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# Conservation for older neighborhoods?

## Districts would preserve unique neighborhoods.

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To give input, contact John Howard at the Charlotte Planning Department, 704-336-2205.

Charlotte is exploring whether to follow Chapel Hill, Greensboro and Raleigh in allowing conservation districts in some older neighborhoods.

The districts would help preserve distinctive communities by creating standards for new construction, renovation or similar projects.

Charlotte has several neighborhoods that might be appropriate for conservation districts, said John Howard, principal planner in the city's Strategic Planning Division.

The districts are not quite as old as the city's historic districts, and the restrictions are generally not as strict.

"A neighborhood conservation district program in Charlotte would be focused primarily on areas that were developed from roughly the World War II era up to the last quarter of the 20th century," said John Rogers, planning coordinator for Charlotte's historic districts.

"These areas are not what most people would consider historic neighborhoods, but they have been in existence long enough to have a well-established character of their own."

In short, Howard said, they are "nice character but not quite historic."

The Planning Department is considering conservation districts and other initiatives as a way to address concerns over residential development that date back to 1996, Howard said.

One of the concerns is a lack of design variety in some large-scale residential developments.

The other quality-of-life issue that conservation districts could address is development that is considered incompatible with the character of an established neighborhood with distinctive character.

The size and height of a home compared with existing structures can be a concern to neighbors. A home's distance from property lines and parking areas also are sometimes concerns.

"Being overwhelmed by your neighbor is not fun," said Nancy Carter, District 5 City Council member.

Carter began hearing concerns about residential construction projects in Myers Park at least four years ago.

Now concern for preserving neighborhood character has spread to Selwyn, Foxcroft, Cotswold and other communities, she said.

Howard said he believes conservation districts might also be of interest in Biddleville, Chantilly, Hampshire Hills, Hyde Park Estates, Sedgefield, Revolution Park, Windsor Park and parts of Newell, Pawtucket and South

Charlotte.

Charlotte approached the concept of neighborhood preservation 12 years ago by presenting design standards for building in established neighborhoods to advisory groups. The effort didn't progress beyond that.

The Planning Department is reviewing the city's zoning ordinances to address concerns over residential development trends, which makes the topic timely again.

The planning department staff will take public input through the end of the year.

If there is local interest in the concept, the staff would develop an implementation plan beginning next year. The public would be invited to comment before a plan could become final.

Other cities have already approved legislation for conservation districts. Raleigh has identified 18 neighborhood conservation districts since adopting legislation in 1999.

Communities can petition the city to identify setbacks, heights and other characteristics as existing standards for their neighborhoods.

Greensboro passed legislation last year and has identified one neighborhood conservation overlay.

Two petitions are required for interested communities. The first is to show interest among residents in initiating the process. The second must show support for proposed standards before they are considered by city officials.

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**yalku** wrote on 11/09/2008 04:13:39 PM:

Conservation district is a term that sounds good, but the program is voluntary and relies on mutual cooperation. If the houses are more than fifty years old, if their architecture shows a distinctive style such as bungalows or fifties modern, and if the neighborhood shares a common theme that demonstrates the development of a particular group or era of growth, then the residents may wish to compare the benefits of creating a historic district which may even have certain tax advantages rather than a conservation district which includes no real means of enforcement.

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