



TOWN OF CARRBORO

NORTH CAROLINA

TRANSMITTAL PLANNING DEPARTMENT

DELIVERED VIA: ☐ HAND ☒ MAIL ☐ FAX ☐ EMAIL

To: David Andrews, Town Manager
Mayor & Board of Aldermen

From: Tina Moon, Planning Administrator

Date: October 8, 2014

Subject: Input toward Potential new Mixed-Use District

BACKGROUND

During the January 2014 work session, staff provided the Board of Aldermen with a summary of the commonalities from the five 2011 design workshops concept plans and proposed a possible new zoning classification tentatively called Mixed Use Rural-Transition or MURT. Using the existing Office-Residential Mixed Use (OR-MU) as a model, the proposed MURT district could be structured in such a way that it would respond to the rural design emphasis in the concept plans while also implementing the recommendations of the Northern Study Areas Plan Implementation Review Committee (NSAPIRC) for mixed-use development.

At the June 2014 work session, the Board discussed in more detail specific land uses identified by Omar Zinn, owner of the study property used for the design workshops. Mr. Zinn had requested just under twenty land uses (six residential uses and thirteen non-residential uses) which he believed would be well-suited to the location. The uses included multifamily and senior living opportunities as well as a variety of commercial uses such as office, retail and restaurants. Board members asked questions about the potential commercial uses and their target markets—surrounding residents, commuters traveling the I-40 corridor and/or a larger regional market--and asked staff to meet with the Chapel Hill-Carrboro Chamber of Commerce to discuss appropriate uses for the area.

On September 30th Town staff from planning and economic development met with Kristen Smith, with the Chamber of Commerce, and Mr. Zinn to discuss potential uses for MURT district. Smith reported a deficit in the greater Carrboro community for many commercial uses, particularly retail, and shared with the group examples of recent economic development studies relating to commercial needs for additional information. Discussion shifted from eliminating, or substituting specific uses to focusing on the form of those uses (e.g. building height and square footage allocations) and their placement on the site.

What follows is an outline for a new mixed use general zoning district (MURT) based on the information from the design workshops, Mr. Zinn and existing concepts in the Carrboro Land Use Ordinance. Suggestions for framing a potential new zoning district are provided as the end of each section in italics.

OUTLINE FOR POSSIBLE NEW MURT DISTRICT

Residential Uses

- 1.110 Single Family Detached
- 1.220 Primary Residence with Accessory Apartment
- 1.320 Multi-Family Townhouses
- 1.330 Multi-Family Apartments
- 1.480 Nursing Care Home
- 1.630 Senior Citizen Residential Complex

The design workshop participants suggested residential density based on R-7.5 to R-15 zoning districts, (7,500 to 15,000 square feet per dwelling unit). The study property contains approximately 27 acres, which if calculating density based on the total acreage without any constraints could yield between 156 to 117 dwelling units, respectively. With natural constraints factored in the yield would be somewhat less. The design workshop participants considered density based on approximately 15 acres, and calculated reductions for open space requirements and environmentally sensitive site features. The resulting dwelling unit yield: approximately 21 units under the existing RR zoning classification (one acre or 43,560 square feet per dwelling unit), 121 units under R-7.5 and 84 units under R-10. Mr. Zinn has expressed a desire to construct approximately 120 multi-family units in an early phase of the development, to help cover infrastructure costs, with the possibility of constructing additional dwelling units later as single family dwellings. These later units could be specialized housing such as small houses, tiny homes, senior houses or something similar.

A residential density of R-7.5 (7,500 sq. ft. per du) with an opportunity for a density bonus for providing affordable housing per the existing Section 15-182.4, housing above commercial units, additional open space or a civic space amenity could increase the total density to approximately 180 homes. In accordance with the building height limitations in Section 15-185 for R-7.5, the maximum residential building height would be 35 feet. Additional maximums on building size could also be imposed to guide multi-family development to occur as moderate sized garden-type apartments of six to twelve units a building rather than monolithic blocks and/or high rise complexes.

