

Thank you for allowing public feedback for the creation of the Unified Development Ordinance. I am really excited that we will have some policies in place in the future that will address some community concerns.

I would like to see more protection of our natural environment, especially in areas where there are native plant communities, mature trees, and active wildlife. Fragmentation of land is making it more and more difficult for local wildlife to find food, move from one natural area to another, and find enough space to care for their offspring. We can help them by maintaining natural areas between housing developments. To butt them up next to each other doesn't allow animals to safely move through. They have to cross over roads or enter people's back yards where they are often treated as a threat or a pest.

Natural areas also mitigate floodwaters due to our native plants and trees because of their extensive root systems. A mature tree with thirty-inch diameter can take up 300 gallons of water and meadows are like natural sponges taking up thousands of gallons of water, thanks to plants like goldenrod which have root systems that grow 11ft deep. Leaving natural areas will ensure that water is filtered into groundwater, without the need of building expensive detention basins or additional infrastructure, and it costs nothing to leave these areas as they are. This will reduce pressure on our existing stormwater systems and reduce flooding in these new neighborhoods that are being built, as well as to our current neighborhoods. Additionally massive storms, like the recent Hurricane Helene, are causing a lot of damage and natural areas can help reduce the flood severity of these storms.

Trees are also known for cooling our environment, cleaning our air and water through evapotranspiration. To see so many being ripped down as if they are nothing more than an obstacle is heartbreaking, especially during a time of climate crisis as global warming is on the rise which is why storms are becoming more and more severe. Leaving native plants is also critical to the survival of many pollinator species (bees, bats, butterflies, and hummingbirds), which are in severe decline due to a lack of native plants within their flight range. Humans need pollinators if we want food in our future. Birds also need a lot of food to survive migration and brood new offspring every year. Without access to the seeds in native meadows or the insects those meadows attract how will they survive? Thank you for your consideration of our community concerns and I look forward to seeing the new Unified Development Ordinance when it is completed.