



# CLOSE THE LEGISLATIVE HEARING AND CONSIDER ADOPTING THE COMPLETE COMMUNITY STRATEGY AS AN AMENDMENT TO THE TOWN'S COMPREHENSIVE PLAN, CHAPEL HILL 2020

## SUMMARY REPORT

TOWN OF CHAPEL HILL  
Mary Jane Nirdlinger, Deputy Town Manager  
Britany Waddell, Planning Director  
Judy Johnson, Assistant Planning Director

### MEETING DATE

May 10, 2023

### TOWN MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

That the Council adopt the resolution to update the Town's Comprehensive Plan to include the *Complete Community Strategy* and its components.

### UPDATES SINCE THE HEARING

Since the April 19, 2023 Hearing, staff has been working to:

- Revisions to the Everywhere to Everywhere Greenways map including major destinations such as schools on the map.
- Continued revisions to the Natural Areas Map to incorporate park spaces and future open spaces on the base map. Staff is scheduling review of the map at upcoming advisory board meetings and review by partner agencies.

### PROJECT VISION

The *Complete Community Strategy* has several objectives including:

- To build consensus about where and how to build.
- To determine where complete communities can be advanced, exploring trade-offs and opportunities.
- To identify strategic projects to implement the Town's vision for a connected and sustainable future.

### PROJECT OVERVIEW

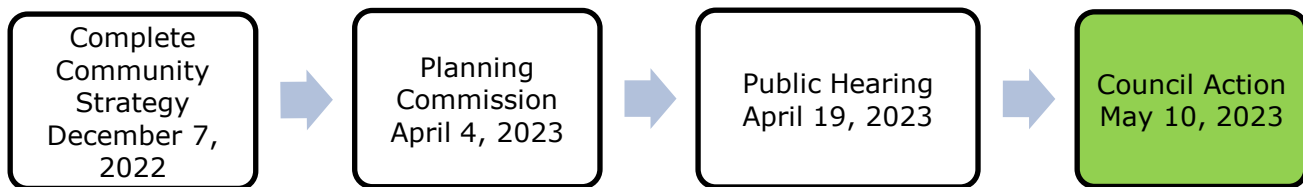
The *Complete Community Strategy* is a Council-led initiative to determine a new approach toward housing creation in Chapel Hill. The strategy details how Chapel Hill can purposefully grow to meet the projected housing needs. The Council adopted a resolution endorsing the *Complete Community Strategy* on [December 7, 2022](#)<sup>1</sup> acknowledging that an amendment to the Town's Comprehensive Plan, *Chapel Hill 2020*, would need to occur to incorporate the Strategy into the Plan.

### DECISION POINTS

Does the Council agree with the following steps:

- Update the Town's Comprehensive Plan with the *Complete Community Strategy* as the guiding vision.
- Update the Town's Comprehensive Plan to include the Everywhere to Everywhere Greenways Plan
- Provide guidance on the creation of the Natural Areas Map and next steps.

### PROCESS



### ATTACHMENTS

1. Technical Report
2. Draft Staff Presentation
3. Resolution A
4. Draft Complete Community Strategy, Amendment to Chapel Hill 2020

<sup>1</sup> <https://chapelhill.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=5955330&GUID=C74831CF-A66F-46CC-BC7D-762C09193961>



# TECHNICAL REPORT

## KEY CONSIDERATIONS

### CONSISTENCY WITH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN THEMES

*Complete Community Strategy* aligns with key themes established in *Chapel Hill 2020* including:

