



ARCHER LODGE LAND USE PLAN UPDATE

Citizen Survey Results Interpretation May 26, 2024

As part of the Town’s current Land Use Plan update effort, the Town administered a citizen survey and gathered public feedback in March and April of 2024. An earlier document titled “Archer Lodge Public Forum One and Survey Results Summary” provides a summary of the results of the citizen survey. This document was presented to the Town Council on May 5, 2024.

In total, 267 people took the survey. 78% of those who took the survey lived in town, but a small percentage (22%) did not. Of the town residents, there was an even split of residents who have lived in the town of 10 or less years and the other half for over 10 years.

The Archer Lodge Land Use Plan Citizen Survey asked questions that focused on six main themes:

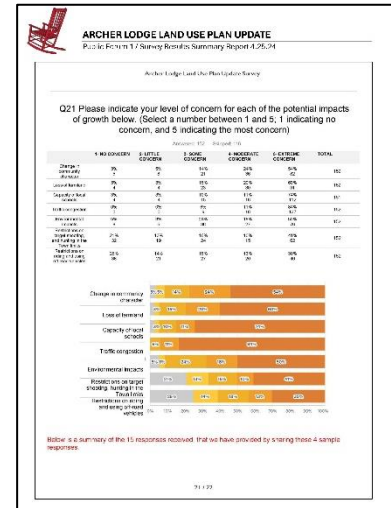
1. Town values
2. Housing
3. Transportation
4. Water and sewer
5. Commercial development
6. Controlling growth and expanding boundaries

Each theme in the survey was selected to capture perspectives on critical issues related to growth, development, and town character.

Generally speaking, the survey clarified that Archer Lodge residents are concerned about traffic congestion and loss of community character due to growth. In response to these concerns, survey respondents indicated a desire to limit new residential development and ensure that new residential development consisted entirely of single-family detached development. Likewise, there was concern on the part of residents that additional commercial development would further exacerbate traffic congestion concerns and help accelerate loss of community character. There was also little support for the extension of public sewer, likely based on similar concerns about additional growth and growth’s impacts on established rural community character. Survey respondents did support the idea of expanded planning control, through the establishment of new extraterritorial jurisdiction beyond the current corporate limits, likely based on the rationale that the extension of Town planning authority into these areas would help slow or control growth and thus delay traffic congestion or continued loss of community character.

This document explores the responses related to the six main themes and provides some additional thoughts for the Town’s consideration. While the citizen survey does give some general parameters and direction for the land use plan update, it is important to remember that the number of survey respondents is low (267 people) relative to the Town’s population (4,800 people), and that the survey results should not be used to infer how the balance of Town residents perceive the issues. There are also some important subtleties in the data and potential outcomes that also need consideration. The following sections will go into more detail on some of these issues.

The next step in the process is the refinement of the Town’s current vision statement and the articulation of new land use and development goals for the future. This interpretation document will help crystallize some of the thinking about potential goals and methods for achieving the Town’s objectives.





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THEME 1: TOWN VALUES AND VISION

Archer Lodge is a small-town that is valued for its sense of community and rural beauty. However, many see the growth of the Town, increased traffic, and loss of open space as a threat.

The most frequent sentiment about what makes Archer Lodge special in the citizen survey was the small-town feel. For many, this feeling is embodied in community festivals, slower pace of life, and the rural character of the landscape. One respondent shared, “The land-ethic of the town seems to be structured well. It’s a pleasant, rural/suburban area with beautiful land features and authentic small-business farming.”

However, many feel this authenticity is threatened by growth in and around Town. When asked about what folks would like to see change or be improved, the prevailing sentiment was that Archer Lodge has too much new growth and too much traffic which has started to threaten or even alter the small-town feel that makes Archer Lodge special. One comment shared, “The rapid development of housing is crippling our small town. We do not have the infrastructure to support it. I miss the small town feel and sense of community that came with it.”

