



The Carrboro New Unified Development Ordinance Update (or “UDO”) project is an effort to update the Town’s development regulations, currently called the Land Use Ordinance, to implement the 2022 *Carrboro Connects* Comprehensive Plan and bring the current LUO into better alignment with State planning law and best planning practice. The project has a special focus on increasing climate resiliency, promoting fairness for everyone, encouraging attainable housing, and ensuring the new UDO is clear and predictable.

Task 1, Project Initiation, of the UDO update effort includes a series of interviews with interested parties about their views on what is working or not working with the Town’s current development regulations and review process, as well as discussion about what makes Carrboro great (and the areas where improvement is needed). This document summarizes the input collected through a series of nine interviews with the Town Council and Town-identified interested parties. Interviews were conducted by members of the consulting team with Town staff present and took place in-person and virtually over several days from mid-December 2024 to mid-January 2025. Great care was taken by Town staff to ensure a diverse blend of perspectives and points of view were included in the interviews.

This report summarizes the comments provided. It also identifies additional parties who interviewees thought the consulting team should speak with about the project. The information collected during the interviews in December and January is not attributed to any one individual. Thoughts and ideas are paraphrased, grouped by topic, and consolidated in cases where multiple people expressed the same or similar sentiments. The input is not prioritized or listed in any particular order.

Interviewees were encouraged to share their thoughts freely, but were asked the following five questions:

- 1. What aspects of the Town’s current regulations are problematic?**
- 2. What parts of the Town’s current application review process are in need of improvement?**
- 3. What parts of the Town’s current regulations or review process should not be changed?**
- 4. What makes Carrboro great?**
- 5. Who else in Carrboro should we speak with?**

The table on the following page identifies the 23 people interviewed. We note that meaningful and representative public engagement is a cornerstone of this new UDO project and the proposed work program includes numerous other opportunities for anyone to provide input and suggestions as the project progresses.





Interested Party Interviewees

Name	Title (if applicable)	Affiliation
Sophie Suberman	Co-Executive Director	Grow Your World (youth development center)
Anissa McLendon		Alabama Ave. "Ambassador"
Brian Crawford		Blogger (civics & bike related topics)
Shelley Welsh	(+ partner Kevin)	Business Owner
Heidi Perov Perry		Bicycle Advocate
Ryan Byers		Formerly with OWASA
Patrick McDonough	City Beautiful21 blog	Urban Planner
Jeanne Ernhardt		Landowner in North Transition Area
Diane Robinson		
Linda Haak		
Laura Van Sant		
Jenny Hoffman		Builder
Maria, Olivia & Densie	(+ 3 additional members virtually)	El Centro Hispano
Barbara Jessie Black	CEO	Community Works

In addition to interviews with interested parties listed above, the consulting team and Town staff also conducted interviews with the following Town Council Members:

- Mayor Barbara Foushee
- Mayor Pro Tempore Danny Nowell
- Randee Haven-O'Donnell
- Jason Merrill
- Eliazar Posada
- Cristóbal Palmer
- Catherine Fray

The following pages list the comments provided during the interested party interviews and Council member discussions. Comments are organized into ten major categories, which are listed below. These categories are not in any particular order and are not listed in any particular order.



- A. Density and housing
- B. Desired forms of development
- C. Downtown
- D. The environment
- E. Transportation
- F. The development review process
- G. Development standards
- H. Project outcomes
- I. What makes Carrboro great
- J. Who else should we speak with?

The main idea or question of each comment below is shown in **bold** type.

