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Durham Comprehensive Plan

Chapter 1 Introduction and Administration Element

Durham City-County Planning Department

The Durham Comprehensive Plan

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Chapter 1, Introduction and Administration Element

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Introduction



*What is a Comprehensive Plan?
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Adopting the Plan*

A plan represents a logical method for achieving a desired end. For Durham’s long range planning, the end is how its citizens want our community to be in the future—how it will look, how it will work and how it will preserve what is special, while accommodating the growth we anticipate. The logical method is the deliberate steps Durham takes today, tomorrow and the next day that will result in the future its citizens want. The key is to ensure that what we do in the short-term respects and supports how we want to be in the future.

What is a Comprehensive Plan?

A Comprehensive Plan is the statement of local government and its citizens about how they want to grow and develop. The term “comprehensive” refers to two aspects of planning. First, it means that the plan covers all of the territory in the City’s and the County’s jurisdictions. Second, it means that the plan deals with all the physical aspects of the community’s growth and development. It guides how the City and County provide public facilities and services, and regulate new development. A comprehensive plan is long range in scope, focusing on the needs of the community in the future rather than the concerns of today.

In general, a rapidly growing community should review and update its long-range plans every five to seven years. The Durham 2020 Comprehensive Plan was adopted in late 1995, so an update now is appropriate. The Comprehensive Plan update provides an opportunity for citizens and elected officials to take stock and see if the growth and development policies in the Plan still make sense after several years of rapid change.

The Plan’s Vision

Every plan needs a vision. The vision embodies the desires of citizens and elected officials to create a community in which people want to live and can fulfill their own dreams. The Durham Comprehensive Plan Vision describes how Durham will look and function in the future. The Plan’s goals, objectives, and policies that follow provide the means of implementing the Plan’s Vision.

Durham Comprehensive Plan Vision

- Promote the creation, enhancement and sustainability of a healthy, livable, safe and beautiful community for all Durham citizens.
- Promote a range of choices in transportation, education, housing and economic opportunities to effectively serve a diverse community.
- Promote the identity of our distinct neighborhoods by encouraging design elements and public facilities appropriate to the character of each area.
- Protect our historic heritage, open spaces and natural resources.
- Provide opportunities for high quality growth and development.

How the Plan is Organized

Following this Introduction are sixteen elements, or chapters, of the Durham Comprehensive Plan. The first element anticipates how the Comprehensive Plan will be administered after its adoption. The next six elements provide guidance on how the natural and built environment of Durham ought to grow and develop. These include the Land Use Element, the Housing Element, the Community Character and Design Element, the Historic Preservation Element, the Economic Development Element, and the Conservation and Environment Element.

The next seven elements provide guidance on how Durham should provide community services and facilities. These include the Transportation Element, the Water and Wastewater Element, the Parks and Recreation Element, the Schools Element, the Public Safety Element, the Solid Waste Element, and the Libraries Element.

The last two elements are critical. The Capital Improvements Element outlines the steps Durham will take to provide the community services and facilities needed to support future residents. The final chapter, the Intergovernmental Cooperation Element, commits the City and County to actively working with its neighboring communities to coordinate planning and service delivery. Following the Plan Elements are appendices that includes a glossary of planning terms, a list of commonly used acronyms and a list of references.

Existing Conditions Report

Prior to the development of the Durham Comprehensive Plan, the City-County Planning Department prepared a report on current conditions in Durham. This report provided an overview of background information about the Durham community. Planning staff updated the Existing Conditions Report as part of the 2011-2012 Comprehensive Plan update.

Background information offers a base of understanding about the community that is crucial when looking toward the future. It provides a clear foundation on which to build the goals, objectives and policies to guide the community's decisions.

The Existing Conditions Report also highlights the critical issues that Durham is facing that should be addressed in the Comprehensive Plan. How these issues are addressed will directly affect Durham's success in moving into the future.

Preparing the 2005 Durham Comprehensive Plan

Creating a long-range plan for a community involved numerous tasks and hundreds of people, including citizens, representatives of interests groups, City and County staff, members of appointed boards and commissions and members of the governing boards. Important steps in the process of preparing the Durham Comprehensive Plan are described below.

