

Staff Memorandum



Charting Our Future – Consider Changes to the DRAFT Focus Area Maps & Principles.

Staff:

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Background:

- On [April 5, 2017](#)¹, the Town Council initiated a project to Rewrite the Town’s Land Use Management Ordinance (LUMO). The Town Council requested that the ordinance rewrite process begin with an effort to refine the Future Land Use Map (FLUM), called the Land Use Plan in *Chapel Hill 2020*, to affirm what is not expected to change and to provide an opportunity to have conversations about future planning that would inform the LUMO Rewrite process.
- Since the beginning of 2019, the Town Council has reviewed the various components of the refined Future Land Use Map. This review included the [Guiding Statements on March 13, 2019](#)² and the [Blueprint](#)³ or “rough draft” of the Focus Area Maps and Principles on May 1, 2019. The Council Committee on Economic Sustainability also reviewed drafts of this Blueprint on [April 5, 2019](#)⁴ and June 7, 2019.
- On [June 26, 2019](#)⁵, the Town Council authorized staff to engage with the community on the draft Future Land Use Map.
- The Town Council discussed substantive changes to the Focus Area Maps, in order to make the maps less prescriptive, at a work session on [November 18, 2019](#)⁶ and generalized findings from the engagement activities on the DRAFT Focus Area Maps and Principles on [November 20, 2019](#)⁷.
- The Council Committee of Economic Sustainability, on [December 13, 2019](#)⁸, reviewed a “test” Focus Area Map to determine if this revised approach made the Focus Area Maps less prescriptive while also meeting the Project goals of predictability, functionality, and intentionality.

¹ http://chapelhill.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view_id=7&clip_id=3077&meta_id=156700

² <https://chapelhill.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=3881199&GUID=00667D70-C56A-4704-BF59-DD4EB508470A&Options=&Search=>

³ <https://chapelhill.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=3931189&GUID=BF305E95-EA99-4343-B43C-32279777CBB5&Options=&Search=>

⁴ <https://www.townofchapelhill.org/businesses/council-economic-sustainability-committee>

⁵ <https://www.townofchapelhill.org/Home/Components/Calendar/Event/15075/15?curm=6&cury=2019>

⁶ <https://www.townofchapelhill.org/Home/Components/Calendar/Event/17071/15?curm=11&cury=2019>

⁷ <https://chapelhill.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4244231&GUID=F49AEFE9-F8FF-4D5D-A5EC-A357EEE7729A>

⁸ <https://www.townofchapelhill.org/businesses/council-economic-sustainability-committee>



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Planning Commission Recommendation: Staff met with the sub-committee of the Planning Commission six times to facilitate their discussions on the September 5, 2019 draft Focus Area Maps and Principles. The Planning Commission formed this sub-committee in order to take a deep dive into the draft and bring back their recommendations to the full Planning Commission. The Planning Commission began discussing the recommendations from the sub-committee on December 3 and will conclude their discussions on January 7, 2020.

Changes to Focus Area Maps & Principles

Changes to Focus Area Maps Applicable to all Focus Areas:

At the Council Committee on Economic Sustainability, the Committee reviewed a “test map” for a new approach to the Focus Area Maps. This new approach separates the Focus Areas into sub-areas and lists the appropriate Character Types within those sub-areas. (See the attachment labelled “DRAFT FOR APPROACH ONLY”.) If the Council formally endorses this revised approach this evening, the Project consultant, which is Kimley-Horn, will prepare revised maps for each Focus Area. This change to less prescriptive Focus Area Maps will address many community comments. Other general Focus Area Map changes requested by community include:

1. On the Focus Area Maps, depict the areas subject to Development Agreements and the terms for those Agreements;
2. Ensure labels are properly located, especially the label for the Chapel Hill cemetery; and,
3. Include in the Legend, “See the Mobility Plan for more information about proposed transportation improvements.”

Add the following Focus Area Principles to all Focus Areas:

1. In general, building height and massing, at the front setback line, as well as the streetscape should be roughly the same on both sides of the street in order to properly frame the street. In some instances, the core heights may differ from one side of the street to the other due to site constraints and surrounding land uses.
2. In order to ensure a human-scaled built environment, as building height increases at the front setback line, sizable street trees, breaks in street walls, and wider sidewalks should be utilized, as appropriate to the surrounding context.
3. Utilize climate responsive design including green infrastructure, green stormwater infrastructure (including within Town rights of way), living landscapes, and other vegetative solutions to mitigate the urban heat island effect and create more shaded and walkable streets throughout the Town as well as to mitigate flooding and stormwater concerns.
4. As large parcels redevelop, regulating plans, which include a street/multi-modal grid, should be provided in order to address connectivity and activation.



