

Southeast Durham Focus Area Draft Policies

Development Activity in the Southeast Durham Focus Area

In recent years, there has been a lot of development interest for this part of Durham. There continues to be many requests before Planning Commission and City Council to change the zoning of property in this area and requests to annex property into the City limits. This development activity is in large part due to the city's construction of new water and sewer infrastructure that will serve this area. Because of this, the Durham City Council asked the Planning Department to focus on this area of Durham first to provide early guidance before the entire Comprehensive Plan is adopted.

What decisions have already been made?

Every property in Durham has a zoning designation that says what is allowed to be built on that property. Zoning provides rules for things like how tall and wide buildings can be; what type of homes, businesses, or green spaces are allowed or required; how many and what kinds of trees should be planted or preserved; and more. A property owner may request to change the zoning of their property so that they can build a new type of development (like changing a property from residential to commercial) that follows different zoning rules.

City Council approves or denies requests for properties to change the zoning or be added to the city limits (called annexation). City Council holds public hearings to listen to cases made by property owners, development teams, and residents. City Council relies on staff, residents, and other agencies and organizations to help guide their decisions. Planning Department staff use the 2005 Comprehensive Plan and the adopted Community Goals and Objectives to see what the community has said is the ideal future land use for the property.

In the Southeast Durham Focus area, many properties are already built, approved for new construction, or currently being reviewed.

The city has made significant infrastructure investments in this area to handle new and future developments:

- The [Southeast Regional Lift Station](#) is under construction and will provide a new lift station and pipes to provide sewer service to the area.
- [Durham Fire Station 17](#) was built in 2018 to provide EMS and Fire service to this area.

Existing Comprehensive Plan (2005)

The current Comprehensive Plan, adopted in 2005, has this area largely designated for suburban residential development. This means that new developments proposed in this area are envisioned by the current Plan to typically be single homes at low densities. However, many new developments being built to date are inconsistent with the values and ideas stated in the Community Goals and Objectives. New developments tend to be exclusively single-family homes, townhomes, and age-restricted housing (also known as 55+ older homes). This type of new development encroaches on streams and environmentally sensitive areas, increases traffic that puts a strain on existing two-lane roads, and oftentimes does not include enhancements or funding for bus service, sidewalks, or bike paths. Current policies in the 2005

Comprehensive Plan do not adequately address the development, transportation, and environmental concerns for this area.

Scope of the draft Southeast Durham Focus Area Policies

The table below lists the initial set of draft polices for the Southeast Durham Focus Area. Since this area is experiencing a great amount of development pressure, the following policies are intended to focus on addressing the current issues associated with this unprecedented growth. Specifically, these policies center on topics such as housing, transportation, and the environment, which often relate to **rezoning** and **annexation request** processes, to best achieve the aspirations for this area as stated in the Community Goals and Objectives. Furthermore, while these policies are intended to focus on this area, they may also apply to other parts of the Durham community as well.

Therefore, the table below includes the draft policy language, the corresponding topic or theme related to each policy, and the related place type to which the policy may apply. Each policy applies to all place types unless otherwise indicated in the policy.

	Draft Policy Language	Topic or theme
1A	New proposals for Zoning Map Change and Annexation applications should engage residents, with a focus on equitable engagement to reach residents with the least access to public processes, such as Black and Hispanic/Latino, low-wealth, and rural residents. Applicants should connect with local residents and organizations to identify who they need to engage and what methods are best to reach them, and reference the City’s Equitable Engagement Blueprint.	Land Use Process
1B	For Annexations and Zoning Map Change Applications in the eastern portion of the Southeast Durham Focus Area (north and east of Kemp Road, east of Virgil Road) designated as a “Future Growth Area” significant development should not be approved until critical services and infrastructure have been funded. Any development in this area is outside of the service area for Fire Station 17, and will require construction of new sewer outfalls that have not yet been funded or committed to by private developers. Staff will recommend against any annexations or utility extension agreements until funding for a new fire station has been identified in the City of Durham Capital Improvement Plan.	Land Use Process
2A	Residential development should include components that enhance housing affordability. The City and County will work with the private sector to identify incentives to the development of affordable housing, including density bonuses and zoning flexibility, for example. Statutory development agreements are encouraged to incentivize the development of affordable housing.	Housing & Land Use