- The **Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee** was formed in May 2002 to provide citizen oversight to the entire planning process. The Steering Committee was composed of 20 citizens, representing a broad range of community interests and viewpoints. The group met over 30 times as the Plan was being prepared to review and adjust the appropriate language for the Plan Vision, goals, objectives and policies. The Steering Committee recommended the draft Durham Comprehensive Plan to the City and County governing boards at its last meeting on May 27, 2004.
- In May 2003, the City-County Planning Department conducted a series of four **Open House Meetings** for Durham citizens. The purpose was to hear from citizens about issues that they felt were of critical importance for Durham to address as it grows and develops in the future. The Open House Meetings were conducted at the Eno Valley Elementary School Media Center, the Southwest Elementary School Media Center, the Southern High School Media Center and the auditorium of the Downtown Branch of the Durham Public Library. Over 75 citizens attended to express their views on Durham's future. Citizen comments were used to prepare draft goals, objectives and policies for the Plan.
- Preparing the Durham Comprehensive Plan included a **Review of Small Area Plans' Objectives and Policies**. The Durham

Comprehensive Plan is an update and revision of previously adopted Small Area Plans. However, many of the Small Area Plans' objectives and policies were out-of-date or irrelevant to current conditions in the community. Others were valuable and still useful to guide public infrastructure and private development. The Planning Staff reviewed objectives and policies from the Small Area Plans to glean what was still applicable to Durham's future.

- In 2004, the City-County Planning Department prepared a **Current Conditions Report**. The report describes Durham's context in the Triangle Region, population, economy, land use, natural environment, and public infrastructure. It identifies issues in each of these areas that long range plans should address. An updated report is attached as Chapter 17 of the Plan.
- In May and June 2004, the City-County Planning Department conducted a second round of community **Open House Meetings** in the same four locations. The purpose of these meetings was to acquaint interested citizens with the public review draft of the Durham Comprehensive Plan and to solicit their comments. Citizen comments were summarized and presented to the governing boards to consider during their deliberations on the Comprehensive Plan.

Adoption of the 2005 Plan

The Planning Committee of the Durham Planning Commission reviewed the Durham Comprehensive Plan and held a public hearing to receive comments on August 11, 2004. After consideration of citizens' comments and discussion, the Planning Committee voted on November 9, 2004 to recommend the Plan to the governing boards with several modifications. The Board of County Commissioners and the City Council considered the plan with a presentation and public comment on January 31, 2005. The Board of County Commissioners and the City Council adopted the Plan on February 28, 2005.

Comprehensive Plan Update

Durham Planning staff began work on an update of the Comprehensive Plan in September 2010. A team of eight staff members, representing each section within the Planning Department, was selected to accomplish the task. Over the next several months, staff updated the 2004 Current Conditions Report and prepared updated projections for population, housing, employment and land use demand. Staff also contacted other county and city departments to solicit their help in updating the goals, objectives and policies of the Plan.

In Spring 2011, staff conducted three public open houses to inform citizens about the project and its schedule and gather initial public comments. Simultaneously, staff launched a webpage for the project and designed a series of on-line questionnaires for elected and

appointed boards and commissions as well as City and County departmental directors.

Based on comments received from elected and appointed boards and commissions, directors and staff in other departments, the Planning staff team drafted a Plan update during Summer 2011. The draft was forwarded to the Joint City-County Planning Committee in September 2011 for review and comment. Subsequently, a second series of public open houses were held for public review of the draft update in November 2011. The draft update was then submitted to the Durham Planning Commission for its consideration in February 2012.

Amending the Plan

To be useful, plans must be regularly monitored and reviewed to ensure that they remain effective tools to help achieve the future that the community desires. Accordingly, this Plan requires that the Planning Department annually prepare an evaluation and assessment report for the governing bodies. This report updates baseline information, describes the activities that were called for in the Plan and completed in the previous year, as well as recommends revisions to the text of the Plan. The Evaluation and Assessment Report also includes a report on any Future Land Use Map Amendments (Plan Amendments) adopted by one governing body over the previous year so that the Future Land Use Maps of both the City and County can be rectified in order to maintain a common Comprehensive Plan for both jurisdictions.

In addition to the amendments recommended by the Planning Department through the Evaluation and Assessment Report, either governing body may initiate amendments to the Plan as it affects their jurisdiction at any time.

Citizens may also request amendments to the Plan through the Planning Department. These could be amendments to the text of the Plan or to the Plan maps, including the Future Land Use Map. Such amendments to the Future Land Use Map are required whenever a property is proposed for rezoning to a classification inconsistent with what is shown on the Future Land Use Map to ensure that area residents are apprised of the development potential of their communities. Applicants for amendments to the Plan shall provide a justification, which could include factors such as an error in the Plan, a level of detail not considered in the adoption of the Plan, or a change in circumstances since the adoption of the Plan, for the proposed change.

