

Central West Focus Area

Summary of Comments Received following the April 18 Steering Committee Meeting

April 22, 2013

COMMENTS ON PRINIPLES ONLY

SARAH MCINTEE (SC Member)

Please pass on this article link that was published yesterday regarding traffic speed in town.

<http://www.chapelhillnews.com/2013/04/16/75907/power-to-the-pedestrians.html>

Attached are my edits/corrections/alternative wording for the principles. I agree that we definitely need some kind of principle addressing the big question of Estes Drive traffic management. We know that this road should not be widened, but we are not providing any principles, or means, for us to avoid this fate. Frankly speaking, the land use issues are quite secondary to the existing traffic problems. No use of the land on the corner will do the damage that Carolina North traffic will. Can you imagine what it would be like at lunch time, with all the restaurants on the East side of Estes? There is no way that a second campus could be built down the street at one end of Estes without some kind horrible transformation to meet the forth coming complaints and demand.

Also, please consider taking any document to an editor (English major) before putting it before the public. I am sure the document you all provided us could be written more clearly and with more substance. I have to agree with the gentleman who spoke about having principles with some "teeth."

It is probably pointless to go through this whole exercise without having the hard conversations, if we end up with something that we could have taken out of a planning book. It needs to apply to our situation here. Yes, there is probably going to be conflict, and you might feel like you were a tiger tamer, but these hard conversations need to happen. As Jim Ward has pointed out, twice, Estes Drive traffic management is the key to everything. Once more, school traffic and shopping traffic patterns are something the town can have control over. Of Carolina North traffic, we will have no control whatsoever. With school traffic and shopping traffic, we already have, at key times, the Estes Drive parking lot.

Central West Focus Area Draft Planning Principles

English usage notes: The word, "should," does not indicate willful intention, as all principles shall be. If you don't want to use shall, then use will. Be more specific, and use concrete language, when generalized concepts are not necessary. A generalization is a set of ideas or patterns that relate to each other similarly. If there isn't such a group, then identify the object explicitly. Specify who, what, when, and where, if possible; otherwise this set of principles could belong to any community. Define planning concepts inside the principles where they are used.--SKM

1. **Identity/ Creating A Sense of Place:** ~~The Central West Focus Area should serve as a gateway into downtown Chapel Hill through use of design elements that reflect the Town's character and its commitment to being a unique, livable community. Central West should have its own a heart, providing destinations and gathering areas for residents, workers, students, and visitors.~~ **Central West will be an**

attractive, walkable, community destination of Chapel Hill that serves local residents, visiting customers, workers, students, and faculty of the proposed Carolina North Campus. The vital heart of Central West is at /near the intersection of MLK Blvd and Estes Drive.

- 2. Building Complementary Design Structures:** ~~New development should be compatible with the existing and planned elements of the Central West area, and create appropriate transitions between differing land uses. This includes gradual height and density changes between established single-family neighborhoods, any future multi-story development fronting MLK and Estes, and the Carolina North Campus buildings.~~ **Central West's new development will complement existing residential, office, and institutional buildings, provide a balanced streetscape, in height and density, with the proposed Carolina North buildings, and will provide mixed-use commercial development that balances with the existing commercial support on the east end of Estes Drive. There will be coordination between developments to provide similar forms, heights, set-back, street furniture, and architectural elements.**

Connectivity: ~~The design of Central West should foster connections between people and places. This includes:~~

