



New Town Task Force

Preliminary Recommendations

The New Town Task Force (NTTF) began meeting in June 2025, initiating a multi-phase process to evaluate Section 125.0, New Town (NT) District, of the zoning code. Between September and December 2025, Task Force members conducted a detailed review of the code and during this period, they analyzed its major topical elements and considered whether each should be **Preserved, Strengthened, Enhanced, or Transformed**. These discussions were informed not only by the existing code but also by relevant case studies tied to each element. For each component of Section 125.0, members engaged in group discussions and developed **preliminary recommendations** based on their collective assessment. These recommendations were then further refined during subsequent “Recommendations Meetings”, where ideas were clarified and adjusted.

In total, the Task Force initially produced **42 preliminary recommendations** based on the fall 2025 discussions. During the winter and early spring of 2026, these recommendations were voted on for initial determination. As a result, **28 recommendations either received majority support or were deemed inconclusive**, meaning they will require additional discussion before final decisions are made. The preliminary recommendations showed both alignment and variation across Task Force members. During the Preserved, Strengthened, Enhanced, and Transformed (PSET) discussions—as well as in individual homework submissions—members often identified **similar focus areas within each element of Section 125.0**, indicating shared priorities and concerns about what aspects of the code were working well or needed improvement. However, members sometimes proposed **different directions for how those topical elements should evolve**. For example, while there might be agreement that a particular element was important, some members recommended preserving it as-is, while others suggested strengthening, enhancing, or transforming it to better meet current and future needs. These differences reflected varying perspectives on the appropriate level of change and the best path forward. To reconcile these similarities and differences, Task Force members were asked to **work toward consensus on competing recommendations**. This involved discussing the rationale behind differing viewpoints, identifying common ground, and refining proposals to better reflect shared goals where possible. In cases where consensus could not be reached, multiple perspectives were carried forward for further consideration.



The Preliminary Recommendations Table, shown below, identifies the topical elements in the first column, the section of the code is in column two, the recommendation number is shown in the third column, and the preliminary recommendation is identified in the fourth column. Columns five and six provide the meeting dates where the elements were discussed, and when the recommendations were voted on respectively.

The Task Force will revisit the preliminary recommendations during its April meeting. At that time, members will review input gathered from the public meetings and the technical survey. This feedback will be used to refine and strengthen the recommendations, ensuring they reflect both community input and Task Force priorities. The updated recommendations will then be incorporated into the final report.

Summary of Next Steps:

- The County will host **two public meetings in April**, offering **four total opportunities to participate** (two in-person and two virtual) where attendees can hear presentations and ask questions.
- A **technical survey** will be available from March 30-April 19 by the consultant to collect additional feedback on the preliminary recommendations.
- In May, the Task Force will receive a **draft report** for review ahead of their final meeting.
- The Task Force will hold its **final meeting in June**, where members will take a **final vote on the report**.
- Any edits made during that meeting will be incorporated into the **final report**.

Element	Section Reference	Recommendation #	Preliminary Recommendation from PSET Discussions	NTTF PSET Meeting Date	NTTF Recommendations Meeting Date
Creating Another NT District	Section 125.0.B	1	Maintain the original petitioner's ability to expand or restrict a New Town district *	September 30, 2025	January 27, 2026/February 17, 2026
PDP/CSP/FDP Structure	Section 125.0.	2	Maintain its current overall structure, but seek to simplify the approval and development processes within New Town zoning district.	November 18, 2025	February 17, 2026
		3	Standardize requirements by land use types across the FDPs *	November 18, 2025	February 17, 2026
		4	Remove CSP's as a step in the development process *	November 18, 2025	February 17, 2026
		5	Consolidate the FDPs and their requirements to create a table of permitted uses by area	November 18, 2025	February 17, 2026
		6	Expand the types of uses that can be approved administratively through DPZ *	November 18, 2025	February 17, 2026
		7	Identify most effective opportunities for public engagement and maintain them as a priority throughout the development process *	November 18, 2025	February 17, 2026
		Defining Credited Open Space	Section 125.0.A.8.e	8	Define open space in the New Town Zoning District to provide greater clarity of uses and align with other county zoning district definitions *
9	Maintain the current definition of open space in Section 125.0.A.8.e. *			September 30, 2025	February 17, 2026
10	Maintain required 36% open space			September 30, 2025	February 17, 2026
11	Ensure permanent protection of currently established credited open space areas *			September 30, 2025	February 17, 2026
Apartments Definition	Section 125.0.5.b.	12	Adjust the definition of apartments to align with other county zoning district definitions *	November 18, 2025	February 17, 2026
		13	Create a new land use category for single family attached housing types	November 18, 2025	February 17, 2026
		14	Create a new land use category for diverse housing types, including missing middle housing types *	November 18, 2025	February 17, 2026

Original Petitioner	Section 125.0.F.1	15	Remove the role of original petitioner to amend commercial FDPs	December 9, 2025	February 17, 2026
		16	The county should review the potential for the Planning Board or another entity to take up the role of original petitioner *	December 9, 2025	February 17, 2026
Downtown and Village Center Process Simplification	Section 125.0.E, H, I (downtown), Section 125.0.J (major VC), 125.0.K (minor VC)	17	Simplify the development process for Village Center Redevelopment *	November 18, 2025	February 17, 2026
		18	Simplify the development process for Downtown Columbia redevelopment *	November 18, 2025	February 17, 2026
		19	Reduce the number of public meetings required for redevelopment processes *	November 18, 2025	February 17, 2026
Density Cap Requirements	Section 125.0.A.4	20	Maintain the density cap of 2.5 as is	October 28, 2025	March 24, 2026
		21	Consider excluding village centers from the New Town wide density cap	October 28, 2025	March 24, 2026
Land use Percentage Requirements	Section 125.0.A.8	22	Evaluate and consider adjusting the land use percentage requirements, outside of open space uses, in order to accommodate more diverse housing types	October 28, 2025	March 24, 2026
Moderate Income Housing Unit (MIHU) Requirements	Title 13 Subtitle 402	23	Encourage diversity of housing types throughout the New Town district	October 28, 2025	March 24, 2026
		24	Incentivize, rather than require, the provision of MIHUs	October 28, 2025	March 24, 2026
		25	Maintain the existing exemption from MIHUs in New Town.	October 28, 2025	March 24, 2026
Expansion of Uses, Materials, and Design Guidance	Section 125.0.	26	Evaluate the expansion of the Design Advisory Panel role to review projects in New Town	December 9, 2025	March 24, 2026
		27	Explore the creation of pattern books to incentivize the use of modern and sustainable building materials	December 9, 2025	March 24, 2026
		28	Incentivize and encourage universal design and accessibility in New Town zoning	December 9, 2025	March 24, 2026

* Task Force to revisit recommendation for further discussion after the Public Meetings.