

Cashiers Area Community Planning Council Special Meeting Minutes

December 18, 2023

5:00 p.m.

Albert Carlton Community Library, Community Room

Members	Present	Absent	Members	Present	Absent	Members	Present	Absent
Daniel Fletcher		X	Sonia Morales	X		Dr. Douglas Homolka	X	
David Bond		X	Carole Stork	X		Judy Zachary	X	
Glenn Ubertino	X							

Staff Present

Michael Poston- Planning Director

Anna Harkins- Planner I

Allison Kelley- Administrative Assistant III

Others Present

Chad Meadows, CodeWright

Call to Order

Chairman Glenn Ubertino called the meeting to order at 5:04 p.m. and a quorum was present.

Additions to/Approval of the Agenda

Doug Homolka made a motion to approve the agenda as written. Judy Zachary seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.

New Business

a) **Recodify Cashiers: Community Character Analysis Presentation-Chad Meadows, CodeWright**

Chad Meadows stated the character analysis is an attempt to describe with text and pictures of what the community character is in Cashiers. One of the important things that occurred to us early on was that there are parts of Cashiers that do not exist yet, but that we would like to have exist. Such as mixed-use development, good sidewalk connections, housing options, more open space, and higher quality development. Mr. Meadows stated they hope to convert all of this material into a series of elements in the rules and intent statements in the standard so forth. In May, they held a lot of meetings and discussions about community character, and spent time working with people on maps and they ranked pictures, and gave us words that described the Cashiers community character. The Community Character Analysis document was drafted on November 30, 2023 and there are seven main aspects to the document. The analysis has general statements, whether that is about land use, or streets or lighting patterns about what exists in the world today. In addition, there are also images of buildings in Cashiers that show elements of what is consistent, and elements of what is inconsistent. The analysis also includes aspirational goals of more mixed-use development, the ability to have live work, and more options for attached residential. In addition, it includes pictured other wants and needs such as better pedestrian connections, more opportunities for means to move

around the community in your car, so that maybe you can avoid some of the traffic congestion problems that exist.

Mr. Meadows discussed zoning and showed a map of the boundary of the current zoning district where there is only a Village Commercial District and a General Commercial District. However, he stated when you look at the land use patterns in the zoned jurisdiction it is a much broader and more complex picture. He showed a map of different classifications of each parcel within the zoning jurisdiction based on the use that staff was considering for the new districts that included residential, non-residential, and mixed-use. Mr. Meadows stated they are considering the inclusion of a conditional zoning district that would give more flexibility to come into the modern age. As part of this process, if you own property that is inside the current village commercial and general commercial districts your zoning district designation is going to change and you will become residential, non-residential or mixed-use and those that would want to become conditional would have to ask for that.

Mr. Meadows stated the general character of Cashiers is it is a community for residents that welcomes visitors, strong ethos of environmental stewardship, a place of human habitation, a wooded retreat, a place of “smaller, more informal” development, and work with mountain conditions instead of altering them. He stated Cashiers is a place where people live and development is going to happen here, and they have protected the trees and the vibrant environmental spaces, which is a real testament to the ethos that exists. Cashiers is not a place where we do a lot of mass grading or where we do a lot of tree removal as we try to work with conditions that are here.

Land Use

- 2 zoning districts (with little distinction between them)
- A wide range of use types, but no mixed-uses yet (9 lots)
- Commercial concentrated in core and along corridors – desire for more mixed-use in the core
- 33% of lots in the district are vacant
- Largest vacant lots concentrated in western portion
- Commercial shopping centers of more than 3 in-line tenants should be discouraged
- Developments with more than 20,000 square feet should only be established via conditional zoning
- More live/work units, more ADUs, wider range of residential uses
- All uses (except single-family detached) required to provide open space

Lotting Patterns

- 800 lots in the district
- 48% of the lots in the Commercial District are smaller than 40,000 square feet
- Lots small in core, larger along corridor
- Building setbacks have created irregular development template
- Parking in front of buildings
- Conservation subdivision lot issues

Mr. Meadows stated the Jackson County Health Department generally requires a lot smaller than 40,000 square feet to be on sewer. He stated they do not have enough sewer capacity for half of the of their commercial stock. In addition, he stated it seems like half of the lots inside the district were set up or envisioned to be served by sewer, but we do not have the infrastructure capacity to do that. He inquired what does that mean for those vacant lots, should we consider investing a lot of money to bring sewer to the area. Mr. Meadows stated the conservation subdivision is also a topic that we will need to discuss in more detail, the ULI plan talks about conservation subdivision which is a

development pattern with single-family residential homes on small lots clustered in locations on a larger site that are located outside of the environmentally sensitive area. There is some issues, as when you have small lots, you still need to have sewer and do you allow spray fields to qualify as open space, no. Mr. Meadows stated there is some balancing they would need to consider with conservation subdivisions, as they do need to continue further exploration.

