



April 12, 2024 Legislative Breakfast Highlights and Talking Points

Complete Community Vision, Framework, and Strategy

In May 2023, the Chapel Hill Town Council updated our Comprehensive Plan to include our Complete Community vision and framework. Through Complete Community, we are taking a new approach to planning and development aimed at ensuring our Town will be more inclusive, sustainable, and economically competitive now and in the future.

At present, we are making changes – across our organization and in how we engage the community - to plan for the future holistically and strategically. Key goals for Complete Community are to

1. Create a Town that is green and sustainable – adding more housing while also staying green.
2. Expand and deliver a new Everywhere to Everywhere Greenway network that serves both transportation and recreational purposes so that residents can walk, bike, or roll to more of the things they need.
3. Provide broader community benefits such as parks, greenspaces, and neighborhood retail townwide – including for existing neighborhoods that are currently underserved by specific amenities.
4. Preserve ecologically sensitive areas.

At present, our concrete goals include creating 485 new housing units each year, adding 25 miles of new greenways, and continuing to create and preserve affordable housing in Chapel Hill.

With help from a federal Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant, we are completing a feasibility study for the Everywhere-to-Everywhere greenways network. Supporting that work is our new Office of Mobility and Greenways. In addition, we are updating land use policies through our Land Use Management Ordinance (LUMO) update, creating a Natural Areas map, and starting on a new Parks Master Plan.

Downtown Updates

- **Innovation District**
 - The Junction opened in 2023, bringing together several organizations that provide support to start-ups, including Innovate UNC, Launch Chapel Hill, and most recently Durham Tech’s Small Business Center.
 - 6-month milestones include:
 - Establishing a thriving co-working community of more than 180 members who receive free innovation programming and support. Our diverse group of members include solo workers, startup organization like Eats2Seats, Takeout Central and Level the Playing Field, and members of industry including Hutch Law, and community support initiatives such as Durham Tech, SBTDC, UNC Law Clinic, and Launch Chapel Hill.

- Offering and hosting 45+ unique Innovate Carolina events and programming to the community, including panel discussions, fireside chats, design thinking workshops and networking sessions.
 - Engaging 100+ companies across diverse industries, including Cisco, Deloitte, Fidelity, Gensler, Idea Fund Partners, Infosys, Siemens, Steelcase, Volvo and others.
 - Hosting 3,200+ attendees for community events and programming.
 - Collaborating with 10+ UNC schools including medicine, nursing, business, journalism and media, data science and society, information and library science and public health.
 - Giving 200+ tours to the public who are interested in learning more about our innovation community.
- The **East Rosemary Parking Deck** is slated to open Summer 2024 and will support the development and expansion of the Junction’s co-working program and business ecosystem.
- Business Support Efforts
 - **Downtown Small Business Grant Program:** Summer 2023, the department launched a program to support existing Downtown businesses facing an imminent need to relocate due to redevelopment.
 - \$100,000 to be distributed amongst 3 existing Downtown Businesses
- Streetscape and Mobility Plans
 - The first phase, the mobility plan, concluded late last summer and focused on how our street network functions.
 - **The second phase, the public right-of-way plan, will result in block-specific designs to improve pedestrian experience, achieve economic vitality, and creates safety/accessibility.** The first round of public and stakeholder engagement began just this week.
- Wayfinding Plan
 - The Downtown Together Taskforce has begun a strategic wayfinding and signage plan project that'll be concurrent to the public right-of-way plan

Affordable Housing Updates

- The Town Council unanimously approved the Town’s first comprehensive [Affordable Housing Plan](#)¹, charting the path forward for our work over the next five years. If fully implemented, the Plan would result in as many as 900 new affordable homes and the preservation of as many as 400 affordable homes in Chapel Hill.
- The Town has awarded more than \$22 million in affordable housing funding over past 5 years
 - This funding supports the development and preservation of more than 1,000 units
- The Town is working toward the launch of a \$20 million Affordable Housing Loan Fund
 - Nearly \$6 million in seed funding dedicated from the Town and UNC Health
 - Anticipate fund will grow to \$20 million fund, which is anticipated to support more than 600 affordable housing units
- The Town is planning for the development of 350 affordable units on Town Land

¹ <https://www.chapelhillaffordablehousing.org/read-our-plan>

- Anticipate breaking ground on three projects in 2024: Trinity Court Redevelopment, Tanyard Branch Trace, Homestead Gardens
- The Town is exploring affordable housing development on six other Town-owned sites
- The Town works closely with market-rate developers to create mixed-income communities
 - The Town Council approved more than 500 affordable units in market-rate developments over the past 5 years.
- To learn more about the Town’s affordable housing efforts, see: www.chapelhillaffordablehousing.org.

