

Policy Area 6: Appropriate Housing and Residential Development



Key Words and Phrases:

Citizen Comments from Town Meeting (literal, unedited):

DESIRED FUTURE

A Mix of Housing Types

- Mixed style of housing with single, townhomes, and apartments
- Affordable twin or patio home construction
- Limit condo/multifamily developments
- Different type of housing (ex-patio homes)

Low Density, Single Family Development

- Retain low-density housing

Affordable Housing

- More affordable housing <300k!

Both in town and site planning it is important to prevent the complete separation of different classes of people which is such a feature of the... modern town. Mrs. Barnett in her writings has laid special emphasis on this point and has referred to the many evils which result from large areas being inhabited entirely by people of one limited class.

**Sir Raymond
Unwin
1909**

UNWANTED FUTURE

High-Density Multifamily Housing

- Multifamily residential
- Multifamily dwellings
- Duplexes nor higher density housing
- No apartments or townhouses

Lack of Affordable Housing

- No low income housing – need to invite developers

Tract Housing on Small Lots

- Tract housing/small lots
- No big houses on tiny lots

Mobile Home Parks

- Phase out mobile home parks

Town Council/Zoning Board Comments From Joint Kick Off Meeting:



Vary Development Densities and Products

- More variety in housing product
- Lack of affordable or moderately sized housing

The preceding *key words and phrases* were gleaned from (1) the Town Meeting for the Comprehensive Plan and (2) the Joint Kick-Off Meeting of the Town Council and Zoning Board. *This Policy Area also took into consideration the strong desire of Town residents to preserve open spaces and rural character.* These key words and phrases, and the concern for open space,

were employed to generate the following **Common Objective** and related **Policies for Housing and Residential Development**



Common Objective for Appropriate Housing and Residential Development

Summerfield's appealing residential areas, exemplified by neighborhoods set among expanses of open space, woodlands, and pastures, shall continue to be a defining attribute of the community. To accommodate housing for younger families and senior citizens while promoting and protecting rural character, the inclusion in residential development of smaller single family detached homes shall be encouraged over twin and other multi-unit residential buildings. Walkable, bikeable neighborhoods will be favored. An open system of pedestrian and bicycle friendly streets should work together with a network of greenway trails to connect neighborhoods with each other and with the rest of the town.

Policies for Appropriate Housing and Residential Development

Policy 6.1: Residential development in Summerfield should remain mostly **LOW DENSITY, SINGLE-FAMILY DETACHED HOUSING**. Appropriate instances for other housing forms, such as **SMALL ATTACHED AND ACCESSORY HOUSING** should also be fostered to meet a variety of housing needs.

Policy 6.2: A **VARIETY OF HOUSING TYPES AND SIZES** should be provided within the general bounds of large developments.

Policy 6.3: Architecturally compatible and integrated **ACCESSORY HOUSING**, such as mother-in-law suites, carriage houses, and granny flats, are encouraged to improve housing affordability and allow for extended family care, especially for senior citizens.

Policy 6.4: **OPEN SPACE RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT**, also known as **GREENSPACE DEVELOPMENT**, shall be preferred as environmentally sound and economically cost effective. **LARGE LOT DEVELOPMENT** may occur when greenspace development is not feasible or appropriate to the site.

Policy 6.5: **OPEN SPACE DEDICATION** requirements should be applied equitably to all residential developments regardless of the number of planned housing units. If a development is not appropriate to set aside useful open space, a **FEE IN LIEU OF LAND DEDICATION** may be collected to help provide for future open space acquisition. (Also see Policy 7.3)

Policy 6.6: **OPEN SPACE CREDITS** will continue to be offered for the provision of **SIDEWALKS, BIKEWAYS, and TRAILS** in new developments.

Policy 6.7: The Town should allow for some land development for **MODERATELY PRICED HOUSING** consistent with Policy 6.1.

Policy 6.8: **NEW INFILL HOUSING** should be architecturally compatible with existing structures, landscape features, and the streetscape within its vicinity.

Policy 6.9: So as to maintain the traffic moving function of the Town's primary roads, prevent traffic accidents, and avoid land locking interior land parcels, **RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL STRIP DEVELOPMENT** should be discouraged.

Policy 6.10: **MIXED USE DEVELOPMENT**, meaning a combination of commercial and compatible institutional (e.g. assisted living facilities) and residential development, may be encouraged at appropriate locations to reduce automobile dependency and provide for housing alternatives, and to accommodate an aging population.

Subdivision *n.* A tract of land divided into smaller lots

Neighborhood *n.* An area defined by the commonality of its inhabitants or other characteristics.

