

Comp Plan 2018 Draft Comments

As of 10/24/2017

General

I'm not sure what the asterisks mean but I think it must mean that the request has been in previous comprehensive plans. That is certainly true concerning the need for more rectangular fields. I suggest that the comprehensive plan include language that recommends establishing artificial turf fields to replace the present grass ones especially if there is no will to find new field space. This will extend the playing time and reduce the cost of maintenance. If there is an effort to charge rental fees for fields I suggest we use the same rate as the YMCA gets for its public space 1 dollar a year.

Chapter 1: Land Use

The review of our Comprehensive Plan which has been initiated by the Planning Commission and NDS provides an opportunity to eliminate certain zoning clauses in our urban mixed-use districts which currently act as a significant disincentive to developing smaller more affordable residential units in our walkable urban areas.

The Comprehensive Plan appropriately encourages our downtown and nearby districts to be a mix of live, work and retail/entertainment uses, creating more healthy vibrant walkable urban neighborhoods.

Zoning can appropriately control the scale of our districts and the relationship of private development to the public realm (height, setbacks), and it also can appropriately restrict incompatible uses within certain neighborhoods (e.g. no industrial downtown), but it is the marketplace that should determine the type and size of multifamily residential units within our urban districts. The current 43 DUA restriction encourages larger units (for example 4-bed, 4-bath shared student apartments and large luxury condominiums). Requiring that one obtain a Special Use Permit (SUP) to build smaller units is a very uncertain and costly process, which inevitably unnecessarily re-litigates our comprehensive Plan every time a developer wants to develop smaller residential units.

The attachment expands on this issue. Please consider eliminating the DUA restrictions on our urban mixed-use zones to permit the marketplace to determine unit sizes (controlling building scale through height and setbacks), as we update our urban mixed-use zoning districts.

Chapter 2: Community Facilities

None to date

Chapter 3: Economic Sustainability

None to date

Chapter 4: Urban Environmental Sustainability

Chapter 4 needs to address food-specific issues. A "Green City" that the vision outlines is not complete without a robust and resilient local food system. Charlottesville needs to pledge its efforts toward creating a food system that actively supports local farmers and producers and works to give access to fresh, healthy food to all residents regardless of age, income, race, etc. A targeted line focusing on more vulnerable communities is of the utmost importance if Charlottesville truly sees itself as a socially equitable city. Charlottesville already sees many actors working on the grassroots level to promote a healthy local food system, but we now require institutionalization and coordination in the form of government planning and support to progress toward a better food system for all.

I urge the Comprehensive Plan writers to include a fleshed-out section on strengthening our local food system, as well as specifically mentioning food in the vision.

Chapter 5: Housing

Language was removed regarding considering the effect that regulation has on the cost of housing. Regulations are responsible for a significant percentage of the cost of building and providing new housing. A 2016 NAHB study showed that regulation accounts for nearly 25% of the cost of a new for-sale home. Because regulations apply nearly uniformly across all pricing levels, that percentage is lower for expensive homes and higher for affordable housing. Regulations have a greater cost impact on lower priced new housing. Our community values affordable housing. One of the most effective and significant ways to make housing more affordable is to take a long hard look at the details of regulations that add cost (they all do) and evaluate those regulations in the context that there is a tradeoff. Additional regulations and requirements absolutely lead to less affordable housing. A different class of sewer pipe may be better, but it costs more. With the knowledge that that requiring a developer to install a more expensive sewer pipe makes the new housing served by that pipe less affordable, is it worth it? In some cases the answer may be yes, in some cases it will be no. Without the context of the cost implication we will always opt for the better, more expensive pipe without realizing that we are hampering our ability to provide affordable housing. **Reinsert old sections 6.1 & 6.2 and add reinforcing language emphasizing the need to evaluate cost consequences of regulation along with the benefits.**