A. DENSITY AND HOUSING

1. There is a desire to permit **denser and more infill development**. Would like to see more options for residential development beyond two-story single-family detached homes.
2. There was a question posed about what the Town is doing to ensure that **renting remains affordable and viable**. A comment was made that the Town does want UNC graduate students.
3. There is a desire to make sure that people can live in Carrboro. People who work in Carrboro must have the ability to live in the Town as well. That means the **Town needs to have a broad range of housing types and prices to support different incomes and differing vocations**. The area named “White Oak” behind the Town’s fire station was held up as an example of the kind of diverse housing that is needed.
4. **Pre-approved housing designs** that could be approved administratively were suggested as a possible incentive for maintaining attainable housing. Is that a way to address design requirements despite limits applied by the State?
5. One interviewee commented that **not everyone wants higher density** – that there may be some locations where increased density is appropriate (like downtown), but perhaps there are some areas where increased density may not be appropriate.
6. One interviewee commented that the new UDO should **encourage more density despite the potential fear** about increased density from members of the public.
7. The Town **does not have “middle” housing**. This claim is supported by the example of Fair Oaks Phase 2 (of 3). This phase was supposed to be comprised of townhomes. The local community objects to the townhouses, and the Council decides that townhouses might not be appropriate. The “bohemian” look of small cottages and small homes is being lost as existing lots are being redeveloped with million-dollar homes.
8. One interviewee indicated the perception that many recently constructed dwellings are large and expensive single-family detached homes, and that **Town is not building affordable apartments or townhomes**.
9. People want to **age in place**, and that means more housing diversity is needed.
10. In the Carrboro of old it was easy to build large houses, but **the regulations make it hard or impossible to build numerous small houses on existing larger lots**.





11. The data indicates that multi-family building efforts in Carrboro have slowed. For example, the data show that Carrboro built more multi-family units in the five years from 1985 to 1990 then over the following 30 years. The **combination of development pressure and slow construction has contributed to increasing housing prices**. The lack of speed in the development review process is contributing the affordability crisis.
12. Land values and the development process are allowing **million-dollar homes to be built instead of multi-family or affordable housing**.
13. There was a suggestion to **use a # of bedrooms metric** rather than a density figure.
14. One interviewee mentioned that there is a challenge building affordable housing. The **Town needs more multi-family development**, and a two-year entitlement process is too long. Lot prices are high and that creates expensive homes. The Town needs to find a better balance between building up and building out. More "condo" zoning is needed, so development can get taller rather than occupying more land.
15. It is **hard for small builders to provide affordable housing** given the high land costs and lengthy entitlement process.
16. The Town should consider **more tiny homes on wheels options**.
17. Housing in Carrboro is important, but rent is too expensive, and the **costs of housing are driving members of the community out**.
18. New generations can't afford to build or buy a house and have to stay with their parents. **Affordable housing is a problem, especially for large families (6-7 people)** who need larger dwellings to accommodate their families.
19. We need to be **clearer about our use of terms** when it comes to affordable housing (versus subsidized housing).
20. What is the Town's strategy for density?
21. How is the Town going to accommodate **people living near where they work** in Carrboro given the limited land, and high costs? Many employees in downtown businesses live elsewhere because there are not enough options. Most downtown employees live with people other than their family.
22. One interviewee talked about the Carr Mill neighborhood, which was **rezoned to allow rentals and in so doing brought more students in which raised land values** and resulted in bigger homes that ended up taking affordable housing away from the Town.