Street Design

- Slow-speed “village feel”
- Lack of street connections/options contributes to congestion
- New rules for connecting/continuing private streets
- New rules for short block lengths
- New rules for street connectivity
- Address missing pedestrian connections
- Public sidewalks along NCDOT streets
- Private sidewalks along private streets or where NCDOT does not permit sidewalks

Mr. Meadows stated Cashiers has very few street connections, and there are very few options about how to get around this community. Counties cannot control streets, and they do not own them and the goal is to have regulations to encourage private streets to connect and they would like to explore some rules for new street connectivity when new larger developments come in. In addition, shorter block lengths is more pedestrian oriented with more streets to cross and on corner lots for walkability.

Open Space

- 10%-20% open space required
- Sidewalks credited towards open space
- Require all forms of non-residential (5%), mixed-use (7%), and multi-family development (10%) to provide open space
- 3 types of open space: active, passive, gathering
- Active required for multi-family
- Passive required everywhere else based on priority order
- Gathering spaces credited towards passive

The current open space requirement is for only residential development to provide open space, and he would like the Council to consider requiring all forms of development to provide open space including residential, non-residential, and mixed use based on a certain percentage. These percentages are not finalized and are just a draft talking point and can be reevaluated and discussed further if they need adjusted throughout this process. He stated they are suggesting three kinds of open space be recognized, and are focusing on the passive open space which allows us to get to one of our central goals, which is our strong environmental protection ethic. We hope to rely on passive open space to set aside requirements to protect the most environmentally sensitive and the most ecologically important areas on site. In addition, they also suggest adding a layer on top of that in terms of gathering spaces because we want to find ways to accommodate places for people to interact with one another, such as benches, walking trail. Mr. Meadows stated the only time we are asking for active open space requirements, which is typically a core playground, a pool, pool clubhouse, etc. is if you are doing a multi-family development. Everybody else would be asked to provide passive recreation in these percentages, and we will encourage and permit you to make some or all of that open space available for gathering spaces.

Buildings

- Size
- Height
- Roof Form/Pitch
- Placement
- Spacing
- Multi-building development
- Entryways
- Glazing
- Exterior Materials
- Colors

The Cashiers Character Analysis includes examples that the community said which buildings are consistent with the character, which included Bucks Coffee, 107 S Corridor, Village Green, Farmers Market and Wells Hotel. Patterns start to emerge such as a lot of pitch roofs, earth tones, and natural materials. In addition, they also have a handful of buildings or developments that the community said are inconsistent, which included Toxaway Concrete, Cashiers Center (Ingles), Wilson Electric Building, Spinx Stations (Highway 64 locations), and Designer Cottages (display on Highway 64).

Mr. Meadows discussed building size, the Chamber of Commerce building is 1,044 square feet, Cashiers Center (Ingles) is 124,037 square feet, which is larger than any other building within the Cashiers jurisdiction. Most of the buildings are below 5,000 square feet in size, and the average building size 4,646 square feet. Mr. Meadows stated the building height, two stories is consistent, and they could consider more than two stories in some cases on sloping sites. Buildings that heights exceed two stories on flat sites could require conditional rezoning. Accessory structures should not exceed principal building heights, as by their nature they are smaller in size and in height. In addition, he stated pitched roofs are consistent, flat roofs are inconsistent and mansard/monopitch is inconsistent to the balance of the community character.

Michael Cox stated that some of our most successful commercial buildings that were built originally, like the old grocery store building, behind cashiers' village walk, and the Hampton real estate building all have flat roofs. Mr. Meadows inquired how should we allow these things to live together, are we not going to worry about pitch or should we consider in certain locations we want to see pitch or for these types of uses. Mr. Cox stated the old grocery store building in town has big windows and a flat roof and is one of the most successful retail businesses in Cashiers and the structure supports the use.

Placement

- Random placement
- Shallow front setbacks with buildings close to the street
- Deep front setback=inconsistent
- Buildings not parallel to the street they face
- Variable side setbacks

Mr. Meadows stated one of the coolest things about this community is the random irregular placement of buildings. Cashiers has some shallow front setbacks and buildings that are close to the street, and he believes that is an important part of this community. He stated they could discuss how close they want to keep buildings near the street. However, generally speaking, bringing the buildings up to the street, closer to where people are walking or where people are driving seems consistent with Cashiers community character. In addition, he stated buildings have variable side setbacks, and sometimes they are big or small. Having variable side setbacks is interesting, and he believes there are ways to write some rules that encourage this and maybe even require it.

