

CITY OF CHARLOTTESVILLE

"A World Class City"

Human Rights Commission

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www.charlottesville.gov/963/Human-Rights-Commission



September 21, 2021

Charlottesville Planning Commission and City Council

P.O. Box 911

Charlottesville, Virginia 22902

Re: Human Rights Commission support for FLUM

Dear Planning Commission and City Council:

The mission of the Human Rights Commission is to provide “citywide leadership and guidance in the area of civil rights.” As such, we seek to identify and push the city to dismantle systemic racism as it exists here in Charlottesville.

It would be difficult to identify a law more directly linked to white supremacy than the current zoning ordinance, which was enacted specifically for the purpose of achieving and codifying racial segregation in housing.¹ Now, in the name of “protecting neighborhood character” the discourse about the future land use map has co-opted language of racial justice in pursuit of the goal of maintaining the status quo, a status quo built on exclusion zoning laws and restrictive covenants.²

The Human Rights Commission strongly supports changing our land use and zoning laws to permit and encourage the construction of affordable housing. Only substantial change in policy and the allocation of substantial money will begin to repair the many decades of harm done through restrictive covenants, exclusionary zoning laws, along with the deliberate destruction of Black homes and neighborhoods. Additionally, the increased density will also allow us to better meet our climate goals. As the recent flooding in New York City demonstrated, the adverse effects of climate change are borne most directly by the Black, indigenous, and immigrant communities most affected by inequity.

Specifically, the City should approve a FLUM that includes the following:

¹ <https://www.c-ville.com/zoned-out-how-neighborhood-associations-and-zoning-regulations-have-shaped-our-city/>

² <https://www.cavalierdaily.com/article/2021/02/mapping-cville-plots-history-of-racial-discrimination-through-charlottesville-property-deeds>

- 1) It should include an Affordable Housing Overlay to allow additional density city-wide when the new homes are affordable.
- 2) It should incorporate the following into General Residential (outside of sensitive areas) to ensure additional homes across income levels can be built:
 - Allow 3.5 story buildings. This will help ensure it is spatially and financially feasible for multi-family home construction
 - Allow four-unit dwellings by-right: Buildings with four (or more) dwellings are subject to the Fair Housing Act requirements for accessibility on the ground floor, making these homes more accessible to people with disabilities.
 - Allow a broader range of housing types, including townhouses, rowhouses, and cottage courtyards. Affordable homeownership opportunities are critical for community wealth-building. Attached units on less land make for more affordable for-purchase homes.
 - Allow medium intensity residential use in General Residential outside of sensitive areas when additional homes beyond base zoning are affordable. We should not be limiting where affordable housing can go.
- 3) It should expand medium-intensity residential to include more areas in affluent, historically exclusionary neighborhoods close to amenities.
- 4) It should allow up to eight-story height for the JPA student corridor. This will encourage concentration of student housing in this area and will prevent undergraduate student housing from pushing into other neighborhoods surrounding the university.
- 5) It should allow small commercial uses, such as corner stores, throughout the city. If we want walkable, bikeable, vibrant, human-scale neighborhoods, that will require retail services in every neighborhood. These already exist as highly valued amenities in several neighborhoods across the city.

In particular, the Commission believes it is essential for the City to adopt the affordable housing overlay. We also particularly support allowing four-unit dwellings as, under the Fair Housing Act, this will increase the supply of homes accessible to the disability community.

As you evaluate the many public comments you are receiving, we ask you to weigh those comments against our stated values. Dismantling the legacy of white supremacy is urgent. Thank you for the work you are doing.

Sincerely,



Mary Bauer
Chair, Human Rights Commission

Human Rights Commissioners:

- Mary Bauer (Chair)
- Kathryn Laughon (Vice-Chair)
- Jeanette Abi-Nader
- Ernest Chambers
- Jessica Harris
- Wolfgang Keppley
- Susan W. Lewis
- Tobiah Mundt
- Andrew Orban
- Alex Oxford
- Lyndele Von Schill