B. DESIRED FORMS OF DEVELOPMENT

1. There is also a desire to maintain **human-scaled development** in Carrboro. There was a statement that the recent development like that seen on Fordham Boulevard in Chapel Hill is too much – not in keeping with ideas about human-scale.
2. Interviewees wonder about **how to balance** the need/desire for increased density / more attainable housing / walkability with the desire to maintain a human-scale development template.
3. There is a desire for **more infill development and more townhouses**.
4. There is a desire for **more dispersed neighborhood-serving commercial uses** akin to the existing development on Main Street. Interviewees discussed a desire for more commercial “nodes” or neighborhood-service commercial uses like a corner store or corner coffee shop.
5. There were questions wondering **what are the kinds of development that citizens of Carrboro love**, and what can the UDO project do to foster more forms of development that are consistent with what they love.
6. A statement was made about current **small-scale commercial uses** consisting largely of dollar stores and gas station/convenience stores – that there is a desire for something different in Carrboro. Something more like a “bodega,” “tienda,” “tabac,” “kirana,” a “mom and pop store,” a deli, or other small-scale neighborhood commercial enterprise that caters more to nearby people arriving on foot or by bicycle rather than a broader customer market who arrives primarily by automobile.
7. One interviewee indicated that Carrboro does not want to become another Chapel Hill, but would rather **remain a small town**, and that the LUO update process should keep that as a focus.
8. One interviewee stated that the **current LUO can sometimes be an obstacle** to what makes Carrboro “cool.”
9. Establishment of new 6-plex or 11-plex residential developments (like on Poplar Street) should be easy. The **current rules prevent this kind of desirable development**.
10. The new UDO should **incentivize and encourage human-scaled multi-family development**. New development should maintain a “village scale.” There are several well-loved 2-story townhouse developments in Carrboro, like: White Oak, Cedar Court, and Fidelity Court.
11. There was a suggestion that the new UDO should **make single-family detached development more difficult to do** instead of making it a default setting. Perhaps it should be more difficult to establish detached single-family homes on larger lots.
12. The Town has recently seen construction of 4,000 square foot homes, which is too large. The **Town does not need such large homes**, and there is a feeling that the Town is interfering with the conversion of existing single-family homes to multi-family.





13. There was a question about whether or not the LUO update project will **revisit the use table**, with some focus on what needs to be removed or added.
14. There was a question about whether or not the Town gives **incentives** for the kinds of uses or kinds of development it wants.
15. Carrboro needs to ensure that its **artists and musicians** have places to live and work.
16. There was a comment that there is a loss of and **failure to create new employment** for young people in Carrboro.
17. There was a statement that the **political will does exist** to make the changes being suggested by Carrboro Connects and these interviews.
18. The Town should be **encouraging small buildings**.
19. There are a **lack of community spaces for recreation**.
20. Everyone wants to come to Carrboro because it is small, but then after moving to the Town tries to **turn it into a big city**.
21. Building **more ADUs** would be helpful and the Town needs to find better ways to “fast track” good stuff for the community.
22. We need more places for **small and micro businesses** to take place.

C. DOWNTOWN

1. An interviewee commented that **building heights in downtown should increase**. There is a desire for a vibrant downtown with taller buildings and more density in a limited space. Further discussion pointed to perhaps 5-story buildings in downtown may be acceptable; 2-3 story rowhouses may be acceptable; 2-story mixed use (like Cliff's Market) may be acceptable.
2. One interviewee suggested that **downtown should be about infill and development to higher densities and with taller buildings** (+/- 5 stories). The neighborhoods around downtown should also be subject to more infill. More discussion is necessary about the “Northern Study Area.”
3. There was a statement that downtown is not well kept, and it appears dirty or disheveled; that it is **not well-maintained**. There must be attractions, or reasons to visit downtown.
4. There is **not enough parking downtown**, and the lack of parking spaces keeps people away from downtown. In some cases the parking spaces are absorbed by people who drive downtown and then take the bus to elsewhere.





D. THE ENVIRONMENT

1. There is a question about whether or not there is such a thing as a **500-year-floodplain**, and if the Town can regulate development within it (local governments who participate in the National Flood Insurance Protection (NFIP) Program apply federal FEMA rules to development located within the 100-year floodplain – while FEMA does not apply provisions within the 500-year floodplain, there is nothing barring local governments from doing so of their own accord).
2. One interviewee indicated that **stormwater management is important** and we need it. Open space has to increase in order to facilitate storm water management.
3. There was an observation that moves to protect the existing community character of Carrboro could be a **barrier to reaching the goals for climate resiliency**.

