
COUNTY OF LOUDOUN
COUNTY ADMINISTRATION

Memorandum

Date: May 8, 2019
To: Board of Supervisors
From: Caleb Weitz, Chief of Staff
Subject: Staff Responses to additional Board Member Questions regarding Suburban Mixed Use Place Type

Attached are staff answers to additional Board Member questions regarding the Suburban Mixed Use Place Type.

ATTACHMENT:

1. Board Questions and Staff Responses

SUBURBAN MIXED USE PLACE TYPE – May 8, 2019

Vice-Chair Buona Additional Questions ~ May 3, 2019

1. Who directed staff to expand the performance criteria to will permit projects to exceed 1.0 FAR? Aren't the additional criteria already covered by policies in other chapters of the Plan?

The Planning Commission directed staff to ensure development would be of high quality by having additional project elements that go above and beyond the required development standards when a project is requesting additional density greater than 1.0 FAR and less than or equal to 1.5 FAR. The additional elements listed are spelled out in more detail in other sections of the plan, but this specific policy to allow for additional density is only located in this place type.

2. In the “Possible Ranges” on Page 2-53 – the Planning Commission recommended draft plan provides a Preferred Mix of Uses which allows a FAR mix up to 70% residential – didn't the Stakeholder's Plan recommend a residential FAR mix of up to 80% in the Suburban Town Center, Suburban Regional Commercial, Suburban Community Commercial, and I believe Suburban Mixed Neighborhood went up to 90% (all of which were combined into the Suburban Mixed Use Place Type) -- why are we dropping the Residential FAR percentage in the mix from the Stakeholder recommended 80% to 70%?

Suburban Mixed Neighborhood was combined with Suburban Compact Neighborhood, but the other three place types were combined to create Suburban Mixed Use as noted. In the Stakeholders Plan, there was too much overlap between the mixed use place types and each listed extremely broad use mixes. The Planning Commission consolidated to a single Suburban Mixed Use place type and changed the densities, FAR intensities, and use mixes of several place types to better align with the County's goals and priorities for a residential to commercial balance.

Suburban Mixed Use is designed to create the type of walkable, integrated development that is largely missing in Loudoun, and it is proposed for many of the old “Keynote Employment” areas with the intent that these mixed use environments would lead to commercial growth, especially in the office market which has been stagnant in Loudoun for many years. In earlier review with the Commission, Suburban Mixed Use showed residential only up to 60% to emphasize the County's goal of increased commercial development. Because this is a 20-year plan, the possible maximum was changed to up to 70% in the current draft in an attempt to allow more flexibility and strike a balance between what the market is perceived to support now (more residential) versus the County's goal of additional non-residential development.

3. On Page 2-53, Suburban Mixed-Use place type, last sentence of the first paragraph – the sentence states: “...mixed-use developments with **increased densities and greater ranges of uses than otherwise allowed for Suburban Mixed Use** may be appropriate on sites 150 or more acres in area.”

- How many sites in excess of 150 acres exist in the areas mapped Suburban Mixed Use in the SPA?

This statement did have in mind sites like Dulles Town Center, but “sites” does not mean individual properties only. This would apply to an assemblage of properties, if several different properties were assembled for a project. This acreage would be of a sufficient size to allow for a complete community that could have a more intensive core, perhaps above the maximum FAR currently planned in the place type, with development transitioning to the lower intensity at the edges. There is no way to know what those consolidated sites might be in a future development application, but this provision would provide a flexible development option if such an assemblage of properties were to occur, as well as for a site that already meets the acreage requirement (e.g. Dulles Town Center).

- Is this threshold intended to be the minimum area required to increase density and the range of uses to exceed a 1.0 FAR as depicted on Page 2-55? Or does this mean increasing the density beyond the 1.5 FAR as suggested on Page 2-55 on sites 150 acres or greater? This is a confusing policy.

The provision on page 2-55 on increasing the density from 1.0 to 1.5 if certain project elements are included is not related to the 150 minimum area policy on page 2-53. The 150 minimum acre policy is intended to allow consideration of uses and FAR not currently contemplated in the Plan. Staff could add a line in the paragraph to explain how they are not related to clarify this if desired by the Board.

4. In the “Possible Ranges” on Page 2-53 – the Planning Commission recommended draft plan, the Preferred Mix of Uses provides a Public/Civic: 5%+ -- is this 5% based on FAR, on Land Area or both? Since flexibility is the key to successful implementation of mixed-use developments, shouldn't this be both?

The 5%+ Public/Civic use range is based on both the square feet of building space or land area to provide flexibility. If a development were to devote one acre of land for public/civic space, that 43,560 sq. ft. of space would be applied to the FAR mix calculation. Staff would support adding language to the draft Plan clarifying this if desired by the Board.

5. Page 2-54 within the “Context” section of the “Design Characteristics” references vertically mixed buildings and many types of retail and service uses. The entire “Context” is very prescriptive and requires very specialized design. If you look to the other Place

Types, the “Context” portion of the Design Guidelines within the SPA, is one sentence, the Suburban Mixed Use should not be this regulatory – please explain how we got to this point.

Because the Suburban Mixed Use place type is the only Suburban place type that includes significant flexibility with a wide range of allowed uses and use mix ranges, additional context was included to explain the intent of this place type and to communicate the desired character. Staff does not intend for the text to be regulatory, but rather to provide guidance as to where automobile-centric uses would be appropriate (e.g. exterior to a development along roads), as compared to pedestrian-centric uses (e.g. interior to a development where pedestrians would be more prevalent).

If desired by the Board, the two last sentences of the paragraph on page 2-54 could be moved into the description of the place type on the first page to ensure sites develop with the intent or desired character of the place type.

6. The description of Open Space includes “Community” uses. Aren’t Public and Civic uses Community uses and, if that is the intent, shouldn’t Public and Civic be added to the description of Open Space?

The Quality Development section (Using Place Types) provides the following guidance on Community uses that could be considered as Open Space:

- o Community – plazas, playgrounds, pocket parks, gardens, public art, amphitheater

Civic space is currently defined within the draft Plan as:

Public or quasi-public uses in residential or business areas that are accessible to the public and primarily serve as gathering or meeting areas for the immediate community. Civic uses may be public buildings, defined space in commercial buildings or outdoor space constructed to accommodate gatherings of the community. They can be the settings where celebrations are held, where social and economic exchanges take place, where friends run into each other, and where cultures mix. Such uses may typically include churches, schools, libraries, community centers, amphitheaters, and property owner association meeting space or club houses.

While some Civic space could be considered as Community Open Space (plaza, amphitheater), not all public/civic uses would be considered Community Open Space (libraries, churches, club houses) Also, it is important to ensure that a use that could be considered as Community and Civic is not counted twice—in other words, to ensure that a project does not count the same space as both the required Open Space and the required Civic Space.

7. Loudoun wants to promote tourism and hotels are typically a commercial benefit to mixed use areas – why are hotels a conditional or tertiary use?

Staff would have no objection to moving Hotels to the Complementary Use category, but would recommend adding language to ensure that there are supporting uses in proximity, so as to discourage clusters of hotels with no supporting uses nearby.