American Heritage Dictionary

"All we do here is wait for each other to die. And each time we ask ourselves: Who will be next? What we want is a touch of life. I wish we were near the shops..., where we could see things."

Retirement Home Resident, 1956

Notes and Commentary:

Current Zoning Districts

Residential development in Summerfield generally occurs as permitted in one of several residential or agricultural zoning districts.¹ The general descriptions of these districts, listed below, have been excerpted from Article 4: Zoning of the Town's Development Ordinance:

AG AGRICULTURAL DISTRICT

The AG, Agricultural District, is primarily intended to accommodate uses of an agricultural nature, including farm residences and farm tenant housing. It also accommodates scattered non-farm residences on large tracts of land. It is not intended for major residential subdivisions. The overall gross density in AG areas will be 0.36 units per acre, with a minimum lot size of 120,000 square feet.

RR RURAL RESIDENTIAL

The Rural Residential District is established to accommodate minor subdivisions of fewer than five lots. It accommodates scattered non-farm residences on tracts of land that are no longer being used for agricultural purposes. The overall gross density in RR areas will typically be 0.73 units per acre or less, with a minimum lot size of 60,000 square feet.

RS-40 RESIDENTIAL SINGLE-FAMILY DISTRICT

The RS-40, Residential Single-Family District is primarily intended to accommodate single-family detached dwellings on large lots in areas without access to public water and wastewater services. The district is established to promote single-family detached residences where environmental features, public service capacities, or soil characteristics necessitate very low-density single-family development. Development within this district requires Open Space dedication. The overall gross density in RS-40 areas will typically be 0.73 units per acre or less, with a minimum lot size of 40,000 square feet.

RS-30 RESIDENTIAL SINGLE-FAMILY DISTRICT

The RS-30, Residential Single – Family District is primarily intended to accommodate low density single-family detached dwellings on lots in areas without access to public water and wastewater services. Development within this district requires Open Space dedication. The overall gross density in RS-30 areas will typically be 0.73 units per acre or less, with a minimum lot size of 30,000 square feet. The RS-30 zoning district is referenced in the Development Ordinance for the sole purpose of defining permitted uses and dimensional standards within the district for those areas identified as RS-30 on the Official Zoning Map. No property shall be rezoned to the RS-30 district after May 4, 1999.

¹ While residential development is also permitted in several non-residential/mixed use districts (i.e. LO Limited Office, NB Neighborhood Business, and the TCD Town Core Districts), this commentary focuses on those districts where residential development is most apt to take place.)

OSRD OPEN SPACE RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT

The Open Space Residential District is primarily intended to accommodate rural developments designed to preserve rural character, significant man-made features, and environmentally sensitive areas. The district permits open space, recreational, agricultural, and residential uses that are part of a unified design. The district encourages compact residential growth while maintaining average house densities similar to those in other residential districts. The overall gross density in OSRD areas will typically be 0.73 units per acre or less.



In practice, the Agricultural District and the Rural Residential District each accommodate very few new residences, while the RS-30 District is no longer available for new development. Thus, the vast majority of all new housing built in recent years has occurred in just two of the districts: RS-40 and OSRD. The balance of these notes will focus on these two districts.

How the Town Density Standards Were Developed

The Town's current development standards call for an average development density of 0.73 units per acre. This number was derived from a U.S.G.S. report on ground water prepared in 1997² that recommended that there be no more than one housing unit per 60,000 square feet of land in the Summerfield area. The report held that development built out at a density greater than this would not allow sufficient recharge to sustain the groundwater aquifer. Since the report was prepared, some of its assumptions have been questioned³. Regardless, if the citizens of Summerfield wish to maintain their town as a low density community, they can do so without relying upon groundwater studies for support.

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RS-40 Residential Single-Family District

The RS-40 District is intended for application on land tracts that are predominantly free of environmental constraints. A typical example would be a former farm that is not dissected by numerous stream sections and does not have extensive areas of steep slopes, floodprone areas, woodlands, and the like. The overall density of 0.73 units per acre remains the same however. Thus, development density calculations for three RS-40 subdivisions of 4, 50, and 70 acres would look like this:

² United States Geological Survey, **Groundwater Recharge to and Storage in the Regolith-Fractured Crystalline Rock Aquifer System, Guilford County, North Carolina** U.S. Geological Survey Water Resources Investigations Report 97-4140 Prepared in Cooperation with Guilford County Health Department and Guilford Soil and Water Conservation District, By Charles C. Daniel III, and Douglas A Harned.

