

Guiding Statements

Creating a vibrant, equitable, economically sustainable, resilient future for Chapel Hill

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Guiding Statements

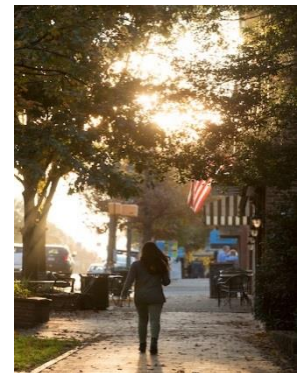
Creating a vibrant, equitable, economically sustainable, resilient future for Chapel Hill

Charting Our Future is a two-phased process designed to chart the next course for the Town of Chapel Hill. The first phase, refining the Future Land Use Map (FLUM), focuses on the Town’s key gateways, corridors, and activity nodes. The future land use designation for most of the Town, including much of the Town’s single-family neighborhoods, remains unchanged. The second phase of the Project is rewriting the Town’s Land Use Management Ordinance (LUMO), which is the Town’s “rule book” that specifies where in Town uses, be they commercial; residential; mixed use; open space etc., are allowed as well as dictating the height of buildings and their placement on lots in addition to a myriad of other details.

As part of the Charting Our Future Project, staff and consultants undertook a thorough review of previous planning efforts. A common theme in these plans is the community’s understanding that the physical environment of Chapel Hill—its neighborhoods, streets, utilities, and natural resources—deeply affect how people experience life in their Town. These past planning efforts include the creation of the rural buffer and the urban services boundary. These forward thinking efforts sought to limit the Town’s ability to sprawl and to maintain the semi-rural landscape that surrounded the Town at the time. Thirty years later, maintaining these sprawl control efforts translates into an opportunity for the Town to mature within its existing boundaries thereby taking advantage of existing infrastructure, transit investments, the benefits of being the home of UNC-Chapel Hill, and the cultural enrichment that accompanies diverse communities living in close proximity to each other.

While updating the Town’s Future Land Use Map focuses only on a small portion of the Town, rewriting the Town’s LUMO could potentially impact all portions; therefore, it is imperative to define a set of Guiding Statements for both portions of the Project that provides direction for the future of Chapel Hill as well as rationale for making the changes necessary to:

- Effectively mitigate the challenges of climate change;
- Support the Town’s economic development strategies;
- Ensure the Town’s fiscal well-being;
- Create a sense of place that is unique to Chapel Hill;
- Collaborate with the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the UNC Health Care System on lifelong learning, innovation, and entrepreneurship;
- Create, in strategic locations, compact, mixed use communities focused on transit and multimodal transportation systems that effectively respond to:
 - The need to reduce traffic and the Town’s carbon footprint;
 - The desirability of such locations for both households and employers that prefer sites that are walkable and located within vibrant, connected communities; and,
 - The desire for an equitable community where all community members have access to jobs, transit, and places to reside.



The Guiding Statements are as follows:

1. **Demonstrate the Town’s commitment to environmental stewardship and resiliency.** The Town should emphasize sustainable urban design principles that minimize impacts to Chapel Hill’s sensitive natural areas and respond to the threat of climate change by:
 - A. Creating compact communities, in targeted locations, where activities are located closer to one another requiring less time and energy to access the daily needs of life including work, school, commerce, and recreation;
 - B. Densifying at strategic locations and mixing land uses. By building up, the Town can absorb development in a more compact manner, support a lively mix of activities, protect open spaces, integrate public spaces into developments, conserve landscaped areas, preserve tree canopy, and create nodes that make transit more viable. Permitting a mix of activities along streets shortens trips, enlivens the public realm, and makes possible the day and night usage of shared parking;
 - C. Fostering patterns and styles of development that are climate responsive, including energy efficient buildings and sites that utilize existing infrastructure and support local, renewable energy production like rooftop solar. Climate responsive design also supports habitat corridors, green infrastructure and living landscapes, providing for tree canopy and other vegetative surfaces that mitigate the urban heat island effect and create more shaded and walkable streets throughout the Town. This style of development accommodates alternative and low carbon forms of transportation, such as biking, walking, transit and the increased adoption of electric vehicles;
 - D. Continuing to support transit, transit connections and integrated transit options. Such connections can integrate and knit together all parts of the Town, reduce vehicle miles traveled, and support additional housing units and more intense land uses, like office and retail uses, so that community members may shop and work in their community thereby potentially reducing the carbon footprint attributable to the Town. Transit supports the establishment of a prosperous and equitable community that is easily accessible by all;
 - E. Establishing a “Connected Community” that includes a tight network of streets and multi-modal paths that are convenient everyday choices. Creating highly integrated multi-modal connections allows for a variety of mobility options that make trips more direct and reduces vehicular trips. To that end, the Town should continue to promote an active and interconnected community that provides safe



routes to work and school, walkable neighborhoods, complete bicycle networks, and multi-modal transportation alternatives; and,



F. Establishing resiliency measures to mitigate flooding concerns within the Town including utilizing “Green Infrastructure,” preserving existing open space, and where possible, developing new open space, improving tree canopy, daylighting creeks and other covered waterways, and creating connections and habitat corridors between the natural areas of the Town.


