



MEMO

Date: June 17, 2016
To: Planning Board
From: Chad Hall, Senior Planner
Re: WestBranch, Master Plan

1. INTRODUCTION

APPLICANT INFO

- **Owners:** R.Y. Westmoreland & Sons, Inc. (represented by Susan Irvin)
- **Developer:** Lennar Carolinas, LLC
- **Consultant:** Mark McAuley (Cole Jenest & Stone)
- **Location:** West of Davidson-Concord Road including property to the north and south of Robert Walker Drive (Parcel ID: 007471010, 00747112 and 00747113)
- **Planning Area(s):** Neighborhood Services, Neighborhood General, Rural
- **Area:** 169.67 acres

REQUEST

The applicant proposes a master plan for development of WestBranch, featuring a mixture of residential uses. The portion of the property indicated for residential development is located within the Neighborhood General Planning Area, which requires a mixture of housing types. The proposal illustrates 305 total lots (107 townhomes and 198 single-family lots). The single-family detached lots are proposed at three different widths (42', 65' and 90'). The master plan provides a density of 1.8 units per acre with an overall open space of +/- 88 acres (51.7 percent).

A proposed commercial phase located within the Neighborhood Services Planning Area at the intersection of Davidson-Concord Road and Robert Walker Drive will require future master plan approval.

SUMMARY OF PETITION

The applicant proposes a master plan for the WestBranch development. Process B of the master plan process includes a Public Input Session (held February 15, 2016) and Planning Board review and comment.

The proposed master plan for WestBranch illustrates 305 total lots. The variety of housing types is compliant with the standards set forth for the Neighborhood General planning area with no more than 70 percent of the homes being detached and no more than 50 percent of the homes being townhomes.

The development proposal has two distinctive “pods” for residential development with the central portion being of a tighter development pattern while the northwestern pod features mostly larger lots.

The central area of the development adjacent to Robert Walker Drive consists primarily of townhomes and 42-foot wide lots. A key focal point for this development will be a neighborhood clubhouse on a central green; on-street parking is provided for the clubhouse. Townhomes also front this proposed clubhouse and green space. Additional townhomes are proposed fronting Robert Walker Drive and adjacent internal streets. A row of townhomes are also proposed along a parkway street (south of the power easement), which connects to Davidson-Concord Road and extends through the proposed WestBranch development. These townhomes and site improvements are located within an historic landmark area and will require review by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Landmarks Commission.

The northwestern portion of the master plan (situated between Davidson Wood, Hudson Place and Westmoreland Farm) generally features larger single-family lots. There is a portion of 42'-wide lots provided here as well. A vast majority of lots in this section are proposed as 65'-wide lots. The master plan depicts ten 90'-wide lots adjacent to Hudson Place; these lots include a volunteered 20' undisturbed buffer and will be cleared on a case-by-case basis. A vegetated buffer of variable width is also indicated on nine lots which directly abut properties in the Westmoreland Farm neighborhood. The master plan also shows a large green for this portion of the community; this is a public park requirement for this portion of the development. A critical connection to Hudson Place occurs from this portion of the proposed community.

The applicant has met the documentation and public notice requirements as set forth in the Davidson Planning Ordinance (DPO).

2. PLANNING STAFF PRELIMINARY REVIEW

BACKGROUND

The applicant's design team has met with planning staff multiple times since November 2015 to discuss the development of WestBranch.

The Westmoreland property was recently rezoned from the Rural Planning Area designation to Neighborhood General. Under the previous Rural Planning Area designation, the site could be developed at two units per acre (assuming access to water and sewer) yielding 339 units. Forty percent open space would have been required.

The current Neighborhood General Planning Area requires no more than 70 percent of the units in each new development to be detached building type and no more than 50 percent of the units in each new development to be attached, townhouse, live work, or multifamily building type. The required open space for developments in this planning area is 20 percent.

This proposal was deemed to be a complete application on January 26, 2016. This review considers compliance with the DPO adopted May 1, 2015, as amended.

A Public Input Session was conducted on February 15, 2016. Approximately 100 people were in attendance. As a result of the session, a greenway edge has been proposed along the parkway street on the northwestern portion of the development. This will provide a vegetative screen of the development from the greenway.

