

STAFF REPORT

The Town of Apex Affordable Housing Plan

January 26, 2021 Town Council Meeting



In May of 2020, The Town of Apex began work to develop the first *Town of Apex Affordable Housing Plan* (Plan). The Plan was prepared for the Town by HR&A Advisors. The Town Council will consider the Plan, hear comments from the public, and formulate a decision regarding Plan adoption.

The purpose of the Plan is to guide the Town's efforts to identify and address the affordable housing needs of its residents. The Plan includes a detailed assessment of housing needs based on analysis of data and public input. Using that assessment, the Plan establishes the following vision: "Apex welcomes people of diverse backgrounds, and supports opportunities for affordable, safe, sanitary, and quality housing that meets the needs of people of all incomes, ages, and abilities."

To fulfill this vision, the Plan outlines the following goals:

- Welcome, attract, and retain a diverse population.
- Meet the housing needs of a diverse population, including providing housing that is affordable to people with moderate and low incomes.
- Connect affordable housing development with transit service, transportation infrastructure, and amenities.
- Partner regionally to meet the needs of vulnerable populations.
- Raise community awareness of affordable housing needs, solutions, and broader impacts.

The Plan includes 14 recommendations generally grouped in three categories: (1) Building the Town's Capacity, (2) Advancing Advocacy and Public Education, and (3) Implementing Programs and Policies. An Action Plan is included to provide guidance for prioritizing implementation of each recommendation over time, measuring success, and allocating funds from the Town's Affordable Housing Fund.

The planning process, including establishment of the vision and goals and development of recommendations, was guided by a Steering Committee with representation from:

- Citizen stakeholders
- Wake County
- Triangle J Council of Governments
- Town Council
- Planning Board
- Apex Business Community
- Non-profit organizations
- Developers, including developers of affordable single-family and multi-family homes
- Town of Cary

In addition to citizen representation on the Steering Committee, the Apex community was engaged through an online survey, stakeholder interviews, a virtual presentation of the Plan, and the project web page. Information about the planning process was distributed through flyers in utility bills, flyers posted in public places, social media, the Town's website, information available throughout Town Hall, email notifications, and through support from the Steering Committee.

Public Comments

The Plan was presented to the public on December 17, 2020. Comments were requested by December 28, 2020. Comments received by December 28, 2020 are summarized in Table 1 of **Attachment 1**. These comments were considered by the Steering Committee during their final meeting on January 7, 2021.

Comments may be received up to and through the public hearings before the Planning Board and Town Council. Comments received from December 29, 2020 through January 18, 2021 are summarized in Table 2 of

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Attachment 1. These comments were received following the final meeting of the Steering Committee, and therefore were not considered as part of the Steering Committee's recommendation.

Plan Versions

The Plan, as presented to the public on December 17, 2020, is provided as **Attachment 2**.

The Plan, as recommended by the Steering Committee on January 7, 2021, is provided as **Attachment 3**. Changes to the December draft are highlighted and shown with a red star on the upper right corner of each page.

Based on comments received following the Steering Committee recommendation, additional changes to the Incentive Zoning Condition recommendation (page 32) the Plan have been proposed. An alternative version of the Incentive Zoning Condition is provided as **Attachment 4**.

Recommendations

Steering Committee Recommendation:

The Steering Committee met on January 7, 2021 to review public comments and consider recommending the Plan for adoption. The Steering Committee members in attendance unanimously recommended adoption of the *Town of Apex Affordable Housing Plan, January 2021, Steering Committee Recommended Draft (Attachment 3)*.

Planning Board Recommendation:

The Planning Board held a remote public hearing on January 11, 2021 and a vote on January 13, 2021. Comments on the Incentive Zoning Condition (page 32) were received during the public hearing. Alternate wording to the Incentive Zoning Condition intended to address those comments was presented on January 13, 2021. The Planning Board voted four in favor and four against recommending adoption of the *Town of Apex Affordable Housing Plan, January 2021, Steering Committee Recommended Draft* with the alternate wording to the Town Council.

The Planning Board requested that details of their deliberation and specific reasons for their vote be shared with Town Council:

- One Planning Board member indicated he would vote against recommending adoption of any version of the Plan and is generally opposed to the Plan.
- Seven of eight Planning Board members indicated that they were initially prepared to vote in favor of recommending adoption of the Plan, prior to introduction of the alternate wording.
 - Three of eight Planning Board members expressed concerns mainly with the process of changing the Plan following the Steering Committee recommendation. They were concerned the alternate wording of the Incentive Zoning Condition could not be vetted with the Steering Committee or other stakeholders and may not be representative of all perspectives.
 - Four of eight Planning Board members expressed support for the Plan with the alternate wording. They indicated the alternate wording clarifies the intent of the Incentive Zoning Condition recommendation and removes ambiguity.

Staff Recommendation:

Planning staff requests that the Town Council adopt *The Town of Apex Affordable Housing Plan, January 2021, Steering Committee Recommended Draft* with the alternate wording proposed for the Incentive Zoning

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Condition provided in **Attachment 4**. Note that staff considers both versions shown in Attachment 3 and Attachment 4 valid, but the alternate wording in Attachment 4 is more clear in terms of what state law allows.

Attachments:

Attachment 1: Detailed Disposition of Public Comments

Attachment 2: *Town of Apex Affordable Housing Plan, December 2020 Public Draft*

Attachment 3: *Town of Apex Affordable Housing Plan, January 2021, Steering Committee Recommended Draft*

Attachment 4: Alternate wording for the Incentive Zoning Condition (page 32)