2. **Ensure equitable planning and development.** Equitable planning and development is a strategy that ensures all current and future community members participate in and benefit from development and economic growth and activity in the Town – especially low-income residents, communities of color, immigrants, and others at risk of being left behind. Equitable planning and development entails an intentional focus on eliminating inequities and barriers and making accountable and meaningful investments to assure that community members:

- Live in healthy, safe, and opportunity-rich neighborhoods;
- Connect to economic and ownership opportunities; and,
- Have voice and influence in the decisions that shape their neighborhoods.

Equitable Development is achievable by:

- A. Advancing economic opportunity. Promote local economic development and entrepreneur opportunities, enhance community-serving establishments, and increase quality living wage jobs for all community members;
- B. Mitigating displacement. Develop plans, policies, and programs that mitigate residential displacement as development and redevelopment occurs in the Town and discourage the displacement of viable small businesses that serve community needs;
- C. Providing affordable housing options. Create healthy, safe, and affordable housing for all family sizes and incomes in all neighborhoods;
- D. Understanding and responding to local context. Respect local community character, cultural diversity, and values. Preserve and strengthen intact neighborhoods, building upon their local assets and resources;
- E. Promoting broader mobility and connectivity. Prioritize an effective and affordable public transportation network that supports transit-dependent communities and provides equitable access to core services and amenities, including employment, education, and health and social services;
- F. Practicing meaningful community engagement. Ensure local community participation and leadership in decision-making reflects a diversity of voices, including targeted



- strategies to engage historically marginalized communities. Structure planning processes to be clear, accessible, and engaging;
- G. Developing healthy and safe communities. Create built environments that enhance community health through public amenities (schools, parks, open spaces, walkable neighborhoods, multi-modal paths, health care, and other services), access to affordable healthy food, improved air quality, and safe and inviting environments;
 - H. Promoting environmental justice. Eliminate disproportionate environmental burdens and ensure an equitable share of environmental benefits for existing communities; and,
 - I. Creating full accessibility. Ensure that the built environment is accessible and welcoming to people regardless of age, physical condition, or language.
3. **Encourage a diversity of housing types.** The Town will encourage additional housing options that are both affordable and desirable for households and individuals with a range of income levels. Accordingly, the Town seeks to facilitate both the development of traditional single-family homes as well as to address the “Missing Middle” of housing units, which includes a variety of housing types between single-family homes and apartments. In addition, this diversity of housing types should include provisions for student housing. The intent of this statement is to enable:
- A. The continued development of single-family detached dwelling units;
 - B. The development of duplexes, triplexes, and accessory dwelling units in some existing single family neighborhoods. These small scale multi-family uses could fit within the fabric of some existing single family neighborhoods, as long as they are carefully designed, and provide additional housing units for the Town;
 - C. The development of townhouses, at the edge of established neighborhoods, to act as a transitional use and provide for additional housing options;
 - D. Small lot single-family subdivisions, where appropriate, that utilize the principles of traditional residential design to create compact, livable, and accessible neighborhoods; and,
 - E. Purposefully built off-campus student housing in appropriate locations.
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4. **Promote distinctive, safe, and attractive neighborhoods.** The Town should preserve and enhance established neighborhoods by directing growth to multimodal and key transportation corridors facilitating connections to those corridors in order to promote a multi-modal network thereby potentially reducing vehicular trips and increasing mobility options. Such connections should be done with care to minimize through traffic on residential streets.



The intent of this guiding statement is also to:

- A. Protect and preserve the Town’s historic neighborhoods;
- B. Preserve and enhance the varied and distinct residential character and integrity of existing residential neighborhoods;
- C. Protect neighborhoods from potential adverse impacts associated with adjacent non-residential uses by proper mitigation measures that address scale, massing, traffic, noise, appearance, lighting, drainage, and stormwater; and,
- D. Safeguard existing single-family neighborhoods as students move into established neighborhoods.



5. **Cultivate a vibrant and inclusive community.** The Town should encourage new opportunities, through the built environment, that promote a sense of place and community for those who live, work, and visit Chapel Hill. This encouragement includes the creation of “third places,” meaning those places close to home or work where unintentional connections happen routinely. These unintentional connections may happen on the sidewalk, in pocket parks, and at plazas. To facilitate these opportunities for unintentional connections, the Town will consider:

- A. Intentionally designing the public spaces of the Town including the interface between private properties and the public environment, which most often is the street;
- B. Methods to weave public space, including plazas and pocket parks, into private projects through public-private partnerships, regulatory incentives, and other creative means;
- C. Requiring a mixture of land uses, residential; retail; office; civic, adjacent to each other or stacked vertically in certain strategic locations to invigorate certain streets;
- D. Enabling the creation of publicly accessible spaces that contain seating, access to food, Wi-Fi, and landscape elements, especially near transit locations; and,
- E. Proactively planning for the location of publicly accessible spaces in each Focus Area.



