

May 16, 2023

Town of Davidson Planning Department
Attn: Trey Akers, Principal Planner
251 South Street
Davidson, NC 28036

Project Name: Summit Farms Conditional Planning Area – Master Plan

Subject: Public Input Session Report

Mr. Akers,

The following is a summary of the Site Visit and Public Input Session (PIS) held for the proposed Summit Farms development located at 19308 Shearer Road in Davidson, North Carolina. The Public Input Session was held as an in-person site visit on Wednesday, May 3rd from 1:00pm-2:00pm at 19300 Shearer Road, followed by a 5:15pm-7:15pm in-person presentation at the Davidson Town Hall & Community Center.

The applicant (Brian Helfrich, Nate Sipp, and Jason Ward - Summit Farms GP, LLC) and development team (Michael LeBlanc, Brendan Willis, Robert Schaffer – Utile Design; Brian and Colin Jenest – Bolton & Menk; & Erin White – Agriculture and Farming Specialist) led the community meeting. The in-person site visit at 19300 Shearer Road was attended by approximately 30 neighbors. The presentation at the Davidson Town Hall & Community Center was given in two sessions with round one beginning at 5:15pm and consisting of approximately 75 attendees. Round two began at 6:15pm with approximately 25 community members in attendance.

Prior to the meeting, notification letters were mailed to the surrounding property owners as outlined in the Davidson Planning Ordinance, informing them of the project and opportunity to attend the public input session where they could meet the applicant and development team, and discuss the Conditional Planning Area proposal.

Commencing at 1:00pm, Trey Akers opened the Summit Farms Public Input Session Site Visit by welcoming attendees. Mr. Akers informed the group of the purpose of the public input session and turned further commentary over to the development team.

With attendees gathered along the existing gravel drive adjacent to Shearer Road, Brian Helfrich introduced the remaining members of the development team and began with a history of the project from inception to where we are today. Mr. Helfrich noted the various components of the project, focusing on the agricultural aspect and pointing out that the beautiful fields surrounding the meeting attendees today are intended to remain as pastureland, crops, and general farming operations. Erin White reiterated the natural beauty of the land and the importance of “laying on the land” and “moving with the land contours” to achieve the sustainable agricultural model envisioned for this project. Moving further into the interior of the site, Mr. Helfrich directed community members to a gathering spot adjacent to the current farming operations. While these facilities will be relocated and/or removed by the new development, Mr. Helfrich pointed out the existing barn structure that is over 100-years old will be broken down and relocated to another part of the development. Mr. Helfrich also noted the natural vista at this location that includes vantage points of the forested woodlands, low-lying bottom-lands adjacent to Rocky River, existing pastures, and farm ponds. Mr. Helfrich concluded the site visit by thanking attendees for joining and reminding everyone of the in-person presentation at the Davidson Town Hall & Community Center later in the evening.

Commencing at 5:15pm, Trey Akers opened the Summit Farms Public Input Session Presentation by welcoming attendees. Mr. Akers informed the group of the project location and purpose of the public input session, noting the

project is going through a conditional process and requesting that any specific feedback be written on cards provided by and returned to the town, or via email. Mr. Akers informed the attendees that all feedback cards and emails must be sent to the town no later than Friday, 5/5/23, to be included in the report. Additionally, Mr. Akers also provided information related to the project timeline including to-date and future actions, and noted the adopted plans for the surrounding area that are taken into consideration for this application. Lastly, Mr. Akers provided a brief overview of the project details including general characteristics of the site plan, preliminary staff analysis, and Transportation Impact Analysis, he then turned over the presentation to the applicant and development team.

Beginning with a slide presentation, Brian Helfrich started by thanking community members for attending the meeting and introducing the rest of the project team. Mr. Helfrich stated his background and strong connection to the community as one of the owners of Summit Coffee. Mr. Helfrich noted that the genesis of the project started with exploring opportunities within town limits to create a roastery and offices for Summit Coffee, but it has evolved into the unique, agricultural-based community node currently proposed after witnessing the beauty of the site and surrounding environment.

Next, Brian Jenest re-stated the location of the site, providing greater context as it relates to proximity to other areas of town. Additionally, Mr. Jenest described the Rural Area Plan in more detail, noting that the town implementation of this plan calls for a neighborhood services node consistent with the commercial uses proposed as part of this application. Mr. Jenest noted that most of the general uses being proposed are allowed within Neighborhood Services and Neighborhood Edge Planning Areas as currently zoned, however the application is requesting modifications/conditions to provide clarity on the permitted uses and to allow flexibility to maintain the desired rural aesthetic. Mr. Jenest finished his segment by noting the various environmental features on the site including: the Rocky River, wetland areas, floodplain areas, ponds, and rock outcroppings.

