

# Kootenai County Commissioners

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## Press Release

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**Re: Land Use Ordinance Update: Neighborhood Conservation District**

Kootenai County's ordinance consultant, Kendig Keast Collaborative, is proposing a new zoning district; **Neighborhood Conservation (NC)**. This district would be applied to numerous established areas of Kootenai County. In this new district, ten sub-districts are proposed, each of which corresponds to an existing neighborhood pattern. By using this approach, large areas of the County with existing homes on parcels (10 acres or less) would be zoned with an NC sub-district as this will most closely relate to their typical parcel size.

First, unlike our existing land use regulations, the newly proposed NC districts will consider existing nonconforming lots and buildings as being conforming. In other words, if the lot or building was allowed when it was created, it will become legal and conforming under the proposed new code. In fact, many residents who currently own nonconforming properties today will greatly benefit from having their properties converted to conforming.

By having all lots and homes in the NC district conforming, the district is an important step towards making it easier to buy, sell, and improve homes in the County. Buyers and sellers benefit because financial lenders are usually more comfortable loaning on properties which conform to local codes.

Second, the NC sub-districts are designed with existing buildings in mind. They provide more flexibility than the current ordinances when it comes to adding onto an existing home. Special procedures, such as variances, will *not* be required for typical improvements under the NC sub-districts. For example, a homeowner who wants to expand a building may build up to the setback line, or may even build past the setback if certain standards are met. These standards are designed to help ensure that additions can be more easily accomplished and at the same time do not place unfair burdens on the neighbors.

Consequently, unlike current county ordinances, the Neighborhood Conservation district is designed to provide a more objective review process which will have a high level of predictability for all land owners. In fact, the proposed Neighborhood Conservation district is specifically designed to protect property rights, protect property values and promote investment in Kootenai County.

For more information about the newly proposed NC district, the Kootenai County Board of Commissioners encourage the public and agencies to visit the Unified Land Use Code (ULUC) project website at: <http://www.zoningplus.com/regs/kootenai/index.aspx?index=488>, and provide input online or attend and participate in one of the upcoming ULUC public meetings.