



# Blue Hill Townhomes

## Text Amendment Proposal



**Council Meeting**  
**November 18, 2020**

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# Council Petition Interests

As Submitted March 14, 2018

1. Increase **non-residential development** with density bonuses or other mechanisms
2. Identify strategies for providing more **affordable housing**
3. Address building size and massing concerns to improve **place-making and permeability**

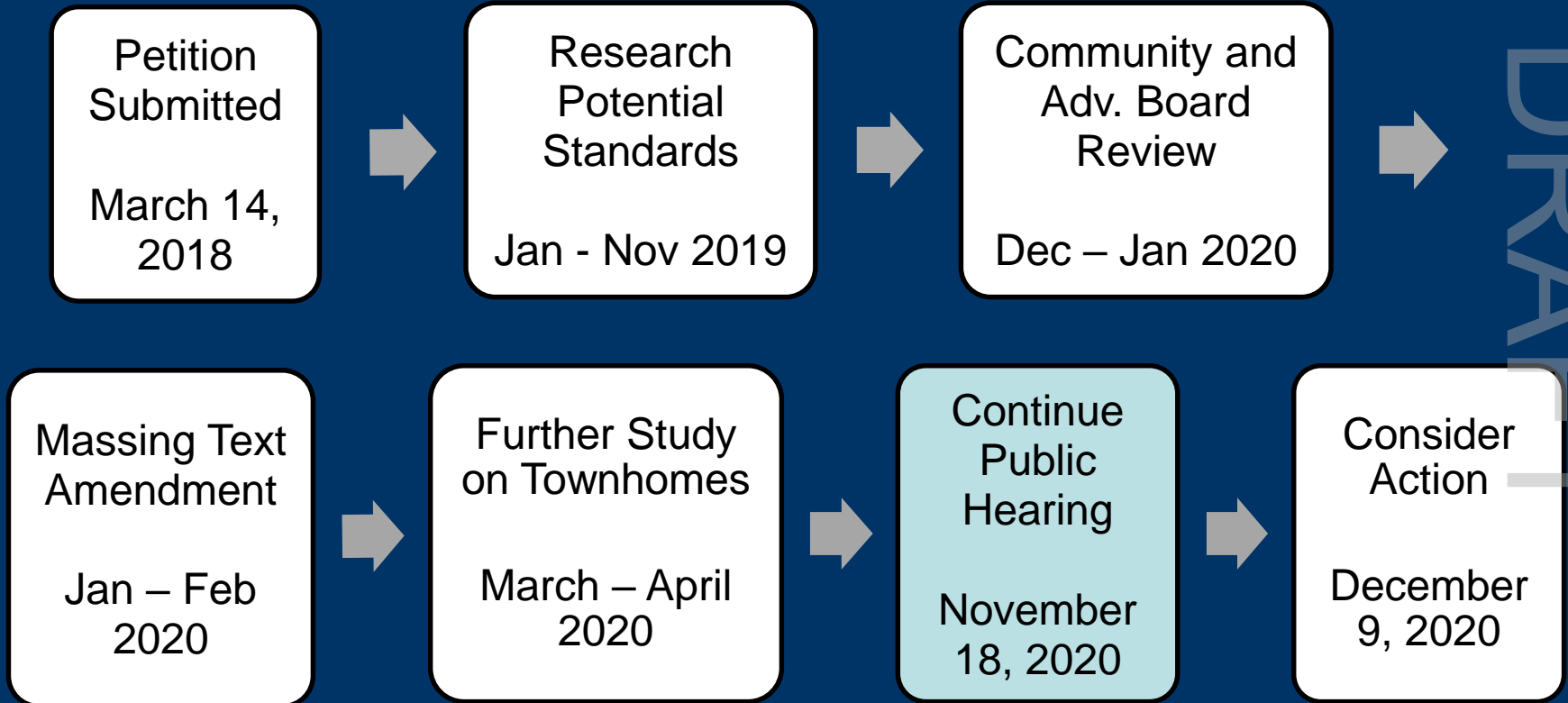
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# Staff Recommendation

- Receive public comment
- Close the public hearing and continue to receive comment for 24 hours via email –  
[mayorandcouncil@townofchapelhill.org](mailto:mayorandcouncil@townofchapelhill.org)
- Consider action on December 9, 2020

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# LUMO Text Amendment Process