E. TRANSPORTATION

1. There is a desire for **more people to be able to walk** to nearby retail and other daily-needs service providers (e.g., purchase of milk & eggs) without need of a car.
2. There is a desire to **maintain and enhance the pedestrian-oriented environment** in Carrboro.
3. Several interviewees mentioned a desire to explore **NACTO street standards** for inclusion in the updated LUO (National Association of City Transportation Officials) <https://nacto.org/> The association maintains several policy positions: Prioritizing pedestrians, cyclists, and public transit over private vehicles, encouraging walking, biking, and transit to reduce carbon emissions, transportation access should serve all (including historically underserved populations), advocating for vision zero principles to eliminate traffic fatalities, improving transit to reduce reliance on personal vehicles, promoting urban densities, and avoidance of auto-centric standards.
4. There is a desire for **slower street traffic and safer streets** for all people (pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers). Interviewees wondered of the Town could use a framework like NACTO standards to show the NCDOT the kind of street configuration that is desired by the Town.
5. There is a desire for more opportunities for **transit**.
6. Public transportation in Carrboro has some challenges; there are **not enough bus stops**.





F. THE DEVELOPMENT REVIEW PROCESS

1. There is a desire for more affordable dwelling units in Carrboro that can be established with a **reduced reliance on discretionary review**. Interviewees questioned if there was a way to use incentives for affordable housing or pre-approved designs for affordable housing that could permit less discretionary review.
2. The community should **appeal to people's sense of need for affordable housing** rather than shaming those who may oppose or have questions about proposed development through phrases like "NIMBY" (not-in-my-backyard) or "Nimbyism." Interviewees noted that when attainable or affordable residential is proposed, we need to have efficient, effective, and representative participation by the public.
3. There was a comment that the Town may **not be that inclined to continue with conditional rezoning**, at least as a means of securing affordable/attainable residential development. Some folks would prefer to have codified standards rather than relying on negotiation.
4. It was noted that the current LUO has many kinds of mixed-use development types and provisions, but they are **seldom used**.
5. One interviewee commented that the **form-based zoning district** in Chapel Hill is a good example we should explore.
6. There is a **lack of clarity in the current LUO, and a lack of understanding** of the current review processes. The new UDO needs to "come up to the times." It is very important that Town residents understand the rules and the development process. The consulting team should focus on making the rules and process more clear with flowcharts and streamlining.
7. When new development comes in to an existing neighborhood, the **developers should strive for architectural compatibility with what exists** and they should reach out to neighbors so neighbors can be aware of what is proposed.
8. One interviewee indicated that the development and the development rules are not meeting the Town's needs. The **rules are increasing the costs of development and slowing the development of much needed homes and jobs** down. The LUO and development process empowers those who do not want to see growth. This situation means that the Town is shrinking. Carrboro has built few new homes over the recent past, and that is leading to more homelessness and other societal problems.
9. One interviewee indicated that **staffing resources are always a problem**. There was a suggestion that code enforcement is inconsistent, and that there is an uneven application of the rules to different people. There was a statement that the Town Attorney has too much power.
10. One interviewee said that the Town should **not be listening to the "nimbys"** [not in my back yard] who do not want a lot of higher density housing since Carrboro Connects calls for this.





11. One interviewee indicated that the current development review process includes **significant amounts of public comment and associated evaluation of comments from the audience** which puts negative pressure on the Town Council. However, the Bolan Creek Greenway project was held up as an example of a successful project and positive Town action.
12. There was an observation that the current special use permit procedure for any residential use type with 5 or more units is a **disincentive to proposals for this kind of development** since it makes it political and unpredictable.
13. There was a suggestion that **removing minimum parking standards** will not result in a flood of new developments that do not include off-street parking since banks likely will not make loans for projects that do not include parking. At the same time, the lack of on-street parking is also a problem, and that the narrow streets and lack of bike lanes could also be part of a problem.
14. There is a need to explore change to how public hearings are conducted – there should be **reductions in the amount of public-provided testimony** and more opportunity for Council deliberation.
15. When asked about their experience with the development review process, one interviewee said the current development review process is a **brick wall due to neighborhood resistance**. The new UDO needs more predictability. There should be no guessing games and there is not enough opportunity to communicate.

G. DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

1. One perspective raised indicated that **restrictions on uses or different development configurations are a disincentive to development generally** and could interfere with desired forms of development.
2. The LUO needs to be updated to **better address stormwater, economic sustainability, racial equity (fairness), and climate resiliency**.
3. There was a statement that the current regulations do not allow for or encourage desirable neighborhoods. The Town might wish to **consider no design review and fewer standards**, along with more encouragement for the re-use of existing buildings. Perhaps the removal of design standards would make it more possible for some of the housing units to be affordable.
4. The updated LUO should be: **clear, simple, make what we want easy to develop**, eliminate loopholes, and reduce obstacles. The LUO should identify and make clear its purposes.





5. There was a statement that the **Town does not manifest its values** for environmental protection or attainable housing through its current LUO and development review process like it does for its racial equity and other fairness aspects.
6. There was a comment that the new parking deck adjacent to the new library is too large and is an example of how the **Town is not being consistent with its statements about density and small-town scale.**
7. There was a suggestion that the **new rules should be streamlined** so that it is not so expensive to build in Carrboro.
8. There was a statement that it seems that **farmers can do whatever they want** with their land without any real regulations or without worrying about how it impacts other adjacent landowners. As an example, clearcutting may take place on farms even though such activity has negative impact on streams and downstream properties. There was concern mentioned about the possibility of the construction of an amphitheater at Maple View farms.
9. There were several comments about what the new UDO needs. Specifically, it should be “built from the ground up”, it should **abolish all minimum parking standards**, it should follow **NACTO** (National Association of City Transportation Officials) street guidelines, the current LUO allows or even requires bike racks to be placed in “weird” places, and there is a general **lack of ADA access** and improvements.
10. Some of the major concerns for the Town are housing affordability, the lack of sidewalks, and transportation concerns.
11. It is **too expensive to develop in Carrboro**, especially for non-profits who provide employment, services, or housing.
12. Suggest **limits on teardowns.**

H. PROJECT OUTCOMES

1. New Land Use Maps are desired as part of the project (not sure, but perhaps what was meant was a **new Official Zoning Map**).
2. There is a request to ensure that the LUO update project include the provision of information and educational information to residents and interested parties in Town. The consulting team should **coordinate with the Downtown Master Planning effort** to make sure that project is helping people understand the difference between the two projects and that the “stage is being properly set” for the LUO project.
3. “Carrboro is a patchwork of neighborhoods.” The **LUO update process should ensure equity and inclusion for these neighborhoods.**





4. Some interviewees commented that they **don't understand the reasons for use segregation** (residential and non-residential uses are kept apart from one another via zoning).
5. The new UDO needs to be revised to be **more closely aligned with the policy guidance** in Carrboro Connects.
6. Time and trees can combine with the development template to yield the "good stuff". It is possible that when initially constructed, some of Carrboro's neighborhoods did not have trees and seemed out of context with the rest of Town. However, over time, trees have grown; surrounding developments have taken place, and these early neighborhoods have become desirable. **It can take some time for our communities to "blossom."**
7. One interviewee indicated that the new UDO **should promote collaboration, creativity, youth involvement**, and should be "cutting edge."
8. There was a comment that cultural problems exist in Carrboro, and how can the Town help keep the "1st generation" families in the town? The Town needs to recognize the **wide variety of people who live in Town and the wide variety of ways they use land**. The Town should embrace diversity.
9. There is a **perception that it is difficult to build in Carrboro** (and that should be changed).
10. There was a comment that the **Town is not following equitable principles** – as an example, children of residents cannot afford to live in Carrboro.
11. There was a comment that some of the Town's on-line reference materials and commercial development pamphlets have misspellings, and this is a symptom of a larger problem – that the **Town staff is not maintaining its resources or keeping up with the times**.
12. One interviewee commented that the current UDO is broken and should be replaced, not repaired.
13. One interviewee reminded that the Town should be **looking at things from the community's point of view, not a developer's point of view**. There were suggestions for improving stormwater functionality, abolishing single-family detached only zoning (already done), encouraging small homes, open space lands only being set aside in marginal or environmentally-sensitive lands, we need more ways to accommodate natural development, recognize that the Town lacks adequate sidewalks, and that we don't need to guide parking so intensively.
14. One interviewee reminded us that we need to be sure we are **addressing equity**; the Town may not feel safe for everyone, and social justice needs to be maintained.





