May 21, 2024

Brevard-Davidson River Presbyterian Church
249 East Main St.
Brevard, NC 28712

Dear Brevard-Davidson River Presbyterian Church congregants,

Over two years ago, Mayor Maureen Copelof and Pastor Keith Thompson began a collaboration on how to help with the housing shortage here in Brevard. At that time, both the City and the Church heard stories about employers losing workers because there was nowhere for them to live; multi-generational families living several people to a room because they could not afford a bigger place; and community members leaving town in order to find an affordable and safe place to live. The idea, which the congregation responded positively to in late 2022, was for the Church and the City to collaborate on converting the approximately 4 acres of wooded area on the Church campus into rental housing for low-to-moderate income (LMI) households. LMI households in our area include, for example, teachers, daycare workers, public safety professionals, nurses, service-industry workers, and other important professionals in our city who earn 80% or less than the area median income.

To kick-off the project, the City hired the Development Finance Initiative (DFI), a program of the University of North Carolina's School of Government, to quantify the extent of Brevard's housing need and assess how a collaboration between the City and Church may contribute to a solution.

After analyzing relevant data, DFI confirmed what we'd heard: the housing need is significant. In 2020, the most recent year of reliable data, nearly 800 LMI households in Transylvania County had housing needs. DFI's analysis of housing market changes through the pandemic years indicates that the number of households with need has likely grown. Brevard's housing market has limited supply, and during the pandemic, the highest-priced rental units doubled, and rental vacancy rates hit below 1%. In addition, the average sales price of homes increased by 30%. The economy has changed as well, and half of the county's workforce are employed in industries with an average wage of less than $40,000/year. To afford a home in Brevard, however, a household must make at least $133,000/year. Despite the limited and competitive housing market, the City and the Church believe that we can collaborate to further LMI households access to a quality, affordable place to live here in Brevard.

Alongside the market assessment, the City asked DFI to conduct a preliminary analysis of whether it was feasible to build housing units on the Church's wooded property. DFI found that building rental units is likely feasible, but additional analysis is needed to understand the constraints of the site.

To date, the City has invested financial resources to determine Brevard's housing need and is ready to invest in a more thorough review of the potential of the Church's site to help meet that need. For the City and the Church to pursue this idea and invest additional resources, we need to enter into a lease agreement for the wooded portion of the Church's property. This lease includes an option to purchase with a deed restriction that ensures the Church's intended use for the property can be guaranteed. This agreement is the preferred method because it binds the City and the Church together as we continue to work towards our shared goals. Please review the agreement for details on the terms included.

With your approval of this agreement, the City and DFI will perform a more technical assessment of the property, including detailed site and financial feasibility analyses to provide options for development. As a part of this process, the City and DFI will conduct input sessions with the Church and Brevard residents to inform the future development program for this site. You and your fellow Brevard residents' input will be necessary to ensure that clear and transparent public interests guide the next steps in this collaboration between the City and the Church.

The Church has been represented in these early phases by a group of Church members consisting of Pastor Keith Thompson, Janice Hiner, Danny Hollingsworth, and Larry Sitton. The City and this group have negotiated in good faith, and collectively brought the agreement to the Church Session for review at their meeting on April 26, 2024. The Session voted to bring this agreement to the congregation for approval on June 9, 2024.

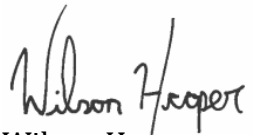
This agreement was also approved by Brevard City Council on May 20, 2024.

This letter is the City of Brevard's request to the congregation to enter into a lease agreement with the City to determine the appropriate type of development and to find a qualified housing partner to convert the wooded portion of the Church's property into new, affordable rental units for LMI households.

Per the traditions of Presbyterian governance, we now request congregational approval of the agreement.

The City's civic responsibilities and the Church's mission are now aligned, and we are fortunate to be in a position where each entity can help the other achieve its goals. I hope that you will approve this agreement and join with us in helping house the people of Brevard.

In Friendship,



Wilson Hooper
City Manager

Cc: Brevard City Council
Maureen Copelof, Mayor
Pastor Keith Thompson
BDRPC Session Members