

## Built Environmental Characteristics & Regulations Report

# Willow Run South

### Background

In February 2019, residents of the Willow Run South neighborhood in north Raleigh submitted a petition to City Council requesting consideration for a neighborhood built environmental characteristics and regulations analysis. This analysis is the first step in the potential creation of a Neighborhood Conservation Overlay District (NCOD). NCODs are zoning overlays that preserve and enhance the general quality and appearance of neighborhoods by regulating built environmental characteristics such as lot size, setbacks, residential density, building height, and vehicular surface area. NCODs generally apply more restrictive standards than base zoning districts. As stated in the citizen petition, the intent behind the request is to maintain the current built character of the area and prevent subdivision of existing lots that could result in increased density.

Per City Council's direction, Planning staff has completed an analysis of the particular built characteristic of lot size as requested by the Willow Run South residents. In addition to lot size, Planning staff also analyzed lot density, front, side, and, rear setbacks, building height, and distance between buildings. This report presents results of the analysis.





## Study Area Overview

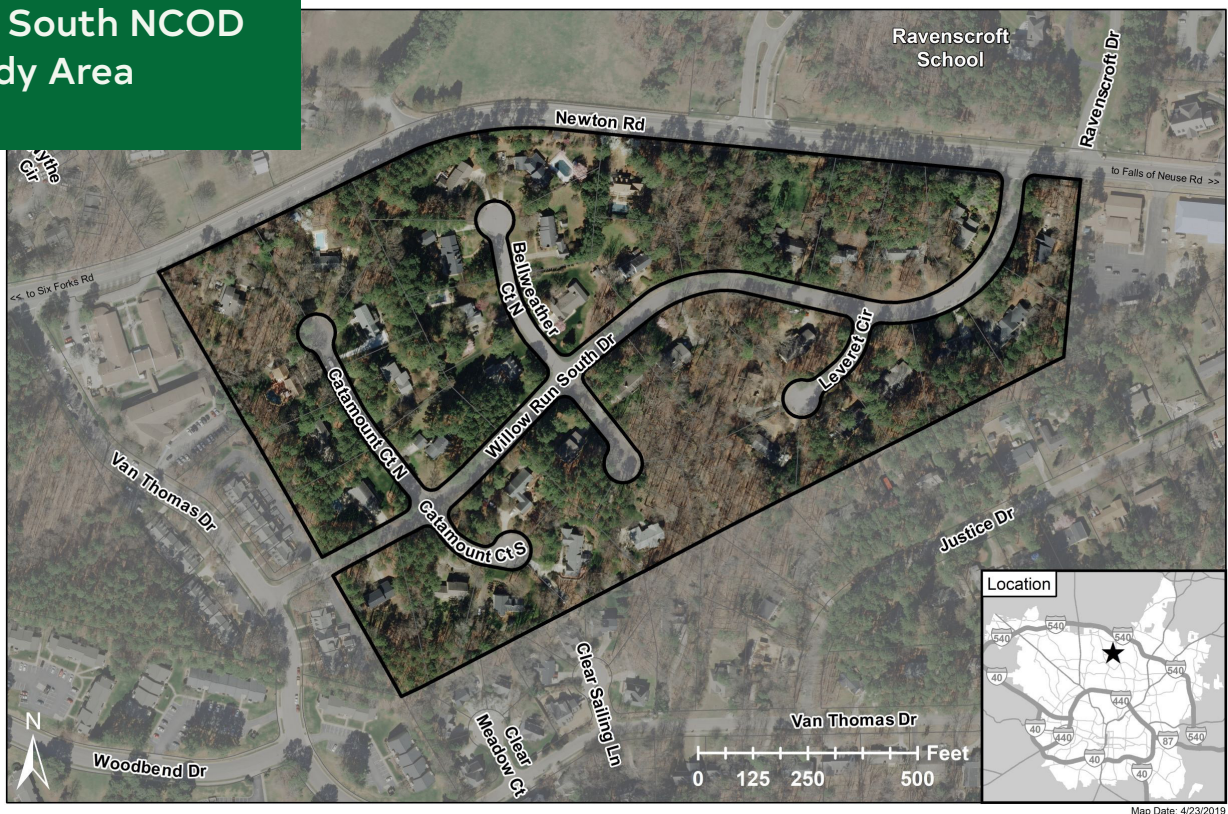
The Willow Run South neighborhood is located in north Raleigh off Newton Road, just south of Ravenscroft School. It is also 0.4 miles from the North Ridge West neighborhood (location of the North Ridge West NCOD adopted in January 2019) and the North Ridge Elementary School. Nearby major streets include Six Forks Road to the west, Falls of Neuse Road to the east, and Strickland Road to the north. The study area includes 38 properties, comprising approximately 33 contiguous acres. These properties all front on internal neighborhood streets: Willow Run South Drive, Catamount Court North and South, Bellweather Court North and South, and Leveret Circle. The only use in the study area is single-family residential, constructed between 1975 and 1988, and the average lot size is close to an acre (0.88 acres). Figure 1 shows a map of the study area.

