

INC Questions 11.18.2021 (numbered 1, 2, 3)

Durham City/County Planning Department Responses 12.7.2021 (bullet points below each question)

1. How are you using the Equitable Engagement Process?

■ Work on the new Comprehensive Plan began as the City's Equitable Community

Engagement Blueprint was being developed. Planning staff established a commitment to work towards equitable engagement for the Comprehensive Plan based on the Blueprint. Here are some of the ways we've been working towards that:

- Transparency – throughout the process we are sharing all community input with residents, reporting out engagement summaries, including demographic characteristics of those engaged, and working towards more accessible language on planning topics.
- ADA and Spanish language accessibility – All of the materials for this plan are created in both English and Spanish and additional outreach is ongoing to try and engage more Spanish-speaking residents in this work. In addition, staff has been working to improve ADA accessibility and creating multiple ways for residents to access and consume information to remove barriers for those who may have a disability or just different learning styles.
- Engagement Ambassadors - The Engagement Ambassador program involves recruiting residents with connections to marginalized communities in Durham to directly engage their neighbors, friends, and family members to shape the new Comprehensive Plan. Ambassadors receive a stipend for this work to try to remove some of the barriers that marginalized communities in Durham face when engaging with local government. Another focus of the program is to hear from Ambassadors on how to improve the program, to change our approach to address and reflect that input, and to keep working towards more equitable development in each iteration. which prioritizes input coming through the Engagement Ambassadors' community engagement in the Comprehensive Plan. Input coming from Engagement Ambassadors work is frontloaded in analyzing input to ensure that these historically marginalized residents are given a voice alongside residents who have more privilege and access to local government

processes.

Page 1 of 8

- Ground-truthing – We have been using an iterative process to hear from residents, analyze that information and form it into a draft, and then providing that draft back for residents to help us understand if we've heard them correctly, and if not, how the draft needs to be revised to better reflect resident priorities and perspectives.

2. Are developers required to use it?

- While the comprehensive plan work has been ongoing, the Land Use team in the department has been finding ways to improve community engagement for development applications such as annexations and zoning change requests.

3. What other ways are you increasing engagement with residents about planning cases and topics?

- The Land Use team has also developed a Social Pinpoint site to make development case information more transparent to residents and provide a platform for resident input on proposed cases. <https://durham.mysocialpinpoint.com/land-use>

4. What can you do to address the issue that the Planning Commission is highlighting about pressures for density not being carried to new developments in suburban areas? ■ The Comprehensive Plan [Community Goals and Objectives](#), adopted by Council and the Commissioners this year, include a strong desire to mix housing types, sizes, and costs in new residential development. These CGOs are already being used to evaluate land use cases and to encourage applicants to shift their proposals to better reflect this community goal. Adopting a new comprehensive plan that includes this, not only in its goals and objectives, but in the policies and place type map, will help us further carry this goal forward.

5. Creating more sprawl and fewer places that will have good public transportation? ■ The draft Place Type Map includes several growth management strategies that work against sprawl and towards better connecting different land uses through public transportation. Information on these

strategies (15-minute community, future growth area, and urban growth boundary) can be found under Growth Management Strategies

Page 2 of 8

in the introduction to the draft [Place Type Guide](#). In addition to the Growth Management Strategies, the place types themselves are oriented towards better connecting land use and public transportation. If you have suggestions for improving the Place Type Guide, please use [this link](#) to provide input.

6. Can we require new developments to put in a bus stop - or design their streets with the bus system participation?

- We can require bus stops in new development. However, this only can happen on sites along current or planned transit routes where GoDurham/GoTriangle determine its needed.

7. How can we get more bike/ped access in new sub-divisions? comment for policies ■ We have heard a strong desire for safe and accessible bicycle and pedestrian access in new developments and existing neighborhoods. Specifically, in the “Connectivity,” “Accessible Transportation: Designing for Everyone,” and “Healthy, Safe, and Dignified Transportation,” objectives. From these objectives, the Policy Working Groups are brainstorming policies that can help us achieve this both as expectations for new subdivisions and publicly funded infrastructure projects. If you see particular areas on the Place Type Map where bicycle and pedestrian connectivity and access are particularly important or lacking, please add your comments to the map. We will fold in comments in the policy work as well as to inform edits to the map. Currently, all new subdivisions require sidewalks, but do not require dedicated bicycle facilities. An implementation step coming out of the Comprehensive Plan policies could be to revise the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) to make bicycle facilities a requirement.

