

# Community Leaders

## A Strategy for Where and How to Build Complete Communities

**TOWN OF CHAPEL HILL**  
**Council Committee on Economic Sustainability**

**Thursday, September 15, 2022**

The  
Keesmaat  
Group.



HFA

HURLEY  
FRANKS  
ASSOCIATES



# COMPLETE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

Meeting Chapel Hill's Housing Needs

## **Transformative change is possible in Chapel Hill.**

The Town of Chapel Hill is interested in identifying shared interests around a new approach to housing that clarifies where and how to build to inclusive, sustainable, complete communities and an economically competitive town.

# 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

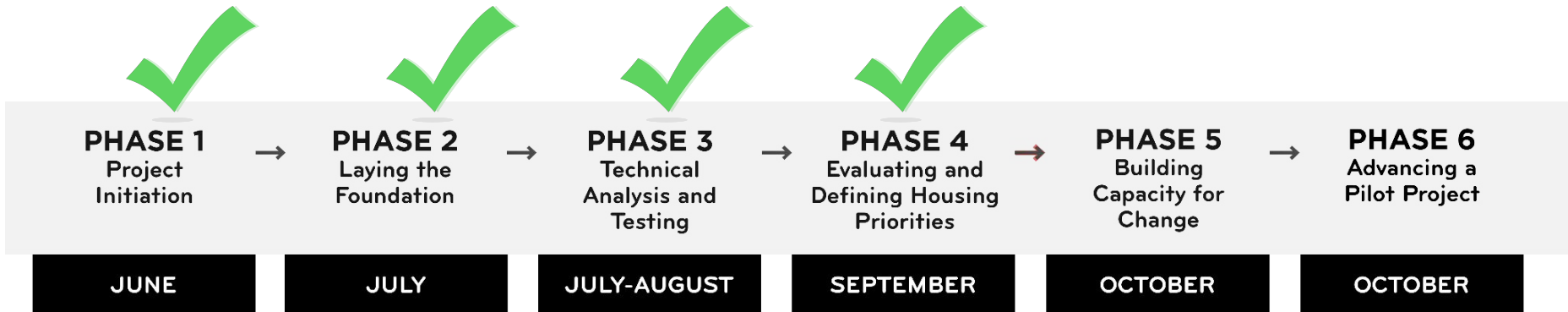
To identify a viable pilot project

# Stakeholder Interviews

Various interests and advocates will provide input into advancing a strategy for meeting Chapel Hill's housing needs