- ~~• Auto, bike, pedestrian, and bus circulation within and between newly developed parcels~~
 - ~~• Multi-modal links to the larger Chapel Hill community (e.g., rapid bus service to downtown; trails to schools, library, etc.)~~
 - ~~• Easy mode transfers (e.g., bicycle to bus)~~
 - ~~• Urban design that connects campus and community~~
- 3. Equal Access to Connecting, Continuous Routes** Central West will provide, separated when possible, equal, safe, comfortable access, and easy inter-mode transfers. Central West will provide sufficiently connected and continuous travel routes for all vehicles and pedestrians. Destinations (buildings and areas) will be spaced closer together. The frequency of intersections for any travel network will be commensurate with the speed of the travel mode. The Central West area will have more permeable access for pedestrians and bicycles than the existing permeability and infrastructure support for motor vehicles. The main objective for connectivity, equal access, and continuity is to reduce the distance anyone must travel to get to common destinations.
 - 4. Welcoming Human-Powered Transportation** ~~Bicycles~~ ~~Pedestrian and bicycle safety and convenience will be of paramount importance in Central West. Key factors include complete street design and/or dedicated multi-use paths; facilitated crossings of MLK, Estes, and other potential barriers; and connectivity into a larger Chapel Hill pedestrian and bicycle network.~~ **The safety and aesthetic comfort of the pedestrian (on foot, or wheels) will be amply accommodated in new development, and sufficiently accommodated amidst older development, to encourage walking and discourage driving. Safety must not only be assured, but the walking environment must feel comfortable, with minimal nuisance assaults from noise, heat, odors, brightness, and ugliness. There will be a variety of places to walk to within a half mile of the most residents in the entire area. Where travel vehicles/pedestrians share a space, the speed limit for all users is set to within 10 mph of the slowest traveler.**
 - 5. Improving Transit Accessibility and Frequency** We will improve upon existing successful bus routes on MLK Blvd, ultimately developing into BRT. ~~Central West has an opportunity to benefit from the improved~~

transit service associated with the Carolina North campus, including additional bus routes and increased frequencies. The CWFA should have an urban design pattern and pedestrian/bicycle facilities to take advantage of its proximity to quality transit service. The density of use for space adjoining the MLK corridor, or any new bus transit corridors, will be high enough to support bus service that runs throughout the day and night, seven days a week, running *at least* every 15 minutes. Density of use and frequency of service must grow together. The two main objectives here are to reduce private car traffic and to reduce the need for parking lots at intermediate commercial and commute-to-work destinations.

6. **Building for Mixed Commercial-Residential Uses:** Central West will have a mixture of uses, commercial and residential, day and night, for better energy efficiency, security, and for a reduction in private auto dependency. All buildings will contain a variety of residential units and some will have commercial on the street level on the featured state roads. ~~should be provided in Central West, including office, retail and residential, to encourage live work shop conditions, and decreasing dependence on automobile travel.~~
7. **Public Spaces/Gathering Places:** ~~Public and gathering spaces of varying sizes, designs and purposes should be available in Central West. These should be integrated into developer led projects as well as within public rights-of-way, civic areas, school campuses, and commercial areas.~~ The street will be a destination. All buildings will face and relate to the street behind wide, shaded sidewalks, with street furniture and pedestrian height lighting, so the street becomes a destination as well as a meeting place. Whenever possible, there will be green natural and garden spaces for people to gather within a development, or coordinating with other developments. Residences and buildings will have front porches, front decks, street trees, and front awnings to provide shelter for mingling conversations and window shopping. There will be places for children to play every half mile or less. Parking will be hidden behind and under buildings or in parking structures so the automobile doesn't interfere with bus stops or normal pedestrian activities of the street.
8. **Design Permanent Buildings for Flexible Use by Different Users** Central West street buildings will have basic urban design of permanent, re-purpose-able, masonry construction, which will serve a wide range of uses by a mixture of ages, income groups, ability groups, family sizes, and other special populations. All buildings, multipurpose paths, and sidewalks throughout the area, will be ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliant access. Residence unit sizes and types will be in wide variety. ~~Central West transportation and land uses should encourage and support economic, lifestyle, age, and social diversity of its residents.~~
9. **Protecting Resources, Designing for Energy Efficiency, and Making a Healthier Environment:** Central West development should promote environmental protection through the use of low-impact storm water management, green building practices, ~~controlling microclimate, baffling noise, light pollution,~~ and using environmentally conscious site design. Central West ~~developers, town, university, and residents will repair erosion, invasive species, and trash damage and protect and restore natural resources, such as tree canopy, creeks, creek banks, restoring wetlands, replanting native vegetation, and protecting, steep clay slopes from erosion. Central West's residents will do what it can to reduce~~

use of carbon fuels and mitigate the effects of climate change by reducing VMT (vehicle miles traveled), encouraging carpooling, and transit use.