Planning staff has conducted a technical review concurrently with Mecklenburg County; after the first cycle of review, comments from the Town and County are minimal and do not impact the design.

PLANNING and DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

Between the Public Input Session and Planning Board, Planning staff conducted a technical review concurrently with Mecklenburg County. A summary of that review, in addition to any outstanding questions/issues which originated at the Public Input Session, is provided below.

LAND USE

The proposed master plan for WestBranch illustrates 305 total units 107 townhomes and 198 detached homes on varying lot sizes from 42' wide to 90' wide. This type of residential development is permitted based upon the Neighborhood General Planning Area, where no more than 70 percent of the units shall be detached and no more than 50 percent of the units shall be attached, townhouse, live/work or multifamily. The proposed clubhouse would be considered an Outdoor Recreation Facility and is permitted.

This master plan does not illustrate development in the existing Rural Planning Area or the redesignated area of the Neighborhood Services Planning Area (approval by the Board of Commissioners on April 12, 2016).

ACCESS and TRANSPORTATION, including GREENWAYS, MULTI-USE PATHS and SIDEWALKS

The property is accessed, primarily, from Davidson-Concord Road, via Robert Walker Drive. A second access to Davidson-Concord Road will provide relief to Robert Walker Drive; this will be a parkway street that parallels the existing greenway. This parkway will not include the multiuse path due to proximity to the Kincaid Greenway. Additional street connectivity is provided to the adjacent Davidson Wood neighborhood via Hudson Place. A street stub extends to the property line of a lot adjacent to Westmoreland Farm; this stub could eventually connect to the Barger property located southwest of the traffic circle at Davidson-Concord Road, Concord Road and East Rocky River Road, should these ever develop.

In addition to the aforementioned road connections, an easement is provided on the east side of Hudson Place (road through WestBranch) to set up a future connection with Westmoreland Farm.

A recommendation of the TIA is for a southbound, right turn lane on Davidson-Concord Road to allow for right turn movements onto Robert Walker Drive. Staff is not in favor of this recommendation, since it will add to the crossing distance across Davidson-Concord Road while maintaining through movement speeds. Staff would prefer for a financial contribution – in the amount of the required improvements – be made so that future intersection improvements could be installed, such as a roundabout.

A couple of the blocks are in excess of 600 feet, as required by the Davidson Panning Ordinance; in these instances, a mid-block pedestrian alley has been provided.

The master plan depicts Davidson-Concord Road featuring a multiuse path/greenway along the western side of the road. Robert Walker Drive is proposed to include bike lanes. There are multiple connections to the existing greenway illustrated as well.

The applicant has also agreed to construct an off-site multiuse path, extending from the current location on the west side of Davison-Concord Road to the subject property. This construction is dependent upon the Town acquiring the appropriate easements.

OPEN SPACE and PARKS

The Neighborhood General Planning Area requires 20 percent open space. The proposed site plan indicates 51.7 percent open space as being preserved, including functional and riparian spaces.

All of the properties associated with the central pod of development are within ¼ mile of an existing park facility. Furthermore, the site plan illustrates a parking area (underneath the main power easement) that is to serve a community garden and/or a dog park; however, this land within the easement shall not be considered for required open space areas.

The lots proposed on the northern development area are not within ¼ mile. An open space green is located central to the development of the northern pod; this space will need to be utilized as a park, complete with all requirements per 7.4 of the DPO.

Additionally, park credit cannot be given for the parkway street since it will not feature the multiuse path.

PARKING

Parking will need to be determined for the clubhouse and pool looking at both quantity required and location, though several parallel parking spots are indicated along the adjacent roads. Bicycle parking will also need to be provided.

TREE PRESERVATION, LANDSCAPING and SCREENING

Street trees will need to be provided per the ordinance. The current landscape plan indicates that a variety of street trees will be planted throughout the overall project. A small group of large existing mature trees, located near the proposed clubhouse, are proposed to be saved if feasible.

There are few areas that need screening per the ordinance, such as surrounding parking lots. Staff has also conveyed a desire to screen the rear of the residential units (townhomes) as seen from Davidson-Concord Road.