Respondents shared that they would like to see expanded infrastructure to handle the traffic, as well as limits on growth to help stall the increase in traffic congestion.

The Land Use Plan update would benefit by including some deeper descriptions of community character in terms of uses, densities, building placement, street configuration, and open space (type, location, and appearance). With community character described in more detail, the UDO can be amended to include new rezoning, site plan, and subdivision criteria that incorporate requirements for consistency with desired community character.

Growth management could be another goal addressed by the Land Use Plan update. The growth management goal might address aspects like preferred locations of new development or conservation, limitations in the rate of growth across Town or in certain areas, and the tools the Town will use to control the rate of growth like changes to current zoning, increased use of conditional zoning, and potential limitation on the number of rezonings that may be considered over the course of a year. One thing to always keep in mind is that any sort of outward constraint on supply will result in increased prices. Growth management policies will place upward pressure on housing prices, and the ability to accommodate workforce housing will be further complicated by housing policies that prohibit or disincentivize more attainable forms of housing like duplexes, townhouses, and multi-family.

Open space and farmland protection are also likely part of a comprehensive strategy to manage growth and protect community character. These kinds of strategies are effective, but also indirectly affect housing supply and thus place further upwards pressure on housing prices. We would also like to note that single-family detached residential development at low densities is one of the most land-consumptive forms of development, and policies that limit residential growth to large-lot single-family development can work against open space and rural character protection goals.

Issues associated with traffic congestion and transportation are discussed in Theme 3: Transportation and Traffic.





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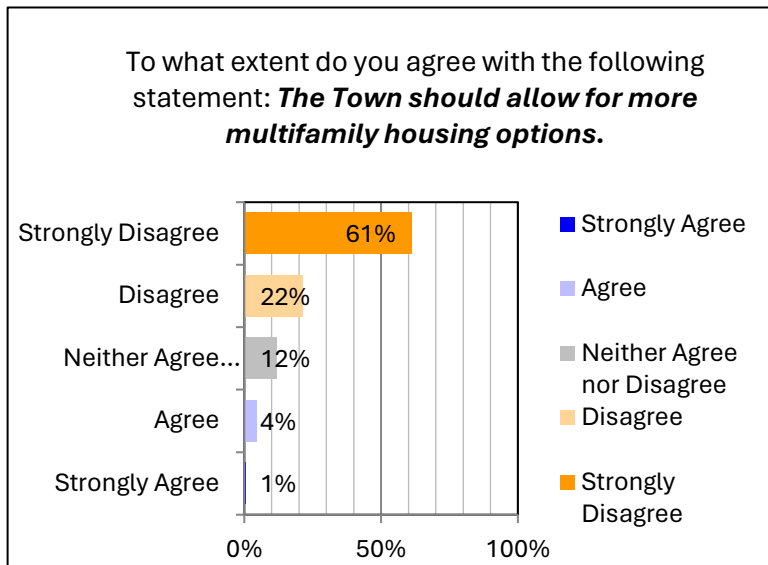
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THEME 2: HOUSING

The general sentiment on the topic of housing was that most people wanted Town leaders to limit residential development generally, and discourage residential formats that are not single-family detached dwellings.

People are generally happy with the types of housing in town (41% extremely satisfied, 37% satisfied). Survey respondents were clearly opposed to more multi-family housing options in the Town with only 5% of responses showing any form of support for multi-family (61% were strongly opposed). Nearly ¾ of the survey respondents (71%) would advise town leaders to “strongly limit the types of housing to only single-family.”

Even the potential benefits of more housing choice were of little-to-no importance to those who took the survey. Only 10% of respondents thought it “extremely important” to have more attainable housing prices, and nearly half (45%) of responses saw “no importance” in accommodating more types of housing choices.



Allowing more housing generally (whether single-family detached or other forms) can potentially cause negative impacts. For those who took the Archer Lodge survey, the most concerning potential impact from new residential development is traffic congestion (81% of respondents were “extremely concerned” with traffic impacts). This result is consistent with other questions that we will unpack in subsequent sections on transportation. School capacity and higher taxes also registered as “extreme concerns,” with survey respondents.