Language about encouraging PUDs and creative, green, mixed-income, and mixed-use housing options was removed. PUDs and creative design are some of the most effective tools the City has at its disposal to get vibrant, diverse, sustainable, creative design. I'm sure that PUDs are difficult zoning districts to administer. They are also difficult for the developer to create. But they're better. That is the point. The extra effort is worth it. PUDs are also one of the most effective ways to produce affordable housing because of the flexibility they offer. Take a look at Phases 1, 2, & 3 of Burnet Commons. All 3 projects are wonderful places to live. They are shining examples of mixed-use, mixed-income, vibrant, sustainable, and creatively designed neighborhoods. Without the PUD, those couldn't exist. Instead of simplifying the comp plan (and then following that with a similar simplification of the zoning code), we

should be looking for more ways to push the envelope and innovate. We are not a boring straightforward community. We are progressive and innovative. We should embrace and strongly encourage creative development in our comp plan because it is the only way to truly develop great places. You can be sure that the Downtown Mall doesn't fit within any standard zoning. It was creative and extremely progressive. Charlottesville took a risk in developing it. By removing the push for creativity from our comp plan, are we now saying that those great places weren't worth the risk? **Reinsert old section 6.4 and deleted portions of old section 6.5. Strongly reinforce language encouraging creative and innovative housing and development. Specifically call out the need to maintain flexibility in design standards in order to accomplish other City comp plan goals.**

I feel strongly that by deleting the #1 goal of the Housing chapter as being proposed by the new draft of the City's Comprehensive Plan we fail to prioritize affordable housing. Please reconsider this edit; it has the potential to speak loudly to communities that deserve to be considered during our long/short term approaches.

As a resident of the City of Charlottesville, I'm writing to you with regard to a number of affordable housing-related issues. The City is in grave need of more affordable housing development, more inclusive and flexible zoning policies, and more support for low-income families, which will benefit the entire community. A few items of consideration:

1. Regarding the Comprehensive Plan, I oppose rewriting Goal #1 in the housing section, which would weaken the commitment to creating more affordable housing. We must maintain our commitment to achieve AT LEAST a minimum of 15% supported affordable housing by 2025.
2. I would like to express my support for keeping to your commitment to AT LEAST double the Charlottesville Affordable Housing Fund allocation to allow the City to reach our affordable housing goals.
3. Regarding the zoning code and ordinance, I support creating a more flexible code that allows for innovation and sound urban design, and I stand with the CADRE policy committee around eliminating barriers and better aligning the zoning code with the affordable housing goals of the Comprehensive Plan.

Thank you for your support of long-term, supportive, and affordable housing in the City of Charlottesville, which will benefit all of our citizens.

Affordable housing could be in the hands of home owners. Make way for backyard buildings. But the regulations would have to be changed.

<https://www.marketplace.org/2017/10/16/world/california-law-relaxes-backyard-building-rules-ease-housing-crisis>

Chapter 6: Transportation

The concept of “future-proofing” was touched on with the acknowledgement that emerging technologies are disrupting the traditional transportation fabric. This concept should be expanded to also incorporate how people live and how their lifestyles relate to transportation. For example, in a near-downtown new development where people want compact walkable living, are standard neighborhood streets really necessary? Could adequate fire protection be achieved another way? Does the rescue squad absolutely need to be able to pull a vehicle right up to the front door? Might environmental goals be better served by allowing lots that only have pedestrian access and no street frontage, thus reducing earthmoving and tree clearing? Before the automobile, streets were very different. We seem to be on the verge of heading back to a time where the automobile doesn’t dominate. Might these “old-world” transportation and access strategies found all over the rest of the world also help achieve housing affordability by reducing infrastructure where not needed? With technology that already exists and is in use, it is easily imaginable that in the next 20-50 years very few people will own cars and that our City will be grossly over-parked. Let’s modernize our comp plan so that it allows the market to dictate how much infrastructure is needed as the technology changes. By changing the comp plan now we aren’t changing the rules, we’re just changing the construct within which the rules can evolve.

Pupil Transportation should be addressed. (1) When new developments are built within the city limits the developer is not addressing school bus pick-up and drop-off to make sure student safety and bus clearance is highlighted. (2) When constructing sidewalks bus routes should be addressed, as well, which will improve transportation efficiency.

Chapter 7: Historic Preservation & Urban Design

None to date