Erin White followed Mr. Jenest by stating his background as an agriculture and farming specialist, expounding upon the sustainable farm enterprise and what that process entails. Mr. White noted that for sustainable farming practices, “listening” to the land and preserving “how the land moves” is critically important to maintaining a healthy ecosystem. Mr. White described how smart farming enterprises include: crops grown to support restaurant and local community, managed sustainability, and healthy pastures; animals are key to re-energize soil to maintain balance with the productivity of the pastures themselves.

Michael LeBlanc finished the development team’s presentation by going over the site plan and layout and reaffirming the team’s desire and commitment to “lay on the land”. Going into more detail, Mr. LeBlanc discussed the three main components of the project: the farm, the neighborhood services/commercial node, and the rural single-family residential area. Mr. LeBlanc noted the intent is to maintain a working farm as the focal point of this development and described the village as the center of energy with the farm the center of the project. Mr. LeBlanc stated that the proposed application currently calls for a maximum of 93 total units, 55 of which are considered single-family detached. Additionally, Mr. LeBlanc went through the other proposed uses including the Summit Coffee Roastery, brewery, inn, restaurant, and retail shops. As part of this use discussion, Mr. LeBlanc noted the various open space areas, both active and passive.

Following the development team’s presentation, Mr. Akers returned to the lectern and opened the floor for questions. A summary of these questions/comments and responses are listed below.

Comments and Responses

The list below contains topics raised during and after the Summit Farms site visit and Public Input Session. This includes questions posed during the site visit and both sessions of the community meeting, as well as comment cards and emails that were sent to the Town of Davidson. Questions are grouped into categories. Development team answers are included as the “Response”.

General Statements

Generally, many comments received were very supportive of the plan and community members were grateful to see a thoughtful, locally focused development proposal that was sensitive to the rural nature of the area. There was general excitement about the development being centered around a working farm and a strong desire to see this built. Overall, most concerns pertained to transportation issues, specifically the intersection of East Rocky River Road and Shearer Road, as most residents view that as a dangerous intersection.

General Feedback

Traffic:

- 1. What will be done to address vehicular traffic concerns at the intersection of East Rocky River Road and Shearer?**

Answer: In coordination with the town, the developer has conducted a Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA). The TIA calls for the installation of a four-way stop sign at this intersection. As these roads are under NCDOT purview, the development team and the town will work with NCDOT to implement the recommendations identified in the TIA.

- 2. The section of East Rocky River Road has limited visibility in parts. I would love to see the town/NCDOT explore options for making that intersection as pedestrian friendly as possible so that the development can be connected to the surrounding community.**

Answer: The development team would also like the project to be connected to the surrounding community in a pedestrian friendly manner. We will be implementing the recommendations of the traffic impact analysis, installing sidewalks and crosswalks at the intersection of East Rocky River and Shearer Roads, and working with the town and adjacent property owners to connect to the greenway west of us at River Run.

- 3. What are we doing about intersection safety?**

Answer: To improve intersection safety, the TIA calls for a four-way stop along with other traffic calming measures such as pavement marking at the intersection approach from both ways on East Rocky River Road. The development also believes that the buildings at the corner and the installation of crosswalks and sidewalks will further help calm traffic speeds at this intersection.

- 4. Can a traffic signal be installed rather than a four-way stop?**

Answer: The TIA analyzed a signal compared to a four-way stop (TIA Pg. 32). The signal performed worse than the four-way stop (leading to longer vehicle delays on some approaches) and, based on NCDOT data, in many instances does less to reduce crash volumes or severity compared to a four-way stop. As this intersection is under NCDOT purview, they are unlikely to exceed the recommendations of the Traffic Impact Analysis, which calls for a four-way stop sign.

- 5. Is there an opportunity to shift the southern road entrance along Shearer?**

Answer: The location of the road entrance at Shearer is set based on sight line distances along the roadway and would be difficult to move further south as this would move it closer to the southern curve at Shearer, as well as impact the operations of the farm.

Parking:

- 1. Will there be landscape screening of the parking?**

Answer: Yes, there will be a planting strip along the perimeter of the parking area, along with landscaped islands among the parking. In addition, the development team would like to use low-impact and permeable parking materials such as gravel and permeable pavers to reduce the amount of asphalt used.

2. Where will residents of the attached houses park? Do we have enough parking?

Answer: Yes, we have exceeded the parking code minimum, with dedicated parking for all housing units. Parking lots for the multifamily building and attached houses are located directly adjacent to their respective structures, and will be designated for residents.