³ The report assumed, for example, that groundwater pulled from the aquifer beneath Summerfield would not be returned to the ground via septic tanks; rather the calculations *effectively* placed all used water into a theoretical pipe and transported it out of the area without opportunity to recharge the groundwater.

5 acres x .73 = 4 building lots
 50 acres x .73 = 37 building lots
 75 acres x .73 = 55 building lots

The Town's current requirements for open space dedication, as set forth in the development ordinance, are preferential to smaller developments with fewer lots.

For the RS-40 District open space acreage is calculated on a sliding scale as follows.

<u># of lots:</u>	<u>% of total acreage to be set aside</u>
Less than 5	0%
5-24	10%
25-50	15%
More than 50	25%

Using the percentages above, and the number of lots previously calculated, the required open space for the three examples given would look like this:

5 acres x 0% = 0 acres in open space
 50 acres x 15% = 7.5 acres in open space
 75 acres x 25% = 18.75 acres in open space

Thus, while the 75 acre development is 50% larger than the 50 acre development, the 75 acre development must set aside more than twice as much land in open space. Note also that a development yielding less than 5 lots is not required to dedicate any open space whatsoever.⁴ To sum up, the open space dedication requirements of the zoning ordinance favor smaller developments with fewer lots, at least in terms of the open space required to be set aside. These requirements may warrant further examination when the Town's development ordinance is next updated.

OSRD Open Space Residential District

The Open Space Residential District is intended for application on land tracts that have a significant amount of area constrained by environmental features. This district allows homes to be placed on those parts of the property most suited for development while preserving areas of steep slopes, flooding, wetlands, and stream sections for open space. Unlike the RS-40 District that permits only single family detached residences, the OSRD District also allows 2 family dwellings and possibly townhouses⁵. Therefore, the numbers that follow refer to *housing units* rather than *building lots*. For a 50 acre tract of land the calculations would look like this:

50 acres x .73 units/acre = 37 housing units.

For the OSRD District, open space acreage is calculated at a flat 50% as follows:

50 acres x 50% open space = 25 acres available for development and 25 acres in open space.

⁴ The logic behind not requiring any open space for very small developments (i.e. less than 5 lots) is that the amount of open space to be set aside is so small to be of little value. One way to correct for this inequality with larger developments is for the Town to collect a fee in lieu of land dedication, the proceeds of which would be placed in a capital reserve account for the future purchases of open space.

⁵ The permitted use table in the Town's zoning does not list townhouses as a permitted use in the OSRD district but the text of the ordinance describing the OSRD does. This should be corrected for clarification.

Lots for single family detached homes in the OSRD district can be as small as 15,000 square feet, and as little as 10,000 square feet for duplexes. . The least amount of acreage consumed by a 37 unit development could theoretically be as follows:

37 single family housing units x 15,000 sq. ft. / 43,560 sq. ft. per acre = 12.7 acres

or

18 duplexes x 10,000 sq. ft. per duplex / 43,560 sq. ft. per acre = 4.1 acres

In reality, many OSRD developments encounter (1) land with septic or well constraints or (2) housing market forces that that will cause these numbers to vary considerably from those shown.

Summerfield: A Place for Affordable Housing?⁶

There are clearly mixed views in Summerfield concerning the need for affordable housing and where, if anywhere, to locate it. One perspective holds that any form of housing other than single family, stick-built homes on large lots is not wanted in Summerfield. This perspective may be unrealistic, in that not all families in a community like Summerfield can afford to live in homes costing \$300,000 or more. There is also a need for housing for young families, school teachers, firemen, store clerks, waitresses and a host of other people with modest incomes. This latter perspective holds that Summerfield is in need of greater diversity in its housing stock, at least in terms of affordability.

Can Housing “Affordability” Be Determined for Summerfield?

Housing is generally accepted as being “unaffordable” when monthly costs exceed 30% of a household’s monthly income. Issues of housing cost arise when they exceed this 30% figure. Housing costs most often affect low to moderate income households.

Households incomes falling into the low to moderate range may be divided into four categories: *Extremely Low Income*, making less than 30% of the median income; *Very Low Income*, making 30% to 50% of the median; *Low Income*, making 50% to 80% of the median, and *Moderate Income* making 80% to 120% of the median income for the area under study. *Workforce housing* is a term that describes housing for those that fall within the *Moderate Income* category.

With the 2010 US Census rapidly approaching, accurate household income figures are a decade out of date, but nonetheless serve to illustrate relative degrees of housing affordability. Based on the 2000 Census, the median household income for Summerfield in 1999 was \$71,738. The median income for Northwest Guilford County in the same year was \$67,940.⁷

The following two charts present calculations of housing affordability based on low to moderate household incomes for the Town and region.

