

Transit-Oriented Development Planning and Unified Development Ordinance Visioning

Engagement Feedback Themes

Growth Potential

- Chapel Hill has a mature town framework, which is substantially built out.
- High growth means the low hanging fruit in terms of land supply has been tapped.
- The nature of remaining sites is shifting as the town has built out.
- Increase the supply of development to benefit the community and achieve community goals.
- A strategy for high quality re-use and in-fill is needed.

Development Density

- “Density” – not a dirty word, as long as there is good design.
- Missing middle / gentle density has different meanings in different parts of the town
- Headline DU’s per acre are a starting point – site buffers and lower density FARs reduce the actual output.
- You can’t even get the identified density because of restrictions in the ordinance. There isn’t even a Townhome application in the process, so you get shifted into Multi-Family.
- Unless you have favorable rules that allow you to build higher densities, it will stay low in single family categories. We can’t stack Townhomes, they become condos, which are expensive and impractical if you want to build 20.

Single Family Zoning

- Single family-only zoning should be eliminated.
- We need to avoid previous harms.
- People need to understand the historic burdens imposed by this type of zoning.
- It’s exclusionary.
- People value their low-density, treed lots.
- Single family that close to TOD - need people to understand the history of inequity.
- There is a need to understand the effect of luxury housing on Single Family lots. There is opportunity for conversion, subdivision of big homes and big lots. They are not pulling their weight. This should include a fiscal impact analysis.
- Eliminate Single Family Zoning in the TOD area – it’s best practice. Very hard direction to get to.

Affordable Housing

- Tremendous need for affordable housing.
- Affordability challenges are being exacerbated.
- Higher income residents are back filling units below their price point.
- Need for all housing types across the board; high percentage of cost-burdened renters.
- People are being displaced.
- There is risk of gentrification and displacement from the near north side
- Entitlement process is burdensome, drives away many affordable housing developers.
- Inclusionary zoning ordinance – applies only to for-sale product, not rentals, which is where the need is.
- General lack of awareness statewide about state LIHTC.

Mobile Home Parks

- A lot of Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing – particularly mobile home parks – is under threat.
- Stay away from the mobile home parks.

- The mobile home parks should be on the table – owners will make their own plans.

Workforce Housing

- People drive to the hospital and university from other communities to work.
- The shortage of locally affordable housing impacts nursing, medical support, maintenance, admin and academic staff.
- The downtown service sector is also supporting the institutions, but its workers also cannot afford to live here.
- Lots of people are working in the service industry or are “third shift” employees.
- A lot of families are moving out of the area because they can’t afford to live here anymore.
- We are seeing a lot of people with rent increases of like \$200 and they have a fixed income.
- Many are forced to move to more rural areas and that cuts them off services – hospitals, psychiatric care, etc.

Student Housing

- Larger-scale, purpose-built commercial student housing not arriving in the market.
- Larger new residential developments are tapping into the student housing market.
- The university needs to allocate land to student housing and workforce housing.
- Some neighborhoods are seeing issues with over occupation of regular homes.

Supportive Housing

- We have an aging population, more housing that supports senior lifestyles will be needed.
- Many people will need direct support as they age.
- There is a need to support people with mental illnesses to live in the community.

Downtown

- It’s not as strong as other college town downtowns.
- It needs a stronger experience.
- There are gaps in services typically found within Downtowns – experiences, fitness, health, personal services workers and residents will seek.
- Downtown does not have an overarching placemaking strategy.
- Too many parking lots are in the hands of unmotivated owners
- Downtown has a distinctive character, which should be preserved.

Office Market

- Biggest challenge is perception – developers and companies don’t view CH as a place to site a new office. Many are working hard to change this.
- Local priority to attract office uses, competing more in the regional market, allowing people to work closer to home, supporting the tax base.
- Pandemic has impacted new leases and occupancy.
- Office development should be directed to Downtown first, not edge sites by highway interchanges.

Retail Market

- Retail comes in large segments: downtown and shopping centers or malls. Smaller, local provision is limited. Station areas create possibilities for this.
- Has been hard to attract certain brands, missing some national and regional retailers.
- Over supplied in grocery; Wegmans is a recent addition.
- Food away from home does well.

Development Decision Making

- The Development review process needs to be streamlined.
- The Town has extra review layers that other communities do not – impacting market led and affordable housing.

- The size threshold for Council involvement in development decision making is too low, in development and land terms.
- Where a Form Based Code has been used, the overall outcome has been a concern – massing and scale of development.
- The Advisory Board system is extensive, must be consulted, but not all have a formal role or legal authority.
- Culture of extensive input and discourse.
- The council has become the de-facto plan decision makers for anything above what are low-bar thresholds.
- Effect is perceived to be one of development suppression – applications do not come in.
- The extended process delays or suppresses developments that can achieve Town objectives – such as affordable housing.
- Entitlement process is burdensome, drives away many affordable housing developers.
- Recommend expedited review process for affordable housing developments
- The nature of developers is shifting, with more from across or outside the region.
- They have different expectations of the process.

Design Character

- There is a series of developments that are touchstones for local understanding of development types
- – both positive and negative views that inform how they respond to new proposals.
- People are concerned about the character of development – individual buildings, often in isolation, not relating to surroundings, not creating a complete environment.
- We can't repeat what happened at Blue Hill with the form-based code.
- Bring well defined values and principles to ground in a practical, specific way that people can understand.
- Chapel Hill has a distinctive character that should be maintained
- The intention to keep it "historic". Are we considering the fact that large pockets of people want to keep it the way it is?
- The essential character is a town in the trees.
- Tree cover and habitat corridors should be maintained.
- Recognize the character of Chapel Hill, and the uniqueness of individual places.
- Define new typologies that respond to this context.

Connectivity

- An equitable approach to movement is needed.
- Create transit stations that are accessible to everyone.
- This can reinforce the roles of Station Areas.
- Intersections across the Town need to become more pedestrian friendly – they are not designed for people on foot or on bikes.
- The possibilities for new street networks may be constrained, but opportunities for walking, biking and electric bike connections can provide a new framework.
- Bike and walking corridors, passive bike routes, will be more acceptable than new connecting streets.
- Bikes are a great way to get around Chapel Hill.
- Electric bikes will extend the distance that people will be prepared to bike to transit stations, as well as the hills they will be prepared to tackle. This may increase the demand for new connections.
- Shaded, screened pedestrian and bike routes are needed.