(joined with above) Green Environment: ~~These natural features should be promoted as centerpieces of the area, contributing to Central West's character and identity.~~

- 10. (new "creative traffic solution" principle?) Minimize Volume, Speed, Tightly Manage Estes Drive Cross Town Traffic** Minimize Estes Drive cross town traffic by balancing west with east commercial development to meet west resident shopping needs. Encourage walk-to-school and carpool programs, and make safe access possible. Consider closing and moving one of the two schools? Develop alternative east-west routes and means? Develop other means to exit neighborhoods? Consider a new cross-town bus route that serves the shopping centers? Consider a frequent speed-tabled road extension of Elliott Road to behind the schools and to MLK? Set new traffic lights at Granville, Halifax, Caswell-Phillips, and Somerset to tightly manage finite volume pulses of traffic at a constant slow speed. Reduce opportunities for anyone to park anywhere in town?

This concept stated in the sentence below was in the transportation group's principles was wasn't reflected in the staff version. I added it to the transportation section of my rewrite. I would like my version to be considered in further discussion about the principles. I would like our principles to look less generic, address specific concepts relating to the actual place, and I would like the language to be clearer and more emphatic.

There will be new transit routes that better serve Chapel Hill shopping, high density housing, and office centers.

JULIE MCCLINTOCK (SC Member)

Comments on Guiding Principles:

I am very glad we took the time last meeting to discuss our ideas about the newest draft of guiding principles prepared by the Consultant. There was not enough time to complete my list of suggestions.

Here are my recommendations. Italics indicate my take on committee discussion.

First, I've identified gaps in the following areas:

- A new traffic principle: Choose land uses that will serve local and Carolina North needs and will therefore generate less new traffic to the area.
Agreement to do some sort of principle on traffic. Agreement no development should exceed carrying capacity of Estes
- A new economic principle: New development needs to be based on known demand, that is the readily available office and retail studies - that which we know is needed. It needs to be economically viable for either the developer or the businesses leasing space and at least cost neutral to the Town in terms of paying for necessary ongoing support services.
Seemed to be agreement on last sentence.
- A new neighborhood principle: New development should not negatively impact the safety, health and property values of nearby neighbors and schools. (very strongly expressed at community meeting)
This is a new principle and has not been presented or discussed.

Specific comments and recommendations that are attached to a numbered principle follow:

1. "Identity" needs to be associated with Carolina North, not Chapel Hill downtown. Incorporate community character ideas that buildings be no higher than tree canopy. Concept of serving Carolina North and **local** needs needs to be added back. Concept of differentiating between commercial development along MLK and a gradual blend on Estes Drive needs to be stated, as discussed last week.

Agreement on identity definition.. Differing views on local.

2. Complementary Design needs to include the need for the construction of buildings that provide an appearance that is unique to the Chapel Hill/Carolina North location, not just what appears in "Any Town, AnyWhere, USA". Lost from last week's discussion is the idea of retaining residential character (residential height and density) and gradual change in height and use as one gets closer to the Estes/MLK corner. Add: Differentiate between the desired character of Estes and MLK. (see survey results last week)

Amy added the idea of the "heart" or focus was missing- which speaks to first sentence. Natural landscape and trees were also omitted.

3. Connectivity needs to state that automobile access needs to be de-emphasized, not enhanced by additional connectivity. Replace multi - modal term as is jargon to most people. Add: New development must be served by safe connecting streets.

Agreement on pedestrian and biking permeability only, not autos. Add aesthetic experience (Sarah).

4. Pedestrian/Bicycle Safety needs to specifically require separate off-road down-lighted bicycle paths, not stripes painted on street pavement. Add: Provide safe pedestrian crossings at principle intersections at MLK, Estes and MLK and Piney Mountain, Estes and Franklin and Seawell and Estes. Add: plans need to coordinate with Carolina North plans, campus to campus connector and future bike plans.

Agreement on first sentence. Safe intersections over more lanes of traffic may not have been endorsed. Need to add in pedestrian crossings.

5. Transit Accessibility needs to state that bus access will be via site-located sheltered bus stops, and bus pullouts at be provided. Density cannot be supported without increased bus transportation.