⁶ Some of this material on affordable housing is also covered in the policy section on Water Supply and Sewage Treatment.

⁷ Source: Anne Edwards, Piedmont Triad Council of Governments

Town of Summerfield	Annual	Monthly	Rent	House Value
Extremely Low Income	\$21,521	\$1793	\$538/Mo	\$67,000
Very Low Income	\$21,521 to \$35,869	\$1793 \$2989	\$538/Mo \$897/Mo	\$67,000 \$111,676
Low Income	\$35,869 to \$57,390	\$2989 \$4783	\$897/Mo \$1435/Mo	\$111,676 \$178,682
Moderate Income	\$57,390 to \$86,085	\$4783 \$7174	\$1435/Mo \$2152/Mo	\$178,682 \$268,023

NW Guilford County	Annual	Monthly	Rent	House Value
Extremely Low Income	\$20,382	\$1699	\$509/Mo	\$63,458
Very Low Income	\$20,382 to \$33,970	\$1699 \$2831	\$509/Mo \$849/Mo	\$63,458 \$105,764
Low Income	\$33,970 to \$54,352	\$2831 \$4529	\$849/Mo \$1359/Mo	\$105,764 \$169,222
Moderate Income	\$54,352 to \$81,528	\$4529 \$6794	\$1359/Mo \$2038/Mo	\$169,222 \$253,833

From the income and house value information presented here, it is apparent that for any "moderately affordable" housing initiative in Summerfield to be effective, the purchase price of some homes must not be greater than about \$250,000.

Notes: Annual household income is the appropriate percentage of the area's median income. Monthly income is 1/12th of the annual household income. Rent is the monthly income multiplied by 0.30. Suggested house value is calculated using the Yahoo! Real Estate website calculator, assuming the above annual household income, no other financial obligations, 6% interest on a 30-year loan. Since no other financial obligations are factored in, (e.g. car payment) these home values are therefore at the high end of affordability.

Additional Note: While the dollar amount of household incomes increased by about 10% between 1999 and 2009, the actual buying power of low to moderate income households, based on the consumer price index, actually fell by nearly 10% over the decade. Thus, from the information presented in the above table, it is apparent that for any "moderately affordable" housing initiative in Summerfield to be effective, the purchase price of some homes must be brought down to a number no greater than approximately \$250,000.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING STRATEGIES

In Summerfield, as in any community, housing prices are greatly influenced by land costs. Summerfield's very low density of development and large lots are not conducive to affordable land costs. Therefore, the following strategies focus mainly on ways of reducing land costs per housing unit.

Affordable Housing Strategy 1: Accommodate Some Smaller Lots

One solution is to amend the Town development ordinance to provide incentives to developers to add a small amount of affordable housing (i.e. smaller lots) to new residential developments. In other words, no single development would be set aside exclusively for so-called "high end" housing or "affordable" housing; rather, new developments would include a small percentage (say 15%) of their total housing units to be built as affordable housing. The numbers could look like this for a 50 acre tract of land in Summerfield:

High End Housing (Under current OSRD district standards)

- 50 acre tract of land
- .73 units per acre (by ordinance) x 50 acres = 37 “high end” housing units
- 37 high end housing units x 25,000 square ft lots = 21.2 acres in housing sites
- 50 acres of land – 21.2 acres in housing sites = 28.8 acres (57.6%) residual land available for open space

15% Affordable Housing Incentive

- 37 high end housing units x 15% = 6 affordable housing units allowed
- 6 affordable housing units x 20,000 square ft lots = approx. 2.8 acres needed (The smaller lot sizes would be made possible by employing cluster sewage treatment technologies.)
- 28.8 acres residual land – 2.8 acres for affordable housing = approx. 26 acres (52%) of the total development in open space

Under this incentive system, several desirable things happen:

- (1) There are no land costs associated with the affordable housing units because the developer is given a 6 unit bonus for building affordable housing. The developer is able to sell these housing units at more affordable price points and still make a profit.
- (2) The Town achieves its objective of encouraging the provision of affordable housing, while still exceeding the 50% open space provision of the ordinance.
- (3) Residents of more modest incomes are able to call Summerfield home.
- (4) The community is not “overridden” with affordable housing; rather it is parceled out carefully in small percentages of the total new housing stock, in accordance with a master plan.
- (5) The one modification that this incentive system would engender is that the overall development density on the 50 acre tract of land would increase modestly from .73 units per acre to .86 units per acre.