There are no vacant properties and all lots are developed. The zoning for all properties is Residential-4 (R-4) which allows up to four dwelling units per acre. R-4 zoning also permits smaller lot sizes and widths compared to the current build-out of the neighborhood.

Although not required at this step in the process, the area does demonstrate initial compliance with the locational guidelines for areas to be rezoned to an NCOD:

- Minimum 15 contiguous acres: the requested study area is approximately 33 contiguous acres.
- Rezoning application must be signed by a majority of property owners within the area proposed to be rezoned: though this is required only at the rezoning stage, the citizens' petition included signatures of support from more than 85 percent of property owners in the study area.
- At least 75 percent of the lots must be developed: there are no vacant lots in the study area.
- Located in an area in which City Council has adopted specific neighborhood built environmental characteristics and regulations into Section 5.4.3 of the UDO: though this guideline only applies at the rezoning stage, the residents have initiated the process of adopting specific built environmental characteristics and regulations into the UDO.

**Figure 1, Willow Run South NCOD Study Area**



## Analysis

The Unified Development Ordinance Sec. 5.4.3.D.3. directs staff to assess properties within the study area for each of the built characteristics requested by the petitioners and to identify the "specific built environmental characteristics and regulations that reflect the predominant representation of the lots within the neighborhood study area." In this context, "predominant" is defined as the metric for each characteristic that can be met by 75 percent or more of lots in the study area.

Using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping tools, staff calculated the specific built characteristic—lot size—that was requested by residents. To provide residents with a comprehensive analysis of the built environmental characteristics of their neighborhood, staff also analyzed lot setbacks (front, rear, and side), density (dwelling units per acre), and distance between buildings. Staff also analyzed corner lot standards, as 12 parcels, or nearly one-third of the Willow Run South neighborhood, are corner lots.

Table 1 summarizes the predominant values for these built characteristics and provides other relevant quantifiable information.

When looking for minimum values, such as is the case for lot size, setbacks, and building spacing, the predominant characteristic is that value where 75 percent of properties exhibit larger built characteristics. Where a maximum value is sought, such as that for density, the predominant characteristic is that value where 75 percent of properties exhibit smaller built characteristics.

The tables below contain the predominant characteristic specifically requested by the petitioners (lot size), plus the additional characteristics analyzed by the Planning staff (density, setbacks including; front, side, rear, and corner, and distance between buildings. The tables also inventory the range of characteristics within the neighborhood.

**Table 1. All Lots Built Environmental Characteristics Summary**

Characteristic	Predominant Character (25 <sup>th</sup> Percentile) minimums	Predominant Character (75 <sup>th</sup> Percentile) maximums	Range (min-max)	Average	Median
Lot Size (sq. ft.)	33,018	38,881	28,338 – 67,981	38,360	36,714
Lot Size (acres)	0.76	0.89	0.65 – 1.56	0.88	0.84
Density (dwelling units per acre)	1.12	1.32	0.64 – 1.54	1.18	1.19
Front Setback (ft.)	55.43	76.15	29.60 – 136.10	66.92	61.15
Side Setback (ft.)	30.43	51.08	9.80 – 173.00	45.57	39.35
Rear Setback (ft.)	55.38	110.88	29.10 – 214.80	89.76	78.00
Distance Between Buildings* (ft.)	57.90	94.88	30.90 – 136.10	72.14	69.40

