

## COKER HILLS NCD RECOMMENDATIONS

### **SUMMARY OF INITIATIVE**

The Coker Hills Neighborhood Conservation District Initiative was initiated by a petition to the Town Council requesting the development of a neighborhood district that would include several new regulations, such as smaller minimum lot sizes, increasing street and interior setbacks, and restrictions on home occupations. The Coker Hills neighborhood engaged in three neighborhood meetings at the Church of Reconciliation as part of the Neighborhood Conservation District Initiative. The three meetings were fairly well attended, with approximately 20-25 participants at each meeting. The Coker Hills Neighborhood Association assisted with organizing the initial kickoff meeting and providing an email list for updating residents on the status of the initiative. Many residents have provided feedback on the key neighborhood issues, preliminary and final recommendations, and have contacted Clarion frequently to ask questions throughout this process.

### **SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES RAISED BY THE NEIGHBORHOOD**

Residents provided input on the key issues to be addressed through this initiative at the initial kickoff meeting and through subsequent correspondence. The 1st *Neighborhood News* report provided several lists of information compiled from neighborhood feedback. The list that reported on “Issues to be Addressed” guided the development of the recommendations for the Coker Hills Neighborhood Conservation District and is listed below.

- Maintaining the visual continuity (i.e. seamlessness) of the neighborhood;
- Size and siting of future residential development, including building footprints, setbacks and height that respects the historic character of the neighborhood;
- Home occupations and other non-residential uses that impact the neighborhood;
- Tree protection and landscaping provisions to screen homes from street;
- Ensuring a mature tree canopy; and
- Ensuring the right to maintain an accessory dwelling unit.

### **RECOMMENDED NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION DISTRICT BOUNDARY**

Throughout this initiative, there has been an open discussion on the boundary for the neighborhood that would define where new neighborhood conservation district regulations would be applied. In general, the proposed boundary follows the neighborhood boundary as defined by the neighborhood’s restrictive covenants. There was much discussion regarding the Vernon Hills properties that were not originally part of the Coker Hills neighborhood, but share public roadways with the neighborhood. There was strong support from both Vernon Hills and Coker Hills property owners to exclude all Vernon Hills properties from the neighborhood district boundary. There were some dissenting opinions, that felt that excluding Vernon Hills was inappropriate as the properties were obvious extensions of the neighborhood. On balance, the fact that these lots are new and not part of the original neighborhood and are of a different scale than Coker Hills lots triggered the recommendation to exclude Vernon Hills.

Residents of Clayton Road have circulated and signed a petition for the purpose of excluding their lots from the neighborhood boundary. As we have not had an opportunity to discuss these concerns with the Clayton Road residents we make no recommendation to include or exclude these lots in this report. The proposed neighborhood boundary map is located at the beginning of this section.

### **SUMMARY TABLE OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

Feedback on the recommended regulations presented at the 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting was used to revise the final recommendations. The revised recommendations are listed here in the following summary table. Following the table are descriptions for each of the recommendations, responses to the recommendations and any dissenting opinions that apply.

Land Use Regulations	Recommended Standards for Coker Hills
Minimum Lot Size	0.6 acre
Minimum Street Setbacks for Single-Family Dwelling (or Single-Family Dwelling with Accessory Apartment)	50 feet
Minimum Interior Setbacks for Single-Family Dwelling (or Single-Family Dwelling with Accessory Apartment)	25 feet
Maximum Floor Area Ratio for Single-Family Dwelling (or Single-Family with Accessory Apartment)	0.2
Maximum Size for Single-Family Dwelling (or Single-Family Dwelling with Accessory Apartment)	7,500 square feet. Larger single-family dwelling allowed if meets floor area ratio criteria and if required minimum street and interior setbacks are doubled.
Maximum Secondary Building Height	37 feet
Maximum Percent of Front Yard Used for Parking	25%
Home Occupations	Limit business related vehicle trips to 6 trips per day, including all employee trips.
Accessory Apartments	No additional minimum lot size requirement to develop an accessory apartment. An accessory apartment is permitted with every single-family dwelling.
Tree Protection	Require consultation with Town before clearing deciduous trees measured at 24" DBH (diameter at breast height) or greater, except as part of construction and/or maintenance of permitted improvements, or to remove dead, diseased, or hazardous trees.

