Land Use Regulations
Draft Outline of Recommended Amendments

Charlotte's Villages are envisioned as vibrant, active, family-friendly hubs for living, shopping, recreating, and socializing. They will be safe, secure and welcoming places for residents, employees, business owners, and visitors to gather, not just for special events, but for everyday activities.

As such, this Draft Outline of Recommended LUR Amendments are directly aligned with the additional components of this Report related to Growth Potential, Public Spaces & Community Building, and Transportation, and are intended to guide community-wide conversations regarding planning and design initiatives, and potential regulatory and policy modifications.

The 14 draft Recommendations on this page and the next have emerged directly from public input, as gathered by the project team through surveys, design workshops, and several small-group forums with property owners and local stakeholders.

The drafting of these Recommendations has also been guided by CCRPC, the project steering committee, and the Planning Commission.

Finally, these Recommendations underscore the opportunity for Charlotte to align with state and regional policy to streamline the permitting process for housing development in dense Village centers, which has always been a state and local planning goal.

These Recommendations will be refined and expanded in the next phase of this project.

1 NEED: Streamline Village Zoning District Provisions. Streamlining the regulations within the Villages is a way to "keep it simple" for current property owners or others who are considering investing and building in Charlotte.

RECOMMENDATION: Combining all three of these districts (West Charlotte Village District, East Charlotte Village District, Village Commercial District) into one combined district should be explored.

2 NEED: Enable Additional Supported Permitted Uses The Land Use Regulations should simplify our permitting process for uses that are typical in Vermont villages. Most residential and non-residential uses that are appropriate in a village center should be allowed as a Permitted use, rather than requiring a complicated and expensive Conditional Use Review.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Uses that are currently permitted by Conditional Use Review in the Villages that should instead be Permitted uses include: Office, Health Clinic, Personal Service, Public Facility, Restaurant, Retail Store, School, Snack Bar, Funeral Home, Veterinary Clinic. In addition, the Land Use Regulations could be modified to permit more than four multifamily units on a single lot, without requiring multiple public hearings and subdivision permitting.

3 NEED: Avoid, Minimize, and Mitigate Adverse Environmental Impacts. Consistent with the Town Plan, Charlotte's Land Use Regulations should facilitate growth in its Villages to reduce development pressure in rural areas of the town.

RECOMMENDATIONS: The Land Use Regulations should include text that speaks to the need to Avoid, Minimize, and/or Mitigate adverse impacts to natural features. Text should utilize "shall" and "must" with respect to conservation-related provisions, rather than "should" or "may."

The Land Use Regulations and application materials should require applicants to be more specific about a proposed project's likely impacts upon Areas of High Public Value. This will enable property owners, builders, and town officials to better understand and regulate these impacts.

4 NEED: Maximize Flexibility of Land Use in the Villages. Charlotte should focus development in its Villages in a manner that promotes economic and social vitality, and supports public transportation, via greater diversity of use and housing types on individual lots.

RECOMMENDATION: Amend the Land Use Regulations to allow for more than one principal structure on a lot, or any Permitted Use, as long as the development adheres to other provisions related to Maximum Lot Coverage, Setbacks, Parking, Maximum Building Coverage/Footprint, etc.

5 NEED: Review Procedures for Multi-Family Dwellings. Multifamily housing projects proposed within the villages are currently reviewed under Planned Residential Development (PRD) or Planned Unit Development (PUD). These complex regulatory processes require multiple hearings, adding time and expense. Multifamily housing projects of up to 4 units also require Conditional Use Review. These regulatory barriers make it very challenging to permit and build multi-unit housing in Charlotte's villages.

RECOMMENDATION: The LURs should be modified so that "Dwelling/multi-family" is a Permitted Use in the Villages.