There are at least two issues to consider here: the amount of new residential coming to Archer Lodge generally, and the form it will take. Population forecasts call for the Town’s population to increase by 4,600 people over the next 25 years, to a total of 9,679 people by 2050. If the Town’s current persons-per-household figure (2.43 in 2020) continues into the future, then the Town will need to add 1,916 new housing units by 2050 (total number of housing units in 2020 is 2,068) to accommodate the projected population increase. The average lot size across the Town’s four single-family districts is around 35,000 square feet per lot. Using this average lot size figure, accommodating the anticipated population growth in single-family detached dwellings will require an additional 1,539 acres of land (not counting roads) by 2050. There are approximately 1,702 acres of vacant land within the Town’s corporate limits in 2023.

These figures help explain how a desire to limit new residential development to single-family detached dwellings can work at cross purposes to protecting open space. It could be possible to reduce the total amount of growth coming to Archer Lodge, but that will likely require downzoning, which could be politically unpopular, or purchase of land, which could be expensive (and will likely raise taxes).





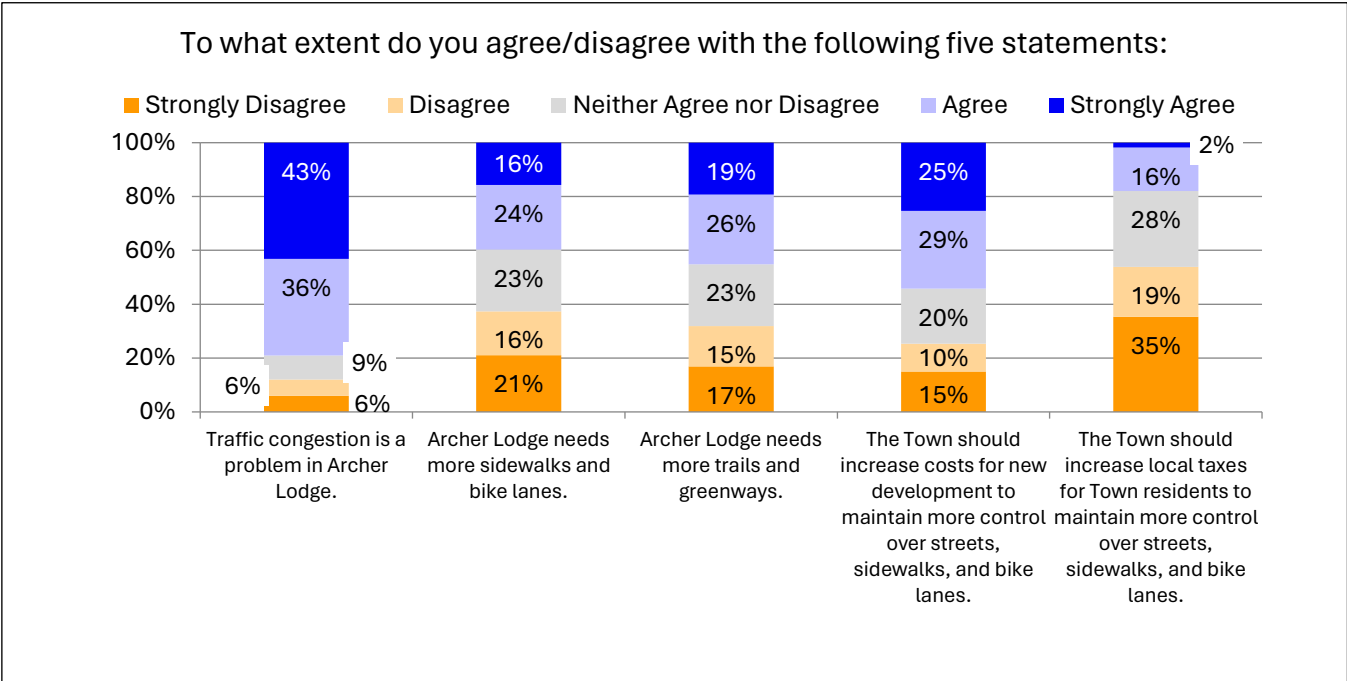
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THEME 3: TRANSPORTATION AND TRAFFIC

Those who took the survey are experiencing significant traffic congestion but aren't sure what the Town should do about it.