All plan amendments are presented to the Joint City-County Planning Committee to ensure that elected officials from both jurisdictions are apprised of proposed amendments. They also require review and recommendation by the Planning Department. Following that review, all proposed amendments (except those designed to rectify differences between the City and County versions of the Plan) reviewed

by the Planning Commission in a public hearing, at the conclusion of which a recommendation is made to the appropriate governing body. Following the hearing before the Planning Commission, the governing body holds a public hearing on the proposed amendment, considering the recommendations of the Planning Department and the Planning Commission, as well as any testimony given during the public hearing. At the conclusion of the public hearing, the governing body makes a final determination on the proposed amendment. Any amendments approved by the governing body are reflected in the Comprehensive Plan and considered as part of the adopted Comprehensive Plan.

Administrative Element



Goal 1.1, Using the Plan

Preparing and adopting the Comprehensive Plan is only the first step in charting Durham’s future. The Plan needs to be systematically implemented through established and well-publicized procedures. Likewise, the Plan and its implementation needs to be regularly evaluated to ensure that it responds to changing conditions and continues to reflect the wants and desires of Durham citizens. The Administrative Element of the Durham Comprehensive Plan provides guidance on how to use the Plan to accomplish its goals, objectives and policies.

Goal 1.1, Using the Plan

Use the Durham Comprehensive Plan in its entirety, including both text and maps, to guide public and private decision making about physical development and public infrastructure.

Objective 1.1.1. Plan Elements

Organize the Durham Comprehensive Plan by elements in order to present goals, objectives, and policies and the Future Land Use Map in a coherent and organized manner.

Policy 1.1.1a. Plan Elements. The Durham Comprehensive Plan consists of the following chapters, or elements:

- i. Introduction and Administration Element;
- ii. Land Use Element;
- iii. Housing Element;
- iv. Community Character and Design Element;
- v. Historic Preservation Element;
- vi. Economic Development Element;
- vii. Conservation and Environment Element;
- viii. Transportation Element;
- ix. Water and Wastewater Element;
- x. Parks and Recreation Element;
- xi. Schools Element;
- xii. Public Safety Element;

- xiii. Solid Waste Element;
- xiv. Libraries Element;
- xv. Capital Improvements Element; and
- xvi. Intergovernmental Coordination Element

In addition, there are three appendices. Appendix A, consisting of three parts, is the Existing Conditions Report. A glossary of terms and acronyms is included as Appendix B. Appendix C is the Subsidized Housing Location Policy, adopted by reference.

Policy 1.1.1b. Future Land Use Map. The Durham Comprehensive Plan shall also include a Future Land Use Map to graphically depict desired patterns of future land use. (See Policy 2.1.1a, Future Land Use Map.)

Objective 1.1.2. Administration

Establish policies and procedures for administration of the Durham Comprehensive Plan that will result in its timely and effective implementation.

Policy 1.1.2a. Responsibility. Administratively, the Director of the City-County Planning Department shall be responsible for interpreting the provisions of the Durham Comprehensive Plan.

Policy 1.1.2b. Enforcement of the Comprehensive Plan. Ordinances, budgets, and procedures of the City Council and County Board of Commissioners shall be used to enforce the provisions of the Durham Comprehensive Plan.

Policy 1.1.2c. Plan Consistency. Applications for zoning map changes and Special Use Permits shall be reviewed for consistency with the Durham Comprehensive Plan. The City, the County, and Durham Public Schools shall consider the consistency of the proposals with the Durham Comprehensive Plan in making decisions regarding the extension and location of public infrastructure. Proposed changes to the Durham Comprehensive Plan shall be reviewed for compatibility with all of the policies of the Durham Comprehensive Plan.

Objective 1.1.3. Plan Amendments

Provide an efficient and predictable process for proposing, considering and acting on amendments to the Durham Comprehensive Plan.

Policy 1.1.3a. Amendment Procedures. The City-County Planning Department shall initiate amendments to the Durham Comprehensive Plan, including but not limited to, the Future Land Use Map, when warranted as part of a City or County-initiated Design District implementation or Land Use Update (See Policy 2.5.2b, Land Use Updates). In addition, the City-County Planning Department shall evaluate privately initiated requests to amend

The **Appendices**, located at the end of the Plan, includes a glossary of planning terms and commonly used acronyms.

the Durham Comprehensive Plan, including but not limited to, the Future Land Use Map (See Policy 2.5.2a, Amendments).