Coffee Roasting:

1. What can you tell about the roasting process? What will be done to mitigate odors and fire issues?

Answer: Davidson-based Summit Coffee is intending to move its pre-existing headquarters to the Summit Farms site. Summit has been roasting in Cornelius since 2015 and is a micro-roasting business. By scale comparison, Summit roasts as much coffee in 1 year as neighboring S&D Coffee in Concord, NC, does in 1 day. Summit is a certified organic coffee roaster, which means it is routinely inspected for importing certified products, and using machines and systems that are in compliance with the USDA. This includes exhaust management. In 2020 Summit Coffee received a determination from the Town of Davidson that the roasting facility would be an allowed use in the Neighborhood Services Planning Area. Summit will use equipment, specifically an afterburner, that mitigates exhaust (odor and smoke). This is a micro-roasting facility that will also house Summit's corporate offices, a cafe and bakery, and serve as a community hub. In Summit's 8+ years roasting, they've never had an issue that required calling the fire department.

Connectivity:

1. Will there be a sidewalk along the west side of Shearer Road?

Answer: There are no current plans to install a sidewalk on the west side of Shearer Road. Additionally, the applicant is currently planning to install a multi-use path along the east side of Shearer Road along the Neighborhood Services node frontage-only. Please note the adopted Area Plans and the Transportation Impact Analysis require a multi-use path along the east side of Shearer Road for the entire project frontage.

2. Is the greenway paid for by the developer?

Answer: Yes

3. I am concerned about the walking path along the Rocky River. A walking path was recently installed along Davidson Lake that appears to have destroyed underbrush/ground wildlife habitat and negatively affected the natural runoff water. Walking paths along the Rocky River can be awesome if done right. Please do a better job protecting our environment and get this one right!

Answer: The development team agrees that the Rocky River boundary is a significant natural asset and so we will do everything possible to preserve the natural beauty of this area. This includes proposing the use of low impact paving materials, such as compacted gravel, that would allow water runoff while still providing ADA compliant access.

4. The greenways and walking trails in the Summit Farms plan would be a wonderful addition to the existing greenway trails that are an important component of the Davidson community and quality of life. We would strongly encourage the town to work with property owners and other stakeholders to see safe connections established between the existing greenway and the new Summit Farms trails.

Answer: The development team agrees. We would particularly like to work with the town and adjacent property owners to connect to the greenway west of the site at River Run as recommended by the Transportation Impact Analysis. This project also proposes to stub the new Rocky River greenway to the northern property line. For the southern Rocky River greenway connection, the development team is proposing to stub at the southern-most interior sidewalk connection. The remaining greenway area south of this connection to the property line will be placed in an easement and funds provided for future construction. This will allow the remaining portion of greenway to be constructed when the greenway connection south of the

project is available. Please note both the Davidson Planning Ordinance and Transportation Impact Analysis require the connection of multi-use path facilities to adjacent property boundaries.

Uses:

1. **Is it correct that there is a proposed inn for this plan?**

Answer: A 40-unit inn is proposed as a use in this plan.

2. **Will there be an actual Summit Coffee at Summit Farms?**

Answer: Yes, there will be a Summit Coffee cafe location.

3. **We are relieved to read that a smaller density development is in the works for the property on the corners of Rocky River Road and Shearer Road.**

Answer: The development team believes this is an appropriate tradeoff to preserve the natural character of the site while providing a model of growth for the Davidson community.

4. **Love the country vibe and connection to community business and plans to live where you develop! Better plan for volume and success.**

Answer: We are committed to the growth of Davidson and providing sustainable and economically viable models of development. This is not just any development but a legacy project which we would like to be proud of.

The Farm:

1. **Will the vegetable coop be available to River Run Residents too?**

Answer: While up to the ultimate discretion of the farmer, the intention is for co-op memberships to be available to the broader community.

2. **What exactly will be the “farming” component of this development?**

Answer: The farm will consist of approximately two acres of year-round vegetable fields along Shearer Road, as well as associated pastures for small animal operations, mainly chickens and sheep. The animal component is necessary for providing for the overall soil health of the project.

3. **I am so impressed with all the thought that has been put into this Summit Farms community. I spoke with the Farm Consultant about things like animal displacement as well as keeping pasture raised chickens safe given the foxes and coyotes in the area. He even had an answer for that! It is great to see.**

Answer: The number of animals kept on pasture would be managed to be in balance with what the pasture itself could support from a feed standpoint, moved often to avoid concentrations of manure, and rotated to build healthy soils.

There are multiple strategies to protect pastured chickens from predators. The most important thing will be to shut them into secure coops every night. Other options would be used only if they were suitable for use in a neighborhood environment: lightweight movable fencing, selection of visible locations, or even automatic sprinklers could be used to deter daytime predators.

