

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The proposed Briar Chapel project is located within the jurisdictional boundaries of Chatham County, North Carolina, within the northeastern portion of the County that is generally bounded by U.S. 15-501 on the east, Andrews Store Road on the south, and Mann's Chapel Road on the west and north.

Situated just five miles from Chapel Hill and other proximate points of progress, the Briar Chapel project is within an area designated by the *Chatham County Land Conservation and Development Plan* as a compact community corridor, or "land designed to accommodate a well-planned and integrated mix of homes, shops, offices, institutions, and civic spaces along U.S. 15-501 north of Pittsboro, U.S. 421 north of Siler City and a section of Farrington Road." As designed today, the project meets, and in many cases exceeds, the requirements for a compact community as designated under the *Chatham County Land Conservation and Development Plan* and the *Chatham County Compact Communities Ordinance*, and therefore consequently meets the Five Affirmative Findings that are necessary to grant approval of a Conditional Use Permit.

Given this, the applications provided herein request that the subject property be rezoned from RA-40 to a Compact Community Conditional Use District pursuant to an approved Conditional Use Permit for a Compact Community and compliance with the recently adopted requirements of the *Chatham County Compact Communities Ordinance*. A text amendment also is requested in order to clarify the language of Compact Communities Ordinance Section 6.1.D.

Project Background and Historical Context

Originally envisioned for more piecemeal development by its various landowners, the contiguous 1,589-acre Briar Chapel landholdings are today managed by Newland Communities' Carolina Division – Pittsboro office. The land was identified for compact community development in November 2001 when the *Chatham County Land Conservation and Development Plan* was adopted by the Chatham County Board of Commissioners. The Plan was a key component to the County's visioning process to "cooperatively control its destiny by balancing growth, providing an adequate and diverse housing supply, conserving and protecting natural resources, and promoting commercial endeavors as a net long-term asset to the community." Upon approval, the Board of Commissioners founded The Plan in two fundamental policies to be considered within every development application. These two policies include the following:

1. *Land development and conservation will reflect balanced growth.*
Balanced growth means that development is welcomed, but in ways that ensure that:
 - benefits and burdens of growth are shared
 - growth consists of a mix of different types of development, and
 - development is guided to suitable locations and is designed appropriately.

2. *Chatham County's approach to land development and conservation will be open, pro-active and cooperative.*

An open, pro-active and cooperative approach means:

- making citizens aware of land use changes,
- preparing ahead for development issues instead of reacting to specific development proposals or growth-shaping influences, and
- working closely with other jurisdictions.

The Plan was supported by six additional policies that included the mandate to “encourage compact communities with a mix of activities as development occurs.” Specifically, compact communities were to accommodate a well-planned and integrated mix of homes, shops, offices, institutions and civic spaces (but not strip development) along a corridor of land generally located along US 15-501, US 421 north of Siler City and a section of Farrington Road.

Based on this Plan, an application for a Conditional Use Permit and Zone Change for the land known as Briar Chapel was submitted to the Chatham County Board of Commissioners by Newland Communities' Carolina Division in December 2001. Following extensive review by the Chatham County planning staff, the application was recommended for approval and deemed in accordance with the Five Affirmative Findings that are necessary to grant approval of a Conditional Use Permit. Wide-spread community outreach was conducted by Newland Communities' Carolina Division staff to secure public comment on the Briar Chapel plan and understand the need for essential services and public facilities. In addition, a half-dozen public meetings were conducted with the Planning Board and Board of Commissioners during which public testimony was secured in an open forum.

Despite staff recommendations, the Board of Commissioners ultimately denied the application in May 2002. Citing the need for more definitive criteria for evaluating compact communities, the Board of Commissioners made a motion to create a Land Use Planning Implementation Committee (LUPIC) to form compact community criteria as well as moved to enact a moratorium on all major development proposals until the compact communities criteria was approved. Although the motion for a moratorium was subsequently defeated, LUPIC was established in May 2002 and began formal meetings in July 2002. Originally chartered to create compact community ordinance language within a six month period, LUPIC conducted dozens of meetings and remained intact until March 2003 when it formally presented to the Board of Commissioners its draft of the *Compact Communities Ordinance*. After months of public hearings and testimony, the final Ordinance language was adopted by the Board of Commissioners on April 19, 2004.

Current Project Proposal

The plan for Briar Chapel submitted today is now very different from that which was originally proposed in December 2001. Briar Chapel is in complete compliance with every requirement provided within the *Compact Communities Ordinance* including those mandating location and size, water supply and capacity, wastewater treatment and management, storm water runoff controls, buffers (perimeter, stream and watershed), passive open space creation, ownership and management, wetlands and wildlife habitats, soil drainage, natural open space protection, and active recreational facilities, impact assessments and mitigation for county services, schools, transportation, and environmental issues, as well as a host of new community design standards and specifications that influence housing styles, prices and architecture, community walkability, accessibility and connectivity, commercial design, green building practices, and more.

