

## **Plan Amendment Justification Statement Letter – Southpoint Trails February 14, 2012**

The proposed Community of **Southpoint Trails** is located on the western side of NC Hwy 751, between Massey Chapel Road and Stage Coach Road. Located immediately to the north is St. Barbara Greek Orthodox Church.

The proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendment (CPA) to change the land use designation from low density residential to low-medium density residential is in the public's interest. The proposed community is:

1. Consistent with the intent, goals, objectives, policies, and guiding principles of the Comprehensive Land Use Plan, UDO 3.4.7A
2. Compatible with existing land pattern and designated future land uses, UDO 3.4.7B
3. Will not create substantial adverse impacts in the area, UDO 3.4.7C; and
4. The subject parcel is of adequate shape and size to support the project, UDO 3.4.7D

Since the adoption of the Comprehensive Land Use Plan in 2005, the Southern Durham area has continued to see very significant growth and interest by home buyers to take advantage of the many life style resources the area has to offer.

The Southpoint Mall area has grown to become one of the nation's top retail and entertainment destinations. There are over 3 million sf of retail, entertainment, office and healthcare destinations within 1-2 mile radius of the site. The mall has spurred growth in and around the immediate area for home buyers. The mall has significantly increased property values in South Durham and has raised the quality of life for those who choose to live there.

Access to one of the greatest recreation resources Durham has to offer, the American Tobacco Trail (ATT), will be directly accessible once the approved plans to improve the trail across I-40 and south to Chatham County are implemented. The design plans call for a street trail connection along Massey Chapel Road to NC 751. With access via the Eagle Spur Greenway located on site, access to Southpoint Mall park and ride locations, north to downtown Durham, and points south toward Lake Jordan are easily within reach via bicycle.

Access to multiple transportation routes are accessible within 1 mile. These include I-40, Stage Coach Road, Scott King Road, Okelly Chapel Road just south of the Durham County line provide transportation routes to all surrounding areas. With RTP only minutes away, there are multiple routes the new residents can utilize. This is in addition to the non-motorized options the ATT offers residents.

The amount of developable land available land in the vicinity of these great resources is scarce. The amount of land without significant environmental and topographical constraints that are far from city services is no longer abundant. This site has none of those characteristics. It has significant open land and low-medium density residential development is very appropriate in reducing low density suburban sprawl while providing a compatible housing option to the area of south Durham. While it is understood that the nearby PDR zoned land incorporates Low to medium density residential, the townhouse portions of these projects offer lifestyle choices as well as more affordable choices that have a similar footprint on the landscape as the proposed amendment. For suburban living, locating townhouse product even closer to I-40 and the Southpoint region seems very reasonable at 6 du/ac rather than 4 du/ac.

### **Consistent with the intent, goals, objectives, policies, and guiding principles of the Comprehensive Land Use Plan**

Referencing the Durham Comprehensive Plan(DCP) section 2.2.2b, this site serves as a valuable opportunity for the residential demand that is sought in this area of Southern Durham. The site fronts a major north/south thoroughfare and is near a variety of east/west transportation routes that currently have available capacity. City water and sewer infrastructure has available capacity and is immediately adjacent to the site. City police and fire services already operate in the vicinity of the project servicing adjacent residential and institutional uses.

Section 2.3.2a of the DCP states that Durham should “Ensure that the Suburban Tier has sufficient land to accommodate anticipated population growth....” This site meets this policy to supply the housing demands of the future with easy access to employment areas, goods and services via automobile and bicycle, public transportation and bicycle routes. It will also provide opportunities for more affordable housing based on the current design intent and provide access to recreational destinations thanks to the Eagle Spur Rails to Trail and the ATT.

It is well documented by Authors like Dr. Arthur C. Nelson that demand for residential land over the next 30 years will be for smaller dwelling units (attached and detached) vs. larger single family dwelling units as the larger population demographics include older age groups and younger individuals and couples seek smaller dwelling units due to economic challenges, access to community resources (retail/recreation), lower maintenance and more flexibility in life style. Nelson goes on to say “Low Density Development is the most expensive density to serve.”<sup>1</sup> The cost of water, wastewater, stormwater, streets, schools, parks, public safety and other forms of infrastructure increase the cost of housing as larger lots are developed.

The proposed density of 6 du/ac is an average density allowed in the Suburban Tier and is consistent with DCP policy 2.3.2c. The highest density the Suburban Tier allows is 12 du/ac.