# Engagement & Expertise

Public Information Meeting

Community Design Commission  
*(2 meetings)*

Planning Commission  
*(2 meetings)*

Town Council  
*(Work Session, CCES,  
Public Hearing)*

Tony Sease / Civitech

Noell Consulting

Town Urban Designer

Planning Dept

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# Current Townhome Standards

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- All residential projects in WX- Subdistricts must include a nonresidential use
- Minimum 10% of building floor area or 15% of site floor area
- Lot Requirements
  - 1700 sq ft Minimum Net Land Area
  - 20 ft Minimum Lot Width

# Previous Recommendation – Feb 2020

1. Exempt 'small' townhome projects from nonresidential requirement
  - a. 60 units max
  - b. 1800 sq ft median unit size



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# Council Feedback – Feb 2020

- Are the thresholds right / Is there risk of unintended outcomes
  - 60 units – too low a limit?
  - What about a ‘phased-in requirement’ as unit count increases?
  - 1800 sq ft median unit size – too large?
- Support for the idea of encouraging townhomes

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# Recommended Text Amendments

1. Exempt 'small' townhome projects from nonresidential requirement
2. Reduce nonresidential requirement for 'medium' townhome projects
3. Adjust lot requirements to better reflect townhomes

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# Maximum Site Area Threshold

## Market Considerations

- 2.0 acres or more typically needed to support building, parking, and other site functions
  - Multifamily (enough units for financing)
  - Hotel (enough rooms)
  - Office (minimum floor plate for tenants)
- Townhome projects offer more flexibility in project size and layout



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# Maximum Site Area Threshold