8. What are we doing to improve tree coverage? (As I watch the "protected" trees on lots near me die because they were not protected during construction properly. Comment for policies ■ Residents have shared concerns about tree coverage in existing and new neighborhoods which are reflected in the “Equitable Access to Green Space,” and “Harmonious and Respective Development,” objectives. For this phase of engagement, we are not mapping trees and tree

coverage on the land use map but these would be great comments to place on the map where there are particular areas where tree coverage is

Page 3 of 8

needed for the policy development. We are working with the Policy Working Groups to draft policies around tree coverage.

9. What about tree protection in teardowns? This is only a requirement in the TLNPO for now – comment for policies

- Similar response to Question 8, the tree protection policies in demolition projects can be a policy in the Comprehensive Plan. If there are particular areas where this is happening a lot or you see patterns of tree loss, please add your comments to the map and will share these with the Policy Working Groups to see how we can form policy language for this issue before engagement on policies in the Spring.

10. How will the PC account for or provide resources to neighborhoods wishing to organize for improvements? Do such resources exist?

- Currently there are no specific resources available to support neighborhood organizing. However, the adopted Community Relationships Goal and associated objectives identify and support the need for resources to go towards ongoing community engagement. Staff would welcome suggestions and ideas around how to work towards this goal so that they can be incorporated into the work of drafting policies that align with the goal and objectives.

11. The incentives around affordable housing in the UDO seems concentrated in only a few sections, which makes sense. Is there also a specific staff member designated to address affordable housing incentives/development questions?

- There is not a specific Planning staff person who handles affordable housing incentives and development. Cases are handled by case planners in the department based on the type of application (Land Use staff for annexations and zoning change requests and Major development staff for site plans). Planning staff coordinates with Community Development department staff on all cases that involve affordable housing

commitments or provisions.

Page 4 of 8

12. ADU's. the COG did some research and provided it to the City on potential ADU programs – this is on the radar but don't believe work on this has happened yet (<https://www.ticog.org/focus-areas-housing/projects>) Providing either template of approved ADUs (or even a list of architects and builders whose ADUs have been approved). Providing low-interest-rate loans for the building of ADUs either for people who commit to renting to 60% (or 80%) and below AMI for a specified period OR are themselves, homeowners, at 60% (or 80%) AMI who want to rent at market rates. (Could require that the construction is done either by an approved contractor or by one of Durham's affordable housing developers.) The idea has been floated in multiple places with multiple members of staff (and a few elected officials) always with the comment that it's an idea worthy of consideration. Has it been considered and what is the outcome?

- All of these items are still on the City's radar, but they haven't yet made it to the top of the priority list.

13. The Planning Department's updates on EHC are provided at <https://durhamnc.gov/3679/Expanding-Housing-Choices>. Without going through the latest report, how does Planning see the outcomes thus far? What does that suggest for future changes, if any?

- Planning staff presented the latest metrics report to the Joint City-County Planning Committee on Wednesday, December 1. That recording can be viewed here. In summary, staff has seen that the changes from Expanding Housing Choices have only had modest impacts so far and have not had significant impacts on any particular neighborhood. Staff perspective is that there is more work to be done if we want to see missing middle housing created in our community.

14. Other than the Comp Plan, how is growth coordinated between Planning, Stormwater, Water, Sewer, Schools, etc.? Do they all work off the same set of assumptions? Which stakeholders are empowered to use different assumptions and why?

- All the entities listed review zoning change requests to determine whether there is

sufficient capacity for the proposal. There are adopted standards such as school capacity level of service, water/sewer capacity calculations, and City and County stormwater regulations that all development must follow.

Page 5 of 8

15. What can be done to ensure that the Planning Department and the Planning Commission work more collaboratively? (Or is the question based on a false premise?) Should we move away from using the Planning Commission for cases and use it more as a consultative body? Are we already making moves in this direction? What jurisdictions do you see as having best practices in this area?

