

Anya Grahn-Federmack

From: Anya Grahn-Federmack
Sent: Monday, May 8, 2023 4:53 PM
Cc: Kevin Hornik; Tas Lagoo; Katherine Shor
Subject: FW: Statement on Housing Choices, for HDC Agenda #8, 5/9/23

Public comment about Housing Choices.

Thanks,
Anya

From: Bob/Chris Berndt [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, May 8, 2023 4:40 PM
To: Anya Grahn-Federmack <agrahn-federmack@townofchapelhill.org>
Subject: Statement on Housing Choices, for HDC Agenda #8, 5/9/23

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Dear Anya, Please distribute this email to the Historic District Commission for its meeting tomorrow night. Thank you, Chris Berndt

Dear Historic District Commission Members,

I am writing to request that you make a recommendation to the Town Council about the Housing Choices proposal on your agenda on 5/9/23. Please request that the Town's Historic Districts and National Register Districts be **exempted** from this proposed change to the Town's zoning (as is now proposed for Neighborhood Conservation Districts).

I cite specifically the Town's adopted Future Land Use Map adopted in 2020, p. 12. Under the goal #4 of promoting distinctive, safe, and attractive neighborhoods, it states:

"the Town should preserve and enhance established neighborhoods by directing dense growth to multimodal and key transportation corridors...The intent of this guiding statement is also to: **A. Protect and preserve the Town's historic neighborhoods as well as its Neighborhood Conservation Districts;**" (*emphasis added*)

The Town's Land Use Ordinance (LUMO) provisions establishing Historic Districts also highlight the importance of our historic neighborhoods to protect the special character of the Town:

"3.6.2 Historic Districts.

Purpose statement: The historic district is intended to protect and conserve the heritage and character of the Chapel Hill community by providing for the preservation of designated areas within the planning jurisdiction, including individual properties therein that embody important elements of social,

economic, political, or architectural history, and by promoting the stabilization and enhancement of property values throughout such areas.”

Please ask that the Town Council apply its adopted policy goals and statements to this Housing Choices proposal by **exempting** the Town’s Historic Districts and National Register Districts.

Sincerely,
Christine S. Berndt
Member, Board of Trustees, Preservation Chapel Hill

Anya Grahn-Federmack

From: Margaret McGuinn [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, May 8, 2023 11:58 AM
To: Anya Grahn-Federmack
Subject: Please distribute this email to the members of the HDC prior to their meeting May9

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Hello Ms. Grahn-Federmack,

I have written to the Mayor and all the council members more than once, and have heard back from only some of them, which is deeply concerning.

I am now forwarding to you an email from others in our community that expresses better than I can the range of my concerns. I ask that you forward this email to the members of the HDC prior to their meeting tomorrow, May 9. The original email follows:

We are deeply concerned about the council's determination to end single family zoning in order to increase so-called "missing-middle-housing." We are equally concerned that you are pursuing this radical change in policy without informing and consulting the citizens it will affect.

The slogan "missing middle" is deceptive. We hope not deliberately so. It suggests that your goal is to provide affordable housing for the middle class when it most emphatically is not. Instead, you are pursuing a policy of deregulation that gives carte blanche to developers whose goal is profit maximization. With no zoning regulations in place, they can tear down houses, destroy tree canopies, burden already inadequate infrastructure, and fill small lots with large luxury townhouses or crowded but lucrative student rental properties. If you wanted to prevent that outcome, you would provide guardrails and guarantees. You would look carefully at and consult with the residents of particular, diverse neighborhoods in order to ascertain how available housing might be augmented without destroying a sense of place, history, and community. You would not just throw up your hands and say, let the market decide.

As historians of race and class in the American South, we could not be more aware of how redlining, racial covenants, and, yes, zoning policies have perpetuated class and racial discrimination. We are also very much aware of how current banking and tax policies disadvantage poor people as well as of how mortgage tax exemptions and other policies privilege homeowners at the expense of renters. But that very awareness intensifies our dismay at how you are expending your time and, most important, your political capital on a policy that will alienate the very supporters you need for addressing the real problem of

affordable housing.

We want to stress the term “affordable.” For the problem of housing in Chapel Hill and elsewhere is a problem of affordability, which will not be solved by “more houses,” let alone by allowing developers to build duplexes, triplexes, etc. anywhere they see fit. It will be solved by rent control, housing subsidies, requirements that developers provide affordable units, and so on. In that regard, you seem to have simply acceded to state legislation that ties the hands of local governments. We understand the predicament that you—and we, as local citizens—are in. But why not use your position as local leaders to band together with other localities and mobilize your citizens to fight to untie those hands?

At the risk of straying from our main subject—the protection of neighborhoods from unregulated development, the importance of the democratic process, the prioritization of policies that will produce both affordable housing and a sense of place and community—we want to add a few comments on your broader development strategies.

Among your stated goals are a “vibrant and inclusive community.” Who would not support that? And yet this is what we see. A proliferation of cookie-cutter one plus fives (or variations of the same). Out of control traffic. Anemic support for parks and other public spaces. Rising real estate costs that push out local businesses. How can it be that Kidzu Children’s Museum has been priced out of its current accessible location? Not to mention that another one and fives seems destined to be built on top of Mama Dip’s? The Purple Bowl? Really? We could go on and could go back in time. You want people to frequent and choose to live downtown. But how are you going to achieve that goal with chain stores and soulless, ugly buildings?

To come back to and add another dimension to our main point: We are not opposed to mindful consideration of denser housing in certain areas, especially if density translates into affordability. We are, for example, supportive of accessory dwelling units. We know that certain neighborhoods will prefer and benefit from carefully regulated duplexes and such. We are very much in favor of “walkable neighborhoods,” although we fail to understand how you are promoting this goal given the striking absence of sidewalks and streetlights even in neighborhoods near the university and downtown.

In sum, we implore you to slow down, look beyond current slogans and nostrums, honor democracy, and have the courage to take on the issue of housing justice in ways that do not play into the hands of developers and thus further the cause of free market fundamentalism, which has done so much to undermine community and solidarity and escalate inequality in our town and throughout the country

Sincerely,

Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, Julia Cherry Spruill Professor Emeritus, Dept. of History,
UNC-Chapel Hill

Robert Korstad, Professor Emeritus, Public Policy and History, Duke University

Thank you,

Margaret McGuinn