## **ANNOTATED LIST OF FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS, RESPONSES & DISSENTING OPINIONS**

### **1. Minimum Lot Size**

*Recommendation:* 0.6 acre

*Discussion of Recommendation:* Generally, most who attended the 3<sup>rd</sup> neighborhood meeting and/or sent comment on the final recommendations agreed that this provision is good and appropriate. This recommendation was based on the neighborhood's restrictive covenants and the current existing lot sizes – the majority of which are 0.6 acre or more.

*Dissenting Opinions:* A few residents have commented that the minimum lot size should not change from the current 0.4 acres as required under R-1 zoning.

### **2. Minimum Street Setback**

*Recommendation:* 50 feet

*Discussion of Recommendation:* Generally, most participants that attended the 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting and/or responded through comment cards agreed that this provision is good. This reflects the setback requirement defined in the neighborhood restrictive covenants and the current setbacks that exist for a large proportion of the neighborhood.

*Dissenting Opinions:* A few neighborhood residents responded that they would prefer that the street setbacks remain at 28 feet, as they exist under R-1 zoning. Others responded that they were concerned that the street setbacks under the restrictive covenants are measured from the pavement and under Town zoning they are measured from the edge of the public right-of-way. Because of the difference in starting points of measurement, some residents thought that 50 feet may be excessive as defined by Town zoning.

### **3. Minimum Interior Setback**

*Recommendation:* 25 feet

*Discussion of Recommendation:* Generally, most that attended the 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting and/or responded through comment cards agreed that this provision is good. This reflects the setback requirement for the neighborhood covenants and the current setbacks that exist for a large proportion of the neighborhood.

*Dissenting Opinions:* Some residents commented that they would like the interior setbacks to remain at the existing 14 foot interior setback, and that 25 feet is too excessive because they felt that landowners should be allowed to develop small ancillary structures on their property without the limitation of interior setbacks.

### **4. Maximum Building Height**

*Recommendation:* 37 feet (secondary building height)

*Discussion of Recommendation:* Participants at the 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting spent a considerable amount of time discussing the original building height recommendation. The original recommendation called for a limit of no more than 2 stories and an attic from the base street elevation. Some were concerned that without a building height restriction measured in feet, houses could be built taller than the current regulation of 40 feet. Participants supported the idea of reducing the current maximum building height, while still allowing for the development of two stories plus an attic.

*Dissenting Opinions:* The recommendation was revised because of the feedback provided on the final recommendations presented at the 3<sup>rd</sup> neighborhood meeting. This revised recommendation was developed to reflect those responses.

## **5. Maximum Floor Area Ratio**

*Recommendation:* 0.2

*Discussion of Recommendation:* Generally, most that attended the 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting and/or provided comment on the recommendations agreed that this provision is good. Currently, no homes exceed a floor area ratio of 0.2.

*Dissenting Opinions:* One resident responded that a 0.2 floor area ratio would allow for the development of large houses on some lots, which could be considerably larger than most existing homes and inappropriate for the neighborhood.

## **6. Maximum Building Square Footage**

*Recommendation:* 7,500 square feet. Larger single-family dwelling allowed if meets floor area ratio criteria and if required minimum street and interior setbacks are doubled.

*Discussion of Recommendation:* Many participants at the 2<sup>nd</sup> neighborhood meeting responded that a preliminary recommendation of a 5,000 square foot maximum house size was too restrictive. Some asserted that many homes are functionally obsolete and permitting more square footage would allow landowners to renovate and expand. The final recommendation was revised to reflect those comments, and to provide the opportunity for landowners to update and renovate existing homes. Generally, most that attended the 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting agreed that this provision is good. It was explained that the recommended 0.2 floor area ratio must allow for development of a 7,500 square foot house before it would be permitted.