- **A Place for Everyone:** *Complete Community Strategy* includes recommendations:
  - Family-friendly, accessible exterior and interior places throughout the town for a variety of active uses (PFE.1).
  - A creative place to live, work, and play because of Chapel Hill's arts and culture (PFE.2).
  - A range of housing options for current and future residents (PFE.3).
  - A welcoming and friendly community that provides all people with access to opportunities (PFE.4).
  - A community of high civic engagement and participation (PFE.5).
- **Community Prosperity and Engagement:** *Complete Community Strategy* includes recommendations for promoting:
  - Promote a safe, vibrant, and connected (physical and person) community (CPE.3).
- **Getting Around:** *Complete Community Strategy* promotes expanding and delivering new greenways for everyday life. The strategy meets goals:
  - A well-conceived and planned, carefully thought out, integrated, and balanced transportation system that recognizes the importance of automobiles, but encourages and facilitates the growth and use of other means of transportation such as bicycle, pedestrian, and public transportation options (GA.1).
  - A connected community that links neighborhoods, businesses, and schools through the provision of greenways, sidewalks, bike facilities, and public transportation (GA.2).
  - Connect to a comprehensive regional transportation system (GA.3).
  - Make an adaptable transportation system to support both dense and suburban development (GA.4).
  - Create a comprehensive transportation system that provides everybody safe and reasonable access to all the community offers (GA.5).
  - A transportation system that accommodates transportation needs and demands while mitigating congestion and promoting air quality, sustainability, and energy conservation (GA.6).
- **Good Places, New Spaces:** *Complete Community Strategy* sets policy objectives for efficient land use including:
  - A vibrant, diverse, pedestrian-friendly, and accessible downtown with opportunities for growing office, retail, residential, and cultural development and activity (GPNS.2).
  - A development decision-making process that provides clarity and consistency with the goals of the Chapel Hill 2020 comprehensive plan (GPNS.3).
  - A range of neighborhood types that addresses residential, commercial, social, and cultural needs and uses while building and evolving Chapel Hill's character for residents, visitors, and students (GPNS.5).

- A community that welcomes and supports change and creativity (GPNS.6).
- Open and accessible common spaces for community gathering, cultural uses, and community development (GPNS.7).
- **Nurturing Our Community** *Complete Community Strategy* focus on:
  - Become a model for North Carolina and beyond in wisely and justly reducing waste in a way that minimizes local environmental impact without imposing upon the environmental and social rights of others (NOC.1).
  - Maintain and improve air quality and water quality, and manage stormwater to heal local waterways and conserve biological ecosystems within the town boundaries and the Extra Territorial Jurisdiction (NOC.2).
  - Protect, acquire, and maintain natural/undeveloped open spaces and historic sites in order to protect wildlife corridors, provide recreation, and ensure safe pedestrian and bicycle connections. These spaces could include, among other things, Significant Natural Heritage Areas (SNHA) lands adjacent to and connecting various properties such as riparian lands, etc. (NOC.3).
  - Support the Parks and Recreation Master Plan and the Greenways Master Plan to provide recreation opportunities and ensure safe pedestrian and bicycle connections (NOC.4).
  - Adopt an integrated development review process that is fair and transparent and that incorporates the Chapel Hill 2020 environmental goals (NOC.5).
- **Town and Gown Collaboration:** *Complete Community Strategy* offers opportunities for collaborative:
  - Take full advantage of ideas and resources to create a thriving economy and incorporate and utilize the intellectual capital that the University and Town create (TGC.1).
  - Improve and expand access to the arts, culture, and intellectual pursuits for both the University and the Town (TGC.2).
  - The University and Town will collaborate to improve downtown parking options that support business, cultural, and academic purposes (TGC.3).
  - Housing for students that is safe, sound, affordable, and accessible and meets a demonstrated need conducive to educational and maturational needs of students, and housing for Town, University, and the Health Care System employees that encourages them to reside in the community (TGC.4).
  - The University, the UNC Health Care System, and the Town will coordinate closely to manage development in ways that respect history, traditions, and the environment while fostering revitalization and innovation (TGC.5).
  - Promote access for all residents to health-care centers, public services, and active lifestyle opportunities (TGC.6).

