

## A Planner's Dictionary

Listed below is a summary of planning terms and words used in all aspects of planning, including land use, architecture, real estate, environment, law, science, economics, government, and engineering. The definitions are taken from the American Planning Association and the Institute of Local Governments definitions for standard planning terms. This list is provided as a quick guide while reviewing and participating in Coweta County's comprehensive planning process. If you would like to review the complete [Planner's Dictionary](#) (495 pages), please visit [www.cowetaplans.com/documents](http://www.cowetaplans.com/documents)

Any general questions or comments may be directed to [cowetaplans@coweta.ga.us](mailto:cowetaplans@coweta.ga.us)

**Appropriate/Compatible.** The characteristics of different uses or activities that permit them to be located near each other in harmony and without conflict. The designation of permitted and conditionally permitted uses in a zoning district is intended to achieve compatibility. Some elements affecting compatibility include intensity of occupancy as measured by dwelling units per acre; pedestrian or vehicular traffic generated; volume of goods handled; and environmental effects like noise, vibration, glare, air pollution, or radiation.

**Adaptive Reuse.** Converting obsolete or historic buildings from their original or most recent use to a new use. For example, an old manufacturing site could be converted into apartments or retail space.

**Adverse impact.** A negative consequence for the physical, social, or economic environment resulting from an action

or project.

**Aging in Place.** The ability to live in one's own home and community safely, independently, and comfortably, regardless of age, income, or ability level.

**Agricultural Urbanism.** An approach to integrating growth and development with preserving agricultural resources and enhancing elements of the food system

**BANANA.** Acronym for the term Build Absolutely Nothing Anywhere Near Anything.

**Blight.** A condition of a site, structure, or area that may cause nearby buildings and/or areas to decline in attractiveness and/or utility.

**Building Intensity.** For residential uses, the actual number or the allowable range of dwelling units per net or gross acre. For non-residential uses, the actual or the maximum permitted floor area ratio (FAR).

**Build-out.** Development of land to its full potential or theoretical capacity as permitted under current or proposed planning or zoning designations.

**Carrying Capacity.** (1) The level of land use, human activity, or development for a specific area that can be accommodated permanently without an irreversible change in the quality of air, water, land, or plant and animal habitats. (2) The upper limits of development beyond which the quality of human life, health, welfare, safety, or community character within an area will be impaired. (3) The maximum level of development allowable under current zoning.

**Clustered/Compact Development.** Development in which a number of dwelling units are placed closer together than usual, or are attached, with the purpose of retaining an open space area.

**Complete Streets.** Streets designed to accommodate all modes of travel and enable safe access for all users. Pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and bus riders of all ages and abilities are able to safely move along and across a complete street.

**Connectivity.** The ease of travel between two points. The degree to which streets or areas are interconnected and easily accessible to one another by direct routes. An example of high connectivity would be a dense grid pattern in a downtown area.

**Density.** The amount of development per acre permitted on a parcel under the applicable zoning. Common measures of density include population per acre or square mile and dwelling units per acre. Gross density includes the area

necessary for streets, schools and parks. Net density does not include land area for public facilities.

Density, Residential. The number of permanent residential dwelling units per acre of land. Densities specified in the general plan may be expressed in units per gross acre or per net developable acre. S

Exurban Area. The region that lies beyond a city and its suburbs.

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Floor Area Ratio (FAR). The gross floor area permitted on a site divided by the total net area of the site, expressed in decimals to one or two places. For example, on a site with 10,000 net square feet of land area, a floor area ratio of 1.0 will allow a maximum of 10,000 gross square feet of building floor area to be built. On the same site, an FAR of 1.5 would allow 15,000 square feet of floor area; an FAR of 2.0 would allow 20,000 square feet; and an FAR of 0.5 would allow only 5,000 square feet. Also commonly used in zoning, FARs are typically applied on a parcel-by-parcel basis as opposed to an average FAR for an entire land use or zoning district.

Gateway. A point along a roadway where a motorist gains a sense of entering a city or county

Greenfield. Farmland and open areas where the lack of prior industrial or commercial activity means that the threat of contamination is lower than in urbanized areas.

**Growth Management.** The use by a community of a wide range of techniques in combination to determine the amount, type, and rate of development desired by the community and to channel that growth into designated areas. Growth management policies can be implemented through public infrastructure ordinances (“concurrency”), urban limit lines, standards for levels of service, phasing, building caps and other programs

**Impact.** The effect of any direct human actions or the indirect repercussions of human actions on existing physical, social, or economic conditions.

**Land Use Regulation.** A term encompassing the regulation of land in general and often used to mean those regulations incorporated in the general plan, as distinct from zoning regulations (which are more specific).

**Land Use.** The occupation or use of land or water area for any human activity or any purpose defined in the general plan. The relationship between people and the land – more specifically, how the physical world is adapted, modified, or put to use for human purposes. This includes even the “non-use” of lands reserved as wilderness or protected from human impacts.

**Mixed-Use.** Properties on which various uses like office, commercial, institutional, and residential are combined in a single building or on a single site in an integrated development project with significant functional interrelationships and a coherent physical design. A “single site” may include contiguous properties.