Objective 1.1.4. Plan Evaluation

Periodically evaluate the effectiveness in implementing the goals, objectives, and policies of the Durham Comprehensive Plan.

Policy 1.1.4a. Evaluation and Assessment Report. The City-County Planning Department shall conduct an annual Evaluation and Assessment Report and present that report to the governing bodies for adoption. This report will address, at a minimum, the following:

- i. Rectification of City and County Future Land Use Map amendments;
- ii. An assessment of progress on Comprehensive Plan policies;
- iii. Proposed amendments (if any) to policies of the Comprehensive Plan; and
- iv. An update to Table 2-4, the projected Demand for Land accommodated by the Future Land Use Map.

(See Policy 2.5.1b, Evaluation and Assessment Report.)

Objective 1.1.5. Citizen Participation

Provide opportunities for citizen involvement in public decisions related to planning, zoning and transportation. Increase efforts to bring diverse interests into these processes, and involve as many people and organizations as possible.

Policy 1.1.5a. Planning Notification. The City-County Planning Department shall notify individuals, community organizations and neighborhood associations that have registered for such notification about planning and zoning decisions.

Policy 1.1.5b. Public Comment. The City Council and the County Board of Commissioners shall provide members of the public opportunity to comment on public decisions involving planning, zoning and transportation.

Policy 1.1.5c. Balanced Representation. The City and County shall continue their efforts to ensure balanced geographic representation on advisory boards and commissions.

Policy 1.1.5d. Utilizing Citizen Participation. The City and County shall continue their practices of utilizing citizen participation in developing, reviewing, implementing, and monitoring plans and programs.

Amendment History

Amendments – May 14, 2012

Policy 1.1.2c. Plan Consistency. Applications for zoning map changes and Special Use Permits shall be reviewed for consistency with the Durham Comprehensive Plan. The City, the County, and Durham Public Schools shall consider the consistency of the proposals with the Durham Comprehensive Plan in making decisions regarding the extension and location of public infrastructure. Proposed changes to the Durham Comprehensive Plan shall be reviewed for compatibility with all of the policies of the Durham Comprehensive Plan.

Policy 1.1.4a. Evaluation and Assessment Report. ~~The City-County Planning Department shall annually prepare and present to the City Council and County Board of Commissioners an Evaluation and Assessment Report describing progress on implementing the Durham Comprehensive Plan. The Evaluation and Assessment Report shall include, as appropriate: The City-County Planning Department shall conduct an annual Evaluation and Assessment Report and present that report to the governing bodies for adoption. This report will address, at a minimum, the following:~~

- i. Rectification of City and County Future Land Use Map amendments;
- ii. An assessment of progress on Comprehensive Plan policies; ~~and~~
- iii. Proposed amendments (if any) to policies of the Comprehensive Plan; ~~and~~
- iv. An update to Table 2-4, the projected Demand for Land accommodated by the Future Land Use Map.

(See Policy 2.5.1b, Evaluation and Assessment Report.)

Policy 1.1.5b. ~~Citizen~~ Public Comment. The City Council and the County Board of Commissioners shall provide ~~citizens~~ members of the public the opportunity to comment on public decisions involving planning, zoning and transportation.

Policy 1.1.5c. Balanced Representation. The City and County shall continue their ~~present~~ efforts to ensure balanced geographic representation on advisory boards and commissions.

Policy 1.1.5d. Utilizing Citizen Participation. The City and County shall continue their ~~present~~ practices of utilizing citizen participation in developing, reviewing, implementing, and monitoring plans and programs.

Amendments – June 2, 2014

Policy 1.1.3a. Amendment Procedures. The City-County Planning Department shall initiate amendments to the Durham Comprehensive Plan, including but not limited to, the Future Land Use Map, when warranted as part of a City or County-initiated Design District implementation Compact Neighborhood Plan (See Policy 2.2.4f, Compact Neighborhood Plans) or Land Use Update (See Policy 2.5.2b, Land Use Updates). In addition, the City-County Planning Department shall evaluate privately initiated requests to amend the Durham Comprehensive Plan, including but not limited to, the Future Land Use Map (See Policy 2.5.2a, Amendments).