6. Mixed Uses needs to state that the uses allowed support "local destination" businesses, not "regional destination" businesses, for example:

No one objected and this should go forward.

Local Destination

Regional Destination

Weaver Street Grocery Market Branch Whole Foods Super Market

Ace Hardware Home Depot

T-shirt & Frisbee shop REI Outdoor Sporting Goods

Deli Sandwich Shop Cracker Barrel Restaurant

Doctors/Dentists Offices Corporate Headquarters

7. Public Spaces/Gathering Places needs to specifically include seating in both indoor and outdoor public spaces that connect with the natural environment.

8. Diversity needs to call for housing diversity as well as economic diversity - that is specifically housing for "age" and "occupation" diverse residents, not just for workers employed there. *Not sure what was said on this. Whit asked that workforce housing be added which was supported.*

9. Sustainable Practices needs to add the concept of low impact design: clustering buildings on the most developable portions of the site by avoiding steep slopes, creeks and significant tree stands.

10. Green Environment needs to require green designed buildings. Add requirement for permeable vehicle parking space surfaces, not solid pavement.

There was support for my suggestions on 9 and 10.

MICHAEL PARKER (SC Member)

The principles draft I think would be strengthened by having simpler, shorter statements of principles, even if that means having a few more of them.

FIROZ MISTRY (SC Member)

Like others I feel we should finalize the principles before we get into too much detail about strategic plans.

JANET SMITH (Non-SC Member)

I have reviewed the maps for Central West Focus Area and I have seen Julie McClintock's comments, which I agree with completely and support.

I would like to add that I do not see any mention of providing improved pedestrian and bicycle paths/sidewalks along Estes Drive between MLK and Franklin Street.

This need was identified by every single group at the Saturday Mall exercise.

While adding bike paths through the woods is certainly desirable, that does not take the place of improving walking and biking for those who wish to take the shortest route to their destination and do not want or need to take a scenic ride through the woods.

The residential character of this route lends itself to biking and walking alternatives to cars. I believe that car traffic on Estes today would be reduced if there were safer more pleasant walking and biking alternatives to the existing destinations - library, schools, Post Office, University Mall and Community Center. This will only increase with additional destinations at the MLK end of Estes.

FRED LAMPE (Non-SC Member)

The CWSC members and the public have been directed to send comments re the CWSC "Guiding Principles" to you by noon Monday April 22, so here is my input.

I notice that none of the Guiding Principles include the need for any of the prospective new Central West development to:

- be "needed" based on known demand as identified in Town sponsored studies of Retail Market, Office Market and Hotel Room demand.
- be economically viable for either the developer or the businesses leasing space
- be at least cost neutral to the Town in terms of paying for necessary ongoing support services
- not impact the property the value of nearby neighborhoods negatively.

Of additional concern, the "Guiding Principles" fail completely to consider the existence of the other five Focus Areas that came out of the 2020 Comp Plan and also ignore the existence of Chapel Hill downtown and other major existing successful Chapel Hill businesses. Do we want to allow a "restaurant row" at the MLK/ Estes intersection trying to compete with the downtown restaurants along West Franklin, etc? Do we want to allow a multi-brand auto dealer along Estes near MLK to compete with Performance on Fordham Blvd? Do we want a Carolina North Mall along Estes near MLK to compete with University Mall?

A few additional thoughts regarding the 10 specific principles edited by the consultant:

1. *Identity* needs to be associated with Carolina North, not Chapel Hill downtown.
2. *Complementary Design* should include the need for the construction of architecturally significant structures that provide an appearance/personality that is unique to the Central West/Carolina North location, not just what appears in "Any Town, AnyWhere, USA".
3. *Connectivity* needs to state that automobile access needs to be de-emphasized, not enhanced by additional road connectivity. Neighborhood roads have no sidewalks and thus must maintain low traffic volume to insure pedestrian and bicycle safety.
4. *Pedestrian/Bicycle Safety* needs to specifically require separate bicycle paths, not stripes painted on street pavement and that ALL new bicycle paths and pedestrian sidewalks need to be lighted (with downward directed light).
5. *Transit Accessibility* needs to state that bus access will be via site located sheltered bus stops that do not impede the normal flow of vehicle traffic.
6. *Mixed Uses* needs to state that the uses allowed support "local destination" businesses, not "regional destination" businesses, for example:

Local Destination

Weaver Street Grocery Market Branch
Ace Hardware
T-shirt & Frisbee shop
Deli Sandwich Shop
Doctors/Dentists Offices

Regional Destination

Whole Foods Super Market
Home Depot
REI Outdoor Sporting Goods
Cracker Barrel Restaurant
Corporate Headquarters

This is a very important distinction because other Focus Areas are far better situated to support "Regional Destination" developments due to locations immediately adjacent to I40 access points, etc.