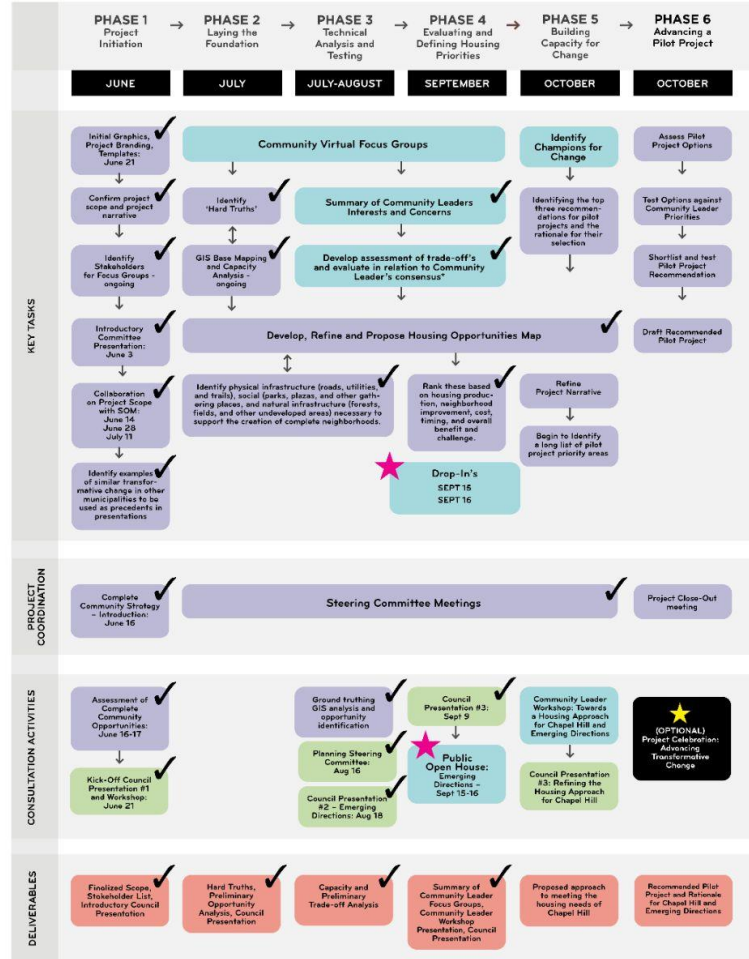
# Six Phases over Five Months



# WORKPLAN:

## Meeting the Need

A Strategy for Where and How to Build Complete Communities



- Council engagement
- Community Leader Engagement
- Collaboration with SOM
- Deliverables

### \* Capacity and Preliminary Trade-off Analysis

- a) Update target housing needs with the latest Triangle J projections.
- b) Review GIS database and modify it as necessary.
- c) Identify locations and settings for housing development, including urban centers, transit-oriented development, neighborhood infill, arterial development, commercial redevelopment, residential upzoning, the expansion of master planned neighborhoods like Southern Village, "missing middle" development, and accessory dwelling units.
- d) Develop housing models for each setting and create a spreadsheet showing how these translate into housing supply by location.
- e) Project development of significant sites by 5-year periods, based on ease of development, evolution in market demand, competing locations, and cumulative supply.
- f) Prepare a spreadsheet, GIS layers, and opportunities map showing type, capacity, and challenges for housing production.
- g) Summarize the options for "low," "medium," and "high" achievement of 20-year housing needs and summarize the trade-offs in achieving these.
- h) Prepare a concise summary of these findings in layman's language and distribute it to Interest Leaders and Council.

# 3 HARD TRUTHS

- 1 Chapel Hill is already an exclusive place.**  
It won't be easy, but there is an opportunity now to put a stake in the ground that resets the trajectory for the future to make the Town more affordable, equitable, and sustainable for all.
- 2 No one is happy with the planning process, or planning outcomes.**  
A lose-lose dynamic and a convoluted planning process is driving away the best developers (who are necessary to build a better future).
- 3 Chapel Hill has a difficult urban form to remediate.**  
If the goal is to make Chapel Hill more inclusive and walkable, strategic planning is imperative to overcome how the Town is organized today.





## TYPICAL SUBURBAN DESIGN

Housing: mostly single family; usually low rise. When buildings are taller, they are still not dense due to surface parking.

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

Housing prioritizes traditional market ownership, often to the exclusion of other models

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

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

Single uses within buildings.

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

## COMPLETE COMMUNITIES

Diversity of housing types, including missing middle density. Both rental and ownership tenures.

Living, working, learning, and playing occur in the same walkshed. Active transportation and transit connections are abundant.

Diversity of tenures for a diversity of households: both units and secondary suites add gentle density.

Designed for walking and cycling, first: 'green' mobility. Parking lots are secondary, rather than prominent, since pedestrian infrastructure is prioritized.

'Eyes on the street' in all areas of the community, as a result of 'sufficient' density. Pedestrian-oriented design.

Buildings are used for multiple uses: housing, community, office, and retail uses can be mixed.

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

## CAPACITY ANALYSIS

Under-supply is a continued risk. Currently, low density design or higher density design that continues to have suburban characteristics.

Project by project planning limits 'completeness'. Missed opportunities for synergies related to infrastructure delivery.

A better balance of housing types is needed. Multi-family condos (ownership) and affordable rental need to be added to the housing mix.

'Everywhere-to-everywhere' Greenways present the opportunity to add people without adding more cars, and can serve to link communities to deliver 'completeness' a short bike or e-bike ride away.

Current densities under utilize serviced land, missing the opportunity to address the housing need.

New partnership capacity needs to be developed to deliver partnerships based on shared interests.

Strategic investments that deliver real returns in keeping with a well-articulated vision are needed, such as investment in greenways that drive growth in higher-density walkable neighborhoods.

# Principles of Placemaking Elements of Complete Communities for Chapel Hill



Where  
did the  
Emerging  
Directions  
come  
from?