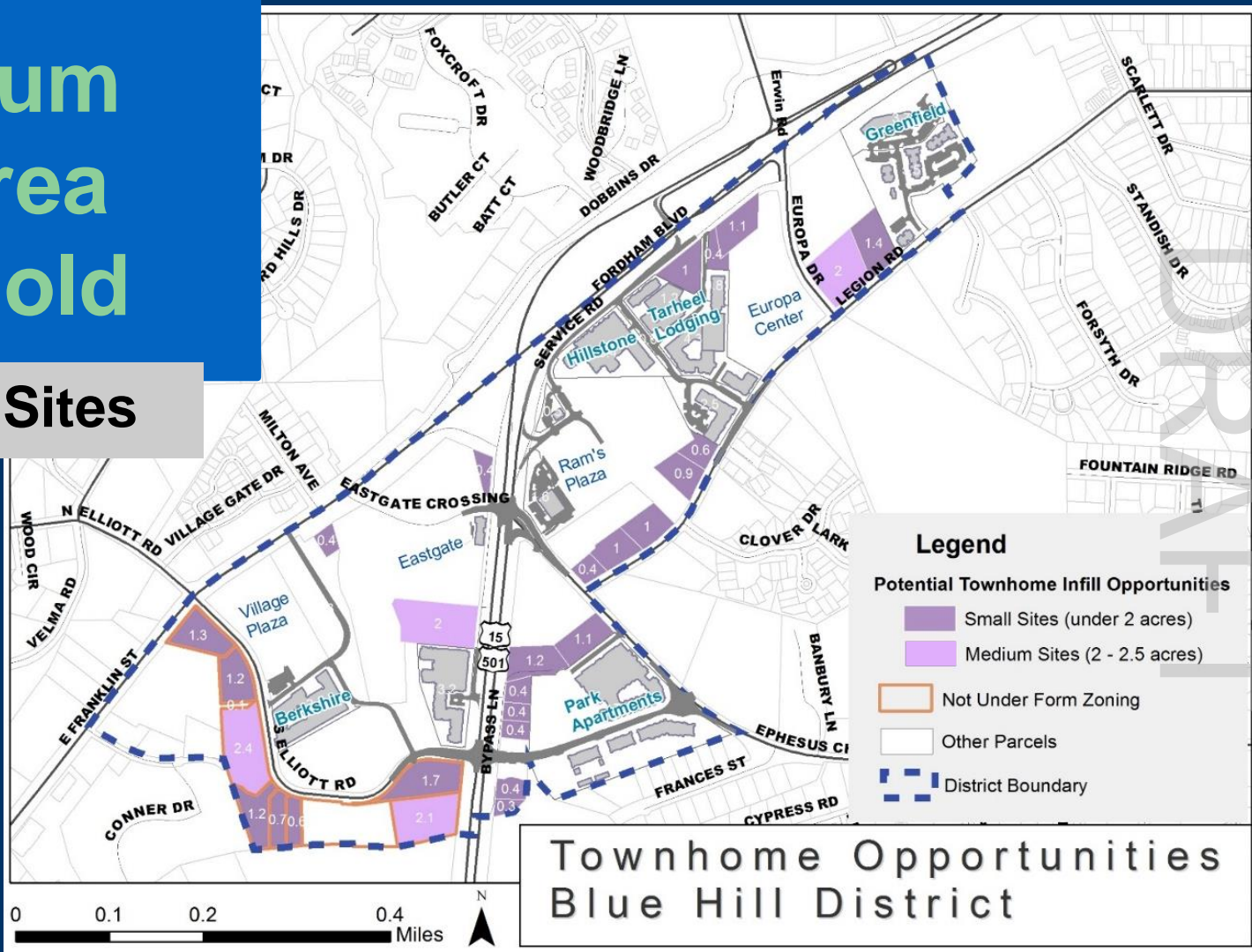
## Takeaway

- Orient the townhome standards towards site area
  - Development opportunity for smaller sites
  - Flexibility on unit count through density
- Sites 2.0 acres and below – good for encouraging townhomes
- Could increase to 2.5 acres, reflecting possible environmental constraints



# Maximum Site Area Threshold

## Candidate Sites



# Maximum Site Area Threshold

## Stacked Townhomes

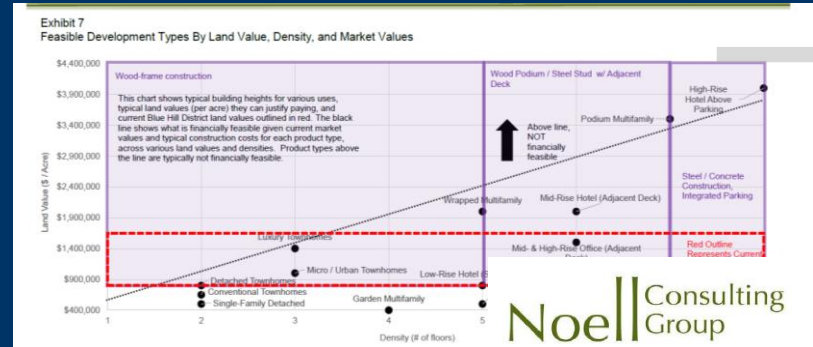
- Two units stacked vertically
- Private entrances at street level
- Increases units per acre – more efficiency for sites with high land cost
- Common in urban areas, may become desirable in Triangle market



# Maximum Site Area Threshold

## Unintended Outcomes – Too Many Townhomes?

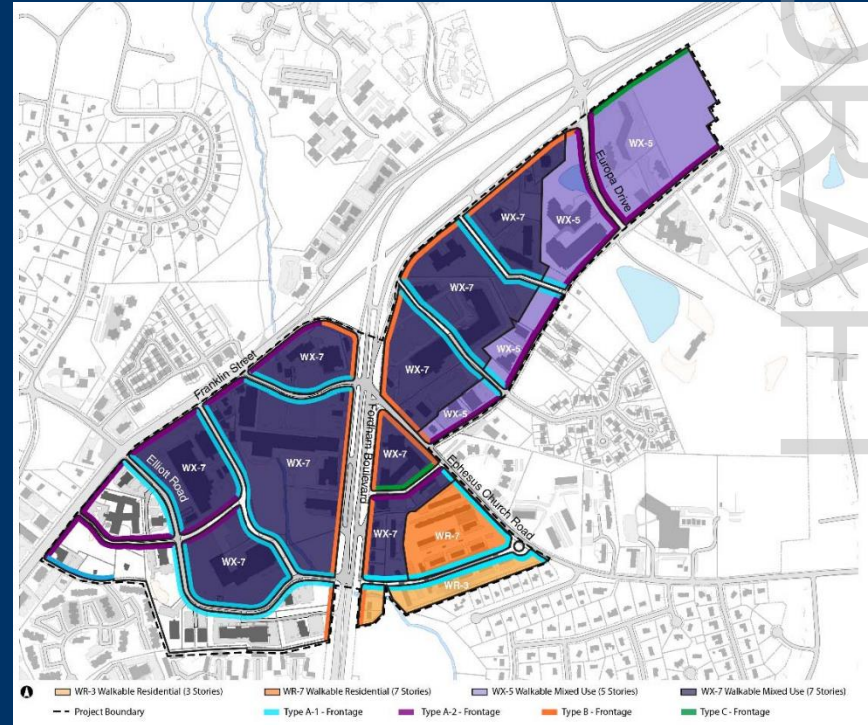
- Other uses that are viable in Blue Hill yield a higher return, per the Noell study
  - Mid-rise Office, Hotel
  - Wrapped Multifamily
- Sites that can support other uses aren't likely to develop as solely Townhomes



