

Meeting the Need:

A Strategy for Where and How to Build Complete Communities

TOWN OF CHAPEL HILL
Council Committee on Economic Sustainability

Friday, September 9, 2022





COMPLETE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

Meeting Chapel Hill's Housing Needs

Project Objectives

To begin the process of building consensus about where and how to build

To determine where complete communities can be advanced, exploring trade-offs and opportunities

To identify a viable pilot project

Overview

1. Work-to-date
2. Capacity Analysis: Preliminary Findings
3. Being honest about the trade-offs
4. Implementation Considerations

1. Work-to-date

- i. Stakeholder Interviews
- ii. Hard Truths
- iii. Emerging Directions
- iv. Capacity Analysis

Hard Truths

Chapel Hill is already an exclusive place.

No one is happy with the planning process, or planning outcomes.

Chapel Hill has a difficult urban form to remediate.

Emerging Directions

- **Stakeholder interviews to date**
- **Previous consultation inputs**
- **Council member interviews**
- **An assessment of existing directions and the challenges that Chapel Hill faces**
- **Early learnings from the capacity analysis**
- **An assessment of the 'gaps'**

Capacity Analysis - Opening Assumptions

- **Recognizing and respecting topography**
- **Clearing identifying watersheds**
- **Everywhere to everywhere Greenways**
- **The rail to trail spine**
- **From dividing to connecting**

2. Capacity Analysis Preliminary Findings

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The Capacity Analysis:

- ➔ Reviewed housing needs
- ➔ Assessed current patterns of development
- ➔ Analyzed where and how new housing might be built over the next 20 years

The analysis included:

- Detailed field surveys and map work
- Investigation of suitable best practice models of medium-density development in other cities
- Projected low, medium, and high levels of production dependent on: appropriate zoning, master planning, and capital investment by the Town

Capacity Analysis: Preliminary Findings

1. The pace of development is not keeping up with the demand for housing
2. There are many excellent sites with a significant capacity to accommodate new housing
3. There is sufficient developable land in Chapel Hill to meet demand
4. The development planning and approvals process needs to change to be able to meet housing demand
5. New development sites can be linked together by an active transportation network

Capacity Analysis: Preliminary Findings

The pace of development is not keeping up with the demand for housing

- During the 2010s, the pace of development was about a third lower than what the Town will need in the future
- Over the next 10 years, Chapel Hill will need about 10,000 new housing units
 - Especially for housing that is affordable to young families, middle-income singles, empty-nesters, and seniors

Capacity Analysis: Preliminary Findings

There are many excellent sites with a significant capacity to accommodate new housing

- There are both undeveloped “greenfield” sites and underutilized site opportunities that can accommodate new housing
 - e.g. shopping centres, hotels, and other commercial uses
 - Most are located within a bikeable distance of a future BRT stop
- Development sites can be intensified without substantial impacts to existing neighborhoods or natural systems
 - Target densities can be achieved in low- and mid-rise buildings while still accommodating for vehicular parking and new parkland
 - Currently, development tends to either be low-density (single family homes) or high-density block-busters; there is opportunity to pursue development at a scale in between those extremes

Capacity Analysis: Preliminary Findings

**There is sufficient developable land in Chapel Hill to meet future demand...
*but the planning approach needs to change.***

- There is currently potential for between 21,000 and 45,000 new homes
 - At 10,000 units for the next 20 years, this equates to a 40-75-year supply of new housing

Capacity Analysis: Preliminary Findings

The development planning and approvals process needs to change to be able to meet housing demand and other Town priorities

- **The Town cannot simply assume a “rezone it and they will come” approach will deliver the desired outcomes**
 - Achieving the required densities while achieving broader goals and priorities of the Town will require master planning
 - The planning and management of capital projects that support the creation of complete communities should be a focus point for delivery in concert with new housing development
- **A “reset” with the development community that offers a new proactive and collaborative approach is needed**
 - You need the good developers to want to develop in the Town, but most don't want to do that today because the process is broken

Capacity Analysis: Preliminary Findings

New development can be linked together by an active transportation network

- The modeling assumes new development areas can be linked to the rest of the Town with greenways that provide bikeable “everywhere to everywhere” connections separated from roads and highways
- This would provide residents with more choice, mitigate traffic congestion, and improve the sustainability of the transportation system

3. Being honest about trade-offs



TYPICAL SUBURBAN DESIGN



COMPLETE COMMUNITIES



CAPACITY ANALYSIS

Mostly single family homes; low density.

Diversity of housing types, including missing middle density.

Under-supply is a continued risk.

Precincts divvy up non-housing, and housing uses into separate areas of the city.

Living, working, learning, and playing occur in the same walkshed.

Project by project planning limits 'completeness'.

Designed for driving to destinations and walking or driving upon arrival: high carbon footprint; leads to traffic congestion.

Designed for walking and cycling, first: 'green' mobility.

'Everywhere-to-everywhere' Greenways.

Precincts experience an intensity of use, and 'dead' times/zones. This compromises safety.

'Eyes on the street' in all areas of the community.

Designed - moving forward - to prioritize safe active transportation..

Single uses within buildings.

Buildings are used for multiple interests - corporate, university + community assets are co-located.

New partnership capacity needs to be developed.

High transit infrastructure subsidy on a per capita basis due to underutilization of land.

Lower costs for infrastructure and buildings due to higher density, higher use, and lessened need for driving/parking.

Strategic investments that deliver real returns are required.

4. Implementation Considerations

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How to ensure successful implementation

Ownership over the Vision Generates Accountability

- Getting the plan right: alignment of interests
- Buy-in from community leaders
- Talk about the plan and get feedback on it

Implementation Processes

- Mitigating what is in the pipeline
- Acting decisively on the parts you control (infrastructure, Greenway etc)
- Reforming processes to deliver outcomes
 - Partnership capacity at the town
 - Alignment of mobility plan, conservation etc
 - LUMO review
 - Future Land Use Map

What comes next?

Consultation

- More stakeholder interviews
- Council member interviews, by request
- Focus Groups: 1) Environmental, 2) Developers, 3) UNC
- Complete Community Public Meeting

Content Development

- Refinement of the capacity analysis based on your feedback
- Developing a long list of potential pilot projects
- Pilot project evaluative criteria



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