

## Small Group Discussions Comment Summary

On March 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>, discussion sessions were held with several stakeholder groups to gain insights from the “user’s” perspective into how current land development regulations are working and what improvements would be appropriate. These groups included residential and commercial developers, architects and engineers, economic development interests, transportation agencies, environmental organizations, and neighboring counties and communities. In the interest of confidentiality and to promote more candid conversation, Town staff and officials were not in attendance during the group discussions.

While many suggestions and comments were offered, the discussions were positive and very constructive. The following is a summary of the topics and comments received during the course of the two days of meetings:

- Predictability
- Flexibility
- Standards
- Specificity
- Buffers
- Tree removal
- Consistent application and enforcement
- Timing of reviews
- Usable open space
- Areawide cooperation
- Incentives needed
- Connectivity
- Traffic
- Quality development
- Non-motorized options

### Developers

- Flexibility and predictability are essential
- Need to be able to respond to unanticipated needs/opportunities
- Ordinance needs more specificity
- Mixed Use District works, provides needed flexibility and is predictable
- Mixed use approval process is reasonable, takes about 6 months
- Initial design review process with departments should be addressed, cumbersome, time-consuming, lacks coordination (consider Charlotte process)
- Delegate authority to staff to review and approve minor changes
- Impact fees will add to the development costs
- Quality development is needed
- Some design standards needed to establish minimum level of quality
- Enforcement of regulations must be consistent
- Larger projects seem to be subjected to more scrutiny than others
- Requirements for affordable housing not needed

- Subdivision process works
- Sign regulations should be revised, consider “Springs” restrictions as a foundation
- Multi-family densities of 8 to 10 units per acre works in some places, but higher densities are appropriate in others
- Townhomes for seniors are needed
- Decisions should be based on standards in the ordinance, not public pressure at hearings

### **Engineers/Architects/Surveyors**

- Downtown zoning district is needed
- Historic preservation guidelines needed
- Concern about churches and businesses expanding within established residential neighborhoods
- Shared parking should be encouraged
- Minimum road standards needed for all classes of roads
- Specific buffer requirements are needed
- There’s a disconnect between the type of development occurring and the desire for excessive street edge buffers
- Traffic is the major issue related to development
- There is no cohesive review process at the staff level, frequent delays, lack of coordination
- Threshold requirements needed for determining when Traffic Impact Assessments are required
- Densities are generally insufficient to support desired commercial development
- Baxter is a good example of appropriate densities
- Fort Mill needs parkland, not just open space within developments
- Mixed Use District has no minimum percent for commercial or other uses to qualify as “mixed use”

### **Economic Development**

- Form-based Code or specific architectural standards needed for historic district (downtown and surrounding residential neighborhood)
- Consistency is essential
- Incentives should be explored to encourage new businesses and renovation
- Fort Mill should be more proactive in acquiring downtown properties and recruiting businesses
- More areawide coordination needed with York County and neighboring communities
- Significant natural features that define Fort Mill (e.g., Catawba River) should be protected and enhanced
- Downtown needs businesses that create foot traffic, no offices at street level
- I-77 corridor should be developed with businesses, not housing
- Type and quality of businesses should be consistent with character and demographics of Fort Mill (e.g. Buckhead in Atlanta)
- Industrial development is feasible in the south end of the town near the bypass but building standards are needed

### **Transportation**

- Current access management requirements are inadequate, DOT standards should be considered
- York County has Traffic Impact requirements that may be useful to consider

- Rock Hill and York County have minimum road standards that may be useful to consider
- MPO is promoting more cooperation with neighboring jurisdictions regarding new roads, transit and pathways
- Standard needed to determine when more than one access is required for subdivisions (min. number of lots)
- A transit circulator along 160 may be implemented within the next 2 years, future BRT (bus rapid transit) along 21 has been discussed but densities are too low to support it
- MPO working on east/west collector plan (expected to be completed by end of 2015) to identify future collector road locations that should be protected as development occurs
- Potential new interchange being studied near north end of Kingsley development
- Non-motorized transportation options should be considered as part of new developments and coordinated with surrounding jurisdictions
- Connectivity is essential to reduce traffic impacts, interior roads should connect to adjacent developments, business parking lots and access points should be connected, UDO should require this
- Fort Mill has no policy regarding private roads, this is needed

### **Environment and Open Space**

- Loss of large trees needs to be addressed
- Scorched earth approach to development should be addressed
- Buffers needed along roadways (screening, frontage greenbelts)
- Tree ordinance is needed
- Open space should be usable and significant, not leftover, unusable land
- Maintenance of open space is being neglected
- Density bonuses and mixed use opportunities should be considered in exchange for greater buffers, environmental protection and stormwater reduction
- Maintenance of stormwater basins is not being enforced
- Stormwater management should be incentivized
- Limitations should be imposed on cul-de-sacs (number, length, design)
- Consider street standards that allow swales in lieu of curb and gutter
- Traffic issues are made worse by lack of connectivity between developments and insufficient density to support transit
- Require “clean diesel” for construction equipment to address air quality
- Clear cutting development sites should not be considered “forestry” as a means of avoiding sedimentation control requirements
- Consider more substantial buffer requirements adjacent to floodplains and other sensitive areas

### **Regional Jurisdictions**

- York County Traffic Impact Assessment requirements may be a starting point for Fort Mill and an opportunity for consistency
- Several area jurisdictions have street standards (Tege Cay, Rock Hill, York County)
- “Complete street” standards should be established for local and collector streets
- York County and Rock Hill have environmental setback/buffer requirements around lakes and rivers.

- There is no coordinated mechanism for review of developments on or near boundary of adjacent communities
- Rock Hill has building design standards that may be useful for the new UDO
- Specific process for staff review of development plans is needed in the UDO