

Glossary of Key Terms

501(c)(3) organization

Organization with non-profit status that allows it to raise and spend money on behalf of the greater community. These organizations do not have to pay state or federal taxes. People who give money to a 501(c)(3) organization do not have to pay taxes on their donations.

Annexation

One process by which a town can include new territory within its municipal boundaries, allowing the residents of that area to participate in municipal elections and entitling them to certain essential services, including water, sewer, and police. There are two types of annexation in North Carolina: voluntary and involuntary. One type, involuntary annexation, does not require the consent of the area's residents. In North Carolina, the requirements for involuntary annexation are:

- a) One-eighth of the boundaries of the area to be annexed must coincide with the municipality's current boundaries,
- b) The area may not include any property already within the boundaries of another municipality,
- c) Sixty percent of the lots in the area must be used for residential, commercial, industrial, institutional, or governmental purposes, and
- d) Sixty percent of the lots must be three acres or less.

In voluntary annexation, a town may, at its discretion, annex an area if 100 percent of that area's residents agree to it.

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)

Grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development that may be used to fund community development projects for installing essential infrastructure such as sewer and water lines, reducing poverty rates, and constructing affordable housing. Local governments apply to the state for these funds on behalf of low-income communities.

Census Designated Place (CDP)

Unincorporated communities that resemble incorporated municipalities in that they are closely populated, named, and contain a mixture of commercial and residential property. CDPs are towns in fact, but not legally. Silver City, in Hoke County, NC, is an example of a CDP.

Extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ)

An area surrounding the boundaries of a city or town that is subject to the power of the town with regard to zoning and land use decisions. Despite the municipality's power over them, ETJ residents do not have a right to vote in municipal elections, and the municipality is not obligated to provide them with the water, sewer, waste disposal, and police services enjoyed by city or town residents.

Gerrymandering

The practice of drawing jurisdictional boundaries in order to give an unfair advantage to one political party in an election by ensuring a majority for that party in each voting district. This may include drawing jurisdictional boundaries along racial lines.

Incorporation

Process by which a town becomes a self-governing entity under the laws of the state. Incorporated municipalities have the power to levy taxes and zone, and the obligation to provide municipal services such as waste disposal, sewer, water, and police. Residents of an incorporated municipality have the right to elect the members of its governing board. Before an area can incorporate, it must have a tax base that will fund the necessary services to its citizens.

Infrastructure

Network of facilities and services underpinning a town. Town infrastructure typically includes a sewer system, a water system, police stations and services, and waste disposal services.

Jurisdiction

Authority of a body, such as a local government, to make decisions regarding a particular area and its residents. Also refers to the area subject to this control.

Land use regulations

Constraints placed on the use of land by a municipality or subdivision. Examples include whether the land can be used for residential, commercial, or industrial purposes. Land use restrictions also determine whether mobile homes are allowed in an area.

Matching funds

The funds a city or county must contribute to a project funded by CDBG funds.

Planning Board

An advisory board to city or county governments made up of residents from the city or county. The board makes recommendations to the city or county council about decisions such as zoning, permitting, and land use regulations. Residents must apply to and be appointed by the local government to serve on the board. Board terms and some planning boards reserve a seat for a representative from the areas within the town's ETJ. Serving on the planning board is an excellent way to stay aware of proposed changes affected your community and to advocate for your community's needs.

Zoning

A type of land use regulation issued by a local city or county council which govern how you can and cannot use your land. Decisions such as whether you can place mobile homes on your land, build an extra room on your house or church, or whether you can start a business on your land are determined based on the zoning regulations for your land.