## **CONSISTENCY WITH FUTURE LAND USE MAP (FLUM) UPDATE**

*Complete Community Strategy* strongly reflects the principles of growth and land use described in the FLUM Update. Specifically, The guiding statements for the FLUM include:

- Foster land use decisions that recognize, integrate, and sustain the Town's unique natural environment;
- 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;
- Create, in strategic locations, compact, well-designed mixed use communities focused on transit and multimodal transportation systems that effectively respond to the need to reduce vehicular traffic and the Town's carbon footprint give 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.

## CONSISTENCY WITH LAND USE MANAGEMENT ORDINANCE (LUMO) STANDARDS

*Complete Community Strategy* meets the standards set in Section 4.2(c) of Chapel Hill's Land Use Management Ordinance:

- The proposed amendment is consistent with the goals and policies in the comprehensive plan, *Chapel Hill 2020*, and
- The proposed amendment enhances the public health, safety, and welfare of the town.

## ELEMENTS

The *Chapel Hill 2020* Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2012 as a framework for the community and for the Town in managing Chapel Hill's future. Since 2012, many new components to the Town's Comprehensive Plan have been adopted. The *Complete Community Strategy* would add an important, guiding vision to the various comprehensive plan elements.

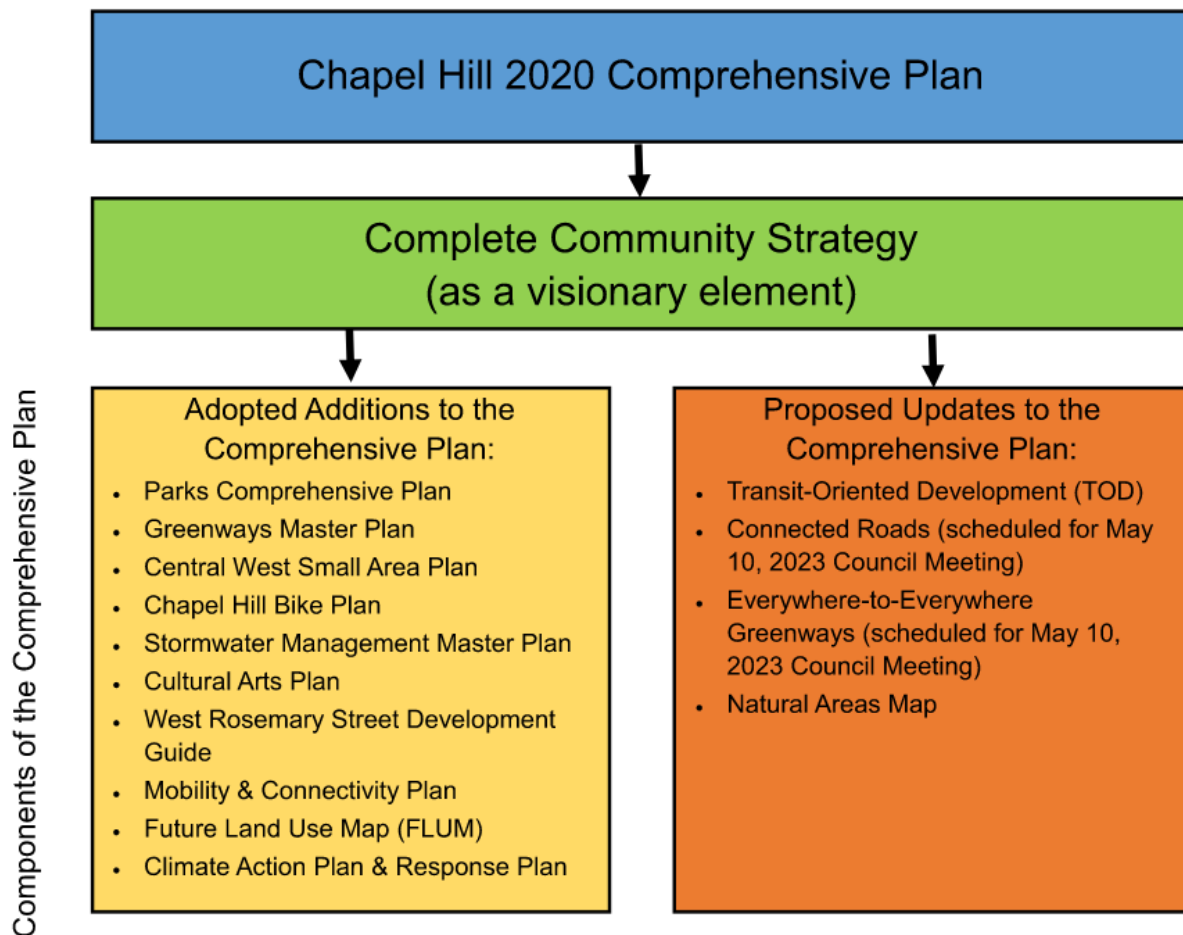


IMAGE A

The relationship between the 2020 Comprehensive Plan and its components is shown in Image A. The Comprehensive Plan is a series of visionary documents where the Council details its policies and visions. Town staff implements the Council's vision through the Land Use Management Ordinance (LUMO) and other regulating documents like the Engineering Design Manual.

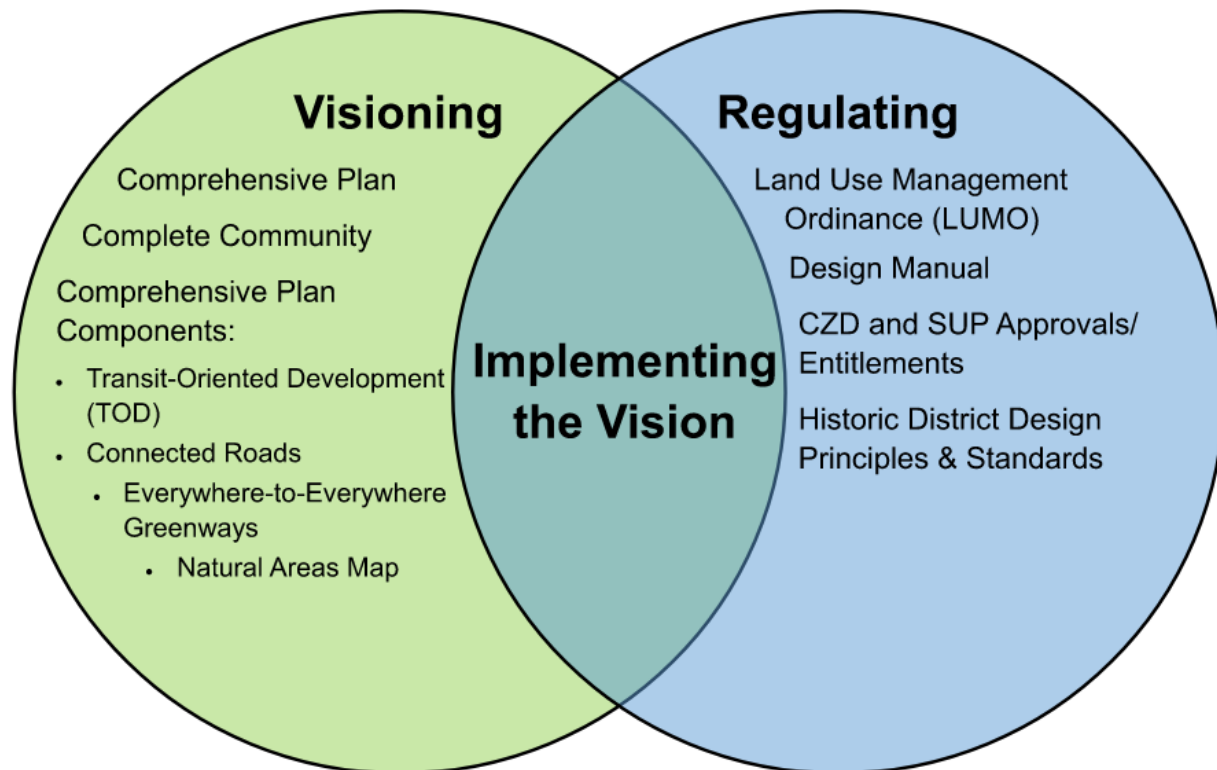


IMAGE B

Tonight, we bring forward the following new elements:

