

NHC Zoning Revisions for Intensive Industry Cheat Sheet

The NHC Planning Staff has recommended that the NHC Planning Board approve revisions to the zoning regulations for the parts of the county that are zoned I2, or intensive industrial. Based on the NHC zoning regulations intensive industry includes the production of acetylene, cement, chlorine, corrosive acid, fertilizer, insecticides, poisons, explosives, petroleum products, coal, and radioactive materials. This group also includes smelting, animal slaughtering, paper manufacturing, and oil refining. This recommendation was made for several reasons.

- The current regulations were adopted in 1969 and are outdated
- New Hanover County has changed dramatically in the last 42 years
- New Hanover County is the 2nd smallest and 2nd most densely populated county in the state and industrial pollution cannot be located away from citizens and sensitive environmental areas
- Many other counties (at least 42 including Wake, Pender, Brunswick, Durham, and Guilford) in the state have adopted similar zoning regulations

The revised regulations would require that intensive industry apply for and receive a special use permit in order to build **new** facilities in the county. This permit process would give citizens and elected officials an opportunity to learn about the facility and comment on the project. For example, if a company was seeking to build a large coal fired cement kiln and mine on the banks of the Northeast Cape Fear River citizens would be given a chance to weigh in on issues including:

- How the pollution from the plant would impact the health of their children
- How the mining activities would impact drinking water and wetlands
- How the facility might impact property values for surrounding landowners
- Where pollution from the smokestacks could be expected to settle and what impacts it would have on the environment
- Whether or not existing roads were able to handle the additional truck and train traffic
- How close the industry was to schools, hospitals, nursing homes, farms, and parks/sports fields
- Whether or not the proposed use was compatible with the county's CAMA Land Use Plan

Industrial polluters are not happy about these changes because it will mean they will have to explain what impacts their facilities will have on NHC residents. Industry derailed the process at the first planning board meeting and they have weighed in since then, claiming that giving citizens a say in what the future of the county looks like will convince future industry to reconsider building in NHC and hurt our economy. Here's why those arguments don't add up:

- North Carolina is consistently ranked as one of the most business friendly states in the US
- At least 42 other NC counties have adopted similar zoning rules and they are doing just fine
- Our main industry is tourism and protecting the reason people come here (our environment) is far more important than allowing heavy industry to operate entirely without zoning restrictions
- Small business owners and their families can and will move if they feel their quality of life is negatively impacted by industrial pollution

The special use permit process is not automatic denial process, even though industry will try and make it seem that way. The process is the difference between a rubber stamp for any and all industry (what we do now) and a process that asks industry to demonstrate that their facility is in the best interest of the

community. Citizens deserve to have input on the industry that builds new facilities in our community. Citizens deserve to know how industry will impact the air we breathe, the water we drink, the beaches where we swim and play, and the fish we eat. If you want your voice to be heard you have to show up and speak up.