Non-Residential Uses

- 2.110 High Volume Sales and Retail
- 2.112 Specialty High Volume Retail
- 2.120 Display of Goods Outside Fully Enclosed Building - Retail Low-volume Traffic Generation
- 3.110 Office, Clerical, Research and Services designed to attract and serve customers on the premises, such as the office of attorneys, physicians, insurance and stock brokers, etc.) operations
- 3.120 Office, Clerical, Research and Services designed to attract little or no customer or client traffic
- 3.130 Office or clinics of physicians or dentists with not more than 10,000 square feet of gross floor area
- 5.200 Churches, synagogues and temples (including associated residential structures for religious personnel and associated buildings but not including elementary school buildings) school or secondary
- 8.100 Restaurants

- 8.200 Restaurants Outside Service and Consumption
- 8.700 Mobile Prepared Food Venders
- 10.100 Independent automobile parking lots or garages
- 22.100 Child Day Care-Home
- 22.200 Child Day Care Facility

Mr. Zinn has identified a number of potential commercial uses for the site, as listed above. The selection of uses could support residents living on the site, offer some live-work opportunities, and accommodate some daily needs for senior residents, should the final development include a senior residential component. The addition of restaurant uses, particularly restaurants with outdoor service and consumption and mobile prepared food vendors seems well-suited to the site which is located in close proximity to a school and future park.

Three existing commercial districts--Outlying Concentrated Business (B-4), Neighborhood Business (B-3) and Office/Assembly (O/A)—most closely align with the proposed new MURT district in their purpose statement and selection of allowable uses, but none of the districts really model the envisioned mixed use district for community that will likely become more than just a commercial node. In addition, specialty high volume sales and retail use, which might include a book store, is not allowed in any of the three districts. Restaurants are not permitted in B-3. Independent parking lots, (a staff suggestion to allow for future park-and-ride lots) is only allowed in the B-4 district.

Rather than select a single district to serve as the commercial element, as in a Planned Unit Development, the MURT could follow the Village Mixed Use model outlined in Section 176.2. The language in Section 15-176.2 identifies uses not generally authorized per the underlying zoning (R-7.5) and lists those uses, which could be allowed subject to a conditional use permit. Dimensional limitations could be imposed to prevent businesses uses from becoming too big and eliminate the potential for big box-type stores from overwhelming a medium sized commercial node. Commercial buildings—retail, office uses, restaurants--could be limited to certain size and height. For example a 50,000 square foot building (typical Harris Teeter) may be too large for the site, but a medium size building of 20,000 square feet (Yaggy Building or the Arts Center) may be appropriate. A slightly smaller size of 12,000-14,000 square feet (new PTA Thrift Shop) may be appropriate. Building heights could be limited to a maximum of three stories or 35 feet in height.

Commercial building placement on the site is also important. Commercial areas could be designed along major transportation corridors for visibility and, in some cases required to have a second façade on the rear elevation to encourage the creation of internal streets, green spaces or courtyard spaces where people could gather.

Potential Performance Standards for the MURT District

The participants in the design workshops reiterated a design with nature theme that stressed the importance of green space within the development. Features such as open space, outdoor greens and gathering spaces, undisturbed buffers, tree planning, all emerged in the concept plans. Tree planting may be particularly important for development in this area, not only because of environmental benefits but because of the ability of trees to help soften the visual impact of new development. The following six bullets, developed from the design workshop analysis provide a potential starting point for performance standards for the MURT district.

- 1) *An overall design that respects the character of surrounding properties, particularly in those cases where the project is creating a transition from low-density community to a more urban*

development pattern which may require including a substantial (100 foot) perimeter buffer to minimize the visual impact of the project from the road and be subject to (15-161) good “neighbors” performance standards.

- 2) A design that respects the existing landscape, maintains a 40% open space requirement including visibly attractive and usable open space near commercial uses that can serve as traditional green square, park or assembly area, and a strong use of shade trees throughout--along street trees and in parking lots.*
- 3) If the development is constructed in phases, each phase shall provide for 40% open space within that phase of the development or within the current phase under development and any previous phases combined. At least 5% of the open space shall be centrally located, usable outdoor space: regularly mowed, and furnished with benches or other outdoor furniture to encourage passive outdoor activities and visual enjoyment.*
- 4) A connected network of complete streets and extra sidewalks to encourage pedestrian and bicycle travel within the complex, and offers multimodal travel as a reasonable alternative to get to and from the complex—TOD along transit route. A traffic study would be required for any project.*
- 5) A clearly defined phased plan, approved as a master plan step, and the ability to increase density as surrounding parcels become more urban. Future subdivision limitations if density calculation—include density bonus for affordable housing, and efforts to encourage transit and multi-model options.*
- 6) OWASA service would be required for any project.*

A selection of photographs submitted by Mr. Zinn is provided as Attachment E. The images convey a sense of potential multi-family residential and medium-sized commercial buildings that would be consistent with the ideas outlined above.

Images of the concept plans from the design workshops and concept plans are provided as Attachment F.