7. *Public Spaces/Gathering Places* needs to specifically include the need for both indoor and outdoor public space with seating.
8. *Diversity* needs to specifically call for housing for "age" and "occupation" diverse residents, not just for the workers employed there.
9. *Sustainable Practices* needs to add the requirement for permeable vehicle parking space surfaces, not solid pavement.

10. *Green Environment* should state the need to locate, inventory and protect all existing significant trees before any design and clearing for construction proceeds.

DEBBIE JEPSON (Non-SC Member)

Thank you for considering my comments on the principles and concepts for Central West.

1. The focus seems to have honed in on the corner of Estes and MLK away from considering the whole of the Central West area, is this intentional?
2. There is no indication of how the divergent views of the steering committee will be addressed to finalize the principles.
3. It appears that there is a rush to comply with the TofCH timeline, and as a consequence, discussion around the principles is being prematurely curtailed so that consultant's concepts can be considered. This seems inconsistent with the due process? I understood that you first needed to agree principles, then derive objectives from which concepts can be developed. (Who is Steering Who?).

I would like to support in their entirety, the amendments to principles that were drawn up and circulated by Julie McClintock. In particular, to include a traffic principle as I am concerned by some of the views of Steering Group members who feel that traffic will increase over the next 10-15 years, so that we don't need to worry about the impact of any developments esp on the junction of MLK and Estes, or through flow of traffic on Estes. I would like the principle included that any development on this area does not negatively impact the existing surrounding areas, esp by becoming magnet for auto traffic from outside the area increasing congestion. My preference is to promote within the principles a non-auto focus with safe and attractive pedestrian and bike permeable areas as suggested by Sarah ? on the Steering Group. In particular, I am concerned that the development principle, build it and they will come – is not a healthy one. Also wish to include in principles that buildings should be no higher than the final tree heights that are around.

SCOTT RADWAY (Non-SC Member)

(see attached document)

Central West Focus Area Draft Planning Principles

For Discussion on April 18, 2013

Please help clarify the area being referred to with the name Central West in description and discussion. Is there a Central West Planning Area? Is the Central West Focus Area the few properties around the intersection of MLK and Estes?

- 1. Identity/Sense of Place:** The Central West Focus Area (*if that means the area at the intersection of MLK and Estes Drive*) along with the buildings and activities located on Carolina North WILL create the urban design and activity statements that announce the transition from suburban Chapel Hill of the 20th century the urban Chapel Hill of the 21st century. ~~should serve as a gateway into downtown Chapel Hill through use of design~~ *Design elements and features* that should reflect the Town's *educational role in North Carolina as a leader in research, science and the arts and the resident's* character and its commitment to being a unique, livable community. ~~As well,~~ *The Central West Focus Area* should *balance its importance to the town as a whole with its important role as a private/public activity area providing economically viable* ~~have its own heart, providing~~ destinations and gathering areas for residents, workers, students, and visitors *that live and work in the Central West Planning Area.*
- 2. Complementary Design:** New development should be compatible with the existing and planned elements of the Central West area, and create appropriate transitions between differing land uses. This includes gradual height and density changes between established single-family neighborhoods, any future multi-story development fronting MLK and Estes, and the Carolina North Campus buildings.
- 3. Connectivity:** The design of Central West should foster connections between people and places. This includes:
 - Auto, bike, pedestrian, and bus circulation within and between newly developed parcels
 - Multi-modal links to the larger Chapel Hill community (e.g., rapid bus service to downtown; trails to schools, library, etc.)
 - Easy mode transfers (e.g., bicycle to bus)
 - Urban design that connects campus and community
- 4. Pedestrian/Bicycle Safety:** Pedestrian and bicycle safety and convenience should be of paramount importance in Central West. Key factors include complete street design and/or dedicated multi-use paths; facilitated crossings of MLK, Estes, and other potential barriers; and connectivity into a larger Chapel Hill pedestrian and bicycle network.
- 5. Transit Accessibility:** Central West has an opportunity to benefit from the improved transit service associated with the Carolina North campus, including additional bus routes and increased frequencies. The CWFA should have an urban design pattern and pedestrian/bicycle facilities to take advantage of its proximity to quality transit service.