NSBRT and Transit

- The **North South Bus Rapid Transit (NSBRT)** is a landmark project for Chapel Hill and our region. It will help reimagine a critical transportation corridor and along with making buses faster, more reliable, and easier to use, it will also include bicycle, pedestrian and safety improvements that will benefit all users. NSBRT supports our Complete Community, Everywhere to Everywhere Greenways and sustainability priorities, along with local and regional transportation goals.
 - Excited to share that the project was recommended for funding in the President’s FY25 budget, a critical step in securing \$146.4 million in federal funding.
 - We hope the State will join our local and federal partners in assisting with funding for this priority project. The project was submitted for SPOT funding and \$25M would help ensure that this project can move forward.
- **State Operating Assistance** for Transit systems, also known as SMAP, has stayed flat for over 20 years (\$30-\$34M), despite growth in costs and an increase in urban transit systems.
 - Around 2% of NCDOT’s budget is dedicated to transit and greenways/trails - urban systems in North Carolina, like Chapel Hill Transit, have critical funding needs and having the State as a partner, through an increase in SMAP funding, is essential to seeing local and regional transit investments move forward in support of the state’s multimodal transportation goals.

Vision Zero,

Bike-Ped and Roadway Safety

Legislative Priority #1 – Strategic Transportation Infrastructure (STI) law ([STI LAW GS 136.89.11](#)²) reform

- The current STI law puts a cap on non-highway funding AND prohibits funding for standalone bike-ped projects (currently bike-ped projects can only be funded as part of roadway projects). A minimum of 90 percent must be spent on highway projects, while 4 percent must be spent on all other modes. The remaining 6 percent is flexible. Question for NCDOT: How can we make sure non-highway projects secure more of that 6 percent?
- The proposed [House Bill 198](#)³ would remove the funding restriction

Rather than establishing these minimums, we’d suggest increased local control and discretion of funds. Funding should match what is in any given area’s Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) or other stated local priorities. MTPs are reviewed and approved by NCDOT and signed off on by Division Engineers. DCHC-MPO’s MTP clearly prioritizes non-highway funding however due to the STI law, we end up with a massive backlog of non-highway

² https://www.ncleg.gov/EnactedLegislation/Statutes/PDF/BySection/Chapter_136/GS_136-189.11.pdf

³ <https://www.ncleg.gov/BillLookup/2023/H198>

projects. A shift towards more local control would mean if a community wanted to spend 100 percent on highway projects, that's fine, but if a community like ours wants to spend 50 percent on non-highway projects that should also be allowed.

Program Funding Priorities

- Safe Routes to School (SRTS): Continued funding for the SRTS grant program as well as program expansion to include funds for infrastructure.
- Governor's Highway Safety Program (GHSP): Continued funding and leadership (Mark Ezzell) for GHSP. Continue to fund grants that prioritize outreach and education as well as enforcement.

Major Challenge: Improving safety on NCDOT-owned roads

- The vast majority of Chapel Hill's bicycle, pedestrian, and vehicular serious injuries and fatalities occur on state-owned roads (this isn't unique to Chapel Hill).
- To address this, fundamental changes are needed at NCDOT. This will mean prioritizing safety over throughput (Level of Service) and speed.
 - To make safety improvements under current conditions, NCDOT's process requires traffic impact assessments to show that proposed changes to their roads won't negatively impact Level of Service.
- Need a quicker and easier process for approving pilot projects and quick builds on state-owned roads.
- Reform NCDOT Traffic Calming Policy to allow for traffic calming interventions on more state-owned roads.

Additional challenges with NCDOT

- Express Design process often ignores local context and planning – Examples: NCDOT Project U-6067 and SPOT Project Submission H230770
- SPOT Safety Program – Need for increased overall funding and cap (\$400k) along with quicker project implementation. Chapel Hill has been waiting 2 years for a crosswalk improvement on Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd, where there have been multiple pedestrian fatalities.

Policy and Funding Interests for NC General Assembly

- Advocating for the removal of funding restrictions in the Strategic Transportation Infrastructure (STI) law through House Bill 198.
- Continuing funding for the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) grant program and the Governor's Highway Safety Program (GHSP).
- Seeking support from the North Carolina General Assembly for SPOT funding for the North South Bus Rapid Transit project and an increase in SMAP funding.
- Advocating for increased funding for non-highway projects and local control of funds.
- Addressing safety concerns on NCDOT-owned roads and advocating for changes in NCDOT processes and policies.