*\*Distance between buildings as requested is not regulated in the Unified Development Ordinance, however "Distances between buildings" may be defined within an NCOD.*

Given the wide range of values for these characteristics, the shaded column above illustrates that density is the only measure where there is uniformity in the built characteristics of the neighborhood. With this lack of uniformity in the remaining distance-based characteristics, it is our observation that a downzoning to a larger minimum lot size (Residential-2, for example)

may be a more appropriate tool to achieve the neighborhood's stated goal of preventing further subdivision of lots.

The curvilinear design of Willow Run South Drive, with five (5) cul-de-sac lanes extending from it, yields twelve (12) corner lots. Table 2 illustrates the results of the analysis for the 12 corner lots.

**Table 2. Corner Lots Built Environmental Characteristics Summary**

Characteristic	Predominant Character (25 <sup>th</sup> Percentile) minimums	Predominant Character (75 <sup>th</sup> Percentile) maximums	Range (min-max)	Average	Median
Lot Size (sq. ft.)	33,454	33,454	28,338 – 39,288	34,823	34,232
Lot Size (acres)	0.77	0.87	0.65 – 0.90	0.80	0.79
Density (dwelling units per acre)	1.15	1.30	1.11 – 1.54	1.26	1.27
Front Setback (ft.)	47.10	62.15	29.60 – 78.30	56.04	56.70
Side Setback (ft.)	36.75	54.30	16.20 – 128.20	48.24	45.70
Rear Setback (ft.)	44.03	127.58	29.10 – 160.30	85.93	76.30

As Table 2 shows, the corner lots have similar values to the neighborhood as a whole; thus, setting separate standards for corner lots would seem to be unnecessary.

## Impacts

The predominant built character of this area differs from the minimum standards that currently apply under the Residential-4 (R-4) zoning district (see Table 3). Minimum lot size and setback standards are significantly smaller under the R-4 zoning.

If new standards based on the predominant built character of the area were applied to this area through rezoning, the resulting NCOD would effectively prohibit the subdivision of existing lots currently allowed under the smaller minimum R-4 standards.

**Table 3. Comparison of Existing Zoning Standards and Predominant Built Character**

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Current Standard (R-4 District)</b>	<b>Predominant Character</b>	<b>R-2 District</b>	<b>R-1 District</b>
Minimum Lot Size (sq. ft.)	10,000	33,018	20,000	40,000
Minimum Lot Size (acres)	0.23	0.76	0.46	0.92
Maximum Density (units per acre)	4	1.3	2	1
Minimum Front Setback (ft.)	20	55.43	20	20
Minimum Side Setback (ft.)	10	30.43	10	10
Minimum Rear Setback (ft.)	30	55.38	30	30

As shown in Table 3, the Willow Run South neighborhood is developed somewhere between the standards for Residential-1 (R-1) and Residential-2 (R-2) zoning districts. Under the current zoning, R-4 standards would likely permit subdivision of 100 percent of existing lots in the area. Residential-2 standards would still render 100 percent of lots conforming, while disallowing subdivision of all but 6 of the 38 lots by the lot size standard alone.

In addition to restricting the opportunity to subdivide lots, an NCOD would impact changes to existing buildings and properties. Any additions, changes, expansions, or alterations to existing structures would have to comply with the overlay district regulations. If the desired alterations exceeded district standards, the property owner would have to apply for a special use permit with limitations on the amount of expansion.

## Next Steps

A neighborhood meeting will be held on Thursday, April 25, 2019, to discuss the results of this analysis. All property owners within the study area have been invited to attend. Following this meeting, city staff will present the results of the analysis and the neighborhood meeting discussion to City Council. Council will then decide whether or not to authorize a text change to the UDO to incorporate neighborhood built environmental characteristics

and regulations for the Willow Run neighborhood. If the text change process is successful, then property owners may petition the City Council for a rezoning to apply the recently created Neighborhood Conservation Overlay District (NCOD) regulations to the Willow Run South neighborhood. A majority of property owners are required to sign the rezoning petition that would apply the NCOD.