

Development Standards in Rural Amsterdam/Churchill: The Basics

Several community members have been working for many months to write draft development standards that would apply to new development in the rural Amsterdam/Churchill area. The primary reason for doing this work is to protect agriculture and its lifestyle in the Amsterdam/Churchill area, while also providing opportunity for landowners to develop their land in a way that doesn't adversely impact surrounding agriculture operations. The work has been a lesson in balance, and will likely change as new people begin looking at the work. What follows is a brief summary of the highlights of this work.

The area where this applies: There has not been any adopted boundary for rural Amsterdam/Churchill, but the area where this is proposed lies outside of the existing towns of Amsterdam and Churchill. The northern boundary lies about one mile north of Cole's corner (meeting the boundary of the Manhattan Planning boundary); the southern boundary is Norris Road; the eastern boundary is approximately Highline Road and River Road; and the western boundary is generally about a mile and half west of Camp Creek Road.

Uses allowed: The development standards are designed with maximum flexibility in mind:

- All agricultural uses are exempted from any development standards;
- All other uses are considered "principle" uses, meaning they are allowed but have to meet certain standards (discussed below). There are a few exceptions to this:
 - High intensity uses (gravel pits, uses generating more than 250 trips per day, and electrical substations) will require a public hearing;
 - Bars, casinos, and any sexually-oriented businesses are prohibited.

Density of new development: A base density for new residential development is limited to one lot per 160 acres. There are some exceptions to this:

- *Clustering.* If new development is clustered, a higher density may be reached:
 - For each increment of 80 acres a landowner owns, a landowner can create one additional lot, but that lot needs to be clustered on 15% of the original parcel. For example, if a landowner owns 160 acres, they would get one development right by right. Because there are two increments of 80 acres in the total 160 acres, the landowner would also get 2 additional development rights, but those additional development rights would have to be clustered on 24 total acres. If a landowner owns 320 acres, then they automatically have 2 development rights that can be used anywhere on the property (because they have two increments of 160 acres) and they also have 4 additional development rights (because they have four increments of 80 in the total 320 acres) that must be clustered on 48 total acres.
 - *Commercial Subdivisions.* If a landowner wants to create a commercial subdivision (for example, if they want to create some lots and put a potato wholesaling operation or a

fertilizer plant on them), that commercial subdivision would be exempt from the density requirements.

- *Family Transfers, Boundary Relocations, Agricultural Exemptions, Mortgage Exemptions.* All subdivision exemptions are also exempt from the density requirements.
- *Employee Housing for Agricultural Operations.* All employee housing for agricultural operations is exempt from the density requirements.
- *Transferring Development Rights within Rural Amsterdam/Churchill.* If a landowner owns several parcels of land spread throughout the area, the development rights for those properties may be transferred from one property to another.

Standards for New Uses: In order to protect agriculture in the area, some standards apply to new residential and commercial uses:

- *Standards Protecting Canals and Ditches.* Primarily, this standard would require new development and construction adjacent to a canal or a ditch to contact the appropriate canal company or user.
- *Buffers for Agricultural Land.* A buffer of 50 feet between new houses or businesses and adjacent agricultural land will be required.
- *Protections for Watercourses and Wetlands.* A setback of 150 feet will be required for new development adjacent to Camp Creek and Godfrey Creek. A setback of 35 feet will be required for new development adjacent to any wetlands in the area.
- *Mitigation of High-Traffic Uses.* For new non-agricultural uses generating more than 60 trips per day, some road mitigation, such as widening, paving, or stop-signs, could be required.