# Emerging Directions

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# 1. Plan for the Future Strategically

**The Challenge:** Project by Project planning does not deliver a complete community. Opportunities are missed to deliver infrastructure that connects communities – such as greenways along riverbeds – when a site by site approach is taken. In addition, a more comprehensive approach can assist in lowering key infrastructure costs. For example, a shared approach to stormwater management on an area wide scale can reduce costs.

**The Opportunity:** Move towards an approach that is led by an overarching strategic vision to ensure all of Chapel Hill is a complete community. By assessing new development through the lens of broader shared objectives, collaborations will emerge for delivering in broader public benefits – including for existing neighborhoods that are underserved by specific amenities.





## 2. Expand and Deliver new Greenways for Everyday Life

**The Challenge:** Adding more people in a traditional way would mean adding new housing along arterials, which is not the current pattern of development in Chapel Hill. Designing Chapel Hill with personal vehicles at the center of mobility has social equity, household and environmental costs inconsistent with the Town's stated values.

**The Opportunity:** Alongside developing cycling infrastructure throughout Chapel Hill, build a complete network of greenways that give residents the option to travel from everywhere to everywhere on foot, on a bike or an electric bike, instead of having to rely primarily on cars. In this way, more people and more housing density can be added without adding more cars. Connecting the gaps within the existing greenway system - particularly in neighborhoods adjacent to equity-seeking groups, is fundamental to enabling this transformation from greenways as recreation to Greenways for transportation.



### 3. Be Green

**The Challenge:** Being a green town requires density, and a changed approach to the environment. Topography has often been forgotten in conversations of development. A new approach is needed that respects natural landscapes, plans for flooding, embraces the magnitude of the opportunity of the greenways, and adds more recreational amenities.

**The Opportunity:** Plan a Town that is green and sustainable, alongside a plan to build 485 new homes per year to meet housing needs. To do so, the dialogue in Chapel Hill must change. Forward looking objectives related to meeting the housing need, adding density, and becoming \*more\* sustainable must be linked, rather than severed.



# 4. Plan for Excellence in the Public Realm, Everywhere

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# Principles of Placemaking Elements of Complete Communities for Chapel Hill



# Summary of Emerging Directions

1. Plan for the Future Strategically
2. New Greenways for Everyday Life
3. Be Green as you Build 500 New Homes
4. Plan for Excellence in the Public Realm, Everywhere

# Capacity Analysis

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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

## 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

# Pilot Project Evaluative Criteria

#	Criteria	Description
1	Speed of Implementation	How quickly can the project be implemented? What are the barriers to implementation, and are they easily overcomable?
2	Financial Viability	What is the total cost of the project, and is there a reasonable expectation that it can be funded in the near-term? Does it require other partnerships or stakeholders to provide financial support?
3	Magnitude of Impact	What is the scale of the impact the project will deliver? Is it located on one site or multiple sites?
4	Contribution towards the Creation of Complete Communities	To what degree does the project tick some important boxes of complete communities?
5	Scalability	Is the project (or concept) scalable across the Town?



# Project Principles

PROJECT PRINCIPLES	STATUS
A Conversation About Growth	Underway. Stakeholder interviews, Council member Interviews.
Realistic Targets	Underway.
Complete Neighborhoods	A proposed framework is being developed for evaluating development.
Everything on the Map	Assessment includes all land areas and a variety of development scenarios.
Money Matters	Development viability is considered in the capacity analysis.
A Stake in the Ground Decision	Process is building to the recommended pilot project.

# WHAT IS IN SCOPE AND OUT OF SCOPE?

## In Scope

Creating a Complete Community framework.

Identifying further work to implement the framework.

Interviews with representatives of various interest groups; follow-up stakeholder focus group meetings.

Identifying housing capacity on key opportunity sites.

Identifying housing typologies or types as precedents.

Recommending a Pilot Project.

## Out of Scope

Identifying specific site by site changes required.

Implementing the strategy.

Multiple, large scale consultation meetings, other than Council meetings.

Identifying housing needs by cohort (families, seniors, students).

Recommending specific built forms for specific sites.

Implementing the Pilot Project.

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