

## **Race and Equity Pocket Questions**

### **Title and purpose of this initiative:**

Legislative Public Hearing Relating to Cafes and Residential Density in Certain Zoning Districts. The Town has received a request for text amendments to the Land Use Ordinance to add a new restaurant use for neighborhood cafes and to allow additional residential density in certain zoning districts.

**Department:** Planning

### **What are the racial and equity impacts?**

The request for this particular text amendment would, if approved, allow for additional residential density in the Office and Office/Assembly zoning districts and add a new neighborhood café use, a restaurant use that would not involve a commercial kitchen. There are potential economic impacts. The proposed changes could provide more business opportunities and more housing opportunities to live/rent in Carrboro, including opportunities for more live-work developments. Residents of low-to moderate income, including members of the BIPOC communities, would benefit from start-up opportunities to begin business venture with lower overhead and/or opportunities to seek more diverse housing options such as smaller units. Other impacts may be experienced from existing neighborhoods, including historically Black neighborhoods such as Alabama Avenue, located adjacent to or in proximity to the Office and Office/Assembly districts, where residents may experience crowding from an increase in density or additional traffic. More details are provided in the responses below.

### **Who is or will experience community burden?**

The text amendments provide additional opportunities for new and existing residents/entrepreneurs. The neighborhood café would be an available use in ten zoning districts and the additional residential density in two districts (Office and Office/Assembly). There are currently two areas zoned Office, the Willow Creek office complex along Jones Ferry Road and the undeveloped property across the street at 603 Jones Ferry Road, and three areas zoned Office/Assembly, the Public Storage site on Jones Ferry Road, the Public Works site and antique shop along Smith Level Road, and the health services complex along Smith Level Road near Culbreth which includes the Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Carolina Institute for Developmental Disabilities, and similar office facilities. Some neighboring residents may find the increase in density undesirable, particularly long-time property owners living along Alabama Avenue and residents in the Rocky Road Mobile Home Park. Similarly, some may find the activities associated with a café undesirable; this scenario seems most likely for residents living outside of the downtown area in a residential district that is adjacent to one of the commercial districts where the café would be permitted. The cafe may attract small groups for meetups or study groups, as well as some additional traffic relating to patrons and/or deliveries.

### **Who is or will experience community benefit?**

Increasing residential density is one strategy for creating additional affordable housing, when paired with office use categories, it can also provide live-work opportunities. The neighborhood café land use would create new opportunities for food service businesses that do not require a commercial kitchen—a scenario that would allow entrepreneurs to open a business with less overhead. Both changes to the existing regulations increase chances for residents to gain a foothold in local markets—housing and/or business.

**What are the root causes of inequity?**

Structural racism in government decisions, particularly those relating to land use, can make it difficult for some residents to gain generational wealth through homeownership and/or business opportunities. Lack of information about development proposals and understanding about the review process limits opportunities to provide meaningful input into projects that may have long-lasting impacts on the Town or specific neighborhoods. Personal experiences with government, can further alienate those that may find it difficult to attend meetings—like working individuals and families—and contribute to a reticence by historically marginalized people to speak in a public setting. Disparate access to quality education, which in turn affects economic outcomes, as well as historical barriers to government for community members of color can lead to undue burden.

**What might be the unintended consequences of this action or strategy?**

Changes to land use regulations can affect land values and quality of life experiences for surrounding property owners and occupants in ways that can be beneficial and, albeit for some, less desirable. While the increase in residential density includes a requirement for 15-percent affordable housing (for rent or for purchase) the increase in development potential may also increase land values. Neighborhood cafes may generate traffic—vehicular and/or bike-ped. Some patrons may stay for extended period, particularly if Wi-Fi is provided and outdoor seating.

The public hearing process is intended to provide a way for developers and community members to learn about a proposal and provide input in a public setting. Even with published notice and social media releases, some people may not learn of a proposed amendment to the Land Use Ordinance in time to provide input and/or feel that they understand the project and/or approval process enough to fully participate. The Planning Department has nearly completed the analysis for a REAL lens for the amendment process, which will be submitted soon for staff CORE team and REC review.

**How is your department planning to mitigate any burdens, inequities, and unintended consequences?**

Suggestions outlined in the REAL lens assessment involves options for better public engagement moving forward, this could include information at tabling events or more targeted outreach for specific communities. Of note, this would involve efforts to go beyond what is required by state statute and the Land Use Ordinance.