6. **Direct investment along key transportation corridors.** The Town should encourage density and intensity in a mixture of uses along key transportation corridors and established activity nodes or centers with particular emphasis at future transit stations.



The intent of this guiding statement is to concentrate the siting of high-density housing, mid-rise office, and more intense mixed use development at targeted locations in order to achieve highly functional, walkable destinations.

- 7. Support and facilitate economic development, including job creation; innovation; and entrepreneurship, through redevelopment and infill development.** To support economic development policies, Chapel Hill will support and facilitate redevelopment and infill



development. The intent of this policy is to proactively address the fact that future economic development will need to occur, most often, on infill and/or redevelopment sites. Accordingly, this policy is intimately tied to Chapel Hill’s future economic health and the Town’s ability to accommodate employment centers.

Any redevelopment or infill projects should be designed in a manner to complement surrounding properties and to efficiently utilize and capitalize on existing public infrastructure, such as roads, water, sewer, and transit.

- 8. Provide appropriate transitions between land uses.** Support the provision of appropriate transitions between sites and/or uses having significantly different types or intensities of land uses as well as built forms.

The intent of this guiding statement is to provide for harmonious transitions between different types and intensities of land uses as well as built form in order to help mitigate any negative impacts that a development might have on an adjacent site or use. Providing for appropriate transitions is especially important between the campus of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and surrounding areas.

Appropriate transitions between developments and adjacent uses can be achieved by many different techniques, utilized either singularly or in combination. Determining the most appropriate design approach for managing transitions between developments and/or uses will depend on the objectives for the transitional space, which will vary by location. The most appropriate transition between sites and/or uses may also depend on the topography of the affected sites, such as differences in elevations, which must be considered whenever transitions are necessary.

Techniques for achieving transitions include, but are not limited to the following:

- A. Form Transitions** – Varying the form of a building to provide for a change in building bulk, height, scale as well as the orientation of exterior spaces away from adjacent residential neighborhoods. This change in form could include “stepping back or down” in bulk or height in order to prevent negative impacts on adjacent neighborhoods or streets.



- B. Use Transitions – Designating a transitional use between uses or developments of different intensities, such as:
 - i. Multi-family residential or townhouses, between an office or retail use and a single family neighborhood,
 - ii. Permitting homes on the edge of an established neighborhood to be used for small offices
 - C. Architectural Transitions – Utilizing the architectural elements of a new or renovated development to ensure compatibility with the adjacent neighborhood in terms of building materials and architectural design elements.
 - D. Landscape Transitions – Preserving and/or installing vegetative landscape materials, which may differ in width, and may include sparse or dense plantings.
9. **Preserve and maintain Chapel Hill’s appearance and create the quality of design and development the Town desires.** The Town should preserve and maintain Chapel Hill’s unique appearance and create the quality of design and development the Town desires, with particular attention to the appearance of – and views from – the public realm, including streets; parks; multi-modal paths, and plazas, while also encouraging high quality development, understanding that different areas of Town will have different characters and defining characteristics. To this end, views from the public streets and public spaces should not be defined by parking facilities, but instead save the front of buildings for people, not cars.



The intent of this guiding statement is to create and maintain the pleasing qualities of our community because activated, desirable, comfortable, and appealing public streets and spaces help to create vibrant civic areas where community members want to walk, shop, bike, and spend time.

This guiding statement encourages high-quality development that embraces exceptional site design, architecture, and construction. This statement is concerned with the appearance of two different aspects of the community:

- A. Public Areas (owned, designed, and maintained by the public sector). Accordingly, this guiding statement emphasizes the design and appearance of roadways; public



- landscaping and streetscape design elements along roadways; public parks and greenways; and public buildings and properties, such as parks and recreation facilities, Town Hall, schools, and libraries; and,
- B. Public Views (refers to the appearance and views of private development as seen from public areas). Accordingly, this guiding statement emphasizes high-quality appearance and design for private development – including buildings, landscaping, signage, and art features – that can be seen from public roadways, or from other public spaces such as greenways, multi-use paths, parks, etc.

Implementation of this guiding statement may require:

- C. The development of design guidelines or regulations as well as streetscape plans and improvements tailored to each Focus Area or to particular portions of a Focus Area in order to create a unique sense of place within each Focus Area as well as a visual continuity of streetscapes; and,
 - D. The establishment of Pedestrian Oriented Districts, which include site and design elements necessary to create the type and quality of development that the Town desires including specifications regarding the preferred location of parking facilities.
10. **Cooperate and collaborate with the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill as well as UNC-Health Care.** Pursue a harmonious relationship where there is a strong emphasis on the pursuit of mutually beneficial goals with respect for the sometimes differing objectives of these institutions and the Town.

