

11.5.2021

Housing Report answers from Rod Stevens.

Question: From the report: **To keep the jobs-housing ratio from rising**, Chapel Hill will need to increase average annual housing production by 35 percent over that of the 2010s. That will require completing an average of about 485 units per year. Of that, about 440 units will be working-age people and seniors (the equivalent of about one Carraway Village every year), and about 45 units will be for students living off-campus (about one Carraway Village every ten years).

That seems like too a low bar, given that the ratio is already so high - shouldn't our goal be to lower the ratio, and if so, what would that look like in terms of numbers and strategy?

Response: *It is a low bar since you are already suffering high traffic and housing prices. Unfortunately, there is now no way to know how hard it will be to just maintain that ratio. Good preliminary analysis can provide that.*

There is a second issue here that may be even more important: linking land use and transportation so that more residents work locally. That may sound like an issue of simply providing more work opportunities, but it requires linking jobs and housing. If you provide housing where people can walk, bike, or take transit to work, more people will work locally. Your ability to provide good transit service depends on creating nodes of development that deliver the requisite levels of ridership.

Question: One of the previously identified gaps in Chapel Hill is attraction/retention of young professionals (mid-20s to low 30's-ish) before they are ready to purchase homes - it seems that the addition of rental apartments is helping to now meet that need - is that an accurate assessment? Is our current stock along with what is in the pipeline sufficient to meet the housing needs of that demographic for the short/medium-term future?

Response: *You are providing that housing now, but many if not most of those residents drive to work elsewhere, and few will be able to buy when locally when they want to. This housing does not meet the needs of slightly older workers, especially those who are single, work in administration for UNC and UNC Health, who cannot afford to buy. That slightly older group, as well as young families, are the "missing middle" in your population.*

The second question is tracking, and you do not have the systems to predict what percentage of units will be built or when. I looked briefly at your pipeline and saw there is a lot in it, but because I could not precisely determine what percentage had been built in the last ten years, I could not forecast future completions.

Question: If possible, could you look back a bit further to talk about the decisions and policies made over the past, say, 10 years or more (if possible), that contributed to Chapel Hill being in the situation we are now in? This didn't happen over a short time period and we won't be able to fix it quickly either

11.5.2021

and I think it is really important to understand how we got here so that we don't repeat the same mistakes or take away the wrong lessons from this experience about zoning, density, approval processes, affordability, etc.

Response: *Carraway Village is an excellent example of past practices. This huge project took a long time to plan, build and lease. Prior councils thought that it would become a neighborhood center, but because it is so isolated and close to I-40, the retail portion is building out with fast-food restaurants with drive-through lanes. Your town did create a plan for urban development in this area. You should review that to determine why it remains unrealized.*

Question: It may be out of the scope of this discussion, but do we have any data on the current amount of existing green space/parks in town and any professionally agreed-upon ratio/formula for what is considered the appropriate amount per population. distance from home, etc.? This will be critical to consider as we plan for future development.

Response: *I am skeptical of quantified targets, for they do not ensure the space is usable. (A great small courtyard is better than an empty, windswept plaza.) I prefer performance standards that let you judge your current progress. An example of this is, "Can a ten-year-old girl safely walk to a store and buy candy on a night in November?" Or, "Can a moderately immobile senior walk out of their dwelling and find a bench where they can comfortably sit and reliably see and hear other people?" Or, "Is there a good walking path where a couple coming home from different jobs take a walk together and sit down en route for a good conversation?" These questions let you judge whether the plan will work socially. Questions of landscape preservation and wildlife corridors are a different matter.*

Question: Assuming we decide to move forward with the proposed plan for addressing the problems identified, what are your recommendations for what we do in the interim with development applications coming in and already in the review process?

Response: *Keep your current efforts going and make those as effective as possible. Small, early "wins" will rebuild public faith in your ability to plan.*