- The work between Planning staff and the Planning Commission has been evolving during the process to develop a new comprehensive plan and can likely continue to do so. Currently, the Comprehensive Plan staff team is having quarterly retreats with the Planning Commission. In addition, the Planning Commission chair identified Commissioners to participate in the Policy Working Groups. Commissioner perspectives in drafting policy recommendations for the new plan is vital to our collaboration and has been very valuable so far. Having a current and common vision, in the new plan, will help staff and the Commission continue to work together. We also welcome ideas around how staff and the Commission can more effectively work together and with residents.

16. What tools are available to the Planning to protect neighborhoods? How can they be used in a manner that does not further advantage (or maintain the advantages) of wealthier neighborhoods?

- The tools available depend on what residents are trying to protect in their neighborhood. We heard clear resident priorities, through the Community Goals and Objectives, around making our neighborhoods inclusive, protecting residents from displacement, creating more types of housing, and ensuring that any changes are respectful of and fit into existing neighborhoods. The work happening now on drafting policies will be working towards these goals. We know that some of our existing tools have been used almost exclusively by neighborhoods with greater privilege and need to look at policies and programs to more equitably use the tools we have while also looking for creative

additional tools that help us towards this goal.

Page 6 of 8

17. How close to a final version of a development agreement must be presented to the Planning Department and/or at the neighborhood meeting referred to in the UDO? What is the difference between the two presentations?

- The required neighborhood meeting happens early in the process for a development agreement application. The purpose of the neighborhood meeting is to inform the developer of what kinds of community benefits would be meaningful to the community so that the developer can address them before submitting to the department. The development agreement has to be submitted to the Planning department in final form before it is scheduled for public hearing before the Planning Commission. This information is publicized as part of the Planning Commission agenda (agendas can be found on [this site](#)).

18. How many areas of Durham will have affordable housing and new workspaces within these communities?

- The goal is to bring affordable housing, in addition to the other resources and uses that residents are looking for, throughout all parts of Durham so all our residents can access housing and other resources they need across the community. The place type map and policies will work together towards that, but do not involve actual building of things. Working with the development community, with the Community Development department, and others will be necessary to bring affordable housing to different parts of Durham.

19. Would like to know about the areas that were planned for density in the light rail that is no longer happening. We have one in our area that will have no bus service (let alone rail) and not much bike/ped connectivity and really poor road connectivity in some directions.

- All of these are currently assigned Transit Opportunity area in the draft place type map. We are interested in input on whether those designations are in line with what residents want to see in these places. Please provide input on the [map](#)!

Page 7 of 8

20. Also, how do you put real teeth into what we expect in mixed-use zones? What do you want to see in mixed use zones?

- It is possible and legal to have mixed use districts that are more prescriptive than the current MU district. The policies developed for [Transit Opportunity Areas](#) and [Mixed Use Neighborhoods](#) place types will help guide the development of new districts. The draft Place Type descriptions linked here provide insight into the desired character for these places.

21. What will the new comp plan have in it to protect existing neighborhoods? ■ With more information on what protection this is referencing, we can provide an updated or more detailed response. The draft Place Type Map includes designations for existing neighborhoods (primarily the “Established Residential” type) that assume only minimal and incremental change in existing neighborhoods. Based on the Community Goals and Objectives this incremental change would be focused on infill of additional homes through things like accessory dwelling units and tiny homes. The goals and objectives also lead us to try and identify sites for the “Neighborhood Services” type - focused on improving access to resources for residents. We are looking for resident suggestions for appropriate places for Neighborhood Services (feedback on the interactive [Place Type Map](#) is the best way to do this).

22. With our new comp plan will work to shift our planning culture to plan with people instead of over them?

- Planning staff have been working on this shift through the process so far (both in the Comprehensive Plan development and in making changes to the current Land Use

process). Through the "Community Relationships" goal and objectives we have clear direction to move this way and we will be working to develop draft policies around this topic. Those draft policies will be the focus of community engagement next spring. In addition, our Planning Director has clearly stated her commitment to the department shifting its role and processes to better serve and work with residents under her leadership.