

## **Planning and Zoning Subcommittee:**

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# **Planning and Zoning Subcommittee: Town of Ellettsville & Richland Township Reorganization**

## **Planning and Zoning Subcommittee Report to Reorganization Committee**

The Planning and Zoning Subcommittee recommends reorganization for several reasons. First, reorganization will unify planning and land use authority across the entirety of the reorganized jurisdiction, creating a consistent and coordinated approach to growth, development, infrastructure planning, and community character. Second, reorganization ensures that development decisions affecting residents of both Ellettsville and Richland Township will be overseen by a single local authority directly accountable to the voters of the reorganized town. Third, the consolidation of planning and zoning authority promotes administrative efficiency, eliminates duplication, and provides greater clarity and predictability for property owners, developers, and residents.

### **Administration of Planning and Zoning Functions**

The Subcommittee recommends that planning and land use functions throughout the Reorganized Town of Ellettsville be administered by the Town of Ellettsville Planning Department under the leadership of the current Planning Director.

The Planning Director should continue to oversee:

- Administration and enforcement of the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO);
- Subdivision control and development plan review;
- Staff support for the Plan Commission and Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA);
- Long-range planning initiatives; and
- Zoning compliance and permitting functions.

Recognizing the anticipated increase in workload associated with the expansion of jurisdiction to include all of Richland Township, the Subcommittee further recommends the hiring of at least one (1) additional professional planning staff member to support

plan review, permitting, inspection coordination, and long-range planning responsibilities.

The Subcommittee believes this staffing approach provides continuity of leadership, preserves institutional knowledge, and ensures adequate administrative capacity for the reorganized jurisdiction.

## **Plan Commission and Board of Zoning Appeals**

The Subcommittee recommends that the Reorganized Town continue to utilize an Advisory Plan Commission (“APC”) and an Advisory Board of Zoning Appeals (“BZA”) pursuant to Ind. Code §§ 36-7-4-207 and 36-7-4-902.

### **Membership Structure**

The Subcommittee recommends:

- Expanding the membership of the Plan Commission by two (2) additional seats; and
- Expanding the membership of the Board of Zoning Appeals by two (2) additional seats.

This expansion is recommended to ensure broader geographic representation across the reorganized jurisdiction, including areas formerly located outside the Town limits.

The Subcommittee further understands that, if reorganization is approved, the State of Indiana will determine final legislative voting districts and related apportionment matters in accordance with applicable law. Accordingly, while the Subcommittee recommends geographic representation across the reorganized jurisdiction, final district configuration and statutory compliance will be subject to state requirements.

To the extent permitted by law, the Subcommittee recommends that appointments to the APC and BZA reflect geographic diversity within the Reorganized Town and include representation from both the Town District and the Rural District.

Members of the APC and BZA shall continue to serve without compensation unless otherwise determined by ordinance of the Town Council.

## **Town District and Rural District**

The Subcommittee recommends the establishment of two service districts within the Reorganized Town:

- A “Town District,” and
- A “Rural District.”

The purpose of creating service districts is to:

- Align service levels with taxation;
- Allow phased extension of municipal-level services;
- Preserve rural character where appropriate; and
- Provide flexibility in infrastructure planning and capital investment.

### **Initial Classification**

The Subcommittee recommends that:

- Property located within the current corporate boundaries of the Town of Ellettsville as of the Effective Date be classified as part of the Town District.
- Property located outside the current Town boundaries but within Richland Township be classified as part of the Rural District upon the Effective Date.

There is no intent to reclassify property currently within the Town boundaries into the Rural District.

## **Governance of the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO)**

The Subcommittee recommends that the Town of Ellettsville Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) govern all territory within the Reorganized Town, including both the Town District and the Rural District.

However, the Subcommittee recognizes the importance of preserving agricultural uses and rural character within the Rural District. Accordingly, the Subcommittee recommends that:

- Agricultural zoning protections be maintained;
- “Right to farm” principles be incorporated into development standards where appropriate; and

- Zoning districts within the Rural District reflect existing development patterns and infrastructure availability.

The UDO may contain differentiated development standards applicable to the Town District and the Rural District to reflect differences in service levels, density, infrastructure, and character.

## **Transition of Current Developments**

The Subcommittee recommends the following transition approach:

- Developments that have received approval under the Monroe County Unified Development Ordinance prior to the Effective Date shall be permitted to proceed under the approvals and standards in place at the time of approval.
- In-progress developments seeking material modifications after the Effective Date shall be subject to review under the Town of Ellettsville UDO.
- New development applications submitted after the Effective Date shall be governed by the Town of Ellettsville UDO.

This approach protects vested rights while ensuring future development occurs under a unified regulatory framework.

## **Reclassification from Rural District to Town District**

The Subcommittee recommends that property initially classified within the Rural District may be reclassified to the Town District upon satisfaction of defined criteria established by ordinance.

Reclassification may be triggered by one or more of the following:

1. Availability of municipal utilities, including water and wastewater service;
2. Extension of municipal infrastructure or services;
3. Annexation-like urbanization in character and density;
4. Petition by property owners requesting Town-level services;
5. Adoption of a rezoning that is consistent with Town District intensity standards; or
6. Periodic review conducted by the Town Council and Plan Commission.

The Subcommittee recommends that the Town Council adopt by ordinance a formal review process, including notice and public hearing, prior to any reclassification of property from Rural District to Town District.

## **Comprehensive Plan Update**

The Subcommittee recommends that, if reorganization is approved by voters, the Town initiate an update to the existing Ellettsville Comprehensive Plan to encompass the entire Reorganized Town.

The updated Comprehensive Plan should:

- Establish a unified long-range vision for land use, transportation, infrastructure, housing, economic development, and environmental stewardship;
- Address growth management in both the Town and Rural Districts;
- Incorporate public input from residents throughout the reorganized jurisdiction;
- Provide policy guidance for future amendments to the UDO; and
- Ensure that infrastructure policies clearly define expectations regarding the extension and availability of municipal utilities, including water and wastewater services.

In conjunction with the Comprehensive Plan update, the Subcommittee further recommends that the Town undertake a comprehensive review and amendment of the Unified Development Ordinance to ensure clarity, internal consistency, and alignment with the policies of the updated Comprehensive Plan.

Specifically, the Subcommittee recommends that the UDO be amended to remove inconsistencies regarding wastewater service requirements. The current UDO contains provisions that are unclear or inconsistent concerning the use of septic systems where development is located more than three hundred (300) feet from an available sewer connection. The revised UDO should clearly state that, provided all other applicable requirements are satisfied — including approval from the Monroe County Health Department and compliance with all state and local health regulations — the use of an on-site septic system shall be permitted in lieu of connection to municipal sewer. This clarification is intended to provide predictability to property owners and developers, particularly within the Rural District, while maintaining public health and safety standards.

The Planning Department has indicated its intent to prepare updates to the Comprehensive Plan and UDO in anticipation of potential reorganization to ensure a smooth transition, regulatory clarity and policy continuity across the Reorganized Town.