2B	The City and County will no longer accept proffers that restrict housing based on age.	Housing & Land Use
2C	Housing placement on lots should create a pleasant walking experience by being close to the street and oriented towards the sidewalk, green space, or community areas where people are gathering. Large garages and driveways taking up the front of houses and disrupting sidewalk continuity is not desirable and varying garage and driveway widths should be explored. Houses should have stoops, porches, or other welcoming entranceways that engage the public realm.	Housing & Land Use
2D	Mixed Residential Neighborhoods, Transit Opportunity Areas, and 15-Minute Neighborhoods should include a mix of uses and housing types, and densities, integrated within the neighborhood, with walkable access to commercial areas. Housing types should be mixed throughout the neighborhood. Each type of housing should not be sited in different sections of the neighborhood, effectively segregating housing types. Mixed residential developments generally less than twenty acres do not need to include multiple housing types.	Housing & Land Use
2E	15-Minute Neighborhoods should include a centrally located combination of commercial, civic, or institutional uses like shops, pharmacies, restaurants, offices, schools, or libraries that can be easily accessed by residents living within a 15-minute walk from their homes.	Housing & Land Use
3A	In all new developments, priority should be given to residents using non-car modes of travel with neighborhoods designed for maximum connectivity for residents going in and out of the immediate neighborhood. This should include building and dedicating right-of-way for sidewalks on both sides of the street, bicycle paths and greenways, bus stop infrastructure, and collector streets, as called for in the DCHC MPO Comprehensive Transportation Plan and other local transportation plans.	Transportation
3B	New sidewalks and pedestrian crossings should be built with safety infrastructure like bump outs, pedestrian signals, audio and textured accommodations for low- or no-vision residents, street trees, and safe mid-block crossings.	Transportation
3C	All new development proposals should connect with adjacent neighborhoods through walking and biking infrastructure. New transportation infrastructure should connect with existing infrastructure outside of the development.	Transportation
3D	In all new non-residential developments, expand transportation demand management programs like encouraging employees to carpool, ride transit, bike, walk, or telecommute.	Transportation
3E	Prioritize pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders by expanding traffic calming measures on existing streets.	Transportation

3F	New development should improve existing road, sidewalk, bicycle, and transit infrastructure near the site.	Transportation
3G	Developments that do not primarily generate primarily automobile trips to and from the site are encouraged. Assessments of single-use developments should incorporate consideration of options for public transit, the feasibility of taking non-automobile modes to reach nearby destinations, and the expected number of trips generated from the site.	Transportation
3H	New residential development in the A-60 Airport Overlay District should grant avigation easements to the RDU Airport Authority to ensure continued safety and viability of air travel in the region. Avigation easements ensure the right of aircraft to legally fly over structures.	Transportation
4A	Developments are encouraged to dedicate right-of-way for, and build, trails and greenways as part of local greenway plans. The trails and greenways system should link residential areas, schools, parks, institutions, shopping centers, and other greenway corridors.	Environment
4B	In new developments, half of the required tree preservation should be located outside of required stream buffers. Tree preservation areas should be distributed throughout the development to maintain a consistent mature tree canopy.	Environment
4C	Developments should provide green spaces and trees integrated throughout the site.	Environment
4D	Areas identified as undisturbed wildlife habitats or natural corridors in adopted open space plans, or identified as NC Natural Heritage Areas, should be left largely undisturbed, with minimal allowances for disturbance, to remain in their natural, vegetative state. The following uses should be prohibited in these areas: road crossings, stormwater infrastructure, residential units, and parking areas. Road crossings and associated infrastructure shown on adopted transportation plans should be allowed, with impacts minimized to the greatest extent possible.	Environment
4E	The use of native plantings should be encouraged as part of any new development, and Homeowner’s Associations should set up similar standards.	Environment
4F	New development should use “green infrastructure” or innovative or natural stormwater controls such as bioswales, green roofs, increased tree canopy, or land conservation.	Environment
4G	For residential applications, when mass grading of new development sites is proposed, it should occur in phases, rather than the entire developed area at once, to reduce stormwater runoff and erosion on-site and to retain tree cover between the phases of construction.	Environment
4H	For Zoning Map Change applications, developments should include 150’ buffers on both sides of any perennial streams on site.	Environment

41	Dedicated open space included as a part of new development should be open to the public through public access easements. New applications should look for opportunities to dedicate open spaces, parks, and recreation facilities and amenities to be provided in a public setting, rather than a privately provided space.	Environment
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