I. WHAT MAKES CARRBORO GREAT

1. **Attainable and flexible housing** options creates the possibility for mixed income communities, which is one of the things that is great about Carrboro. Another great thing about the community is that there are easy-to-reach amenities (Carrboro has a “15-minute downtown,” or is sized and configured to allow almost anyone to reach almost any available amenity within 15 minutes from anywhere in the downtown).
2. One great thing about Carrboro is its **core of small homes that are somewhat close together** with amenities that are interspersed throughout the core. The core has a “ring” of apartments, which are in turn surrounded by single-family detached neighborhoods of larger homes.
3. What makes Carrboro great? My community. Knowing my neighbors. Interacting with my neighbors. **My relationships with my neighbors.**
4. What makes Carrboro great? It was great in the '80s and '90s, but not sure Carrboro is great at the moment. It feels somewhat stagnated, regressing, and the regulations are not enabling the community to be what people think it should be.
5. What is great about Carrboro? It is **dense and compact**, and it has the potential to be less auto-centric.
6. What is great about Carrboro? The **scale of Town is great**. There are many small and local shops (like Fitch lumber). There is the ability to get around many places by bicycle or bus. There is the chance of living a car-free or almost car-free lifestyle.
7. What is great about Carrboro? **That it still “feels” like a small town**. That it is a pro-environment community (even if maybe it isn't). There are many great events and great event venues (Farmer's Market, Art Center, Cat's Cradle, Weaver Street).
8. What is great about Carrboro? The **cultural and music scene**. The affordability of housing permits culture (like music) to remain in Carrboro. At the same time, Carrboro may be losing the things that made it “cool.”
9. What is great about Carrboro? **The rural buffer**. However, the fact that it is hard to build houses in Town can put more pressure to develop land in the rural buffer. The lack of density makes it more likely to have urban sprawl.
10. What makes Carrboro great? **The sense of history** – like Carr-Mill, Fitch's. The co-op. There are lots of deer around Carrboro.
11. What's great about Carrboro? It isn't crowded, it doesn't have tall buildings. One interviewee noted that **perhaps what people like about the Town has to be removed in order to meet the Town's goals for the future**.
12. What is great about Carrboro? It is a small town, it was vibrant, it has community spirit and neighborhood integrity. **There are creative people and the community is inclusive**. It begs the question of how Carrboro can remain an inclusive community with such expensive land.





13. What's great about Carrboro? There is **diversity in the population**, downtown has a lot of local businesses. It feels "safe."
14. What's great about Carrboro? The mill and mill housing. **The human scale of development**. The eclectic nature of the buildings and public spaces. The NC architectural vernacular.
15. What's great about Carrboro? There is diversity in business, and its quirky. It is affordable (relatively speaking) and that help keeps it quirky. The people are open-minded and friendly. It is inclusive and safe. The Town is open and tries to work with people. At the same time, an interviewee notes that **perhaps it is the things that people love about Carrboro (its small size, quiriness, quiet, and relative affordability make it so desirable), which in terms draws people to the Town which then negatively impacts the things people love about it.**
16. What's great about Carrboro? **The schools are good**. There are things for kids to do. There are festivals and music. It is walkable, and there is access to public transportation. There are opportunities for engaging with art.
17. What's great about Carrboro? It is a **quiet town that is easy to get around** and has a great Town Commons.

END OF TABLE

