



06-17-2024 Town Council Meeting Responses to Council Questions

ITEM #6: Rewriting Our Rules – A LUMO Update

Council Question:

The list in the appendix includes a wide range of streets. Some are thoroughfares. Others are much smaller neighborhood streets. Since the document refers to the list as “preliminary”, can you expand on how the various criteria (infrastructure, parcellization...) are applied to confirm or refine the list and what it means to be “near a greenway access point”.

Staff Response:

*Missing middle housing could be allowed **within a quarter** mile of a greenway access point that is either maintained by the Town or meets the Town’s standards.*

Staff do not recommend further limiting the areas in which missing middle housing could be appropriate. The street classification system serves as a strong proxy for the criteria identified in the FLUM (infrastructure; parcelization; and proximity to transit services, multi-modal paths, downtown, and other mixed-use areas). Collector streets, for example, are generally well served by sidewalks and rarely include locations that are more than a 15-minute bike ride from a mixed-use or commercial center. Easing restrictions on small subdivisions (2-4 lots) could help to support appropriate parcelization where it doesn’t already exist.

The list of arterial and collector streets is referred to as “preliminary” because it was pulled from existing GIS data and needs to be verified. For example, some streets that are identified as collectors transition to local streets beyond a certain point. A final list of collector streets would need to identify these streets and clarify the specific portions that meet the definition of a collector street.

The Town recognizes three street types (local, collector, and arterial) and defines them as follows:

- **Local:** *Primarily serve land-access functions; to accommodate multi-modal ingress and egress; multimodal safety and movement emphasized through traffic controls and street design.*
- **Collector Streets:** *Penetrate neighborhoods, public service areas, and other districts; designed to provide both through-traffic and local-access services in relatively equal proportions, often linking the local street system to the arterial street system.*
- **Arterial Streets:** *Primarily serve through-traffic; may accommodate limited access service; traffic controls and street design facilitates efficient through-traffic movement*



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Council Question:

From our work over the past few years, I continue to be concerned about massive buildings like Texas donuts, screening and treatments for parking decks, options for adding trees/shade to surface parking. Would appreciate some information and the opportunity to touch on these on Monday.

Staff Response:

We are prioritizing many of these interests in the updated landscaping and design standards. The standards will include maximum building lengths and façade articulation requirements intended to curb the “cruise ship” effect associated with many modern multifamily buildings. We are also working on updated landscaping standards that will strengthen requirements for shade trees/structures in parking lots.

We are also exploring ways to minimize the visual impact of parking garages but need to be mindful of the high costs that can be associated with screening or other treatments.

Council Question:

When we talked about drive-thrus, we didn’t talk about impacts on walkable, pedestrian oriented places. Are there places where they work and places where they don’t?

Staff Response:

While the Town should promote walkable, pedestrian oriented places wherever possible, it’s important to ensure that these places do not become inaccessible to people with a wide variety of needs. Traditional single-lane drive-thrus are not inherently incompatible with walkable, pedestrian oriented places. Problems arise when places are designed to prioritize the needs/convenience of drivers over the needs, convenience, and safety of pedestrians.

The new LUMO will likely prohibit multi-lane drive-thrus (3 or more lanes) in most parts of Town. The amount of land required and the level of traffic generated by these types of drive thru would not be appropriate in a pedestrian friendly space. Locations near I-40 or along major arterial roads may still be appropriate for these types of drive-thrus.

For smaller drive-thrus, the new LUMO will focus on updated landscaping and site design standards that minimize their impact on the pedestrian experience.



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Council Question:

Affordable commercial is something we negotiated for with U Place and Grubb Properties and has been an interest of council's as we think about supporting smaller businesses and start-ups. Is there a reason it hasn't made the list?

Staff Response:

The Town has no legal authority to require affordable commercial space in new development. Staff do not recommend pursuing this interest as part of the LUMO rewrite.

Council Question:

"The FLUM notes that the best areas to accommodate this growth are those with easy access to campus and other amenities."

Our biggest interest has been in having year-round housing in the expanded downtown area to support a more stable and resilient economy there. What options and strategies might we think about to address this interest and tension point?

Staff Response:

The FLUM highlights an interest in year-round residents in the Downtown Focus Area. In the South MLK Blvd Focus Area, the FLUM highlights the importance of accommodating student-oriented development in appropriate locations.

*In Downtown, there are limited LUMO-based options for implementing the FLUM's interest in year-round residents. **Each of these options carries the risk of depressing overall housing production in Chapel Hill.***

- (1) limiting by-right development opportunities for residential development;*
- (2) adopting a by-right density bonus for projects that abide by bathroom-to-bedroom ratios that may be more desirable for year-round residents; or*
- (3) mandating particular bathroom-to-bedroom ratios.*

The highest yield options for supporting downtown businesses likely involve boosting residential density (of all kinds) near downtown and making it as easy as possible for visitors to reach and/or navigate downtown. The NSBRT, soon-to-be-completed Rosemary Parking Deck, and Downtown Mobility/Streetscape Project will all address options for bringing more people to downtown.



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ITEM #6: Rewriting Our Rules – A LUMO Update (Continued)

Council Question:

The document references the Public Works Engineering and Design manual which does not currently support our Complete Community and placemaking goals. What is the timeframe for updating this? Are there sections that are most important to tackle first?

Staff Response:

The Town adopted an updated Public Works Engineering and Design Manual in May 2023. Further updates to the Manual will be explored once the LUMO is closer to being finalized. Priority areas would likely include requirements regarding landscape buffers and street widths.

Council Question:

When we approved the 100-year storm requirement, staff noted there was more work to do and we asked for a closer look at how to handle smaller residential projects.

Staff Response:

The lack of a comprehensive cost/benefit analysis has been a major criticism of the Town's approach to implementing the 100-year storm requirement. Small-scale residential development is likely to be particularly sensitive to the added costs associated with the 100-year storm requirement. Planning and stormwater staff are currently exploring how to best answer this question and determining whether we have the necessary in-house experience/capacity or whether we will need help from a consultant.

Council Question:

We've talked about applying a resilience lens and hearing the "so whats" from the Natural Area map. Do you have any updates on those topics?

Staff Response:

Staff are working to incorporate a variety of recommendations from the Sustainability team into the new LUMO. These primarily involve updates to the Town's landscaping standards for new development, EV charging requirements, shade requirements, etc.

Staff are still working to refine the Natural Areas Model. Because the model is still in such an early phase of development, it's unlikely that the new LUMO will directly reference it as a decision-making tool (e.g., a property must receive a certain "score" in order for a particular activity to be allowed). Instead, the Natural Areas Model and other data referenced by the Green Growth Toolbox may be sources that staff will be required to consult when making decisions about certain projects (e.g., modifications to RCD buffers could be allowed if – among other factors – a property is not within a critical habitat corridor identified by the Triangle Connectivity Collaborative).