



RETAIL TRANSITIONAL MIXED-USE
DESIGN STANDARDS

DECEMBER 3, 2019

Section 1: Purpose

Retail land uses are experiencing significant change throughout the country as a result of online commerce. “Big box” retailers across the country are under financial pressure to dramatically change their business strategies in order to survive, and many have been forced to close their doors. The City of Watauga (the “City”) has a significant concentration of big box retail land uses along the east side of SH 377 accompanied by fast food and sit-down restaurants and small retail strip centers. The City is proactively anticipating the unfortunate but inevitable continued decline of big box retail uses along SH 377 by adopting a new land use category entitled Retail Transitional Mixed-Use (“RT-MU”). While nothing changes in this area as long as retail tenants continue to operate, the City has developed the RT-MU land use to accommodate future redevelopment opportunities in this area in a manner that not only reflects the community’s vision for improving quality of life and increasing property values, but to also capitalize on emerging mixed use markets that will ensure the continued vitality of the community.

The RT-MU district is meant to accommodate and encourage the redevelopment of existing big box and strip center uses on SH 377 into individual mixed-use developments that provide for vehicular and pedestrian connectivity while allowing for an iterative pattern of development as opportunities arise. This redevelopment will feature new northern and southern gateways to help define the corridor and the accompanying land uses. In addition, these improvements will provide a new “move up” opportunity for residents and an urban living product that will attract more residents that desire the non-traditional single-family housing. The RT-MU district is envisioned to accommodate a mix of uses that create a regional destination for residents and visitors with its own unique and clear identity.

The district is designed to be pedestrian friendly, but still able to accommodate significant vehicular traffic. Development will be oriented to existing or planned streets with pedestrian amenities, such as wide sidewalks, street tree cutouts, pedestrian-scale lighting, and street furnishings. The RT-MU district is meant to provide flexibility in the siting and design of new developments and redevelopment to anticipate changes in the marketplace.

Neighborhood-serving retail uses are to be strategically integrated with new high quality, high value residential uses. These areas will improve the current transition between commercial and residential uses east of the 377 corridor by providing a regional destination that is safe and inviting to attract new shoppers and residents to the City.

The RT-MU land use category provides an opportunity for well-planned, high value, medium and higher density residential uses in the new mixed-use areas as big box uses are vacated. Quality is maintained by enforcing strict but flexible design standards that encourage adaptive reuse of big box uses where feasible.

Creative placemaking envisioned in the RT-MU area will assure the attractiveness and financial success of the corridor defined by the northern and southern gateways by utilizing design standards that emphasize public space, sidewalks and connectivity throughout the RT-MU. The mix of uses will enhance active street life, increase the vitality of businesses, support stable and attractive neighborhoods, and reduce vehicular traffic. Additionally, redevelopment will be encouraged across properties with existing uses that are no longer relevant to the marketplace,

stimulating new market driven growth in the City. Bundling small, adjacent parcels into unified projects will help establish continuity of use and ultimately create a natural growth between the northern and southern gateways.

Finally, the RT-MU will function as new economic centers to ultimately replace existing big box retailers in order to adapt to a changing retail market. The RT-MU will encourage creativity in property design and landscape while minimizing negative impact to existing development and enhancing the character of the area.

The following uses are provided as a prelude to amending the Zoning Ordinance to incorporate the RT-MU use as zone change applications are submitted.

Section 2: Uses

A. General Permitted Uses

A lot or building may be used for one or more of the following by-right permitted uses.