6. ~~Mixed Uses~~ **A Complimentary Mixture of Activity:** A balanced mix of *private and public* uses should be provided *located* in Central West *Focus Area*; including *residential, retail, hotel, restaurant, and other service businesses that will provide Central West Planning Area residents with conveniently located goods, services, and gathering places while providing development of sufficient size to ensure long term economic sustainability.* ~~office, retail and residential, to encourage live-work-shop conditions, and decreasing dependence on automobile travel.~~
7. **Public Spaces/Gathering Places:** Public and gathering spaces of varying sizes, designs, and purposes should be available in Central West *Planning Area*. These should be integrated into developer led projects as well as within public rights-of-way, civic areas, school campuses, and commercial areas.
8. **Diversity:** Central West transportation and land uses should encourage and support economic, lifestyle, age, and social diversity of its residents.
9. **Sustainable Practices:** Central West development should promote environmental protection through the use of low-impact stormwater management, *This is a local code word for low intensity activity. It is appropriate in many locations, but should not be the major planning/design principle for the "Focus Area"* green building practices, and environmentally conscious site design.
10. **Green Environment:** Development in Central West should enhance existing natural resources, such as significant tree stands, tree canopy, creeks and steep slopes. These natural features should be promoted as centerpieces of the area, contributing to Central West's character and identity.

To: CW Steering Committee
From: Scott Radway
Former Planning Board and Community Design Commission Member
24-Year Chapel Hill Resident
Date: April 18, 2013
Subject: CW Focus Area – Planning Principles
Questions and Thoughts

Estes Drive

Of the many comments and discussion items raised at the Steering Committee meeting of April 9, comments about the real role of Estes Drive were very important from the perspective of dealing with the reality of what Chapel Hill is now - a small city constrained by past decisions in a gradually evolving political and economic environment.

Estes Drive between MLK and East Franklin (and more completely between the US 15-501 by-pass and North Greensboro Street in Carrboro) is an arterial road with regard to east-west traffic flow. It currently provides the community with access to the current major "public" facilities that serve the entire community (Library, Elementary School, Middle School, YMCA) as well as residential neighborhoods. No matter what happens elsewhere in the CW study area, Estes will see a higher level of vehicular activity due to its role in connecting to Carrboro and Carolina North.

As a resident of the CW Focus Area at two separate properties and the parent of a child that attended Estes Hills Elementary School, to me the primary issues for CW and Estes Drive are:

- [1] pedestrian safety for all ages,
- [2] preservation of the quality of life of neighborhoods along Estes Drive and Elliott Road
- [3] maintenance of the economic value of these neighborhoods, and
- [4] providing the needed circulation improvements within the next 5-10 years during a period of municipal and state financial resource and program reductions.

Local v Community

The second most important point I heard discussed seems to be "local need/want" vs. "community as a whole" examination. For some reason these are being incorrectly cast in my view and oppositional ideas or outcomes. This issue plays out in language - much like the liberal or conservative word codes are treated. It also plays out in the uses and intensities that might be considered local or community. Because all uses are tied to economic activity and affect, and because of the small population base of Chapel Hill, local commercial uses in Chapel Hill depend upon the community for their survival. Their survival in any particular location by extension affects how we travel thru and spend or do not spend our money within our community. I know of few "local" only businesses – if by local we speak about a population within one-half mile of a business location with good pedestrian access and with products or services that we (young, old, fully mobile, etc.) can

carry – and will carry – by hand, especially in the heat of a southern summer. In spite of all the ideology about pedestrian wants, we do not have a sufficient density of population outside of downtown to support a walking commercial culture at the present time.