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Add the following for Focus Areas containing Gateways to Town:

For the Focus Areas that contain gateways to Town, North Martin Luther King Jr.; North 15-501; NC 54; and South 15-501 Gateway, add the following Focus Area Principle:

Because the Town is a Tree City USA, as designated by the Arbor Day Foundation, significant tree stands at Town entrances, as appropriate to the location, should be maintained and/or enhanced. For example, when entering Town from the rural buffer, dense development may be jarring, and consequently, density should build from the edge of the rural buffer toward the more developed portions of Town. In all instances, the entrances to Town must signal that you have entered a different and distinct community and must demonstrate the uniqueness that is Chapel Hill.

Changes Specific to Each Focus Area

Below, listed by Focus Area, are suggested map changes and changes to the Focus Area Principles. These changes are compiled from the community input received during recent engagement opportunities. (Contextual information pertinent to the change is included in parenthesis next to the suggested change)

1. North 15-501 Focus Area

- a. Remove the Parks & Green/Gathering Space designation on the south side of Estes Drive except where the Town owns parcels, such as the Community Park, or expects to own parcels in the near future; (See Map labelled N. 15-501 – Proposed Changes)
- b. Depict the area on the west side of Summerfield Crossing, which is located in the floodplain, as Parks & Green/Gathering Spaces; (See Map labelled N. 15-501 – Proposed Changes)
- c. Show the outline of the Blue Hill District on the N. 15-501 Focus Area Map;
- d. Remove the designation for the American Legion Property and label as “Area subject to concurrent planning process” and,
- e. Remove the South Estes Drive Public Housing Community from the Focus Area and retain the existing Land Use Category, which is Medium Density Residential.

2. Downtown

- a. The north side of West Rosemary should be limited to four stories with no permitted core height;
- b. The upper limit for Downtown core heights should be eight stories (The current limit in the Land Use Management Ordinance is:
 - TC-1 – 44 feet at the front setback/Core height of 60 feet
 - TC-2 – 44 feet at the front setback /Core height of 90 feet
 - TC-3 – 44 feet at the front setback /Core height of 120 feet)



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- c. Along West Franklin, the height limit should be 3 stories at the front setback line. (The current limit is 44 feet);
- d. Include in the map key or the Sub-Area Matrix the following:
“Adjacent to lower scale residential uses, step backs or other transitional methods are usually necessary to ensure harmonious transitions.”
- e. Remove the parcels on the north side of E. Rosemary, east of Spring Lane from the Focus Area and include the area in the new Traditional University Supportive Uses Land Use Category. (See the map labelled Downtown – Removal of Parcels along Spring Lane.)
- f. Overlay the Historic Districts on the Downtown Focus Area Map and revise the text to reflect the influence of these Historic Districts on the Downtown.
- g. Include the following Focus Area Principle:

When core heights are utilized, large step backs from the front façade are desirable to create a more human-scaled public realm;

3. North & South Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.

For both the North and South Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard Focus Areas from I-40 to Hillsborough Street, update the vision for these areas to explicitly state that the vision for this corridor as follows:

At larger Bus Rapid Transit Stations, move buildings (development) closer to the street in order to create highly functional, walkable destinations for both transit riders and adjacent neighborhoods. Between these BRT stations, buildings are pushed back with significant front yard landscaping.

4. South Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.

- a. To reinforce the goal to extend Downtown to Hillsborough Street:
 - i. Depict land uses that reinforce the goal to extend Downtown to Hillsborough Street;
 - ii. From Rosemary to Hillsborough Street, permit core building heights up to eight stories with four stories at the front setback line; and,
 - iii. Include in the map key or the Sub-Area Matrix the following:
“Adjacent to lower scale residential uses, step backs or other transitional methods are usually necessary to ensure harmonious transitions.”
- b. As previously decided, remove the Glenn Heights neighborhood from the S. Martin Luther King Jr. Focus Area.



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5. **NC 54** – Increase the building height at the corner of NC 54 and Fordham Road to six stories
6. **South 15-501 Gateway/Southern Village Park and Ride** – No changes except change the name to reflect the new name of S. Columbia and include the parcels adjacent to Southern Village as previously discussed on October 2, 2019.

Next Steps:

Regarding the remaining Future Land Use Map (FLUM) components, discussion and consideration of the following elements remain:

1. Precedent images of Character Types;
2. Revised Map Book; and,
3. Revised Guiding Statements.

Staff intends to hold open houses in the near future for both the Precedent Images and the Map Book, and additional discussion on the Guiding Statements is forthcoming in February, as currently planned. Staff anticipates having revised Focus Area Maps and Principles available for Council review in early February.