4. **The proposed layout of the farm plots adjacent to this section of Shearer Road does much to preserve the historic rural character of the road. The proposed retention of the gravel farm road, the adjacent field fence and the preservation of the historic barn significantly help to preserve the historic character of the site.**

Answer: It was the intention of the development team to preserve as much as possible the rural character of the site. A central feature is making the farm operations highly visible to all members of the Davidson community.

Lighting:

1. **How will the team prevent light pollution from affecting neighbors?**

Answer: All lighting for the project will comply with current LEED standards for light fixtures. This means cut-off fixtures with low light-spillage that only illuminate pathways and areas on site. Additionally, the team is looking at complying with the International Dark Sky model lighting ordinance.

Noise:

1. **We are concerned about noise from the “small pavilion” that was mentioned. If this is for weddings as described then that should not be an issue. Is the plan to have bands playing late into the night? This could be a significant disturbance.**

Answer: The pavilion is planned for the hosting of small weddings and not for larger performances. Any associated bands or amplified music will comply with local noise ordinances.

Landscape:

1. **How are we dealing with utilities and stormwater?**

Answer: The project will comply with all stormwater best management practices, according to the Davidson Planning Ordinance. We are also coordinating with Charlotte Water for the Sewer Capital Improvements Project (CIP) and extension of the water main.

2. **How does the development propose to deal with the flooding that occurs from the creek, as it regularly overflows its banks?**

Answer: There will be no development in the surveyed flood plan. There will only be approved uses per the TOD planning ordinance such as pathways, open space, and stormwater management areas.

3. **How much open space is being saved?**

Answer: Approximately 50% of the site.

4. **Please allow residents to have native plant yards instead of grass.**

Answer: It is the intention of the development team not only to allow but to encourage this.

5. **I love the vision of a working farm, conserving as much of the tree line as possible, keeping the rolling topography and working walking paths into the plan. It is all very exciting!**

Answer: Much care was taken to preserve the natural character of the site, and in fact most conditions asked for in this Conditional Planning Area are in service of this.

Economics:

1. **Is there a taxation impact (either up or down) to the adjacent residents once the proposed project is completed?**

Answer: The Town of Davidson’s internal review reports that the Summit Farms project covers all the costs to serve the development plus generates an additional \$127,653.97 on an annual basis to the Town of Davidson. This analysis includes the commercial and residential components of the project but does not include the areas utilized for active agricultural uses. The town states: “This proposed plan highlights two significant economic development goals. One is retail, food service and an inn, which will bring in additional taxes through prepared foods and occupancy taxes. The other is the potential to provide workforce housing.”

2. **How many jobs will this development bring in?**

Answer: *The development team has yet to determine what the retail components will be on site, but our economic analysis of anticipated partners (namely Summit Coffee, the brewery, the restaurant, the inn, and the farm) conservatively estimates at least 100 part-time and/or full-time jobs created by this development.*

3. **Will this take away activities from downtown?**

Answer: *No, we don't expect this to, but rather to provide a complementary location for the business activity of Davidson. Both the Davidson Rural Area Plan (2016) and the Davidson Comprehensive Plan (2020) identify small, village-scale commercial nodes to be located at key intersections throughout the community.*

4. **I'm thoroughly impressed by the thought and quality of how this is being approached by the development team and the town. I am equally pleased to see how local members of the community are also involved.**

Answer: *We are a local team and want to do right by the Town of Davidson!*

Miscellaneous:

1. **In terms of the residential community, what will be available in terms of lot sizes, home size, pricing, restrictions of design/size, custom building, etc.?**

Answer: *A majority of this information is yet to be determined, however the proposal currently calls for 55 single-family lots distributed over four total lot sizes (60' wide, 75' wide, 90' wide, and 105' wide). The intent is to have custom homes that fit the contours of the land as to minimize earthwork and tree removal to maintain the natural environment to the greatest extent possible that exists today.*

2. **Will the development be located in Mecklenburg County?**

Answer: *Yes*

3. **How long will it take to complete the project?**

Answer: *The timeline is uncertain at this point, but the development team would like to see Phase 1 implemented as soon as possible.*

4. **What will happen on the other three intersection corners?**

Answer: *All other corners of the intersection are currently zoned Neighborhood Services Planning Area. Possible uses and forms are described in the Davidson Planning Ordinance.*

5. **I love it. It's how I grew up and look forward to seeing it duplicated.**

Answer: *The development team is committed to seeing this project through and providing a legacy asset to the Davidson community.*



Respectfully,



Colin M. Jenest, PE
Bolton & Menk Inc. d/b/a Cole Jenest & Stone

cc: Jason Burdette, AICP – Town of Davidson (ToD)
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