Uses with Positive Community Affects

I would suggest that the discussion of uses and intensities for those locations that can/should be developed or redeveloped can be examined by several sets of metrics that most of us do in some shorthand in our heads when we consider the affects of proposed change.

We know that single-family homes generate more children than multi-family development per unit. The different effects on the community can be measured. Likewise the revenue vs. service costs of office compared with retail.

Measuring financial and service affects of differing uses is important, but only one of the many elements to be carefully examined.

Fiscal and Services Impacts

Because I started doing fiscal impact modeling in the mid 70's I have seen many methods used, revised, discarded, etc. I've prepared (along with faculty at CUPR) methodologies for use in a number of communities like Chapel Hill (less than 100,000 residents and university driven) as well as more rural communities that have substantial agribusiness property that is taxed at low farming or agricultural exemption status. I've also worked in the rebuilding efforts in communities with aging downtowns and a desire to "reestablish" their community centers. In 2404 I created a complex development impact model (service changes and fiscal impact) for the Waterstone development in Hillsborough that now contains the Orange County Campus of Durham Community College and a UNC Medical Campus (now under construction). It sought to model the impacts of a large sequenced project on the small town government capacity to provide services, but also included impact estimates for the school system, the capital budget, the utility capacity and costs, etc. Chapel Hill & UNC-Chapel Hill went thru a similar process with Carolina North.

This all leads me to the comments below about the use of "The Cost of Community Services in Chapel Hill" report by Mitch Renkow and elements of analysis-consideration that are not part of the study he prepared, but are important to making decisions about future activity.

What the Fiscal Study Did – Did Not Examine

- What the report does address is the General Fund Budget for Chapel Hill for FY 10.
- The Council is now considering the budgets for FY 14, a budget that is now 4 years beyond the study year - more current information would be relevant
- The study did not consider the capital budget needs of the community, nor did it consider the amount of public financial resources available to the town over the next 10-15 years to construct new facilities, nor the priority of such facilities
- The study did not consider the wisdom of continuing to rely upon the private sector to pay for needed community improvements (intersection and roadway improvements, sidewalks, etc.) as development activity reductions take place
- The study did not examine the transit system nor did it examine the affects of

residential and non-residential uses on the costs of education. When about 50% of our local (municipal and county) property tax goes to the school systems, we should be able to examine the wisdom of land use patterns and preferences that place such a high burden on existing and future residents.

In quick summary – If we are going to make any decisions based upon economic and fiscal impacts we should examine the costs and benefits more completely than a limited examination of the general fund put together four years ago.

Additional Fiscal Study Comments

Between 1010 and now – Are there overall structural changes to the relationships between residential and non-residential revenues and service costs? In my opinion no, but there are some internal modifications as the result of significant budget cutbacks as a result of less revenue as well as the distinction the report does address for multi-family residential development that is categorized as "Commercial" in the County tax records. I believe we can isolate several components of the Commercial category for the purposes of planning evaluation and fiscal impact analysis.

In addition to separating multi-family uses in order to study transit, school, and purchasing power components of such developments, I would also separate several other uses for a more focused examination. These include [1] hotels/motels, [2] automobile sales, and [3] mixed-use development – such as East 54. We know that many businesses in Chapel Hill (A Southern Season) generate income from outside the region that multiplies in local impact.

- We know that many types of performing arts provide the same financial infusion. If we have choices, why focus on only those “local uses” that re-circulate local dollars. Why not first consider what uses can generate a revenue from outside the town/county and at the same time retain local revenue for re-circulation.
- For CW Planning purposes that deal with the type and quantity of development - especially that located at the MLK-Estes Drive intersection area that is the location of the major development opportunities - I think the planning process should and can go beyond the limited analysis done for the Renkow study and report. The Council in considering the annual budget looks at much more than the general fund and possible affects of new circumstances. Why should the CW Steering Committee look at a “dumbed” down set of information?

Does any land use pay its own way through property taxes for the municipal services provided through the General Fund. NO!

Using Appendix Table 3 (multi-family included as residential use, not commercial) and rounding numbers to the nearest thousand, I see the following.