- Retail, restaurant, and related uses
- Retail commercial sales, excluding drive-through facilities
- Personal service businesses
- Restaurants and other food or beverage establishments, excluding drive through facilities
- Professional, administrative, medical and business offices.
- City administrative uses, post offices, community centers, and libraries
- Financial institutions, excluding drive-through facilities
- Hotels, bed and breakfast facilities, convention centers, meeting space, and banquet facilities
- Galleries and museums.
- Theaters.
- Day care centers.
- Studios for dance, music, fitness, art, or photography
- Attached single-family townhomes
- Two and three family housing
- Multifamily residential provided all dwelling units are located on the second floor and above
- Civic open space uses, and plazas
- Structured parking

B. Specific Uses

A lot and/or building may be used for one or more of the following specific uses, in conjunction with a permitted use, provided special use approval is received in accordance with the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance and all standards of the RT-MU district is met.

- Amusement center indoor. Ex. bowling alley, racquet sports, and health club

- Bar, tavern, or nightclub
- Amusement center (outdoor)
- Community center
- Farmers market, community garden

C. Prohibited Uses

The following uses, as well as any use not specifically permitted, are prohibited.

- Drive-up facilities associated with any allowed commercial use
- Self-storage facilities none or climate controlled
- Thrift stores, second-hand stores and pawnshops
- Adult entertainment and sexually oriented business
- Automobile or other vehicle sales, service, or repair
- Automated fueling centers, bulk fuel dealers, gas stations
- Motor vehicle sales, service or repair businesses
- Sales of manufactured and modular homes
- Hookah lounges
- Vape bars
- Veterinary clinics with outdoor kennels
- Garden style apartments

Section 3: General Design Guidelines

The purpose of this Section is to establish minimum performance guidelines for any proposed RT-MU project which contains land uses allowed in the district. In order to protect residents within and adjacent to the proposed development, and provide for reasonable harmony between residents with residential interests and businesses with commercial interests, no project shall be approved in a RT-MU district unless the design of the project has considered and satisfactorily addressed, in addition to all other applicable regulations within code and criteria, the following items:

A. Noise

- 1) Retail/commercial uses shall be designed and operated, and hours of operation limited where appropriate, so that neighboring residents (either within or adjacent to the project) are not exposed to offensive noise, especially from traffic or late-night activity.
- 2) Common walls between residential and non-residential uses shall be constructed to minimize the transmission of noise and vibration.

B. Security

- 1) Residential units shall be designed to ensure the personal security of residents, including, but not limited to, the provision of separate and secured entrances and exits that are directly accessible to secured parking areas.

- 2) Non-residential and residential uses located on the same floor shall not use common entrance hallways or common balconies, which may compromise the residential living conditions.
- 3) Parking spaces for non-residential and residential uses shall, be specifically designated by posting, pavement marking, and/or physical separation.

C. Lighting

- 1) Parking areas shall provide sufficient illumination for access and security purposes.
- 2) Light fixtures on buildings and light poles in parking areas shall not exceed twenty-five (25) feet in height and shall be oriented in such a way as to not shine onto adjoining properties. Such lighting shall not blink, flash, oscillate, or be of unusually high intensity of brightness. Downward facing and shielded lighting is required for all projects.

D. Odors, Dust, Vibration

- 1) No commercial or industrial use shall be permitted to expose residents, either within or adjacent to the site, to offensive odors, noxious fumes, dust, electrical interference, and/or vibration.

E. Refuse Storage and Location.

- 1) Residential units shall be provided with refuse storage containers separate from that used by the commercial or industrial uses. They shall be clearly marked for residential use only and their use by non-residential uses is prohibited.

F. Parking Spaces and Traffic Lanes.

- 1) Parking places and traffic lanes for both residential and non-residential uses must be available either on site or elsewhere in the vicinity of the project as they may be allowed pursuant to other sections of code.
- 2) To the extent possible, pedestrian and vehicular access for the project shall be shared by all of the proposed uses.

Section 4: General Requirements

A. Concept Master Plan

- 1) Any zone change application within the RTMU shall be accommodated by a Concept Master Plan
- 2) Any development of any size on one or more contiguous parcels or lots, whether vacant or not, where the uses are or will be mixed requires approval of a Concept Master Plan.
- 3) No minimum sized parcel is necessarily required if it is found that the development meets the performance standards and the approval criteria.
- 4) Concept Master Plans shall meet the following requirements:
 - i. Shall be prepared when any property is initially proposed for subdivision or land development.