Affordable Housing Strategy 2: Place Affordable Housing in Mixed Use Development

Historically, good community planning calls for affordable, attached housing such as apartments and townhouses to be located within walking distance of job centers and services or with convenient access to public transit. Since public transit within the sparsely developed Summerfield community is unlikely, one option is to provide for affordable housing as part of a mixed use development, where housing and urban services are designed to co-exist. Since land costs are dramatically reduced under such an arrangement, a good quality of housing can often be produced at lower price points. This plan therefore suggests that any new commercial or service center planned for Summerfield give consideration to the marketability of affordable housing as an integral part of the development. Currently, the Town’s NB Neighborhood Business zoning district allows up to 2 housing units to be built above a ground floor business. Further, the LO Limited Office district allows an accessory dwelling unit to be built within an office building (more on accessory housing in the next section). The Town is to be commended for including such provisions in these two districts; it should look to further expand such mixed use capabilities into other commercial zoning districts.

Many people would find their own family life replenished if the grandparents, though no under their feet, were near at hand; and above all, the young would be gainers from this; for there are special bonds of sympathy between them and their grandparent's generation, through its very detachment, which often makes them far more ready to heed their advice than that of their own parents. Who can say how much delinquency and brutalized mischief in our American towns may not be due to the absence of a warm loving reciprocal intercourse between the three generations?

Lewis Mumford
May 1958

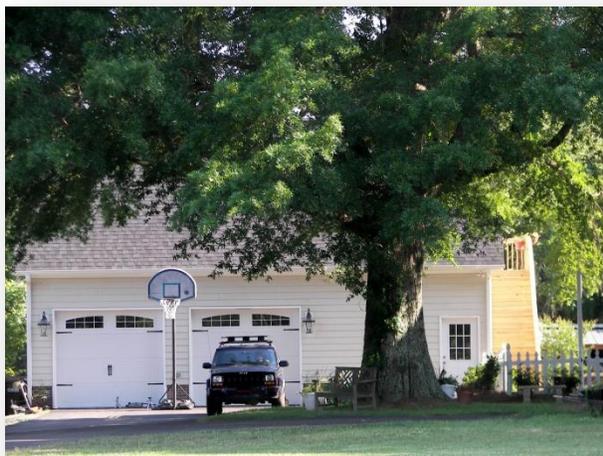
Affordable Housing Strategy 3: Employ Accessory Housing (Carriage Houses, Mother-In-Law Suites)

Accessory housing units are normally smaller housing units either within, attached to or on the same lot as a larger principal housing unit. Mother-in-law suites, carriage houses, garage apartments, and back yard granny flats, to name a few, are all forms of accessory housing. The principal advantage of accessory housing is that there are no land costs or additional infrastructure needed (streets, water, sewer, etc.).

Accessory housing may be one answer to housing the aging baby boom generation. Baby boomers will eventually be unable to drive and it will not be possible or affordable to institutionalize this entire generation in assisted living facilities. Even now, as the country is experiencing a severe economic downturn, some extended families are moving in together to share housing costs.

Under Summerfield's large lot zoning standards, home sites often have ample lot area to accommodate a carriage house or other accessory housing unit.

Obstacles to accessory housing include a building industry pattern of restrictive covenants that allow only one housing unit per lot. Also, after decades of large lot, single family development, much of the American public sees accessory housing as a threat, rather an opportunity to reduce their own mortgage payments and reconnect the generations. Education and perceptions will have to change if future subdivisions are not to be bound by such restrictions. Like so many other societal norms, it may take several successful examples to demonstrate how such development can be beneficial and well done.



The Summerfield zoning ordinance allows accessory dwelling units in all residential zoning districts except the OSRD district. They would also be allowed in the Town Core

districts as presently written--if that feature were ever to become reality. The Town should consider permitting accessory housing in the OSRD as well.

Conservation or Creation of Open Space Buffers in Residential Developments Along Major Highways.

As was made evident during the first town meeting held for this plan, citizens are most concerned about preserving the rural image of Summerfield, especially as seen from the major roadways in the community. This plan recommends that buffer strips with frequent, random clusters of trees be retained along both sides of most US and NC designated roadside corridors throughout much of Summerfield. The practical implication of this policy is that some of the open space required to be set aside within new developments may need to be directed to these buffer strips adjoining the highway.⁸ The form of development occurring off the highway will then become less critical, so long as the overall development density remains low.

⁸ Land immediately adjoining a highway should be included among the list of features designated as Secondary Conservation Areas in the zoning ordinance.