

## Guiding Statements

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

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

#### Charting Our Future – What is it?

Charting Our Future is a two-phased process designed to chart the next course for the Town of Chapel Hill to the year 2049 and to make the Town’s Land Use Tools more predictable, functional, and intentional.

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.

#### Charting Our Future by Looking to the Past

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.

#### Why does Chapel Hill need to Chart Its Future?

In 2012, the Town adopted its current Comprehensive Plan entitled “*Chapel Hill 2020.*” *Chapel Hill 2020* established this Vision for the Town:

Chapel Hill will be a multicultural university town where each day celebrates connections and choice; where a dynamic downtown and networked community inspire connections among people, ideas, the region, and the world; where innovation, technology, discovery, learning, and the arts continually animate a town alive with choices, options, and opportunities to live, work, play, and prosper.

This Vision and *Chapel Hill 2020* continue to guide the Town.

Nonetheless, the Town has changed since 2012 and forces, many outside the control of the Town, are working that make it necessary to amend *Chapel Hill 2020* through the establishment of these Guiding Statements as well as the refined Future Land Use Map and all of its components. These forces

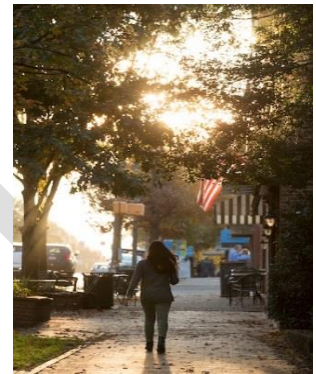


include climate change, population growth in both Chapel Hill and the Triangle Region, increasing urbanization, an aging population, an increasingly diverse population, aging housing stock, continued growth of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC), and technology changes.

## Purpose of the Guiding Statements

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;
- Foster land use decisions that recognize, integrate, and sustain the Town's unique natural environment;
- Support the Town's economic development strategies, including job creation;
- Ensure the Town's fiscal well-being by diversifying and increasing its tax base;
- Sustain and create a sense of place that is distinctive to Chapel Hill;
- Balance development/redevelopment while protecting and preserving the Town's natural environment and resources;
- Collaborate with the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the UNC Health Care System on lifelong learning, innovation, and entrepreneurship; and,
- 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.



*Chapel Hill 2020* including all of its amendments, these Guiding Statements, and the revised Future Land Use Map and all of its components constitute a long-range land use and public infrastructure plan to guide future growth, to identify areas and resources to be preserved, and to shape the Town's physical development. This guidance is necessary as land use decisions, proposed developments, and capital improvements are considered. (A land use decision is one that has a substantial impact on present or future land uses, such as zoning decisions.) The Guiding Statements include a wide variety of topics, but they are all for the purpose of informing and guiding decision making.

When applying these Guiding Statements to particular situations, such as specific development proposals, some of these Guiding Statement may compete or conflict. Although it would be ideal to always fulfill every Statement, sometimes that is not possible, and proposals must satisfy these Guiding Statements on balance. This approach recognizes that there are trade-offs and compromises, and



allows flexibility while still guiding land use and capital decisions. These Guiding Statements provide an anchor or reference point to consider when making trade-offs and compromises.

**The Guiding Statements are as follows:**

1. **Demonstrate the Town’s commitment to effectively respond to the threats associated with climate change as well as 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. Ceasing to permit low-density, auto-dominated corridors and instead, creating compact walkable, mixed-use 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. Creating a meaningful Climate Action Plan and 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. Reduced parking requirements helps to support these alternative forms of transportation and encourages the development of sustainable communities;

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*The **Public Realm** belongs to everyone. It includes the streets, squares, parks, green spaces and other outdoor places that require no key to access and are available to everyone.*

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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 supports initiatives like Vision Zero and 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 Stormwater Infrastructure” techniques that utilize natural and constructed landscape features that capture, absorb, and store rainwater; preserving existing open space; and where possible, developing new open space; improving tree canopy; daylighting creeks and other covered waterways; and creating “Green Infrastructure” connections such as habitat corridors between the natural areas of the Town.

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*Resilience, according to Triangle Regional Resilience Partnership Resilience Assessment, is the capacity of a community, business, or natural system to prevent, withstand, respond to, and recover from a disruption.*

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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. Creation of these diverse housing types is constrained by the Town’s limited ability to annex property outside of



its borders and its desire to create housing units without contributing to sprawl. The intent of this statement is to enable:

- A. The development of duplexes, triplexes, and accessory dwelling units with an approval process similar to that of single-family detached dwellings. 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;
- B. The development of townhouses, at the edge of established neighborhoods, to act as a transitional use and provide for additional housing options;
- C. The continued development of single-family detached dwelling units;
- 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.



- 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 as well as its Neighborhood Conservation Districts;
- 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, in order to expand and diversify the Town’s tax base to enable the Town’s fiscal resiliency.**



To support economic development policies, Chapel Hill will support and facilitate redevelopment and infill development, and where necessary, investigate the usage of public/private partnerships. 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.

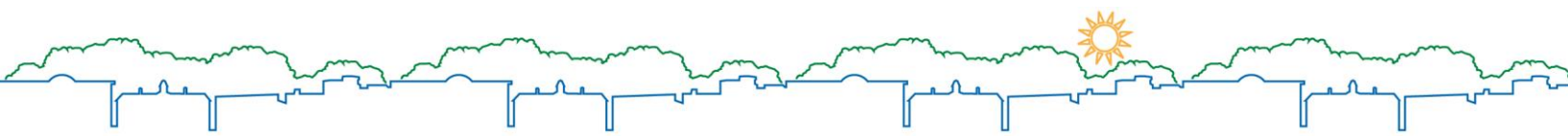
8. **Provide appropriate transitions between land uses.** Support the provision of appropriate transitions between sites and/or uses having significantly different types or intensities of land uses as well as built forms.

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:

- A. 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,
- B. 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.

As it states in *Chapel Hill 2020*, “The richness of the University—its history; its physical beauty; its intellectual, entrepreneurial and artistic capital; its world class health care enterprise; the dynamic idealism of students and faculty—is part of the [Town’s] vision. The Town of Chapel Hill’s identity is based, in large part, on the presence of UNC. Chapel Hill is a college town. However, the relationship between the two institutions is much deeper than identity. The destinies of the Town and the University are inextricably linked, and strengthening the strategic alignment on issues of economic development; transportation; housing; student housing; recreational, open space, and cultural amenities; and other quality of life issues are essential to the Town and UNC’s sustainability and resiliency. To that end, the Town should continue to:

- “Aspire to use the intellectual and financial capital of the University and the UNC Health Care System to help the Town flourish,” as stated in *Chapel Hill 2020*;
- Work with UNC to develop economic strategies, especially related to research and development as well as entrepreneurship;
- Enhance the relationship between students and permanent residents;
- Coordinate transportation initiatives;
- Recognize the importance of UNC’s cultural and natural resources including Carolina North, Ackland Art Museum, and Morehead Planetarium and Science Center and work with the UNC to utilize these resources to the benefit of both the Town and the University; and,
- Work with the UNC to help mitigate the impact of student rental housing in established single-family neighborhoods and to provide safe and sanitary off-campus housing for students.