# Maximum Site Area Threshold

## Possible Alternative

- Create a new Subdistrict where the townhome exemption applies
- Select sites that are good townhome opportunities – more predictability
- No maximum area needed



# Median Unit Size Threshold

## Market Considerations

PRODUCT TYPE	VIABLE IN BLUE HILL?	SQUARE FOOT RANGE	SALES PRICE
 Micro/ Urban (Stacked)	YES	1,400 – 1,800	\$300,000 and up
 Conventional	NO	1,800 – 2,600	\$360,000 and up
 Luxury	YES	2,800 – 3,600	\$700,000 and up

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# Median Site Area Threshold

## Takeaway

- 1800 sq ft is the typical maximum for the Micro/Urban product type
- Setting it as the median unit size allows mix of product types

## Unintended Outcomes – Units Too Large for ‘Missing Middle’?

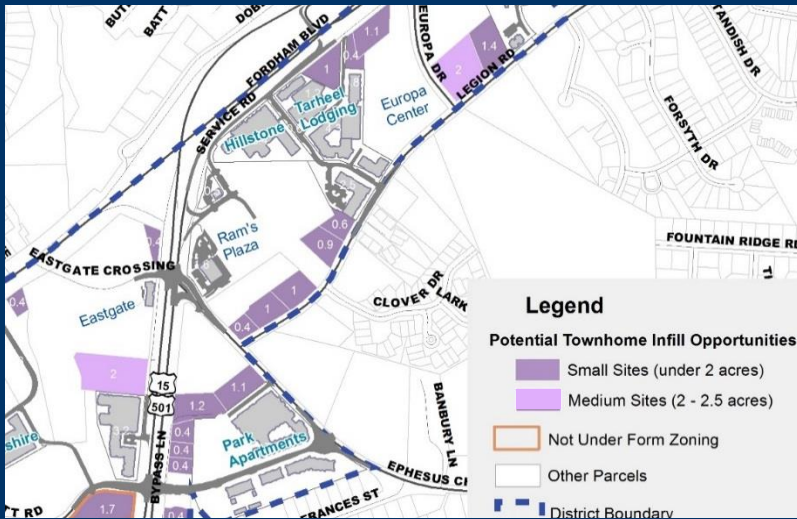
- Other viable type is considerably larger ‘Luxury’ townhomes
- Don’t expect to see units from 1800 – 2600 sq ft