Massing

- Simple form
- Residential appearance
- Visible framing
- Sequential additions

Mr. Meadows stated there are some trends and patterns he believes are present in regards to massing. He stated the simple building form is typically a square and/or rectangle. Residential appearance is typically our older commercial buildings that started life as houses, but not all of them, and they have a residential kind of a feel. Visible framing telegraph's a message that these buildings are not modern buildings as they are older buildings. Generally, you do not see glass skyscrapers with visible framing, but there are buildings that have visible framing that are glass skyscrapers. Cashiers has many buildings that have a nod to framing and give at least a semblance of how the building was put together. Another important concept, and one that is extremely hard to explain and probably even more difficult to regulate is this notion of sequential editions, which he believes is very important part of Cashiers character. An example is the Cornucopia building that got what clearly started as something much smaller than what exists today, over time they added to the building, and that is the same concept with several other buildings in town.

Multi-Building Development

- Campus-style=consistent
- In-line shopping center (over 3 tenants) =inconsistent
- Hybrid=consistent (detached, semi-detached, 2-story)

Mr. Meadows discussed Multi-building developments, the community from the Cashiers community character standpoint the in-line tenant shopping centers did not feel these types of developments fit the character, even though they are important to have currently in the area. However, there were some hybrid options (two-story/semi-detached buildings) that the community felt were consistent, such as Creekside, Village Walk and Laurel Terrace. In addition, he stated the community felt the campus-style multi-building development was acceptable and consistent.

Sean Cronin inquired if a part of the code Mr. Meadows would be doing would address the parking surface. For example, he stated the Farmers Market parking surface feel, which has a pebble kind of surface that makes the place a little bit different and more natural and consistent with the area versus the parking surface at the Laurel Terrace. Mr. Meadows stated they would be talking about parking, and he believes parking surface is an important concept. They may want to allow people to have more gravel more kind of macadam kind of things, instead of everybody having to have asphalt or cement.

Entryways

- Faces the street
- Roof identifies entry location
- Material/appearance change
- Weather protection
- Entry way does not face primary street=inconsistent

Mr. Meadows stated the primary interest in entryway in Cashiers faces the street that the building faces, but there are plenty of examples where the primary entrance does not face the street that the building faces. In addition, he stated there are some roof features that identify entry location and it is common to have material/appearance changes. He hopes that they would try to embrace the inclusion of weather protection for pedestrians to have a place they could come out of the outside elements to fold up their umbrella,

take their coat off, or put on which creates the small town village feel. In addition, most felt that when the entry way does not face the primary street it was inconsistent with the character of Cashiers.

Glazing (transparency)

- Vertical orientation
- Divided light
- Glass wall=inconsistent
- Horizontal band of glass=inconsistent
- More than 50% glazed=inconsistent

Glazing is windows and doors and a vertical orientation is where the window is taller than it is wide, divided light, and is operable or at least appears operable. We are not talking about big sheet plate glass that is not operable. Reduced glazing on the upper floors, which is more windows on the first floor and fewer windows on the second floor, which is consistent. Mr. Meadows discussed some things that are not consistent, such as the glass wall, and horizontal band of glass with no relief using trim. He stated this is a more modern feature in construction, because back in the day we could not make bands of glass because we had things to hold the wall up.

Michael Cox stated, as they become a vibrant year round commercial community, could they look at which buildings are successful with their commercial endeavors. As he would argue that part of what makes the Hampton Real Estate building a good commercial building with such low vacancy is that it does have large windows, that allows those to see into when they are walking and driving.

Mr. Meadows stated storefront windows are very typical aspect of pedestrian shopping streets. He inquired that maybe there is a way to split the difference. The community indicated that they think they need to look deeper into the percentage of glazing that is required within Cashiers.

Exterior Materials

- Natural materials
- Wood, metal, stone

Most of Cashiers building cladding is wood and in terms of roof, it is mostly asphalt shingles and there is some standing seam metal and cedar shake. In addition, he stated they discussed stone and how to use stones successfully, and we see many instances where people are using veneer stone, whether it is as a foundational element or an accent feature. Generally, when using stone we would suggest that that stone be a vertical feature, not a horizontal feature unless it is a foundation, which would not count. The exterior materials they felt were inconsistent were Synthetic Stucco, Smooth-faced Cinderblock, Sheet Metal, Wooden Sheathing (TS-111), Masonite (or comparable), and Brick. Mr. Cox inquired if they should eliminate cultured stone as a high quality material. Mr. Meadows stated they could do that, they would have to define cultured stone, and he would like to say natural stone that is from 100 miles away is good and if you cannot do that, do not do it.