As described within this submittal package and in accordance with the *Compact Communities Ordinance*, Briar Chapel is proposed as a non-gated, traditionally designed, pedestrian-oriented, mixed use compact community encompassing a broad spectrum of no more than 2,389 homes including multi-family dwellings as well as single-family attached and detached homes, a 470,000 square foot Town Center (commercial areas), 12,000 square foot Village Center, 30,000 square foot Village Market, sites for two schools, fire station, EMS (911) provider, Sheriff's office, library, a place of worship, numerous recreational spaces, a network of interconnecting, walkable trails, curbside trash and recycling pick-up, a community wastewater and reclamation treatment facility, storm water quality and detention system, and more than 50% on-site open space. (See "Description of Use" for details)

Summary of Briar Chapel Benefits

Briar Chapel will be a responsibly phased development, with the goal of selling approximately 300 homes per year over seven to 10 years to ensure that major infrastructure improvements are paced with new development to better promote managed growth. As a new community within the County, Briar Chapel will benefit existing residents by providing new public-access sites including sites for brand new soccer, football, and baseball fields for youth sports teams, a site for a new County regional library, fire station and EMS service sites, and a site for a Sheriff's sub-station.

Local Jobs/Personal Income Through Briar Chapel Construction

Through the construction of Briar Chapel homes, commercial and recreational facilities, as well as additional related construction activity, Briar Chapel would result in an average annual direct investment of \$101.8 million and 866 new jobs created directly in Chatham County. Another 568 jobs would be created as an indirect effect of the construction activity for a total of 1,434 new jobs in Chatham County during the construction and development period. In addition, the construction of Briar Chapel would result in \$33.6 million in personal income with an additional \$12.8 generated in Chatham County as indirect income for a total of \$46.4 million in personal income generated just through the construction of Briar Chapel.

Local Jobs/Personal Income Through Briar Chapel Households

The 2,389 households in Briar Chapel would have approximately \$329 million in total personal income at Briar Chapel's build-out. As a result of the spending capacity of each household's income, it is estimated that 2,400 permanent jobs would be created in Chatham County to meet the needs of Briar Chapel residents. These new jobs would generate positive impacts on the labor income of the County to the tune of nearly \$36 million in direct labor income generated. An additional \$11.2 million would be generated as indirect income from Briar Chapel for a total of \$47.1 million in new income in the County.

Benefits Associated with Briar Chapel Development Fees and Donations

Through development fees and voluntary contributions paid by Newland Communities and their builders, Briar Chapel will provide over \$8.1 million in funding to the Chatham County Board of Education for capital needs related to the construction of new schools or expansions of existing schools. Newland will also donate a site valued at over \$700,000 to the Board of Education and will donate additional property valued at over \$600,000 to another publicly funded school, the Woods Charter School. Newland will also provide between \$1.5 to \$2 million worth of improvements to existing roads situated outside Briar Chapel. In addition, 120 home sites located within Briar Chapel will be donated to the County, or their appointed agency, to help meet County affordable housing objectives. Sites will also be provided for retail, office and commercial job centers and there will be more than 900 acres of open space within the community.

Revenues from Briar Chapel to Chatham County

The tax revenues from Briar Chapel to Chatham County (at project build out) are estimated to be more than \$6.4 million per year. The primary revenue source from Briar Chapel will be from ad valorem tax revenues generated from the residential and commercial improvements in the project. Total annual property taxes generated at build out from Briar Chapel will be nearly \$5.5 million. In addition to property tax revenues, Briar Chapel will generate considerable economic activity that will result in increased sales tax collection for Chatham County. It is estimated that sales taxes will increase by more than \$900,000 a year at build out. In addition, thousands of both new construction and new permanent jobs will be created through the development of Briar Chapel, including those established in Briar Chapel's different retail, commercial and office centers.

Assuming current *and* increased levels of service by various County agencies and the Chatham County Board of Education, the incremental expenses associated with Briar Chapel have been estimated at \$5.5 million annually (at build out). Therefore, the very conservative net benefit associated with Briar Chapel at build out has been estimated at more than \$900,000 per year.

Summary of Briar Chapel Environmental Impacts and Mitigating Measures

The submittal package includes an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report and extensive supporting documentation. The EIA evaluates the potential impacts of the project on soils, land use, water resources, forest resources, wildlife and vegetation and various other resources of concern, and describes the steps being taken to avoid, minimize, and mitigate adverse impacts. The EIA concludes that, given these measures, the project will not result in significant adverse impacts to any of the resources in question.

Conclusion

Revisiting the original two fundamental policies for the *Chatham County Land Conservation and Development Plan* as described in the Project Background, clearly the process and the plan for Briar Chapel meets, and often exceeds, the original policies established for the County's balanced growth management efforts. The burdens of the project have been absorbed by the applicant, benefits surpass original projections, and an exceptional variety of residential and commercial development is proposed within a clearly defined location along a clearly defined path of progress. In addition, the process undertaken over the past four years, has been one of forward-thinking interaction and proactive planning that has welcomed differing points of view, embraced new land use concepts, and engaged all sectors of the community in open and frank discussion.

Abiding by the strict criteria created under the *Compact Communities Ordinance*, the plan for Briar Chapel is now respectfully submitted to the Chatham County Board of Commissioners.