



11-19-2025 Town Council Meeting Responses to Council Questions

ITEM #7: Omnibus Text Amendment to the Chapel Hill Land Use Management Ordinance and Town Code

Council Question:

What is staff trying to accomplish by lifting the parking maximums as described for duplexes?

Staff Response:

The goal of all the proposed changes to duplex rules is to remove barriers to building or living in a duplex. To the extent reasonable, we are trying to reduce regulatory distinctions between single-family homes and duplexes. Parking maximums are often cited as one of the more onerous restrictions the Town currently places on duplexes but not single-family homes.

One of the primary interests behind parking maximums is to reduce car dependency. This can be achieved by (1) changing the behavior of the same set of people over time (e.g., a household chooses not to buy another car) or (2) selecting against people that are more car-dependent (e.g., a household chooses not to rent or buy a duplex because it doesn't have enough parking to meet their needs). The selection pressure against more car-dependent households conflicts with the goal of making duplexes a more viable and attractive option for a wide range of households.

The updated parking restrictions for duplexes will treat them the same as single family homes. By focusing on front-yard parking, these restrictions will help to ensure that duplexes are not predominated by parking that could impact the public realm.

Council Question:

Are we able to add tree canopy requirements to single family housing? If so, can we consider a tiered system with the highest requirement (ie 40%) for single family versus lower amounts (ie. 30%) for duplexes....?

Staff Response:

We can consider adding a tree canopy requirement for single family housing as part of the full LUMO rewrite. However, we would not recommend adding it as part of the omnibus text amendments.



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ITEM #7: Omnibus Text Amendment to the Chapel Hill Land Use Management Ordinance and Town Code (Cont'd)

Council Question:

Are there places where removal of the requirements for new lots on “local” streets would create gaps in our Everywhere-to-Everywhere greenway or Safe Routes to School plans? If so, is there something we can do to ensure that those projects can go forward?

Staff Response:

The major weakness of the subdivision infrastructure requirement is that it relies on something the Town cannot control (the individual decisions of thousands of unique property owners) to provide something the Town wants (sidewalks and other infrastructure). This dynamic makes the requirement an extremely unreliable tool for delivering new infrastructure.

Paring back the requirement along “local streets” will not create meaningful gaps for high priority projects like E2E Greenways or Safe Routes to School because those projects would not generally rely on a tool that is ultimately very unreliable.

Since we cannot know with any certainty when a particular parcel of land will be subdivided, it would be imprudent for such high priority projects to rely on this requirement as an implementation tool. For example, the owners of a high-priority parcel may choose not to subdivide for years beyond the preferred timeline of the E2E project. Or they may choose to never subdivide. This uncertainty underscores the importance of not relying on the subdivision infrastructure rules as a tool for implementing E2E or Safe Routes to School.

Council Question:

What specific protections, such as a Manufactured Home Community Preservation Overlay, are being proposed as part of this text amendment to actively prevent the displacement of residents and the loss of this naturally occurring affordable housing, ensuring that our pursuit of growth does not repeat a history of excluding our most vulnerable communities from the benefits of progress?

Staff Response:

The proposed text amendment does not include zoning measures for preventing displacement. These sorts of measures were not part of the scope of this project because there are significant legal hurdles to their implementation through a zoning ordinance.

Many effective anti-displacement measures such as relocation assistance, support for resident ownership, or Town-led acquisition do not rely on zoning at all. These sorts of measures are part of the [County-Wide Manufactured Homes Strategy Action Plan](#) and – where possible – are being explored by Town staff.



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Council Question:

Will the proposed changes for manufactured home communities make it easier for them to redevelop?

Staff Response:

Making existing manufactured home communities a permitted use will not make it easier for them to redevelop into another use. Current requirements for a special use permit or rezoning are not related to the manufactured home communities' status as nonconforming uses. Requirements for a special use permit or rezoning are generally applicable around Town and do not change based on whether the existing use on a site is nonconforming.

From a zoning perspective, our current rules actually make it easier to redevelop an existing manufactured home community than to make many quality-of-life improvements for residents.

Council Question:

For section 4.4.6, minor modifications of district-specific plans, would a 19% change to the building square footage (which would qualify as a minor modification under the new language) still require the project to comply with the other stipulations of the approval (impervious surface, buffer)? Could that trigger more modifications, like additional reduction in canopy coverage (up to the 10% minor modification limit)?

Staff Response:

There are two inviolable limits to minor modifications: (1) they cannot result in a project violating a LUMO standard and (2) they cannot modify a condition of a Council approval. For example, a minor modification could never allow a project to drop below its LUMO-mandated canopy coverage requirement or buffer widths/planting requirements. Similarly, if an applicant agrees to a condition that imposes a more stringent canopy coverage requirement or more robust buffer plantings, they cannot come back to staff and ask for a minor modification that either directly or indirectly allows them to drop below those more stringent requirements.

Because minor modifications can never alter a condition of Council approval, staff and Council have the opportunity to limit flexibility for specific projects or for specific metrics. For example, most conditional zoning approvals include conditions that automatically make any change to RCD impacts or impervious surface limits a major modification.



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Council Question:

How can we add incentives for affordable housing projects that we're losing in the streamlined CZ process? Are there other community benefits we might want to incent as well (affordable retail, environmental conservation, cultural preservation . . .)?

Staff Response:

The 3-year track record of the affordable housing process strongly suggests that the Town is not losing an incentive for affordable housing projects. LIHTC projects like those successfully approved under the affordable housing process will continue to be supported by the updated process.

Additional incentives for affordable housing projects will be included in the full LUMO rewrite. These will include density bonuses and other regulatory relief that would, for example, allow a sizeable LIHTC project to move forward without requiring a conditional zoning.

The regular conditional zoning process has proven to be an effective tool for securing a wide range of community benefits without the need for special incentives. Streamlining the process creates more room – and potentially more resources – for applicants and the Town to focus on high level interests like community benefits.