

I support the proposed RP–Rural Preservation district, but the final UDO should expressly allow a Rural Retreat to operate with agriculture, agritourism, livestock, and agricultural structures.

The current draft creates a conflict. Agriculture, agritourism, and Rural Retreat are permitted in RP, yet the Rural Retreat definition excludes “a farm engaged in agriculture as defined by state law.” Article 7 also appears to limit an RP property to one principal use.

These provisions could force owners to choose between rural lodging and raising sheep, cattle, donkeys, chickens, or other farm animals. They could also restrict pastures, livestock barns, farm demonstrations, and other agritourism activities.

These uses should be compatible. Livestock, pasture, barns, and agritourism preserve rural character, generate agricultural income, maintain open land, and support small farms. They are more consistent with Rural Preservation than residential subdivision or intensive commercial development.

Please revise the UDO to:

1. Allow agriculture, agritourism, customary livestock, pastures, and agricultural structures with a Rural Retreat.
2. Allow Agriculture, Agritourism, Rural Retreat, and an approved Event Venue to coexist on the same RP parcel.
3. Confirm that multiple lodging cabins on one parcel may collectively constitute one Rural Retreat.
4. Confirm that livestock barns, fencing, shelters, feed-storage buildings, and similar structures are permitted agricultural structures and not separate principal uses.
5. Distinguish customary farm animals from commercial kennels, animal boarding, and concentrated animal-feeding operations.

Suggested definition:

“Rural Retreat: A facility providing a rural setting in which lodging, camping or glamping, conferences, banquet facilities, recreational amenities, and meeting or event facilities may be provided. A Rural Retreat may include multiple lodging structures on the same parcel. Agriculture, agritourism, customary livestock keeping, pasture, and agricultural structures may operate as principal or accessory uses with a Rural Retreat.”

Suggested RP provision:

“Agriculture, agritourism, customary livestock keeping, Rural Retreat, and conditionally approved Event Venue uses may coexist on the same lot. Agricultural structures shall not be treated as additional principal uses.”

These changes would protect rural businesses, support working farms, and advance Knox County’s goal of preserving rural character. RP zoning should encourage compatible farming, agritourism, and rural lodging—not make them mutually exclusive.

Sincerely,

Kevin R.