steering committee member is expected to act in a manner to maintain their integrity and independence yet be responsive to the interests and needs of the town, Council, and staff.

1. Steering committee members shall understand the steering committee's role as an advisory board and respect the decisions made by the Council and staff.
2. Steering committee members have legitimate interests (economic, professional, and vocational) of a private nature. Steering committee members shall not be denied, nor should they deny to other steering committee members or citizens the opportunity to acquire, retain, and pursue private interests, economic or otherwise, except when conflicts with their responsibility to the public cannot be avoided. Steering committee members must exercise their best judgment to determine when this is the case.
3. Steering committee members will understand that the actions of the steering committee may interfere with, or be counter to, the actions of another Town board. When this occurs, it is incumbent upon steering committee members to properly discuss the issues arising from such conflict and be willing to accept the decisions made by other Town boards, staff, and Council as acting in the best interest of the citizens of Laurel Park.
4. Steering committee members should conserve town resources in their charge and employ town equipment, property, funds, and personnel only in legally-permissible pursuits and in a manner that exemplifies excellent stewardship.
5. Steering committee members have a fiduciary duty (see "Definitions") to the town and steering committee, not their own or other private interests. Any possible fiduciary conflicts shall be disclosed to the steering committee, Town Manager, and Council.

H. Complaints Against Steering Committee Members: Steering committee members hold a position of trust and responsibility within the community. Complaints made regarding their actions or behavior must be made in writing with as much detail as possible about the circumstances of the complaint. Complaints will be reviewed by the Town Manager and reported to Council for further action.

I. Grounds for Removal of a Steering Committee Member: Steering committee members serve solely at the pleasure of Town Council and it reserves the right to remove any member from the steering committee at any time for any reason. The Town Manager may recommend removal of a member for Council's consideration. Examples that could lead to removal include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Excessive absences from regular steering committee meetings.
2. Verbally or physically abusive behavior toward the public, members, staff, or Council.
3. Inability to work for the common good of the steering committee and town.
4. Violations of the "Ethics and Conflicts of Interest" section of this ordinance.

5. Violations of any other section of this Steering Committee Ordinance or other town ordinances, policies, or procedures.
6. Past or present criminal charges, judgments, or professional misconduct actions.

J. Definitions: For purposes of this ordinance, the following definitions apply:

1. *Resident*: a Town of Laurel Park citizen who resides inside the corporate town limits or the extra-territorial jurisdiction.
2. *Ex-officio*: either a resident or non-resident appointed to a serve and offer input to the steering committee who doesn't have the full rights and privileges to vote on steering committee matters.
3. *Fiduciary duty*: a legal relationship between two or more parties that is highlighted by good faith, loyalty, trust, and a duty not to profit from their fiduciary position without express knowledge and consent; a fiduciary cannot act with a conflict of interest.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Town Council of the Town of Laurel Park, North Carolina that this ordinance serves to provide guidance, leadership, and standard operating policies and procedures to the Council-appointed steering committee and this ordinance shall be in full force and effect from and after the date of its adoption.

Adopted and approved this 15th day of October, 2024.

Attest:


Town Clerk Tamara Amin, NCCMC, CMC


Mayor J. Carey O'Cain