



Planning Department Administrative and Initiative Updates

From: Britany Waddell, Director of Planning

To: Chris Blue, Town Manager

This memo serves to provide an update on the major projects and administrative updates our department has worked on over the last few months. We have been focusing on our major initiatives, such as Complete Community Implementation and the Land Use Management Ordinance (LUMO) rewrite. We have also worked to refine our internal and external communication with an emphasis on how we deliver information to this council.

1. Complete Community Implementation

We look forward to what we can achieve in Chapel Hill as we continue to manage development wisely and strive for a healthy and vibrant future. We began implementing Complete Community by incorporating the Complete Community strategy into our review process. Using clear messaging and development goals, we support applicants in submitting projects that will provide connected, environmentally sensitive development. This also enables staff to have discussions related to the needs of the community and expectations of our council.

Development Review - We have begun to incorporate Complete Community involvement into our review process by assessing our current development applications and checklists provided to applicants.

Placemaking - We have also discussed with Community Arts and Culture the possibility of utilizing public art for placemaking and how to include that into a full evaluation of the project.

Community Engagement Analysis - We are preparing an equity evaluation for community engagement and focusing on how to analyze demographic information related to our stakeholder engagement. It is essential that our department, which has frequent communication with the public, provides up-to-date and transparent information that is accessible to all residents.

Office of Mobility and Greenways (OMG) - We're currently recruiting staff for our Office of Mobility and Greenways that will focus on developing plans for greenways and the realization of Everywhere2Everywhere Greenways. We look forward to a town announcement on a formal office launch in the coming months.

2. Land Use Management Ordinance (LUMO) Engagement

We anticipate receiving policy guidance when we join council for the October and November work sessions. Staff will start conversations with Council on key decision points as we prepare to begin the drafting of the LUMO this winter. Staff will provide options for updated zoning and use matrices. Council will also receive updates on potential design guidelines for new construction and strategies for promoting affordable housing.

Practitioner Focus Groups. In October, staff held focus groups on two themes: Affordable Housing and Design Standards. The focus group input will inform draft design guidelines for conversation with the Council. The focus group is made up of individuals from community partners, non-profits, town staff, and advisory board representatives. Participants have expertise in the topics being discussed and can provide insight into the associated needs and concerns. This focus group will help us identify key issues, refine our strategies, and identify possible solutions for the community.

We anticipate that these continued discussions will give us a deeper understanding of how the LUMO can be adapted to fit the needs of the community and generate a more concentrated document. We look forward to engaging the community and Council in the coming months to make sure that the LUMO reflects the interests of the community.

Planning Ambassadors. We've recruited Planning Ambassadors that will receive training related to the LUMO and its adoption process. Staff focused recruitment efforts on communities that have been historically under-engaged in our Town processes. The Ambassadors represent multiple populations such as seniors living on fixed incomes, students, renters, and low-income residents. We're encouraging these residents to be engaged in their communities and participate throughout this multi-year process.

We are providing the Ambassadors with a variety of resources to help them understand the project. They'll have direct access to Town staff to learn about the LUMO and can provide feedback that will help shape the document. We'll also host a series of public engagement sessions to engage the community, including members of the Planning Ambassadors program, and provide an opportunity to share their thoughts and opinions. These events will help raise awareness of the LUMO process, create a better understanding of the document, and provide an opportunity to ask questions.

3. Summer Successes

Our department has prioritized improved communication and completed a few team projects to assess our current procedures.

- Evaluating the technical review team process
- Standardization of comments for project review
- Streamlining Packets
- Restarting archival records management

We've refined our internal and external communication by creating a layout redesign of our staff reports. We've tried to improve our council packets by producing documents which:

- Inform council deliberations with helpful guidance
- Reduce redundancies
- Highlight key points and areas of public concern

The redesign also focuses on highlighting the elements of Complete Community in project analysis and elevating community benefits.

Finally, staff presentations have been simplified and will now follow the applicant's overview of their project. We're working on slide templates for applicants and communicating any major issues that staff have on projects based on their analysis or council guidance.

We welcome any feedback you have so far on the staff report, revised packet, or presentations.

Thank you for your time and attention.