



Frequently Asked Questions: Small Area Plans (Motion 2018-1 and 2018-2) July 3, 2018

What is a Small Area Plan?

The Town adopted three Small Area Plans ([Monroe Road in 2014](#), [Entertainment District in 2014](#), and [E. John/Outer Loop in 2017](#)), which show concepts for possible future development, as well as transportation connectivity (pedestrian and bicycle paths, streets, transit, etc.). Each Small Area Plan has its own unique policies and actions to follow during consideration of development proposals. The Small Area Plans are policy documents that define the vision, but have no enforcement capability.

What is a [Small Area Plan Overlay](#)?

While the Small Area Plans define the vision, an overlay gives the Town the ability to enforce the requirements, making sure developers comply with the vision. It's a proactive measure to ensure the Small Area Plans are followed, and developers cannot come in and do whatever they want. For example, the downtown overlay (which has been in place nearly 30 years) has protected and preserved our downtown.

What is the UDO?

The purpose of the [Unified Development Ordinance](#), or UDO, is to create a comprehensive set of land development standards and regulations consistent with Matthews' "Our Town, Our Vision", the Matthews Land Use Plan, and other community development policies. The UDO includes provisions for zoning, subdivision, floodplain management, post construction storm water design, and minimum housing standards. The UDO was adopted by the Matthews Board of Commissioners on December 9, 2013, and went into effect as of April 1, 2014. As amendments are proposed, they go through a public hearing and review process prior to approval.

What was the process to approve these Small Area Plans?

The process of developing a Small Area Plan involves a detailed study and lengthy public involvement – carried out by our Town Planning staff.

The first step is to identify the physical characteristics of the study area. For E. John Street, students from Winthrop University assisted with initial research on physical conditions of the area (soil, creek, land uses, etc.).

Next, residents and stakeholder groups provide their suggestions on what future land uses and public infrastructure they envision for the area.

Another important factor in the process is to explore what is necessary to allow the best development potential – for example: more street network, more walking paths, what types of land uses are wanted or not at subareas within the study area (not manufacturing/trucking uses up against established residential neighborhoods, etc.).

The Small Area Plan then goes through a public hearing, review by the Planning Board and then must be approved by the Board of Commissioners.

If these have already been approved, what’s the purpose of the public hearing?

The Small Area Plans have been approved, but adding an overlay requires a public hearing and Board approval.

Why is the town proposing development in this area? This is close to my backyard, and I’d like it to remain undeveloped.

The Town is not proposing any development. Though residents may want neighboring land to remain untouched, that is up to the property owners. However, the purpose of the Small Area Plan is to allow for the best possible use of the land. The Small Area Plans were developed after significant study and input from residents.

Is the Town aware of any development plans for these areas?

The Town has not received any development plans for approval for any parcels within the Small Area Plan locations.

What if I don’t like the Small Area Plans? Is there an opportunity to change them before adding an overlay?

At this time, the Small Area Plans will not be revised before adding the overlay. It is possible for the Board to revise the Small Area Plans in the future. That would include another public involvement process.

What if a developer wants to do something different within the Small Area Plan? Can the Town make a change to allow this?

Yes, that would require the developer to petition the Board for a revision to the Small Area Plan. That would go before the Planning Board and would involve a public hearing process, and would ultimately need to be approved by the Board of Commissioners.

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