Agenda Item: Eastern Gateway Small Area Plan

DATE: October 26, 2021
FROM: Nadine Bennett, Senior Planner

Background/Issue:

The area at the Eastern tip of Matthews, bordered by I-485, Idlewild Road, and the Springwater and Windrow neighborhoods, is one of the few remaining sizable, largely undeveloped sites within Town limits. The area also serves as a gateway to Matthews from both Union County and I-485.

The approximately 120-acre study area is divided into 25 parcels with 14 different owners and currently contains a number of single-family dwellings, a Duke Energy substation, large wooded areas, and open fields. A number of the larger tracts are currently for sale or under contract or have recently been sold to development groups, and Town Planning staff has been fielding multiple questions from multiple groups wanting to know what can be done in this area. A large portion of the area was rezoned to R-VS in 2007, but the remainder is zoned R15 (minimum 15,000 square foot lots).

The most recent Matthew Land Use Plan, adopted in 2012, calls for the land to remain residential but notes that “infill opportunities such as townhomes, multi-family communities and coordinated R-VS developments are encouraged.”

Because of the heightened interest in the area, as well as the age of the land use plan and shifting demographics and development trends, the Town felt that it would be appropriate to take a holistic look at the entire area to determine if the 2012 recommendations are still relevant and appropriate for meeting the needs of the Matthews community of tomorrow.

Proposal/Solution

The Matthews Eastern Gateway Plan makes a number of recommendations for the area and includes a proposed site plan that Staff believes contains an appropriate mix of uses that will create additional (and much needed) housing for Matthews, as well as neighborhood-serving uses that will enhance the surrounding area. Among the recommendations are:

- Provide a mix of housing types, including single-family detached residential, townhomes and duplexes, and multi-family apartments in proximity to I-485.
- Single-family detached homes should be closest to the existing Windrow and Springwater neighborhoods to create a buffer between these neighborhoods and higher density housing.
- Recognize the importance of the public realm (including green spaces, street trees, public art, and street furniture) in creating a sense of place for the community.
• Focus on multi-modal transportation options. Make the area safe for pedestrians and cyclists as well as cars.

• Provide pedestrian access only to the Springwater and Windrow neighborhoods via Creekside Drive.

• Work with NCDOT to provide a traffic signal at the intersection of Idlewild and Davis Trace Drive.

• Focus on appropriate architecture for the area.

• Provide a central gathering place that will form the heart of the community.

• Encourage branding for the community to set it apart as a unique destination within Matthews.

Since the time of the Public Hearing on the plan, staff has added recommendations on architecture, strengthened the recommendations on affordable housing and tree save, and included residential street cross sections.

**Recommendation:**
Staff recommends that the Planning Board forward a favorable recommendation of the Eastern Gateway Small Area Plan to the Board of Commissioners.