

NOTICE

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Planning & Growth Management

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Charles County
Government

Department of
Planning & Growth
Management

Peter Aluotto
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Required Open Space Calculation for Cluster Subdivisions Effective April 11, 2016

The purpose of a cluster subdivision is to preserve open space by clustering the number of lots ordinarily achievable over the entire parcel, onto a much smaller portion of the site as prescribed by Figure XIV-1 of the Charles County Zoning Ordinance. Preserving the number of lots is achieved by reducing the size of the lots, hence the term “clustering.” Historically, the County’s method of calculating open space has been to multiply the size of the entire parcel by the percentage shown in the table. This number, when subtracted from the entire parcel size, results in the net buildable area upon which the residential lots may be created. Using this methodology, the amount of open space varies directly with the size of the original parcel, i.e. the larger the original parcel; the more open space is achieved. This is wholly consistent with Comprehensive Plan goals and policies that speak to the overall preservation of open space county-wide.

Previously, an alternative methodology had been introduced which calculates open space by multiplying the number of lots by the minimum allowable lot size and again by the percentage found in Figure XIV-1 of the Zoning Code. Using this methodology, the amount of open space varies not with the size of the original parcel, but inversely varies with the number of lots created, i.e. the fewer lots created, the less open space. The effect of this calculation is to reduce the amount of total open space by increasing lot sizes. This effectively transfers public open space to private open space, which for Comprehensive Plan purposes, does not count toward the County’s open space goals.

Therefore, staff shall discontinue using the alternative method of calculation for all cluster subdivisions submitted after April 11, 2016. However, in cases where the majority of lots within a proposed subdivision are Cluster design, but Conventional lots are also proposed/included, the acreage of the Conventional lots may be subtracted from the gross tract area in order to arrive at a net tract area upon which the open space requirement, respective to the zone in which the development is being proposed, may be calculated. In no case shall the required Cluster open space be calculated on less than the minimum tract size required for a Cluster subdivision in the respective zone.

Please contact Heather Kelley, Planner III, at 301-645-0592 or kelleyh@charlescountymd.gov for any questions or clarifications regarding this determination.

Those citizens with special needs, please contact the Charles County Department of Planning and Growth Management, voice phone number (301)645-0540 or Maryland Relay Service TDD 1-800-735-2258.