

New Townships

As market forces drive the urban area of Davidson to expand east beyond the existing core of the old town, the main danger will be the uncoordinated sprawl of single-use residential districts without any new center or focus. To avoid this, the plan envisages the creation over time of an additional focus providing a mix of office, commercial and civic services. This center would take on the characteristics of a traditional "Main Street" and form the core of a new township.

Based on future development projections for Mecklenburg County, the Land Plan identifies the intersection of Highway 73 and Ramah Church Road as the location of such a township. The Ramah Church Township would be designed as a companion to the existing Village Center of Davidson. This township would have an employment focus, commercial services, civic space and a variety of residential building types, just as Davidson has Davidson College, Main Street businesses, several churches, a post office, library and walking distance residences. The Ramah Church Township, when proposed, should be planned as an integrated community. A complete variety of building types would be permitted.

Highway 73 is a state highway which will likely be a multiple-lane road in the future. This will make it inappropriate as the spine of a new township. As a result, a new community in this area should be inwardly focused away from the highway, maintaining a green strip of open landscape between it and the highway.

The timing of a Ramah Church Township will depend upon economic circumstances and market demand. A township ordinance will be drafted to specifically accommodate a township in this area, because although hard to imagine at this time, land in this area will be only a few minutes from North Cross and I-77, King's Grant and I-85, the Concord Regional Airport, and the Charlotte outerbelt I-485. These circumstances are primary development indicators, and without a township ordinance, beautiful landscape could easily become stripped by suburban style growth.

The following recommendation applies to new townships:

1. Incorporate standards into the Land Plan Code specifically designed to accommodate a township in the area of Ramah Church Road and Highway 73. Details of this township are not yet included in the code, but will use the same basic practices of describing building types, street types, and open space areas as the critical components of the physical environment.



Building Types and Affordable Housing

Current zoning is typified by segregation of uses and the prescription of designs that are dependent upon the automobile. This results in each component of town life being isolated into separate compartments. Housing developments are internally focused and usually of a single building type: the detached home, condominium, etc. Shopping, workplaces, and even civic uses are designed primarily around parking lots. In this form, they cannot be joined with homes to create a walkable, integrated environment.

The Land Plan suggests that the emphasis of local land development regulations be on public space and building types. The town should encourage development in its own image with a variety of building types structured by inviting public spaces of streets, squares, and parks.

There is a variety of building types in Davidson, the Charlotte region, and the Southeast United States providing models upon which to base a new set of land development codes. The new code recognizes these models and permits their addition to the community.

Buildings define the physical environment of the town. A small range of building types, when arranged, scaled, and designed compatibly, can safely and harmoniously accommodate a great variety of uses. Traditional American towns and neighborhoods like Davidson and Dilworth in Charlotte, sustain their physical form and quality

of life. They accommodate a wide variety of uses within a limited range of building types. These places are also arranged around a system of inviting public streets and other public spaces.

The plan recognizes the fundamental importance of such building types in the growth and development of the town. The plan uses building types as the primary method of development control instead of conventional zoning formulae based exclusively on use.

Only by allowing a mix of building types can housing for a range of income levels be provided. And by allowing such a variety throughout town, housing can be integrated across the community. Current zoning prescribes the suburban pattern of development, isolating subdivisions from one another. Current zoning practices also prohibit smaller sources of affordable housing such as garage apartments or apartments over businesses. In addition, existing zoning requires large lot detached homes in most areas of Davidson, eliminating any possibility of a wide variety of affordable housing. All of these practices will be changed by the Land Plan Code specifically to promote opportunities for affordable housing.

There is a variety of strategies to ensure the building of housing for all income levels and most require public/private partnerships. For example, in lieu of setting aside land only for public open space, a developer may set aside some land dedi-

cated for affordable housing. Thus the cost of future homes on this land would be insulated from land cost, immediately rendering the houses more affordable. The Land Plan recommends such innovations in development practice to permit the creation of affordable housing throughout the community. To address this issue more fully, the Plan suggests the formation of a citizens' committee whose members have experience and skills in this important area.

The following recommendations apply to building types and affordable housing.

1. Focus on building types rather than building use.
2. Establish a standing town committee to develop strategies to ensure the provision of housing for all income levels. (This committee was appointed in August, 1995.)