The survey asked one question to measure the level of agreement or disagreement with five statements regarding traffic and transportation infrastructure in Archer Lodge. The most striking of these results is that 79% of those who took the survey see traffic congestion as a problem in Archer Lodge (see the chart below). When asked about alternative transportation modes like greenways or sidewalks, respondents showed slightly more agreement with the need for trails and greenways (45% agreement) than for sidewalks (even split of 40% agreement and 40% disagreement).



It is clear that many in Archer Lodge agree there is a transportation problem in Archer Lodge. The ability to address that problem is somewhat hampered by the fact that roads in Archer Lodge are controlled either by NCDOT or by private entities. Aside from some limited standards that address the configuration of new roads in subdivisions, the Town has no control over its roadways. Survey respondents did agree (54% of respondents) that raising fees for new development may be part of a solution, but the problem remains that most of those fees would not go to the Town (since it does not own or maintain roads). The Town could work to reduce dependence on automobile travel through more standards for greenways, requirements for sidewalks, and requirements for bike lanes. NCDOT, will in some cases, provide sidewalks along NCDOT streets, but would also likely require the Town to pay for maintenance costs of those sidewalks.

Requirements for developers to reserve and construct more greenways and trails may be part of the solution, but this will require some more comprehensive planning and programming. There is also the possibility to require more robust street planning and connections as part of new development, but this will raise the costs for developers, who will likely pass these costs on to buyers.





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THEME 4: COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

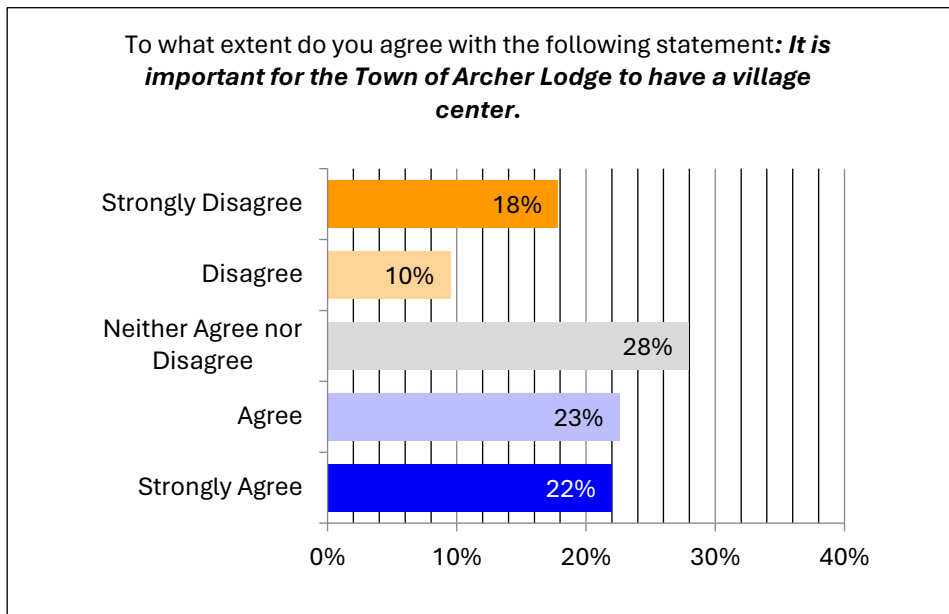
Responses supported limits on new large-scale commercial development but many thought it may be worth exploring small-scale commercial in a Village Center setting.

