



February 20, 2019

To: Patrick Young

Subject: Trinity Park Feedback to EHC Proposal/Suggestions for Potential Revisions

We sincerely thank you and your staff for the time and attention you have given to us: coming to the neighborhood on February 3rd, answering emails, meeting with individual neighbors, and with our Urban Planning Subcommittee representatives. There is no doubt that you are earnest in your efforts to accept feedback and we appreciate it.

Trinity Park wants to be a partner with the City to address the diverse housing needs for present and future citizens, advocating for the shared needs of all downtown neighborhoods, and save what is great about the “Bull City” while welcoming newcomers.

Trinity Park is a neighborhood with widely diverse housing choices. A significant proportion of our residences are multi-unit dwellings, including duplexes, fourplexes, six-plexes and large apartment buildings, a bed-and-breakfast and a hotel, many of which already have higher density than what is proposed in the Expanding Housing Choices (EHC). In fact, Trinity Park is almost completely built out and has very few undeveloped lots, so we are sensitive to the redevelopment and infill impacts which will affect both ours and other neighborhoods across the City.

NEIGHBORHOOD SURVEY ON THE EHC INITIATIVE

Following the February 3rd information session presented by you and Mike for residents of Trinity Park, the Trinity Park Neighborhood Association (TPNA) Board created an Urban Planning Sub-committee to assess neighborhood reactions to the Expanding Housing Choices (EHC) initiative and to rapidly come to understand the initiative details.

The Sub-committee conducted an online survey from February 11 to 16th to gather reactions from residents. Paper notices were hand-delivered to households within Trinity Park, directing neighbors to the online survey. More than 200 individuals completed the survey, which assessed residents' familiarity with the EHC initiative and asked for comments on perceived benefits and possible concerns. From survey creation through result tabulation, the Urban Planning Sub-committee has worked hard to create a fair, non-biased survey and a summary of qualitative, not quantitative, results.

The survey results demonstrate widespread support for the larger idea of accommodating population growth by thoughtful increases in density in the Urban Tier, but also deep concerns for how some provisions in the current draft of the EHC could have negative impacts on the livability of the neighborhood.

A significant finding was that more than 75% of the respondents had only learned about the initiative since January and there is a prevalent feeling that the process has seemed rushed.

PROGRESSIVE UPZONING INITIATIVES IN OTHER CITIES

In addition to the TPNA survey, the Sub-committee has studied similar initiatives in other cities, such as Portland and Nashville. We have talked with experts both outside Durham and within our city, as well as within city governments and in the private sector. Our team has met with urban planners, architects, and developers, as well as a diverse array of Durham residents.

An interesting finding in Portland was the effort to enable development of historically small lots, without encouraging teardowns and splitting of full-sized lots into multiple skinny lots.

BENEFITS OF PROPOSED CHANGES

Through the survey, some Trinity Park residents noted value in increasing housing diversity to the "missing middle": having a greater range of housing size (and commensurate value) including more onsite rental options for consumers as well as those on a fixed-income who need to realize rental revenue or to be able to "age-in-place". Some also felt that increased density might lead to a more walkable neighborhood.

CONCERNS WITH PROPOSED CHANGES

Trinity Park residents also expressed a number of concerns. Below is a list of residents' top concerns along with proposed ordinance text revisions of the Enhanced Housing Choices documents provided by the Planning Department.

1. **Teardowns:** The greatest concern among Trinity Park residents is that the proposed text amendments would encourage tearing down otherwise viable residences that define the physical fabric of the neighborhood, including historic structures. Smaller minimum lot sizes, increased density, and the fact that the newly proposed category of "Small House Lots" is exempt from density cap calculations all incentivize the redevelopment of existing properties to maximize their revenue-generating potential.

Suggested solutions involve Eliminating or revising Small Houses/Small Lots provisions:

- a. Small Houses SHOULD count towards density caps.
 - b. Do not permit ADU's on Small House Lots.
 - c. Second floor cantilevers, protruding bays or other spatial projections shall not extend more than 2' beyond the perimeter of the first floor level (similar to permitted roof eave/gable extensions).
 - d. Garages on Small House Lots should be considered part of the allowable built square footage.
 - e. Houses on Small House Lots may not have garage doors facing the street yard.
 - f. Street yard driveways shall not be more than 9' wide.
 - g. Small House Lot houses may only be built on parcels that have been vacant for five or more years or historically small lots.
2. **Parking:** Residents are concerned that the changes do not adequately address parking issues resulting from the increased density. A 35' wide lot, for example, does not have adequate street frontage to park the minimum required two vehicles. This will result in either a street facing garage (very out of character with the neighborhood fabric) or a 42% higher rate of driveway cuts than is currently found in the neighborhood. Residents would like clear parking requirements that will not negatively affect existing neighborhood fabric (disallowing street facing garages and new

curb cuts, and requirements for front yard landscaping and/or street trees, etc).

3. **Infrastructure:** Residents are concerned that increased density will result in increased traffic congestion and that City / County infrastructure and resources are not designed to accommodate additional demand. The Planning Department should clarify the capacity of all neighborhood infrastructure including traffic, water, sewage, storm water, schools, public safety, and so on. If the capacity is not in place already, please clarify how this will be addressed as demands increase.

ADDITIONAL CONCERNS

The Urban Planning Sub-committee of the Trinity Park Neighborhood Association has studied the available EHC documents and have generated the following additional concerns and recommendations.

- A. **Building Size and Density:** Establish a suitable Floor Area Ratio (FAR) to control the scale of new construction to be in proportion with the adjusted lot sizes in the proposed amendments. We would recommend a generous FAR = 40% which is in keeping with the scale of typical Trinity Park properties and would also make way for increased density on lesser developed lots. If Small House Lot homes are permitted, they should not follow the FAR. Rather, Small House Lots should be governed by a special set of rules as noted above.
- B. **In-Fill Standards:** Block face should be better defined to include all houses in the block which face the street (not just the two adjacent houses). The “block” shall not extend past an intersecting street (whether or not it crosses), or 1,000 feet from the intersection of the subject lot’s corner with the street (whichever is the shorter distance).
- C. **Accessory Dwellings Units:** ADU’s should not be larger than the primary residence. We recommend that ADU’s be limited to 800sf or 60% of the principal dwelling, whichever is smaller. Regarding the issue of density, ADU’s should not be permitted on properties with a duplex.

D. Implementation Timeline: Based on the mixed and controversial impact of similar upzoning measures enacted elsewhere across the country, we recommend a sunset clause after five years so that the effects of the zoning amendments can be evaluated for adjustment, continuance or any other subsequent action.

Thank you for your careful consideration. The proposed text amendments to the Urban Tier residential zoning are 50-year decisions that will have tremendous impact on the future growth and transformation of evolving and established neighborhoods and as such it is paramount that we move forward thoughtfully and collaboratively. The Trinity Park Neighborhood sincerely hopes that your team will consider folding in these above recommendations to the final EHC proposal scheduled to be finalized by February 25th.

Respectfully,

Diane Amato
President
Trinity Park Neighborhood Association

CC: Mayor Schewel, City Council Members, Wendy Jacobs, County Commissioners, Planning Commission, Mike Stock, Scott Whiteman