

§ 160D-102. Definitions.

Unless otherwise specifically provided, or unless otherwise clearly required by the context, the words and phrases defined in this section shall have the following meanings indicated when used in this Chapter:

- (1) Administrative decision. – Decisions made in the implementation, administration, or enforcement of development regulations that involve the determination of facts and the application of objective standards set forth in this Chapter or local government development regulations. These are sometimes referred to as ministerial decisions or administrative determinations.
- (2) Administrative hearing. – A proceeding to gather facts needed to make an administrative decision.
- (3) Bona fide farm purposes. – Agricultural activities as set forth in G.S. 160D-903.
- (4) Charter. – As defined in G.S. 160A-1(2).
- (5) City. – As defined in G.S. 160A-1(2).
- (6) Comprehensive plan. – A comprehensive plan that has been officially adopted by the governing board pursuant to G.S. 160D-501.
- (7) Conditional zoning. – A legislative zoning map amendment with site-specific conditions incorporated into the zoning map amendment.
- (8) County. – Any one of the counties listed in G.S. 153A-10.
- (9) Decision-making board. – A governing board, planning board, board of adjustment, historic district board, or other board assigned to make quasi-judicial decisions under this Chapter.
- (10) Determination. – A written, final, and binding order, requirement, or determination regarding an administrative decision.
- (11) Developer. – A person, including a governmental agency or redevelopment authority, who undertakes any development and who is the landowner of the property to be developed or who has been authorized by the landowner to undertake development on that property.
- (12) Development. – Any of the following:
 - a. The construction, erection, alteration, enlargement, renovation, substantial repair, movement to another site, or demolition of any structure.
 - b. The excavation, grading, filling, clearing, or alteration of land.
 - c. The subdivision of land as defined in G.S. 160D-802.
 - d. The initiation or substantial change in the use of land or the intensity of use of land.

This definition does not alter the scope of regulatory authority granted by this Chapter.
- (13) Development approval. – An administrative or quasi-judicial approval made pursuant to this Chapter that is written and that is required prior to commencing development or undertaking a specific activity, project, or development proposal. Development approvals include, but are not limited to, zoning permits, site plan approvals, special use permits, variances, and certificates of appropriateness. The term also includes all other regulatory approvals required by regulations adopted pursuant to this Chapter, including plat approvals, permits issued, development agreements entered into, and building permits issued.

- (14) Development regulation. – A unified development ordinance, zoning regulation, subdivision regulation, erosion and sedimentation control regulation, floodplain or flood damage prevention regulation, mountain ridge protection regulation, stormwater control regulation, wireless telecommunication facility regulation, historic preservation or landmark regulation, housing code, North Carolina State Building Code enforcement, or any other regulation adopted pursuant to this Chapter, or a local act or charter that regulates land use or development.
- (15) Dwelling. – Any building, structure, manufactured home, or mobile home, or part thereof, used and occupied for human habitation or intended to be so used, and includes any outhouses and appurtenances belonging thereto or usually enjoyed therewith. For the purposes of Article 12 of this Chapter, the term does not include any manufactured home, mobile home, or recreational vehicle, if used solely for a seasonal vacation purpose.
- (16) Evidentiary hearing. – A hearing to gather competent, material, and substantial evidence in order to make findings for a quasi-judicial decision required by a development regulation adopted under this Chapter.
- (17) Governing board. – The city council or board of county commissioners. The term is interchangeable with the terms "board of aldermen" and "boards of commissioners" and means any governing board without regard to the terminology employed in charters, local acts, other portions of the General Statutes, or local customary usage.
- (18) Landowner or owner. – The holder of the title in fee simple. Absent evidence to the contrary, a local government may rely on the county tax records to determine who is a landowner. The landowner may authorize a person holding a valid option, lease, or contract to purchase to act as his or her agent or representative for the purpose of making applications for development approvals.
- (19) Legislative decision. – The adoption, amendment, or repeal of a regulation under this Chapter or an applicable local act. The term also includes the decision to approve, amend, or rescind a development agreement consistent with the provisions of Article 10 of this Chapter.
- (20) Legislative hearing. – A hearing to solicit public comment on a proposed legislative decision.
- (21) Local act. – As defined in G.S. 160A-1(5).
- (22) Local government. – A city or county.
- (23) Manufactured home or mobile home. – A structure as defined in G.S. 143-145(7).
- (24) Person. – An individual, partnership, firm, association, joint venture, public or private corporation, trust, estate, commission, board, public or private institution, utility, cooperative, interstate body, the State of North Carolina and its agencies and political subdivisions, or other legal entity.
- (25) Planning and development regulation jurisdiction. – The geographic area defined in Part 2 of this Chapter within which a city or county may undertake planning and apply the development regulations authorized by this Chapter.
- (26) Planning board. – Any board or commission established pursuant to G.S. 160D-301.
- (27) Property. – All real property subject to land-use regulation by a local government. The term includes any improvements or structures customarily regarded as a part of real property.

- (28) Quasi-judicial decision. – A decision involving the finding of facts regarding a specific application of a development regulation and that requires the exercise of discretion when applying the standards of the regulation. The term includes, but is not limited to, decisions involving variances, special use permits, certificates of appropriateness, and appeals of administrative determinations. Decisions on the approval of subdivision plats and site plans are quasi-judicial in nature if the regulation authorizes a decision-making board to approve or deny the application based not only upon whether the application complies with the specific requirements set forth in the regulation, but also on whether the application complies with one or more generally stated standards requiring a discretionary decision on the findings to be made by the decision-making board.
- (29) Site plan. – A scaled drawing and supporting text showing the relationship between lot lines and the existing or proposed uses, buildings, or structures on the lot. The site plan may include site-specific details such as building areas, building height and floor area, setbacks from lot lines and street rights-of-way, intensities, densities, utility lines and locations, parking, access points, roads, and stormwater control facilities that are depicted to show compliance with all legally required development regulations that are applicable to the project and the site plan review. A site plan approval based solely upon application of objective standards is an administrative decision and a site plan approval based in whole or in part upon the application of standards involving judgment and discretion is a quasi-judicial decision. A site plan may also be approved as part of a conditional zoning decision.
- (30) Special use permit. – A permit issued to authorize development or land uses in a particular zoning district upon presentation of competent, material, and substantial evidence establishing compliance with one or more general standards requiring that judgment and discretion be exercised as well as compliance with specific standards. The term includes permits previously referred to as conditional use permits or special exceptions.
- (31) Subdivision. – The division of land for the purpose of sale or development as specified in G.S. 160D-802.
- (32) Subdivision regulation. – A subdivision regulation authorized by Article 8 of this Chapter.
- (33) Repealed by Session Laws 2020-25, s. 3, effective June 19, 2020.
- (34) Zoning map amendment or rezoning. – An amendment to a zoning regulation for the purpose of changing the zoning district that is applied to a specified property or properties. The term also includes (i) the initial application of zoning when land is added to the territorial jurisdiction of a local government that has previously adopted zoning regulations and (ii) the application of an overlay zoning district or a conditional zoning district. The term does not include (i) the initial adoption of a zoning map by a local government, (ii) the repeal of a zoning map and readoption of a new zoning map for the entire planning and development regulation jurisdiction, or (iii) updating the zoning map to incorporate amendments to the names of zoning districts made by zoning text amendments where there are no changes in the boundaries of the zoning district or land uses permitted in the district.
- (35) Zoning regulation. – A zoning regulation authorized by Article 7 of this Chapter. (2019-111, s. 2.4; 2020-3, s. 4.33(a); 2020-25, ss. 3, 51(a), (b), (d); 2023-108, s. 1(c).)