Similar to the questions about residential development, respondents showed concern with increasing the amount of new commercial development in the Town. 52% of survey respondents would advise Town leaders to “strongly limit new commercial development.” 68% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with a suggestion to encourage more commercial development.

However, there was some support for targeted small-scale, neighborhood-serving, “local” commercial development identified in the written comments provided. This sentiment was also expressed by several people during the public forum on March 21, 2024.

It is worth exploring what “small-scale” commercial might mean to the community - whether it is the size of the building, the type of use, or the number of patrons that makes a commercial use “small.”

In a related question, we asked respondents to tell us how much they agreed with the following statement: “It is important



for the Town of Archer Lodge to have a town center” - 45% of respondents supported this sentiment while only 20% of those taking the survey disagreed. In addition, one-third of respondents thought there would be at least moderate benefit to having more eating and drinking establishments in town.

While the survey results were fairly clear regarding the general sentiment surrounding more commercial development, we also think there may be support smaller-scale, local-serving commercial development, like a small restaurant, a bank, a drug store, or even some offices. Generally speaking, commercial development requires sewer, which is not currently present in Archer Lodge. The cost of extending sewer to one or two small-scale commercial developments is likely cost-prohibitive. However, if a handful of commercial establishments could locate in close proximity to one another, like in a village center context, it may be possible to share the costs of sewer extension to a single point and accommodate small-scale neighborhood-serving commercial development in a manageable way.

Additional discussion about the potential for establishment of a small village center area, proximate to a source of public sewer from outside the Town should be considered further. This could be a feasible means to addressing some of the resident’s desire for additional commercial development closer to home and can help create a central gathering area of “heart” for the Archer Lodge community.





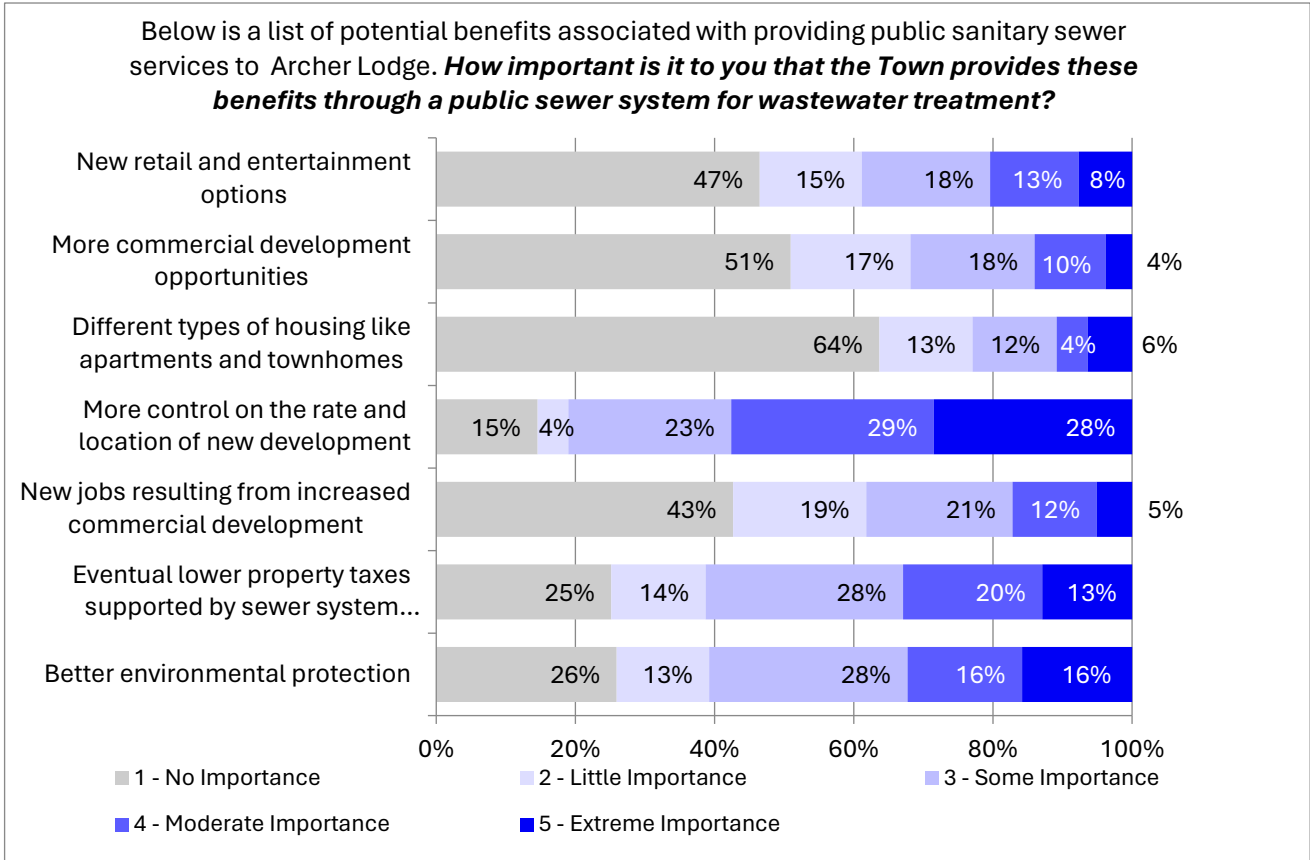
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THEME 5: WATER AND SEWER