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- ii. Subdivided properties that are intended to be developed at a later date shall be subject to this initial Concept Master Plan.
- iii. Shall show proposed buildings, land uses, lots, streets, and open space for the entire tract and shall be consistent with the municipal Subdivision and Zoning Ordinance.

B. Phasing

- 1) Property development is permitted to be done in phases if desired. However, any proposed subdivision or land development of a property or portion of a property must be consistent with the Concept Master Plan. If a proposed subdivision or land development is not consistent with the Concept Master Plan, the approved Concept Master Plan as a whole may be revised, provided the following requirements are met:
 - i. The Concept Master Plan complies with all current RT-MU requirements.
 - ii. All owners of land within the original Concept Master Plan development area, whose property is affected by the revised Concept Master Plan, approve the revisions to the Concept Master Plan that affect their properties.
 - iii. The revised Concept Master Plan is approved by the municipal governing body.

C. Other Plan Requirements.

- 1) Concept Master Plan shall be accompanied by architectural drawings, such as elevations, perspective drawings, and cross-sections, which shall be enumerated in the Zoning Ordinance.
- 2) All development in the RT-MU district shall be served by public sewer and public water facilities with accompanying dedicated easements.
- 3) Land area proposed for development shall be in one ownership or shall be subject to a joint application filed by every owner of the land area proposed for development, under single direction, using one overall Concept Master Plan and complying with all requirements of the RT-MU district.
- 4) Common open space, plaza areas, and other common facilities shall meet the ownership and maintenance regulations of Code of Ordinance for the City. Required usable civic common area and open plaza areas may be permanently deed restricted from future development.
- 5) Tree mitigation requirements must be in accordance with the City code.

Section 5: Dimensional Requirements

RT-MU developments shall meet the following dimensional requirements:

A. Lot Area Requirements

- 1) Minimum Net Lot Area for all multi-family and non-residential uses:
 - i. No minimum lot size; however, all lots must be consistent with the Concept Master Plan.
- 2) Minimum Net Lot Area for townhouses and duplexes:
 - i. 2,000 square feet
- 3) Minimum Net Lot Area for single-family detached homes:

- i. 5,000 square feet

B. Minimum Lot Width

- 1) For urban dwelling and non-residential uses:
 - i. No minimum lot width; however, all lots must be consistent with the Concept Master Plan.
- 2) For townhouses and duplex:
 - i. 20 feet
- 3) For single-family detached homes:
 - i. 50 feet

C. Minimum Building Setback

- 1) When no plaza is between the building and the street:
 - i. From street curblines, portions of buildings up to 40 feet in height, provided buildings are not located within the street legal right-of-way line:
 - a) Arterial Streets:
 - 1) 20 feet
 - b) All Other Streets:
 - 1) 12 feet
 - i. From street curblines, any portions of buildings from 40 to 75 feet in height:
 - a) 25 feet
 - ii. Maximum Building Setback from street curblines for 60% or more of the front façade of the ground floor level of buildings (these standards do not apply to structured parking garages):
 - a) Arterial Streets:
 - 1) 35 feet
 - b) All Other Streets:
 - 1) 25 feet
- b. Where a plaza is between the building and the street, the Minimum and Maximum Building Setback from street curblines shall be the depth of the plaza.
- c. Minimum Building Setback from property lines not abutting streets:
 - i. Portions of buildings sharing a party wall:
 - a) 0 feet
 - ii. Portions of buildings not sharing a party wall, up to 40 feet in height:
 - a) 10 feet
 - iii. Portions of buildings not sharing a party wall, from 40 to 75 feet in height:
 - a) 20 feet
- d. Minimum setback between any portions of separate buildings not sharing a party wall:
 - i. Portions of buildings up to 40 feet in height:
 - a) 20 feet
 - ii. Portions of buildings from 40 to 75 feet in height:
 - a) 40 feet