*Dissenting Opinions:* A few respondents offered that they did not want a maximum building square footage regulation of any size.

## **7. Maximum % of Front Yard Used for Parking**

*Recommendation:* 25%

*Discussion of Recommendation:* Generally, most participants that attended the 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting agreed that this provision is good. It was explained that all existing parking surfaces would be "grandfathered" and could be maintained or replaced as they currently exist.

*Dissenting Opinions:* No dissenting opinions were offered.

## 8. Home Occupation

*Recommendation:* Limit business related vehicle trips to 6 trips per day, including all employee trips.

*Discussion of Recommendation:* The participants spent much time at the 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting discussing this recommendation. The original proposed recommendation allowed either employment of one non-resident employee or traffic and parking from four client trips per day. Some residents felt that this was too restrictive, especially for teachers who may have multiple clients on any one day. Some participants expressed their concern for the neighborhood becoming too business friendly and proposed limiting the traffic and parking of home occupations. The group discussed different alternatives and seemed more comfortable with the recommendation as it is now proposed. In general, written comments support the revised recommendation.

*Dissenting Opinions:* A few residents offered their opinion that the home occupation regulations should stay as they currently exist under R-1 zoning.

## 9. Accessory Dwelling Units

*Recommendation:* No minimum lot size requirement to develop an accessory apartment. An accessory apartment is permitted with every single-family dwelling.

*Discussion of Recommendation:* Generally, most who attended the 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting agreed that this provision is good. It was clarified that accessory dwelling units are attached to the primary dwelling unit and that there are stipulations on square footage that limit an accessory dwelling unit to no more than 750 square feet.

*Dissenting Opinions:* No dissenting opinions were offered.

## 10. Tree Protection

*Recommendation:* Requires consultation with Town before clearing deciduous trees measured at 24" DBH (diameter at breast height) or greater, except as part of construction/maintenance of permitted improvements, or to remove dead, diseased, or hazardous trees.

*Discussion of Recommendation:* Because many residents were opposed to the preliminary recommendation of requiring a tree removal permit and weren't concerned about being notified before a neighbor removed trees, a tree protection regulation was not originally recommended. Participants at the 3<sup>rd</sup> neighborhood meeting raised this issue again and many stated their interest in developing tree protection measures. It was explained that the existing tree ordinance does apply when building a new house, and that the neighborhood was more vulnerable to the clear-cutting of trees on lots with existing homes. Participants discussed the idea of requiring consultation with the Town before removal of large diameter trees.

*Dissenting Opinions:* The recommendation was revised because of the feedback provided to the final recommendations presented at the 3<sup>rd</sup> neighborhood meeting. This revised recommendation was developed to reflect those responses.

## 11. Design Guidelines

*Recommendation:* General

*Discussion of Recommendation:* Most participants were comfortable with the idea of general design guidelines that weren't overly prescriptive, but that served to provide general guidance to landowners developing new homes or expanding an existing home. Participants discussed the idea of including a list of specific trees/plantings that are appropriate for the neighborhood. These proposed design guidelines are not regulatory in nature, and would not require that a landowner implement the suggested design principles.

### **SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED BY OTHER MEANS**

Throughout the neighborhood initiative, residents raised several issues that cannot be directly addressed through the development of zoning regulations as part of a neighborhood conservation district. These issues included:

- Dealing with the increase in property taxes;
- Traffic calming measures to address traffic cutting through the neighborhood, especially between Franklin Street and Estes Hills;
- Responding to increases in on-street parking; and
- Mitigation of possible impacts of the proposed Carolina North development.

The neighborhood was provided with preliminary recommendations for addressing those issues through means other than zoning regulations. The preliminary recommendations are listed below.

1. Invite a Chapel Hill Engineering Department representative to a neighborhood meeting to discuss:
  - Possibilities for traffic calming of through traffic on Elliott Road;
  - Current data on traffic volumes, projections; and
  - Management of on-street parking.
2. Prepare written statement to Town Council asking for attention to:
  - Increases in property taxes; and
  - Concerns about impacts of Carolina North development.