Respondents were very conscious of the potential costs and possibility for increased development through the extension of new public water and sewer service.

In general, responses did not support the Town managing their own wastewater through a public sewer system. 56% of respondents disagreed with the Town needing to add public sewer capacity, with 38% of this as “strong disagreement”. However, there was support for the idea that control of sewer could aid the Town in controlling the rate and location of new development.



Johnston County is currently engaged in a regional sewer study that is exploring a regional sewer authority that would provide sewer service to the municipalities in Johnston County, like Archer Lodge. However, as of this writing, the policies associated with the study are configured to provide sewer without requirements for the development being served by sewer to annex to a particular community – meaning there is no tax benefit from sewer provision. Another alternative is for the Town to cooperate with an adjacent community to purchase sewer treatment capacity and pay for the initial extension that brings the sewer line to Archer Lodge’s corporate limits. Developers in Archer Lodge seeking sewer would then pay directly for any extensions beyond that point, and would be required to annex into the Town.

Not having sewer means no commercial development, and few controls over growth. It could also create a situation where adjacent governments with sewer extend it around Archer Lodge, serve development with sewer, and the Town has no control over the timing, rate, or location of development along its borders. In addition, no sewer means continued low density development which consumes open space and disperses traffic.





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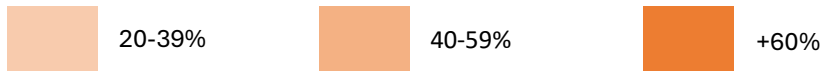
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THEME 7: CONTROLLING GROWTH AND EXPANDING BOUNDARIES

One of the significant issues for consideration is whether or not Archer Lodge will seek extraterritorial jurisdiction (“ETJ”) from Johnston County. Archer Lodge is the only community without ETJ in the County. ETJ allows the Town to control growth and development within one mile of its corporate limits. When asked whether they supported this notion, over half of the survey respondents agreed (26%) or strongly agreed (27%). As it has been presented throughout this summary report, the public is most concerned that increased growth will lead to an increase in traffic and transportation impacts. Over 84% of respondents were extremely concerned about traffic congestion. We should note that the Town anticipates a further ETJ extension request from Clayton to the County in the near future. The table below summarizes respondent’s concerns about growth and development.