- e. Minimum building and parking setback from abutting residential properties that are not part of the proposed RT-MU:
 - i. 40 feet
 - f. Minimum surface parking area setback from street ultimate right-of-way lines and property lines:
 - i. 10 feet
- D. Maximum Building Height:
- 1) 75 feet or 6 stories, whichever is less
- E. Maximum Impervious Coverage:
- 1) 85%; or
 - 2) The City Council upon special consideration, circumstances, qualifications and specific approval may make an exception
- F. Open Space Dedication:
- 1) 15%; or
 - 2) The City Council upon special consideration, circumstances, qualifications and specific approval may make an exception
- G. Maximum Residential Use within RT-MU:
- 1) 30%; or
 - 2) The City Council upon special consideration, circumstances, qualifications and specific approval may make an exception

Section 6: Design Standards

- A. General Layout
- 1) All development within the RT-MU district shall comply with the following design standards:
 - i. Various land uses shall be laid out and spaced to make walking from one land use to any other land uses as easy as possible.
 - ii. Retail uses shall be located as physically close to as many of the following on and off-site features as possible: existing retail areas, existing collector or higher classification streets, and proposed plaza areas.
 - iii. Single-use residential buildings, when proposed, shall be located and designed to provide a transition between abutting off-site residential zoning districts, when they exist, and the non-residential uses in the RT-MU district.
- B. Streets
- 1) All RT-MU developments shall be laid out with streets, in accordance with the following standards:
 - i. Streets shall be laid out to create blocks, and blocks shall not exceed 500 feet in length before being interrupted by a street intersection, unless the reuse of existing buildings longer than 500 feet or the presence of unique

barriers, such as a creek or a grade, preclude the creation of a street intersection. In such cases, blocks shall be as small as feasible. Alley and driveway intersections shall not be used to meet the block length requirement.

- ii. Streets shall be interconnected with each other and with streets on abutting properties in a grid or modified grid pattern.
- iii. Streets shall be extended to abutting properties in logical locations, as determined by the City Council. When warranted by unique circumstances, the City Council may allow driveways to be used instead of streets for these connections, provided access for the driveway is guaranteed to the abutting property and appropriate cross access easements are illustrated on the final plat submittal.
- iv. On tracts of five (5) acres or more, new streets within an RT-MU development shall have a planned street connectivity to adjoining uses and depicted as such on the Concept Master Plan.
- v. At least every 500 linear feet, blocks shall include public pedestrian connections through the block between generally parallel streets, unless the reuse of existing buildings longer than 500 feet or the presence of unique barriers, such as grade preclude the creation of a pedestrian connection.

C. Building Design Standards

1) Building Orientation and Entrances

- i. Front facades of buildings shall be oriented towards existing and proposed streets, with an everyday entrance in the front façade. Buildings with multiple front facades shall have entrances in each front façade, corner entrances, or, if permitted by the City Council, entrances in only some of the front facades.
- ii. All primary building entrances shall be accentuated. Permitted entrance accents may include: recessed, protruding, canopy, portico, or overhang.
- iii. Loading doors, service doors, and loading docks shall not be located in any façade facing a street or any portion of a façade within 35 feet of a street.

