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SENATE BILL NO. 783

Offered January 12, 2011

Prefiled December 28, 2010

A BILL to amend and reenact §§ 15.2-2223.1 and 15.2-2286.1 of the Code of Virginia, relating to zoning; clustering.

Patron—Watkins

Referred to Committee on Local Government

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That §§ 15.2-2223.1 and 15.2-2286.1 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 15.2-2223.1. Comprehensive plan to include urban development areas.

A. For purposes of this section:

"Commercial" means property devoted to usual and customary business purposes for the sale of goods and services and includes, but is not limited to, retail operations, hotels, motels and offices. "Commercial" does not include residential dwelling units, including apartments and condominiums, or agricultural or forestal production, or manufacturing, processing, assembling, storing, warehousing, or distributing.

"Commission" means the Commission on Local Government.

"Developable acreage," solely for the purposes of calculating density within the urban development area, means land that is not included in (i) existing parks, rights-of-way of arterial and collector streets, railways, and public utilities and (ii) other existing public lands and facilities.

"Population growth" means the difference in population from the next-to-latest to the latest decennial census year, based on population reported by the United States Bureau of the Census. In computing its population growth, a locality may exclude the inmate population of any new or expanded correctional facility that opened within the time period between the two censuses.

"Urban development area" means an area designated by a locality that is (i) appropriate for higher density development due to its proximity to transportation facilities, the availability of a public or community water and sewer system, or a developed area and (ii) to the extent feasible, to be used for redevelopment or infill development.

B. Every locality that has adopted zoning pursuant to Article 7 (§ 15.2-2280 et seq.) of this chapter and that (i) has a population of at least 20,000 and population growth of at least five percent or (ii) has population growth of 15 percent or more, shall, and any locality may, amend its comprehensive plan to incorporate one or more urban development areas.

1. The comprehensive plan of a locality having a population of less than 130,000 persons shall provide for urban development areas that are appropriate for development at a density on the developable acreage of at least four single-family residences, six townhouses, or 12 apartments, condominium units, or cooperative units per acre, and an authorized floor area ratio of at least 0.4 per acre for commercial development, or any proportional combination thereof.

2. The comprehensive plan of a locality having a population of 130,000 or more persons shall provide for urban development areas that are appropriate for development at a density on the developable acreage of at least eight single-family residences, 12 townhouses, or 24 apartments, condominium units, or cooperative units per acre, and an authorized floor area ratio of at least 0.8 per acre for commercial development, or any proportional combination thereof.

3. The urban development areas designated by a locality shall be sufficient to meet projected residential and commercial growth in the locality for an ensuing period of at least 10 but not more than 20 years, which may include phasing of development within the urban development areas. Where an urban development area in a county with the urban county executive form of government includes planned or existing rail transit, the planning horizon may be for an ensuing period of at least 10 but not more than 40 years. Future residential and commercial growth shall be based on official estimates of the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service of the University of Virginia or official projections of the Virginia Employment Commission or the United States Bureau of the Census.

4. The boundaries and size of each urban development area shall be reexamined and, if necessary, revised every five years in conjunction with the review of the comprehensive plan and in accordance with the most recent available population growth estimates and projections.

5. The boundaries of each urban development area shall be identified in the locality's comprehensive plan and shall be shown on future land use maps contained in such comprehensive plan.

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6. The comprehensive plan shall incorporate principles of traditional neighborhood design in the urban development area, which may include but need not be limited to (i) pedestrian-friendly road design, (ii) interconnection of new local streets with existing local streets and roads, (iii) connectivity of road and pedestrian networks, (iv) preservation of natural areas, (v) mixed-use neighborhoods, including mixed housing types, with affordable housing to meet the projected family income distributions of future residential growth, (vi) reduction of front and side yard building setbacks, and (vii) reduction of subdivision street widths and turning radii at subdivision street intersections.

7. The comprehensive plan shall describe any financial and other incentives for development in the urban development areas.

8. A portion of one or more urban development areas shall be designated as a receiving area for any transfer of development rights program established by the locality.

9. *The comprehensive plan shall provide for clustering of single-family dwellings as provided in § 15.2-2286.1.*

C. No locality that has amended its comprehensive plan in accordance with this section shall limit or prohibit development pursuant to existing zoning or shall refuse to consider any application for rezoning based solely on the fact that the property is located outside the urban development area.

D. Any locality that would be required to amend its plan pursuant to subsection B that determines that its plan accommodates growth in a manner consistent with subsection B, upon adoption of a resolution describing such accommodation and describing any financial and other incentives for development in the areas that accommodate such growth, shall not be required to further amend its plan pursuant to subsection B. Any locality that has adopted a resolution certifying compliance with subsection B prior to February 1, 2010, shall not be required to comply with this subsection until review of the locality's comprehensive plan as provided for in provision 4 of subsection B.

E. Localities shall consult with adjacent localities, as well as the relevant planning district commission and metropolitan planning organization, in establishing the appropriate size and location of urban development areas to promote orderly and efficient development of their region.

F. Any county that amends its comprehensive plan pursuant to subsection B may designate one or more urban development areas in any incorporated town within such county, if the council of the town has also amended its comprehensive plan to designate the same areas as urban development areas with at least the same density designated by the county. However, if a town has established an urban development area within its corporate boundaries, the county within which the town is located shall not include the town's projected population and commercial growth when initially determining or reexamining the size and boundary of any other urban development area within the county.