Please indicate your level of concern for each of the potential impacts of growth below:

	1 - NO CONCERN	2 - LITTLE CONCERN	3 - SOME CONCERN	4 - MODERATE CONCERN	5 - EXTREME CONCERN	TOTAL
Change in community character	3% 5	5% 8	14% 21	24% 36	54% 82	152
Loss of farmland	3% 4	3% 4	15% 23	20% 30	60% 91	152
Capacity of local schools	3% 4	3% 4	10% 15	11% 16	74% 112	151
Traffic congestion	0% 0	0% 0	6% 9	11% 16	84% 127	152
Environmental impacts	5% 8	3% 5	24% 36	18% 27	50% 76	152
Restrictions on target shooting, and hunting in the Town limits	21% 32	13% 19	16% 24	10% 15	41% 62	152
Restrictions on riding and using off-road vehicles	25% 38	14% 21	18% 27	13% 20	30% 46	152



While extension of ETJ brings no additional tax revenue and can result in some additional service delivery costs as the Town becomes responsible for review of development and code enforcement in the ETJ area, the benefit from ETJ extension is that the Town is protected from subsequent ETJ requests by other local governments, and the Town can apply its planning and development regulations in the 3,000-acre area on the Town’s northern and eastern sides.

The Land Use Plan update is configured to permit the Town to demonstrate its planning for an ETJ to the County in anticipation of a request to the Johnston County Board of County Commissioners for granting of a one-mile ETJ extension to the north and east of Archer Lodge. If this request goes forward, it will be important for the Town to reach out the landowners and residents in the potential ETJ area to ensure the Town hears and addresses their concerns. It will also be necessary for the Town to consider the potential range of zoning district designations it would apply in the ETJ if the request is granted by the County.





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SUMMARY

Archer Lodge is growing and facing many challenges that can be addressed by the updated Land Use Plan. There is a strong community sentiment to manage growth and development and protect the Town's community character.

This must be done carefully and thoughtfully as some of the survey respondent's desires run at cross purposes to goals of rural character protection, control of growth in taxes, traffic congestion management, and control of rises in housing costs.

The lack of desire for a wider range of housing types could result in higher costs of residential development (based on constrained supply) and a potential increase in taxes (due to inflationary pressures on service delivery costs and the lack of a more diverse tax base). Reliance on single-family detached dwellings on lots of one acre to 30,000 square feet in size are consumptive of land and will work against the Town's goals for farmland protection and maintaining rural character.

The community is also concerned about new commercial development and the potential increases in traffic congestion, but there may be some alternatives that allow for a limited amount of commercial development in a concentrated area that would provide a village core to the community and could help defray tax increases solely on residential development. A lack of commercial development means more residents will have to drive on the streets to access commercial services in outside areas, and the Town will never have the opportunity to develop an identity as might be created from a village core or center.

In order to have commercial development, however, sewer is necessary. There may be some options for sewer service without significant cost to the Town from the regional sewer service initiative being explored by the County – however, anticipated policies associated with the regional authority will also prevent the Town from accruing any positive increases in tax flow through mandatory annexation as part of sewer connection. An alternative to this is for the Town to purchase sewer capacity from an adjacent jurisdiction and borrow (or pursue grants) to cover the initial sewer extension costs to the corporate limits. This, in turn, permits the Town to use its sewer to control growth and supplement tax revenues through mandatory annexation.

No matter what, the Town can and should consider extension of its planning controls to the north and east of the corporate limits through an ETJ request to the County – this permits the Town greater control over how new development will take place along its corporate limits.

The challenges of transportation and traffic congestion will likely be some of the most vexing for the Town to solve. Without an affirmative decision to own and operate roadways, the Town is left to the whims of NCDOT and private developers. There are some development standards that could be added to the UDO that require roadway extensions, street connectivity, and construction of a more well-connected street system (as a means of reducing congestion generally). The Town could also strengthen its regulations with respect to sidewalks and greenways to help encourage more non-motorized transportation. Inclusion of these regulations will aid in addressing traffic, but not necessarily in a significant way, and both will increase the cost of development, which will be passed on to consumers in the form of higher home prices.

We look forward to exploring these issues further with Town leaders and residents in Task 4 of the Land Use Plan Update Project – Vision and Goals.

