



RALEIGH PLANNING COMMISSION CERTIFIED RECOMMENDATION

CR# _____

CASE INFORMATION: TC-1-26 SCHOOL LOT AREA AMENDMENT

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN GUIDANCE

Applicable Policy Statements	Policy LU 2.2 Compact Development
	<p>New development and redevelopment should use a more compact land use pattern to support the efficient provision of public services, improve the performance of transportation networks, preserve open space, and reduce the negative impacts of low intensity and non-contiguous development.</p>
	<p>LU 2.5 Healthy Communities</p> <p>New development, redevelopment, and infrastructure investment should strive to promote healthy communities and active lifestyles by providing or encouraging enhanced bicycle and pedestrian circulation, access, and safety along, roads near areas of employment, schools, libraries, and parks.</p>
	<p>Policy CS 1.6 Transit Accessibility of Community Facilities</p> <p>Concentrate community facilities in transit accessible areas and walkable communities to increase access to and delivery of services.</p>
	<p>Policy CS 1.7 Equitable Facility Distribution</p> <p>Ensure that community centers, senior centers, libraries, schools, and other community facilities are sited equitably across Raleigh and are accessible to those requiring adaptive services.</p>
	<p>Policy CS 1.8 Community Facilities as Centers</p> <p>Use recreation centers, senior centers, schools, and libraries as a means of enhancing and strengthening a neighborhood's sense of community.</p>
	<p>Policy RC 2.10 School and Library Planning</p> <p>Work with Wake County to plan for land adequate to meet present and future public school and library needs.</p>

Action Items	N/A
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SUMMARY OF TEXT CHANGE

A member of the public has requested an amendment to UDO Sec. 6.3.1.D.2.b, which currently requires all schools to provide 500 square feet of lot area per enrolled pupil. The proposed change would retain this requirement citywide except when a school site meets the following conditions:

- It is located in a Mixed Use zoning district;
- It lies within a City Growth Center or Frequent Transit Area as designated in the Comprehensive Plan; and
- The lot does not immediately abut any area designated as Low Scale Residential on the Future Land Use Map

SUMMARY OF IMPACTS

Adoption of TC-1-26 would:

- Improve flexibility for school siting and expansion in areas where the City encourages compact, transit-supported growth
- Enable schools to serve more students on smaller sites in high-intensity urban contexts without being constrained by a per-pupil land area formula

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Submitted	Committee	Planning Commission
2/17/26	3/18/26 (TCC)	4/28/26

PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

The proposed text amendment is **Consistent** with the relevant policies in the Comprehensive Plan and **Approval** of the proposed text amendment is reasonable and in the public interest.

Reasonableness and Public Interest	The action taken is reasonable and in the public interest because ...
Recommendation	

ATTACHMENTS

1. Staff Report
2. Draft Ordinance

This document is a true and accurate statement of the findings and recommendations of the Planning Commission. Approval of this document incorporates all of the findings of the attached Staff Report and Comprehensive Plan Analysis.

Bynum Walter
Assistant Planning Director

Date:

Staff Coordinator: Justin Bucher, justin.bucher@raleighnc.gov



ZONING STAFF REPORT – TC-1-26 SCHOOL LOT AREA AMENDMENT

Section Reference	Section 6.3.1.D.2
Basic Information	Amends the Part 10 Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) to remove the minimum lot-area-per-pupil requirement for schools located in Mixed Use zoning districts that are also within a City Growth Center or Frequent Transit Area
Planning Commission Recommendation Deadline	May 17, 2026

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN GUIDANCE

Applicable Policy Statements	<p>Policy LU 2.2 Compact Development</p> <p>New development and redevelopment should use a more compact land use pattern to support the efficient provision of public services, improve the performance of transportation networks, preserve open space, and reduce the negative impacts of low intensity and non-contiguous development.</p> <p>LU 2.5 Healthy Communities</p> <p>New development, redevelopment, and infrastructure investment should strive to promote healthy communities and active lifestyles by providing or encouraging enhanced bicycle and pedestrian circulation, access, and safety along, roads near areas of employment, schools, libraries, and parks.</p> <p>Policy CS 1.6 Transit Accessibility of Community Facilities</p> <p>Concentrate community facilities in transit accessible areas and walkable communities to increase access to and delivery of services.</p> <p>Policy CS 1.7 Equitable Facility Distribution</p>
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Action Items	N/A

CONTACT INFORMATION

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OVERVIEW AND PURPOSE

History and Background

On December 8, 2026, a member of the public submitted an external text change request to amend the Unified Development Ordinance use standards applicable to the “School” use. Staff presented the request to City Council on February 17th 2026 and outlined several options: maintain the existing UDO standard, approve the applicant’s request as submitted, remove the standard entirely, or proceed with a staff-led mitigation approach. Following discussion, Council approved a motion to authorize the text change under the third option—authorizing the text change to move through the public review and Planning Commission process with direction for staff to work with the applicant on appropriate mitigation and controls.