D. Walls and Windows

- 1) Blank walls shall not be permitted along any exterior wall facing a street. Walls in these locations shall comprise a minimum of 35% window area and a maximum of 75% window area, with windows interspersed across the façade.
- 2) Ground floor facades of retail, restaurant, and related uses facing a street or passenger train station shall comprise a minimum of 50% clear window area, with windows providing views of display areas or the inside of the building. These ground floor windows shall begin between 12 to 24 inches above ground level and shall end above 86 inches above ground level.
- 3) Smoked, reflective, or black glass in windows is prohibited.
- 4) Walls or portions of walls where windows are not provided shall have architectural treatments designed to break up the bulk of the wall, including at least four of the following treatments: masonry but not flat concrete block; concrete or masonry

plinth at the base of the wall; belt courses of a different texture or color; projecting cornice; projecting metal canopy; decorative tilework; trellis containing planting; medallions; opaque or translucent glass; artwork; vertical/ horizontal articulation; lighting fixtures; or a similar architectural element not listed above, as approved by the municipal governing body.

E. Roofs

- 1) Building ridgelines or roof planes facing a street, parking area, or walking area must be interrupted at least once every one hundred (100) feet by the inclusion of at least two of the following: a gable, a dormer, a vertical change of five (5) feet or more, a tower, a dome, a barrel vault, a projecting cornice, an articulated parapet of five (5) feet or more, or the inclusion of a similar architectural feature.
- 2) Buildings shall use parapets or mansard type roof styles to conceal flat roofs, elevator and stair shafts, large vents, and rooftop equipment such as HVAC units along all roof edges.

F. Building Massing

- 1) Buildings shall be designed to achieve a fine-grained texture by dividing large facades into the appearance of several sections or smaller buildings to avoid the appearance of a large, monotonous building mass.
- 2) Buildings must have at least a 3-foot break in depth in all front facades for every one hundred (100) feet of continuous façade. Such breaks may be met through the use of bay windows, porches, porticos, building extensions, building recesses, balconies, towers, and other architectural treatments.
- 3) In addition to the required 3 foot break, building facades of two hundred (200) feet or more facing a street, surface parking lot, passenger train station, or walking area shall include design elements that will break up the façade, such as awnings, porches, canopies, towers, balconies, bays, gables, changes in materials, changes in façade treatments, etc.

Section 7: Landscaping requirements:

Refer to Watauga Code of Ordinances, Chapter 115 – Zoning, Article V. Development Controls Section 115-117

Section 8: Parking Design Standards

A. Surface Parking

- 1) Surface parking lots shall be located to the rear of principal buildings or to the side. Surface parking shall not be located between a building and a street.
- 2) Surface parking shall not extend more than 70 feet in width along any street without being interrupted with a principal building.
- 3) Parking lots visible from a street shall be continuously screened by a 3-foot-high wall/fence or hedge. Parking lots adjacent to a residential use shall be continuously

screened by a 6-foothigh wall/fence or hedge. Screening shall also include street trees.

- 4) Surface parking lots within a block in an RT-MU development shall be interconnected by access driveways.
 - 5) Each lot created within an RT-MU development shall provide cross-access easements for its parking areas and access driveways guaranteeing access to adjacent lots within the same block that are zoned RT-MU. Interconnections shall be logically placed and easily identifiable to ensure convenient traffic flow.
- B. Structured Parking
- 1) Except for their pedestrian and vehicular entrances, structured parking garages, or structured parking within a principal building, that is located within fifty (50) feet of a street curblin at street level shall have office, entertainment, institutional, apartment lobby, retail, restaurant, or a related use in occupied space along 70% of the first floor of the structured parking that faces the street.
 - 2) Structured parking shall have design treatments such as colonnades, arcades, awnings, landscaping, street furniture, and other public amenities to create the appearance of an occupied building. Blank walls are not permitted.
 - 3) Cars shall be generally visually screened from the street through features such as grills, lattices, mock windows, louvers, false facades, etc. Such screening shall be in keeping with the rest of the building's architectural style and materials.
- C. Access to Off-Street Parking.
- 1) When feasible, vehicular access to off-street parking facilities shall be from a street, alley, or driveway that has no retail or related uses facing this street or alley. When this is not feasible, access shall be located as far from retail or related uses' front facades as possible.
- D. Multifamily Parking
- 1) Multifamily land uses shall have sufficient parking for its land use