

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Discussion of Prescriptive Nature of the draft Focus Area Maps & Principles

**Overview:** In September 2019, staff engaged with the community on the draft Focus Area Maps and Principles (dated September 5, 2019). During these engagement opportunities, staff received input from various stakeholders that the draft was too specific and would not be flexible enough to accommodate the changing nature of land uses. Specifically, staff received comments that the Character Types should be less prescriptive.

This concern highlights the inherent tension between flexibility and certainty. More tightly defined Character Types, which are precisely mapped, seem to provide more certainty while less rigid Character Types may give the flexibility necessary to better accommodate whatever land uses may arise in the next thirty years. Given the thirty year time horizon for this Future Land Use Map, Council authorized an examination of the draft Focus Area Map and Principles on [October 2, 2019](#)<sup>1</sup>.

#### Decision Points:

- Should the Character Types be mapped in specific locations?

In the current draft of the Focus Area Maps and Principles, tightly defined Character Types are mapped in precise locations within each Focus Area.

After receiving comments that the Character Types are too restrictive, staff examined not only the definitions of the Character Types but also the necessity of precisely mapping the Character Types within each Focus Areas. There are two alternatives to specifically mapping the Character Types on every parcel in each Focus Area as listed below. Examples of both of these options are included in your agenda materials.

1. **Some Flexibility** - This Option breaks the larger Focus Areas, such as N. 15-501 and North and South Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., into Sub-Areas and then lists the Character Types appropriate in these Sub-Areas by Predominant Character Types, Other Character Types, and Excluded Character Types. This approach provides specific direction regarding the appropriate Character Types within smaller defined areas without mapping the Character Types on parcels.
2. **Most Flexible** – This option would list the Predominant Character Types, the Other Character Types, and the Excluded Character Types that would be appropriate anywhere in each Focus Area. This approach would give an indication of the desirable Character Types within an entire Focus Area, but would not provide any direction as to where those Character Types should be located within the Focus Area.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://chapelhill.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4148988&GUID=CEFDBA84-55F1-49EE-B587-9F41361B59E5>



In order to provide some concrete recommendations for land use for both of the above options, we would suggest mapping existing and planned parks/open space as well as a new Character Type called Transitional. Mapping these two Character Types demonstrates the importance of these two Character Types and shows that we were listening to the many community members that stressed the importance of parks/open space and transitions between sites with differing uses and heights.

- Should Character Type and height be mapped separately?

As currently drafted, the Character Types include both use and height. This approach permits both aspects of future development to be depicted on one map. However, it does make the maps appear busy and somewhat difficult to interpret. In addition, it may result in community members honing in on height rather than future land use.

To clearly indicate both height and land use without making the Focus Area Maps overly busy, we could remove height from the definition of each Character Type and create a separate height map. Examples of height maps from other communities are included in your agenda materials.

- Utilize revised nomenclature and descriptions for Character Types or retain existing Character Types?

As stated above, community members expressed concern that the definitions and names of the Character Types are very specific and could be interpreted to exclude some existing land uses, like hotels, and any new land uses that may emerge in the future.

The revised Character Types are defined generally and should allow for a broad range of land uses in the future. The revised Character Types are included in your agenda materials.