Color

- Earth Tones
- Muted, Dim
- Accent colors

Mr. Meadows stated they see earth tones in in Cashiers, which are generally muted and dim, we do not see fluorescent colors, and some buildings successfully use accent colors. Mr. Cox pointed out that in the past they did brown muted earth tones because they were trying to look good in the summer time when visitors are there and the trees were green. He stated he wanted to acknowledge their past and understand why they

decided to use those colors. However, if they have a different mission for the future they should consider allowing people to experiment to try to succeed in that new mission. Ms. Zachary stated she would not want to see what is happening in every urban city, which is everything is white with black trim. Mr. Meadows stated that the issue of uniformity and they do not want to see everything be the same color.

Mr. Meadows stated the state statute that was adopted in 2017 states that local governments may no longer control single-family detached residential design, and we are not allowed to tell people what color they can or cannot paint their house. This legislation does the contrary to what we should be doing, which is encouraging people to do better instead of just sort of throwing up our hands and letting people do whatever they want to do.

Dr. Homolka stated Cashiers is evolved with craftsmen, tradesmen and merchants that started small and evolved. In addition, he stated if people would have seen Cornucopia 40 years ago, and looked at it how it sits today; they would have said this place needs to go. However, he stated it was an excellent craftsman and businessman that took that building to a certain level, and he had to be allowed to evolve in his place with sequential editions with both colors and roofs that he chose and not being too punitive.

Site Features-Parking

- Parking lots are small
- Parking in front
- Little parking landscaping
- Access management issues

Mr. Meadows stated they would need to address access management issue, as there is a safety concern for cars, pedestrians and bicyclists for ingress and egress locations off Highway 107.

Troy Lucas stated parking lots are always best suited on flatter areas, because they are less destructive for grading and masquerading. Parking is sometimes up by the road, in the back of the building, or 500 feet away. Buildings can react better to typography than parking lots can in terms of less dirt removal. The landscape and hardscape piece if you do have larger parking areas if they are in front of those areas that are inconvenient for visually, landscaping, changing materials in the parking bays, and doing things to soften the asphalt.

In addition, someone from the audience inquired if there would be discussion about prohibiting parking meters. Mr. Meadows stated no there is not, however if a private developer wants to put parking meters in their parking lot, he is not sure that we could stop them from doing that. He stated you would not put any parking meters on an NC DOT Street, and the County does not own any streets and it would have to be a private street that they could put those on.

Site Features-Landscaping

- Little streetscape landscaping
- Few perimeter landscaping buffers
- Fence screening
- Little landscaping lot parking

After receiving feedback from the community, Mr. Meadows stated they might need to explore utilization of understory trees instead of canopy trees for street trees.

Site Features-Signage

- Directory Sign=consistent
- Awning Sign=consistent
- Monument Sign=consistent
- Architectural Detail=consistent

- Wall Sign=consistent
- Roof Sign=inconsistent
- Internally Illuminated=inconsistent
- Billboard=inconsistent
- Pole Sign=inconsistent

Cashiers has its own sign ordinance that has a max height and maximum size, and a lot of the signage for commercial buildings is auto oriented. He inquired if the community had feedback regarding signage. General feedback was to look into different regulations for canopy signage, and to potentially consider pitched roof canopies.

Mr. Meadows left some questions for the community to consider as follows:

- Does residential zoning mean, single-family detached, duplex, quadplex, multi-family, townhouse?
- Should we permit multi-family developments in the residential district? Or should we require that be in a mixed-use district?
- Whether or not we should permit people to make requests for the zoning district they are going to get as part of this process. Or will we allow people to make those requests after the new zoning districts are in place?
- How do they feel about requiring Open Space as active and passive?
- Should the county allow developers to pay a fee-in-lieu, instead of providing a sidewalk or open space?
- Should we allow or not allow illumination, and pole signs.

How will we use the Community Character Analysis?

It informs the revisions to UDO Section 9.3:

- Purpose and intent
- District dimensional standards
- Allowable uses by zoning district
- Development standards
- Building design standards

Mr. Meadows stated tomorrow night in the community room at the library at 5:00 p.m. he would be discussing the annotated outline, and he anticipates drafting to commence in January 2024.

Adjournment

With no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 6:26 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,


Allison Kelley
 Administrative Assistant


Glenn Ubertino
 Cashiers Planning Council Chairman