Under the former City of Raleigh Development Regulations (pre-2013), lot size for schools were only regulated for private and parochial schools, but not public schools. When the City adopted the current UDO, the regulations for all types of schools were aligned; Raleigh has maintained a minimum school site standard of 500 square feet of lot area per enrolled pupil since adoption of the Unified Development Ordinance in 2013. In November 2017, City Council adopted TC-19-17 Lot area per Pupil Requirements for School in Downtown District, which removed the 500 square foot per enrollee requirement for schools located within the - DX district.

Current Regulations

Schools (public or private, K-12) are regulated pursuant to Unified Development Section 6.3.1.D and are defined as 'a public or private (including charter or religious) school at the primary, elementary, middle, junior high or high school level that provides basic academic education'. There are 4 use standards associated with this use:

- a. *Meet the curricular teaching certification of instruction approved by the State Board of Education.*
- b. *Be located on a lot with total area of 500 square feet area per enrolled pupil unless within a DX- District in which case no minimum area per pupil shall be required.*
- c. *Be located outside any Airport Overlay District or Primary Reservoir Watershed Protection Area.*
- d. *The additional traffic generated to and from the site during peak travel periods, combined with the background traffic volume traveling on the roadway would not reduce the roadway or nearby intersections' capacity below level-of-service "D," as defined in the Highway Capacity Manual, 1994.*

It is important to note that the above use standards are not the only zoning requirements that schools have to meet; they must also comply with other development requirements found throughout the UDO and in related technical manuals, such as the Street Design Manual. For instance, schools located within a Residential zoning district must provide specific protective yards, including:

- A Type A1 or A2 transitional protective yard (Sec. 7.2.4.A) along any property line that abuts a residential use.
- A Type C2 street protective yard (Sec. 7.2.4.B) along all property lines that abut a public right-of-way.

Neighborhood Transitions (UDO Sec. 3.5.1) also apply in Mixed Use and Campus zoning districts when a school site directly abuts certain lower density residential districts (R 1, R 2, R 4, R 6, or R 10) or a Planned Development (PD-) district where the adjoining property is vacant or contains a detached house, tiny house, or attached house.

Neighborhood Transition Zones consist of three components:

- Zone A – Protective Yard: A buffer intended for screening; no buildings or structures are permitted.
- Zone B – Use-Restricted Area: Intended for low intensity uses such as open space, landscaping, or surface parking.
- Zone C – Height and Form: Regulates building height and massing to reduce the impact of new multi story development on adjacent residential areas.

The UDO also includes broader development standards that address elements such as parking, landscaping and screening, site lighting, and natural resource protection.

The City of Raleigh Street Design Manual also contains requirements that help guide development. The Street Design Manual establishes the engineering and design standards that shape how a potential school would connect to and impact the surrounding street network. Some of these standards contained within the manual include street improvements,

right-of-way dedication, sidewalk and streetscape design, access management, and multimodal accommodations, traffic control devices, etc.

Proposed Changes

A member of the public has submitted a request to amend UDO Sec. 6.3.1.D.2.b, which currently requires all schools to provide 500 square feet of lot area per enrolled pupil. The proposed amendment would maintain this standard citywide, except for school sites that meet all of the following:

- Located within a Mixed Use zoning district;
- Situated in a designated City Growth Center or Frequent Transit Area, and;
- Not directly abutting any area identified as Low Scale Residential on the Future Land Use Map.

IMPACTS

ADOPTION OF TC-1-26

Adopting TC-1-26 would remove the minimum lot-area-per-pupil requirement for schools located in Mixed Use zoning districts that also fall within a City Growth Center or Frequent Transit Area and are not immediately adjacent to Low Scale Residential on the Future Land Use Map. The change would expand siting flexibility for schools and allow schools that are located on smaller sites to potentially serve more students without being constrained by a per-pupil land area calculation.

NO CHANGE

If TC-1-26 is not adopted, the current use standards would remain in place, and schools outside the DX- district would still be required to provide 500 square feet of lot area per enrolled student.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The draft ordinance was posted to the public engagement portal from March 4 through March 17, 2026. A detailed report is attached.