

Advanced Search

home : archive : archive

share

November 30, 2022

9/29/2022 2:54:00 PM

Council, board give feedback on land use plan

Summerfield Town Council and Planning Board members wary about language encouraging denser residential development

by CHRIS BURRITT



+ click to enlarge

SUMMERFIELD - Summerfield Town Council decided to remove language about subsidized housing from the draft of the town's land use plan (LUP) that will guide development over the next two decades.

In a joint meeting this past Monday, Sept. 26, members of Summerfield's council and the Planning Board reviewed the 70-page document prepared by Piedmont Triad Regional Council (PTRC). Removal of the "subsidy" language reflected the skeptical reaction by some council and board members to references in the plan recommending denser, more affordable housing in Summerfield.

The draft LUP states that "housing diversity to attract and retain ages 18-34 residents, 'empty nesters' and senior living will require a new vision for housing that is built with aesthetics in mind, located close to major transportation corridors, smaller lots, and connected via trails to parks and open space."

The line that the council instructed PTRC's staff to delete from the draft reads: "Existing single-family development does not allow middle income households to locate in Summerfield without subsidy."

More than 30 people attended the meeting in the gymnasium of Summerfield Charter Academy on U.S. 220 North. Council and board members sat behind folding tables that ran three-fourths the length of the basketball court.

The LUP has been in the works since March 2021, after the creation of a steering committee composed of town staff, council members and residents. The PTRC led the process and wrote the draft report which was posted on the town's website earlier this month.

Even though the plan aims to plot Summerfield's growth through 2040, it touches on landowner David Couch's proposal to develop his 973 acres spanning Summerfield. The property from Summerfield Road to Interstate 73 is shown on the LUP's map as a primary growth area.

The plan encourages the residential development of the area "with bicycle and pedestrian accommodations (and) limited service-oriented businesses."

Broadly, the LUP's recommendations for denser housing in a variety of formats mirrors Couch's proposal for building apartments, townhouses, traditional single-family homes and expensive houses in the Villages of Summerfield Farms, a series of 11 communities connected by walking and biking trails.

In May, Couch, owner of Summerfield Farms, submitted a new request to amend the town's unified development ordinance to accommodate his plans. A month earlier, citing widespread opposition to apartments, the council rejected his initial text amendment application.

Couch's latest request halved to 596 the number of apartments he wants to build. He hasn't yet asked the Planning Board to consider his application, the first step in the process before the decision whether to allow him to proceed with his plans ultimately goes before the town council.

In an interview after this week's meeting, Couch said he was disappointed the council instructed PTRC staff to remove the reference to housing subsidies from the draft. In recent months, Couch has said he'd be prepared to subsidize apartment rents for some occupants to make living in Summerfield more affordable.

"Why would the town's leadership modify a professionally drafted document about the future development of Summerfield without the public first having the opportunity to express their views?" Couch asked.

During the meeting, Mayor Tim Sessoms recommended, and council members concurred, that PTRC's staff should edit the draft over the next two weeks. Afterwards, the public will have the opportunity to share their views about the plan during public hearings at Planning Board and council meetings.

To accommodate denser housing, Couch proposed extending water and sewer services to his development and said property owners within the development - not other Summerfield taxpayers - will pay for the additional public utilities.

Looking ahead, the draft LUP encourages town leaders to decide whether to bring water and sewer services to areas designated for primary growth in Summerfield.

"Mixed-density housing will require water and wastewater service," the plan stated, "but a clear policy on areas served by water and wastewater should be established to ensure that existing residential areas remain in their current character, with particular attention to transportation impacts."

The plan urged town leaders to "allow increased housing variety and options in primary growth areas when the Town of Summerfield establishes a policy on allowing water and wastewater service to key primary growth areas."

Planning Board Chair Dick Feulner asked PTRC's staff how Summerfield would pay for wastewater services. Jesse Day, PTRC's planning manager, said his staff isn't prepared to recommend funding options.

Council member Janelle Robinson questioned whether the final version of the LUP should contain references to sewer services.

"There's a lot of mentions about wastewater," she said. "And I'm not sure we want that."

Article Comment Submission Form

Please feel free to submit your comments.

Article comments are not posted immediately to the Web site. Each submission must be approved by the Web site editor, who may edit content for appropriateness. There may be a delay of 24-48 hours for any submission while the web site editor reviews and approves it.

Note: All information on this form is required. Your telephone number is for our use only, and will not be attached to your comment.

Submit an Article Comment

First Name:

Required

Last Name:

Required

Telephone:

Required

Email:

Required

Comment:

Required

Passcode: [Click here to see a new mix of characters.](#)

Required

This is an anti-SPAM device. It is not case sensitive.

Advertise with us
and deliver your message
to NW Guilford County

northwest
Observer

Click here
to learn more

View annual
special-focus publications
by PS Communications

