



## MEMO

Date: February 15, 2016  
To: Public Input Session  
From: Chad Hall, Senior Planner  
Re: WestBranch, Master Plan

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### 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 306 total lots (107 townhomes and 299 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 +/- 96 acres (56 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.

\*The proposed master plan also depicts single-family detached homes and townhomes within the current Neighborhood Services Planning Area. As these are not permitted building types, in a separate request from this master plan the applicant proposes a map amendment to reduce the size of the current Neighborhood Services Planning Area and a resignation as Neighborhood General Planning Area. Approval of this master plan is contingent upon separate approval of the proposed map amendment by the Board of Commissioners.

## **SUMMARY OF PETITION**

The applicant is proposing a master plan for the WestBranch development. Process B of the master plan process includes a Public Input Session (February 15, 2016) and Planning Board review and comment. Planning staff would then conduct a technical review concurrently with Mecklenburg County.

The proposed master plan for WestBranch illustrates 306 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 would 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 are located within an historic properties designated 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 as here 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 20' vegetated buffer. A vegetated buffer is also indicated on four lots which directly abut properties in the Westmoreland Farm neighborhood. The master plan also shows a large green for this portion of the 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.

## PLANNING and DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

In advance of the Public Input Session, Planning staff is required to provide a preliminary staff analysis. Below is a summary of this analysis. A more detailed technical review, conducted concurrently with Mecklenburg County, will follow.

### LAND USE

The proposed master plan for WestBranch illustrates 306 total units (107 townhomes and 199 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 proposed redesignated area of the Neighborhood Services Planning Area (contingent upon approval by the Board of Commissioners).

### 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 to the adjacent Davidson Wood neighborhood via Hudson Place. A street stub extends to the property line of a lot adjacent to Westmoreland farms; 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.

While the proposed site plan indicates the aforementioned road connections, an opportunity to set up a future connection with Westmoreland Farms has not been illustrated, as required.

Another potential conflict with the Davidson Planning Ordinance is that some of the blocks are in excess of the required 600 feet.

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.

Certain street section and sidewalk details still need to be rectified or confirmed, such as the six foot wide sidewalk or path connecting to greenways and planting strip widths for streets featuring large maturing trees. Staff will be working with the design team to finalize these details.

A Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) is currently being prepared, as required by the ordinance. The site will also need to be evaluated by the Charlotte Area Transit System for the provision of a CATS transit stop.

### OPEN SPACE and PARKS

The Neighborhood General Planning Area requires 20 percent open space. The proposed site plan indicates 56 percent open space as being preserved, including functional and riparian spaces.

All of the properties associated with the southern 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; without details, it is unclear how that space will be vegetated and/or programmed for use as a park.

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 reverse angle 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. A small group of large existing mature trees are called out as being preserved and protected in the area near the proposed clubhouse.

There are few areas that need screening per the ordinance, such as surrounding parking lots, but 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.

#### AFFORDABLE HOUSING

A total of 38 affordable units are required based upon 306 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 306 total units, requiring 38 affordable units. The breakdown of housing types is consistent with the 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, though additional connectivity could be added to set up a more fibrous street network in the future. It should be noted that three proposed blocks are in excess of the 600 foot maximum.

Open space is provided in excess of the 20 percent required in the Neighborhood General Planning Area. The site plan also illustrates greenway connections to the existing Kincaid Greenway; dimensional details still need to be finalized for links to the greenway.

Street trees have not been illustrated on the site plan, but are shown in the street sections. Staff needs to work with the design team to finalize street tree types and placement, as well as planting strip widths for large maturing trees.

In conclusion, the proposed master plan for WestBranch includes townhomes and single-family homes consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and DPO. Staff supports the general intent of the master plan, understanding that detailed ordinance requirements will be addressed during the technical review.

## 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
  - Environmental Inventory