6 NEED: Streamline Subdivision Review Process. Currently, proposed mixed use or adaptive reuse of previously developed properties must go through the complex Planned Unit Development or Planned Residential Development review, even when no subdivision of land is proposed. These processes entail multiple hearings and involve development restrictions that are inappropriate to villages. These barriers can discourage the creative reuse and re-purposing of existing historic structures for housing and businesses.

RECOMMENDATION: Decouple mixed use and adaptive reuse projects from a requirement to meet Planned Unit Development or Planned Residential Development standards in the village districts.

Such development proposals would still have to meet all Site Plan review and other land development provisions.

7 **NEED: Lower Minimum Lot Area and Minimum Lot Frontage Requirements.** The LURs do not allow current Village property owners to make reasonable additions to their historic properties without a complex regulatory review because most Village lots and buildings do not meet current dimensional standards (setbacks and frontage widths). This discourages owners from investing in upgrades to their property that could enhance livability, add long term value, and potentially offer additional housing opportunities.

RECOMMENDATIONS: The LURs should be modified to allow a minimum lot area within the Villages consistent with historical development patterns, such as 1 or 2 acres (or even less). At the same time, Charlotte should continue to explore options for greater water reliability and wastewater capacity that would support appropriate infill development in line with the Town Plan.

8 **NEED: Lower Minimum Setback Requirements.** The current setback standards for new construction within the Villages (25 feet from all property lines) will result in a more typically suburban form instead of the typical historic Village form.

RECOMMENDATIONS: The setback provisions in the Villages should be reduced, to be more consistent with historic development patterns. In the case of the character-defining front-yard setback, this could be 10 or 15 feet from the right-of-way line.

9 **NEED: Disconnect Lot Density from Lot Size.** Remove unnecessary restrictions on infill and redevelopment opportunities (particularly for housing) within the Villages.

RECOMMENDATION: Separate the Minimum Lot Area requirement from density requirements. In addition, update the Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) provisions to use simple units (rather than density, which is units per acre) to avoid legal challenges to this conservation and compact development tool.

10 **NEED: Exchange Maximum Building Coverage for Maximum Building Footprint.** Remove Duplicative Building Design Standards. Having both a maximum lot coverage and maximum building coverage requirement, combined with other dimensional requirements, limits infill and redevelopment opportunities within the Villages

RECOMMENDATION: The Land Use Regulations should be modified to eliminate the Maximum Lot Coverage requirements within the villages but retain the Maximum Building Footprint provision to ensure the scale of new buildings aligns with the community's vision.

11 **NEED: Increase Maximum Building Height.** The current Maximum Building Height standard of 35 feet effectively limits construction to two stories on a building with a pitched roof. Charlotte should promote a diversity of building types and economically viable mixed-use construction in our Villages.

RECOMMENDATION: Increase the Maximum Building Height in the Villages from 35 to 45 feet.

12 **NEED: Update Village-Specific Parking Provisions.** In order to promote a human-scaled streetscape in our Villages and maintain accessibility, parking should be located to the rear of buildings and parking minimums should be eliminated.

RECOMMENDATION: The LURs should be modified to remove the phrase "to the extent feasible" and to require that all new parking, loading and service areas be located to the rear of buildings, and located to the side only if rear locations are deemed by the Town to be physically impossible. Modify the LUR to remove parking minimums.

13 **NEED: Update Village-Specific Road and Driveway Provisions.** Provisions governing road and driveway geometry should be more scaled to the Villages (rather than rural areas), in order to reflect historic development patterns and promote greater promoting natural feature conservation.

RECOMMENDATIONS: The street cross sections in this Report should used to develop specifications for Village streets. All edits to road specifications should also be addressed in Charlotte's Road and Driveway Standards.

14 **NEED: Update Village-Specific Pedestrian Paths and Sidewalks Provisions.** Sidewalks and/or paths should be required within and along the frontages for all new development or redevelopment within the Villages.

RECOMMENDATIONS: The current standard that encourages "pedestrian paths or sidewalks" in the existing villages districts should be strengthened to a requirement.