



January 12, 2021

Ms. Shelley DeHart
Director of Planning
Belmont Planning Department
PO Box 431
Belmont, NC 28012

Ms. Tiffany Faro
Associate Planner

Dear Shelley and Tiffany,

Habitat for Humanity of Gaston County has applied to rezone PID 182236, 3100 Lee Road, commonly known as the Dixon Village neighborhood. The city of Belmont is familiar with this project as it was approved in 2010 by the council.

Dixon Village will be a unique, mixed-income neighborhood that will contribute greatly to a strong and healthy city of Belmont, as well as a greater Gaston County, by providing affordable housing. This is an innovative project that is designed to encourage interaction in a diverse, closely-knit community, creating what research shows are economic and social benefits for our entire region.

Dixon Village is a proposed 28 home mixed-income single family residential subdivision, comprised of 3- and 4-bedroom homes with front porches. The average lot size in this community is approximately 5,820 s.f. Proposed neighborhood amenities include open green space with walking path, playground, picnic tables and sidewalks.

This innovative neighborhood will support hard-working, low-income Habitat families achieve their dream of becoming homeowners, which will allow them to provide an environment where their children will grow and thrive. It will also provide the opportunity for entry-level, market-rate buyers to buy a house in the lower range of home prices.

The 2020 State of Housing in Charlotte research report, conducted by the Childress Klein Center for Real Estate at UNCC, illuminated the lack of availability in the real estate market of houses priced at \$250,000 and below. Key findings from the report include:

- Population growth in the region is outpacing housing growth. From 2010 to 2019, the population grew by 1.9%, but housing units grew by only 1.6%.
- Land prices are rising rapidly across the region, which is driving up the price of housing and also pushing more people toward the suburban fringe.
- The lowest-priced segment of the owner-occupied market has seen the sharpest price increase, impacting low-income and middle-income affordability. Between 2010 and 2019, home prices in this segment have risen 195%, from \$48,990 to \$145,000. That is an annual increase of 14.5%.

Habitat Future Homeowners fall into the 30-60% of area median income segment and earn an average of \$33,122 annually. Without a "hand up" these families will not be able to afford homeownership. Habitat families pay for their

1840 E Franklin Blvd Gastonia, NC 28054 ▪ Phone: 704-864-6536 ▪ info@habitatgaston.org ▪ habitatgaston.org

Building homes, community, and hope.



house with an affordable mortgage, defined as no more than 30% of their gross income. The goal of Dixon Village is to have 1/3 of the houses occupied by Habitat Families and the remaining 2/3 of the houses will be priced at an entry level market rate.

Construction plans for this project were previously prepared, reviewed and partially approved in 2010. Drawings were approved by the NCDOT and Gaston County Natural Resources. The city of Belmont conducted a sketch plan review process and two reviews of construction drawings and the plans were verbally approved contingent upon the receipt of city required development fees. These fees, charged in the economically hard time of the great recession that began in 2008 ultimately led to the termination of development plans moving forward.

Today, a new regime of Habitat looks forward to working with the city of Belmont to develop this project to provide an unmet need of affordable housing within the Belmont community. Updates to the Belmont land development ordinances since the original 2010 plans have added an additional cost burden to this project making it challenging to remain economically feasible. The costs to prepare this land for construction are extremely high and are becoming cost prohibitive. Therefore, in order to make this project feasible, Habitat requests the following relief and design considerations:

1. Relief from conducting a tree inventory due to the time and expense, and relief from tree save requirement of 20%. The original design was in compliance with the 2010 ordinance which did not require any tree save since existing topography slopes were less than 15%. The plan as submitted shows a tree save of 18.7%.
2. Relief from parking pad size requirement of 30' long x 20' wide and allow for installation of parking pads that are 22' long x 18' wide. This size is equal to or greater than that required for two commercial parking spaces and will be designed so the length is outside the right of way and sidewalk to avoid car overhang obstruction of the walk. The designed road grades along with arrangement of house and driveway on a 55' wide lot, the requirement of a wider driveway would require costly retaining walls in order to make grade transitions.
3. Relief from System Development Fees, following the example of the Loftin Senior Housing complex.
4. Relief to eliminate sidewalks on one side of Geneva Circle along road centerline stations 2+00 through 8+00 where it abuts the Parkway/Greenway COS and has a walking trail in the tree save area.
5. Relief to eliminate street trees on one side of Geneva Circle along road centerline stations 2+00 through 8+00 where it abuts the Parkway/Greenway COS and has a walking trail in the tree save area.
6. Ability to use Powell funds to pay for construction of sidewalks and new street construction.
7. Relief from Belmont Land Development Code Section 4.2 #A1 that says "useable front porches are at least 6 feet deep and extend more than 50% of the façade." The proposed houses will have porches, but they may be smaller than 6 feet in depth and may not extend more than 50% of the façade. The minimum area of porch will be 40 square feet.
8. Relief from the 20-foot setback requirement to allow a 10-foot minimum setback as shown on the originally approved 2010 plans. The Habitat house footprint will not fit on the lot with a 20-foot setback. Petitioner agrees to prohibit front porches from encroaching into the 10-foot setback but steps from the porch will be allowed to encroach.

1840 E Franklin Blvd Gastonia, NC 28054 ▪ Phone: 704-864-6536 ▪ info@habitatgaston.org ▪ habitatgaston.org

Building homes, community, and hope.



Habitat for Humanity of Gaston County is very excited to work with the city of Belmont on this project. Safe and stable housing is the building block of our society and Dixon Village will be a needed and meaningful addition to the housing stock of Belmont and Gaston County.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kay Peninger".

Kay Peninger
Executive Director