



January 19, 2018

City of Charlottesville Mayor Walker, Vice Mayor Hill, Councilors Bellamy, Galvin and Signer
Planning Commission Chair Green, Vice Chair Clayborne, Commissioners Dowell, Keller, Keesecker,
Lahendro and Santoski

cc: Maurice Jones, Alex Ikefuna, Missy Creasy, Chris Engel, Stacy Pethia, Brenda Kelley

Re: **Comprehensive Plan Update Goals**

Dear City Councilors, Planning Commissioners and Senior City Staff Members,

We respect the considerable time and effort that the Planning Commission has put forth thus far to shape a Comprehensive Plan update for Charlottesville. However, we at CADRe are concerned that the direction that the plan appears to be taking is detrimental to the economic well-being and quality of life of our City.

The Planning Commission has not publicly stated the specific goals and planning principles informing their proposed changes in the City's land use and zoning. Their work thus far has focused on defining the characteristics of several land use categories and their application to the City's land use plan. It appears to show a determination to "downzone" our downtown and virtually all of our urban mixed-use corridor areas. Reducing building height, and hence buildable area, would create impediments to addressing the City's housing and workplace shortages, including the affordable housing shortage.

Cities need a vibrant core. Charlottesville's downtown has a successful entertainment focused Mall and would benefit from increased residential and office inventory to create the essential elements of a vibrant downtown. In CADRe's view, the Comprehensive Plan update should remove current impediments to developing more multifamily residences and office space. The Planning Commission's current direction would dramatically curtail a well-balanced downtown by restricting the City's overall growth, and instead proposes decentralizing modest growth to fringe suburban retail and industrial neighborhoods. Our current Mall and West Main Street should remain our City's "main street", and not shift growth to Harris, Emmet and Long Streets.

The stated goals of City Council in the 2014 strategic plan emphasized a "thriving community" (goal 2) with a "strong diversified economy" (goal 3). Reducing development in our downtown and urban mixed-use corridor zones would seriously impede achieving these desired economic goals.

While the Planning Commission identifies affordable housing in the City as a goal, this reduced growth downzoning approach would have the opposite effect. It would make it more difficult to develop needed housing for all income levels, especially affordable housing. The cost of existing housing stock would likely increase.

Removing current impediments to residential growth (e.g. 21 and 43 DUA density restrictions), encouraging increased multifamily in our urban areas, and reducing single family minimum lot sizes would all provide more economic opportunities for our residents, generate more resources to create affordable housing, and reduce growth pressures on existing residential neighborhoods.



Advocates for Charlottesville's next great places

The attached chart compares current permitted building heights, both by-right and bonus (SUP), to proposed new height limits in these zones. These proposed takings remove up to one-third of existing by-right development in urban mixed-use zones, also completely eliminating opportunities for higher density development currently achievable through the SUP zoning process.

CADRe respectfully suggests that the Planning Commission define clear planning principles to guide proposed Comprehensive Plan revisions, build consensus around these guiding principles, and then apply approved principles to the current land use plan (and resulting zoning). We strongly urge that these principles encourage increased economic opportunity through growth in our urban areas. An anti-growth, anti-height goal would not be in the best economic interests of our residents, would reduce economic opportunity negatively impact the ability to develop more affordable housing, and place further impediments to creating a more vibrant City center.

Respectfully submitted by:
Charlottesville Area Development Roundtable

Gregory Powe, AIA
Co-Chair, CADRe Executive Committee