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# Sites over 2 Acres

## Unintended Outcomes –

## Sites Penalized for Falling Just Above Threshold?



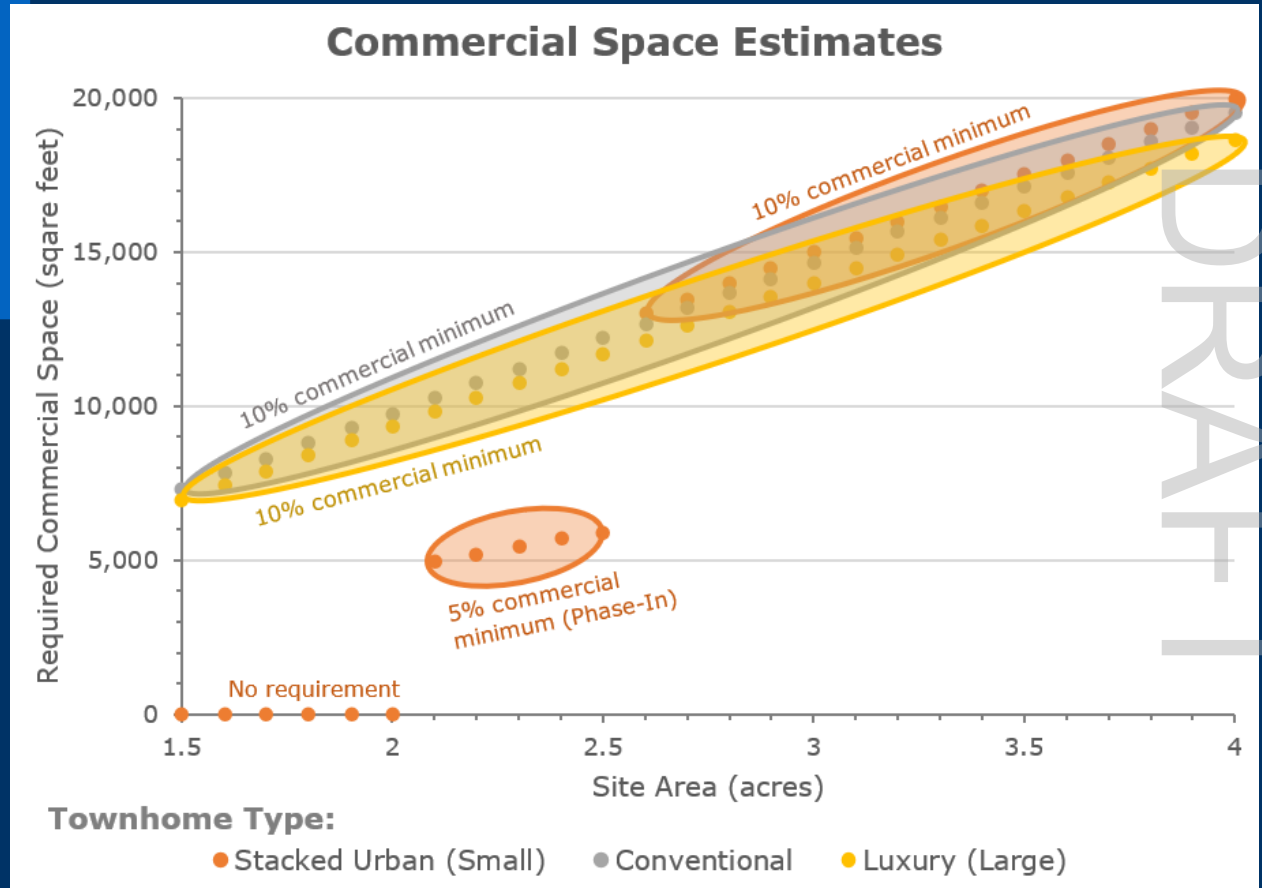
## Takeaway

- Create a 'Phase-in' with reduced commercial space for sites 2 - 2.5 acres
- Minimum 5% of building floor area or 10% of site floor area

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# Sites over 2 Acres

**Possible  
Development  
Outcomes**



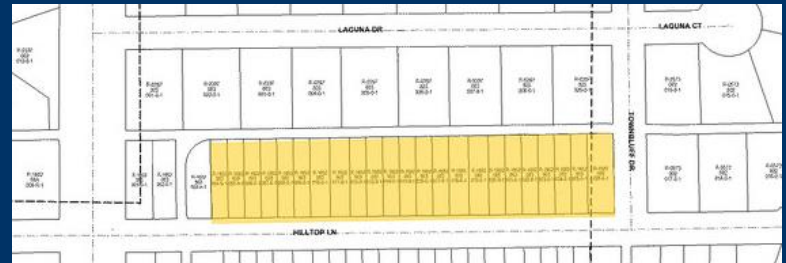
# Lot Requirements

## Current Standards

- 1700 sq ft  
Min Net Land Area
- 20 ft Min Width
- Some townhomes may need even smaller lots

## Proposed Adjustments

- For Attached Living –  
Dimensions are measured for the townhome building, not individual lots/units



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# Community Interests

- Development Opportunity for Small Infill Sites
- Broaden Variety of Housing Types
- Broaden Options for Housing Price Points



# Recommended Text Amendments

1. Exempt 'small' townhome projects from nonresidential requirement

2.0 acres max

1800 sq ft  
median unit size

2. Reduce nonresidential requirement for 'medium' townhome projects – 5% of building / 10% of site floor area

2 – 2.5 acres

1800 sq ft  
median unit size

3. Adjust lot requirements to better reflect townhomes

Measured for townhome building as a whole

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