G. To the extent possible, federal, state and local transportation, housing, water and sewer facility, economic development, and other public infrastructure funding for new and expanded facilities shall be directed to the urban development area, or in the case of a locality that adopts a resolution pursuant to subsection D, to the area that accommodates growth in a manner consistent with this section.

H. Documents describing all urban development area designations, as well as any resolution adopted pursuant to subsection D, together with associated written policies, zoning provisions and other ordinances, and the capital improvement program shall be forwarded, electronically or by other means, to the Commission within 90 days of the adoption or amendment of comprehensive plans and other written policies, zoning provisions and other ordinances. The Commission shall annually report to the Governor and General Assembly the overall compliance with this section including densities achieved within each urban development area. Before preparing the initial report, the Commission shall develop an appropriate format in concert with the relevant planning district commission. Other than the documents, policies, zoning provisions and other ordinances, resolutions, and the capital improvement program forwarded by the locality, the Commission shall not impose an additional administrative burden on localities in preparing the annual report required by this subsection.

I. Any locality that becomes subject to provision 2 of subsection B shall have until July 1, 2012, to amend its comprehensive plan in accordance with this section.

J. Any locality that becomes subject to this section due to population growth shall have two years following the report of the United States Bureau of the Census made pursuant to P.L. 94-171 to amend its comprehensive plan in accordance with this section.

§ 15.2-2286.1. Provisions for clustering of single-family dwellings so as to preserve open space.

A. The provisions of this section shall apply to any county or city that had a population growth rate of 10% or more from the next-to-latest to latest decennial census year, based on population reported by the United States Bureau of the Census. However, the requirements of this section shall not apply to any such county or city that has a population density of more than 2,000 people per square mile, according to the most recent report of the United States Bureau of the Census.

B. Any such locality shall provide in its zoning or subdivision ordinances, applicable to a minimum of 40% of the unimproved land contained in residential and agricultural zoning district classifications, standards, conditions, and criteria for the clustering of single-family dwellings and the preservation of

open space developments. In establishing such standards, conditions, and criteria, the governing body may, in its discretion, include any provisions it determines appropriate to ensure quality development, preservation of open space, and compliance with its comprehensive plan and land use ordinances. However, the locality shall not include in its ordinance provisions for any of the following: (i) prohibiting extension of groundwater source systems to adjacent residential subdivisions; (ii) requiring permanent conservation areas or, as part of such conservation areas, requiring identification of slopes, healthy woodlands, the locations of species listed as endangered, threatened or of special concern, historic structures and sites, riparian zones, or requiring the applicant to provide a property resource map showing such matters in any conservation areas; (iii) requiring such conservation areas to be made permanent; (iv) requiring such conservation areas to be excluded from the calculation of density in a cluster subdivision or excluding land in such conservation areas because of prior land disturbing activities; (v) prohibiting roads, parking areas, or stormwater management areas from being located in such conservation areas; (vi) requiring as part of the zoning provisions for open space, that lots in the clustered subdivision directly abut the open space or a developed pathway providing direct access to the open space; (vii) requiring that dedications of conservation areas be contingent upon the locality approving who will own and maintain the conservation area; (viii) requiring minimums for acreage and density, or other such zoning provisions that effectively frustrate the use of cluster zoning.

The density calculation of the cluster development shall be based upon the same criteria for the property as would otherwise be permitted by applicable land use ordinances. As a locality provides for the clustering of single-family dwellings and the preservation of open space developments, it may vary provisions for such developments for each different residential zoning classification within the locality. For purposes of this section, "unimproved land" shall not include land owned or controlled by the locality, the Commonwealth or the federal government, or any instrumentality thereof or land subject to a conservation easement.

If proposals for the clustering of single-family dwellings and the preservation of open space developments comply with the locality's adopted standards, conditions, and criteria, the development and open space preservation shall be permitted by right under the local subdivision ordinance. The implementation and approval of the cluster development and open space preservation shall be done administratively by the locality's staff and without a public hearing. No local ordinance shall require that a special exception, special use, or conditional use permit be obtained for such developments. However, any such ordinance may exempt (i) developments of two acres or less and (ii) property located in an Air Installation Compatible Use Zone from the provisions of this subdivision.

C. Additionally, a locality may, at its option, provide for the clustering of single-family dwellings and the preservation of open space at a density calculation greater than the density permitted in the applicable land use ordinance. To implement and approve such increased density development, the locality may, at its option, (i) establish and provide, in its zoning or subdivision ordinances, standards, conditions, and criteria for such development, and if the proposed development complies with those standards, conditions, and criteria, it shall be permitted by right and approved administratively by the locality's staff in the same manner provided in subsection A, or (ii) approve the increased density development upon approval of a special exception, special use permit, conditional use permit, or rezoning.

D. Notwithstanding any of the requirements of this section to the contrary, any local government land use ordinance in effect as of June 1, 2004, that provides for the clustering of single-family dwellings and preservation of open space development by right in at least one residential zoning classification without requiring either a special exception, special use permit, conditional use permit, or other discretionary approval may remain in effect at the option of the locality and will be deemed to be in compliance with this section. Any other locality may adopt provisions for the clustering of single-family dwellings, following the procedures set out in this section, in its discretion.