1. *Complete Community Strategy*: The *Complete Community Strategy* expands the vision of the 2020 Comprehensive Plan and weaves together the various plan elements that have amended the 2020 Comprehensive Plan since its adoption in 2012. The *Complete Community Strategy* document details the vision of the Town's Comprehensive Plan and provides a road map that guides future decisions about how the Town should evolve over time.

The key tenets of the *Complete Community Strategy* include:

**Assets:** Qualities of Chapel Hill that make it a unique and desirable place. Decisions about the future should be made to protect and enhance these elements.

**Design Attributes:** Qualities of the physical environment that Chapel Hill has and desires to provide more of to the people who live, work, and visit the community. Creating connected, attractive, human-scaled places supports climate goals and a more inclusive community.

**Programs & Amenities:** Strategies to attract, support, and provide the programs

and amenities that people in the community need and desire on an everyday basis supports an active, complete, and vibrant place.

**Social Equity Drivers:** Qualities of a place for everyone that provides equitable access to the necessities and amenities that support a healthy, safe, and fulfilling community.

A Complete Community includes:

- Diversity of housing types (both rental and ownership opportunities)
- Live/work/learn/play in the same watershed
- Abundant active transportation and transit connections
- Designed for walking and cycling
- Pedestrian-oriented design
- Mixed-use buildings including housing, community, office, and retail uses

As the Town reviews new development applications for compliance with the Town's Comprehensive Plan, the tenets of the strategy (social equity drivers, assets, programs and amenities, and design attributes) provide a strategic approach to growth.

2. Everywhere to Everywhere Greenways Map:

The Everywhere to Everywhere Map in Appendix A is based on corridors identified by the Keesmaat Group to support the Complete Community Framework. Town staff reviewed the corridors, compared them to the facilities proposed in the Mobility and Connectivity Plan, and looked at the technical feasibility of the recommendations. The map has been updated to include major destination points such as schools and parks.

Staff recommends adding 14 new segments of greenway (in pink) and one additional at-grade crossing (red cross) to the Mobility Plan. These additions represent 6.5 miles of future greenways and bike lanes to support the Council's vision of a connected community.

3. Natural Areas Map: Town staff has initiated efforts to create a Natural Area Suitability Analysis as attempts to identify areas within the Town's Jurisdictional Limits that exhibit characteristics consistent with criteria defining natural habitat. The initial criteria has used three sub-models: Natural Habitat, Hydrology and Land Use/Land Cover.

The Town staff developed the draft Natural Areas Map to balance the competing goals of development with environmental protection. This draft map identifies the existing environmental resources in Chapel Hill. The objectives of the map will include:

- Balance development with conservation
- Preserve and enhance the ecology, natural resources, and habitats
- Encourage forest and mature tree protection
- Habitat corridors

The draft map is being shared for input and guidance on the development of the process. The Natural Areas Map, once completed, will be shared with Advisory Boards and stakeholders as well as Town Council for consideration as an element of the Town's Comprehensive Plan. We anticipate bringing this map forward in the next couple of months.

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR COUNCIL**

Town staff have been working to address necessary changes to the Town's Engineering Design Manual.

Design Manual: Town staff has been working to update the Engineering Design Manual, last approved in 2005, to reflect the changing conditions. We anticipate the updated Design Manual to be approved by the Town Manager shortly. Once approved, additional information will be shared with the Town Council