With few areas of mature tree vegetation on site, the primary preservation areas will include the larger lot homes on the northern portion of the site. Being a mixed-use development, including the future Neighborhood Services Area, there is a requirement for preservation of 20 percent of existing vegetation. Additionally, the landscaping installed to each building lot will be vital for creating tree canopy in the future. Each lot in the Neighborhood General Planning Area should have approximately 20-40 percent tree canopy at maturity. A typical planting plan for each lot type has been provided.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

A total of 38 affordable units are required based upon 305 total units. The affordable units have not been identified on the master plan. Payment-in-lieu is an option to providing the required units.

3. PLANS AND POLICIES

Below is a list of town-adopted plans and policies summarizing each document's applicability to the proposed master plan.

- The ***Davidson Comprehensive Plan's (2010)*** Targeted Growth Plan illustrates a "Smart Suburban" growth area for the WestBranch property. The future commercial area is also indicated as an Employment Center per the Comprehensive Plan.

- The **Davidson Planning Ordinance (2015)** contains several references that speak directly to this proposal, including:

Principles

- We must create an environment that fosters diversity (General Principles Item 4);
- We must enhance our quality of life through architecture and design: Livable environments include well-designed buildings, a dynamic public realm, and seamless connections between the two (General Principles Item 7).

Consistency with All Adopted Plans

- Any amendments to, or actions pursuant to, this ordinance should be consistent with these adopted plans and policies, as amended (1.5.1).

Neighborhood General Planning Area, Description

- The Neighborhood General Planning Area is established to accommodate medium density development with a variety of housing types within cohesive neighborhoods in close walking or biking proximity to Davidson's planned mixed-use nodes and employment centers. These neighborhoods should be designed at a pedestrian scale with parks and other public amenities as gathering places. (2.2.13.A).

These references underscore the DPO's emphasis on interconnected policies and land use patterns that support the diversity of residential areas, including higher density building types, especially in proximity to identified nodes.

- The **Davidson Walks and Rolls Active Transportation Master Plan (2012)** contains several references that speak directly to this proposal, including the continuation of a multiuse path along the edge of Davidson-Concord Road. The Walks and Rolls Plan also calls for shading along Robert Walker Drive, to provide comfort for sidewalk users.

4. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The proposed Master Plan illustrates building types and permitted uses consistent with existing plans and policies. The plan indicates 305 total units, requiring 38 affordable units. The breakdown of housing types is consistent with the Neighborhood General standards for variety of housing types.

Access to the site is from Davidson-Concord Road and from Hudson Place. Future connectivity is provided to surrounding properties. It should be noted that three proposed blocks are in excess of the 600 foot maximum; due to design constraints, staff has agreed to the provision of mid-block pedestrian alleys.

Open space is provided in excess of the 20 percent required in the Neighborhood General Planning Area. The site plan also illustrates many greenway connections to the existing Kincaid Greenway. The existing greenway will be rerouted for a short portion (approximately 150') to provide an at-grade crossing at its intersection with the extension of Hudson Place.

A park is required for the northwestern portion of the community. A green is currently listed as common open space, but it will need to serve as a park and meet the requirements of 7.4.

Street tree planting plans and lot planting options will provide a variety of vegetation throughout the site. The applicant has volunteered an undisturbed buffer along the rear portion of the 90'-wide lots abutting Hudson Place. A Greenway Edge has also been volunteered in order to provide a visual screen

of the homes in WestBranch from the greenway. The development of this community will greatly expand the reach of the multiuse path along Davidson-Concord Road.

In conclusion, the proposed master plan for WestBranch includes townhomes and single-family homes consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and DPO. Open space requirements have been exceeded. Intersection improvements at Davidson-Concord Road and Robert Walker Drive have not been finalized, but staff will work with the developer to determine an acceptable solution.

5. RESOURCES & ATTACHMENTS

- Resources: Links to referenced policy documents.
 - Davidson Planning Ordinance (2015): <http://www.townofdavidson.org/1006/Planning-Ordinance>
 - Comprehensive Plan (2010): <http://www.townofdavidson.org/340/Davidson-Comprehensive-Plan>
- Maps:
 - Proposed WestBranch Master Plan Set