This site embodies the intent of DCP policy 2.3.2d, Suburban Tier Housing Types. While an abundant amount of large single family homes exist south of the I-40 Corridor, this parcel of land is well suited to create a well placed low-medium dense “Pocket

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<sup>1</sup> Nelson, Dr. Arthur C., *Getting Ahead of the (Housing) Curve: A look at Emerging Housing Needs and Market Dynamics*. (Spring 2006)

Community” that is well buffered on two sides by Army Core of Engineers Land, the back side of a Church to the north and would have a street presence similar to other planned communities along NC 751 and Fayetteville Road, south of I-40. Though more dense than the immediate neighboring parcels, the site provides for an efficient use of the land and City infrastructure, while providing a diversity of housing within the existing southern Durham community.

Townhouses offer home owners of the future more energy efficient dwelling units than single family detached homes, less square footage per person, and easier financing in our financially challenged economic environment.

DCP section 7.1.7a evaluates water usage in the community. Water usage is calculated in a variety of ways. The Planning Departments research suggests that water consumption for a Single Family residence in Durham uses 155 gallons/unit/day, while a townhouse uses 110 gallons/day. Comparing townhouses at 6 du/ac and single family homes at 4 du/ac, it is understood that a townhome project may use about 1,300+/- more gallons of water per day. NC DEHNR suggest usage at 120 gallons/bedroom/day. Assuming a townhouse may have 2 bedrooms and a single family home may have 4 bedrooms, a single family community at 4 du/ac may utilize 12,480+/- more gallons of water per day than a townhome community. Note that this does not consider the usage of water for outdoor lawns and gardens, which are minimized in a townhouse community. Since the demand of potable water for outdoor watering is so high, a townhouse development would be a more efficient user of this vital resource.

Based on accepted Trip Generation Calculations for weekday volumes utilized by the City of Durham, a townhome development of 6.0 Du/Ac will generate +/- 120 fewer daily trips than a Single Family Development of 4.0 Du/Ac; thereby creating less impact to Durham area roads.

### **Compatible with existing land pattern and designated future land uses**

As noted in the above policies, a community is made up of a mix of uses(retail, office, recreation, etc) and mix of residential densities. This policy reflects the fabric of the existing Durham community, from its downtown, and parts of town extending in all directions. Not all one type of residential density makes for a diverse community. Due to the rapid growth of the Southpoint area, a greater demand for housing continues. This site will provide that additional mix of residential product, at a slightly higher density on a well suited piece of property, buffered from established residential neighborhoods, while providing a “Pocket Community” of more affordable and efficient housing.

This site is located in an area where land use densities range from 1.2 du/ac to over 15 ++ du/ac generally within a ½ mile radius extending north toward Interstate 40 and south toward Chatham County. There is little or no development west of the project as this land is mostly controlled by the Army Core of Engineers.

To the north near Southpoint Mall, there are existing townhouse and apartment developments. Their densities are as follows:

1. The Lodge at Southpoint – 12++du/ac
2. Leonardo Drive Townhome Development – 5.27 du/ac
3. Southpoint Village Apartments – 12++ du/ac

To the south, existing and approved developments include:

4. Townhouse Development @ Student Place and NC 751. – 5.35 du/ac on 14.96 acres, 80 Units
5. Colvard Farms – 8 du/ac overall density with concentrated densities over 20 du/ac.

Southpoint Trails' proposed density of 6 du/ac is comparable to the other Low and medium density projects within a ½ mile radius.

#### **Will not create substantial adverse impacts in the area**

This Comprehensive Land Use Plan Amendment request will not create “Substantial adverse Impacts.” The request will only complement the diverse community that Durham is known for by mixing compatible densities, while limiting visual impacts due to the juxtaposition of the site, its proximity to available utilities and roadway infrastructure. Because of the enhanced Stormwater regulations of the Jordan Lake Watershed, water quality treatment will be addressed through carefully engineered plans meeting all state and local regulations.

#### **The subject parcel is of adequate shape and size to support the project**

The parcel is approximately 27 acres in size. Its size and land form is suitable for a variety of residential densities and is extremely well suited for more clustered development allowing a significant portion of the site adjacent to the Army Core of Engineers Land total remain natural. East of the Eagle Spur Trail, the site is mostly open and has topography that is gently sloping with slopes averaging 4%. There are no negative attributes of the parcel size that would prevent this site from being developed at 6 du/ac.

**This site permits a low-medium dense townhome “Pocket Community” due to its multiple transportation and recreational opportunities, proximity to existing City of Durham services, reduced impact on the Durham Counties resources and private energy consumption, and the opportunity to create a compact and responsible residential community.**

Sources:

1. Nelson, Dr. Arthur C., *Getting Ahead of the (Housing) Curve: A look at Emerging Housing Needs and Market Dynamics*. (Spring 2006)
2. City of Durham Public Works Department, NC DEHNR and City/County Planning Department for water consumption information
3. Trip Generation calculation, Ramey Kemp and Associates
4. Density of Adjacent Communities, City of Durham GIS.
5. Durham Comprehensive Land Use Plan