- Residential Property Tax pays for 72% of the cost of residential services (\$25,485,000 / \$35,372,000). The balance of service costs - \$9,887,000 is funded by other types of revenue.
- Commercial Property Tax pays for 85% of the cost of commercial services (\$9,575,000 / \$11,262,000). The balance of service costs \$1,687,000 is funded by other types of

revenue.

What types of additional costs and impacts should be considered for planning purposes?

I think that at least 4 other categories of revenue/cost and system capacity not in the Renkow study should be a part of the discussion.

- Impacts of development on the school system. This category would include property tax revenue to schools (via county and special district taxes) & school impact fees for residential uses, and of course student generation considerations.
- Chapel Hill Transit revenues (property tax) and costs.
- Stormwater Utility, revenues and costs.
- Capital Budget facilities costs and revenues for non-street facilities
- Capital Budget facilities costs and revenues for street related facilities, including sidewalks, repaving, etc.

Scale of New Development - Comments

New development needs to respect the scale of existing development. To me this statement means examining some of the following:

- A mid-rise building street presence of up to 5 stories along major transportation corridors (MLK) and 4 stories along secondary transportation corridors (Estes Drive near MLK).
- Buildings with first level parking only when they are wrapped with street level uses to visually shield parking.
- Buildings adjoining residential neighborhoods where existing zoning permits 3 story homes should be permitted to be 4 stories in height when horizontal separation and mid level tree canopy vegetation is used to reduce the visual connection between the upper floors of both existing and new uses.
- Development that is compact and vertical at key locations will be the visual markers for the quality of Chapel Hill in the future. These development locations and the specific uses at them should be provided the best opportunity to succeed for years to come. Providing them with the most constraints possible is [as we have seen repeatedly in Chapel Hill] the way to make sure that activities we allow to “join” the community must frequently choose between moving from Chapel Hill to continue to thrive or remain in Chapel Hill functioning at less than their full potential and with fewer benefits to the town residents than otherwise possible.

Planning Principles Developed During Small Group Discussions

Central West Focus Area

From April 4, 2013 Steering Committee Meeting

Note: All Small Group Discussion notes are available on the Central West webpage under "Steering Committee Meeting Materials" under the April 4, 2013 meeting date.

Future Land Use Small Group Principles

1. Future development and redevelopment in the Central West Planning Area should respond to Chapel Hill community needs (affordable housing, student housing, & retail goods and services), should be compatible with existing neighborhoods and public facilities (schools, libraries, & parks), and be compatible with and support the emerging uses and needs of Carolina North activities and its future day and night time populations.
2. New development and uses on property adjoining Carolina North and those on MLK and Estes Drive Extension proximate to Carolina North should be physically & functionally compatible with Carolina North buildings and uses as well as respect existing uses adjoining the new development.
3. Future development and re-development should reflect the different existing uses and neighborhood conditions that exist along the following primary roadways:
 - a. Estes Drive – East of Caswell
 - b. Estes Drive – Between Caswell and MLK
 - c. Estes Drive Extension – West of MLK and opposite Carolina North
 - d. MLK Jr. Blvd – North of Estes Drive
 - e. MLK Jr. Blvd – South of Estes Drive
 - f. Homestead Road – West of MLK
4. Within the Central West Planning Area there should be a visual and functional transitions between the scale and intensity of new residential and non-residential development and adjacent existing residential neighborhoods (single-family thru multi-family).
 - O: Residential development that appeals to older adults, young professionals, university students and employees, but does not disrupt existing neighborhoods by the creation of inter-neighborhood traffic (vehicular or pedestrian).
 - O: Offices, retail stores, and residential uses in the form of mixed-use development along MLK Jr. Blvd and at significant intersection locations in a manner that place making can be achieved and that retail or service uses in new development serve Central West Area residents as well as the larger Chapel Hill community. -
5. The Central West area should be a functional and visual gateway to Carolina North as well as downtown Chapel Hill and the University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill main campus.

6. The height of buildings and intensity of development density along MLK should be increased on the limited number of properties that can be developed and that there are transitions in scale to adjoining residential neighborhoods.
 - O: The heights are complementary with the future tree canopy (existing or newly planted trees that meet the town's newly adopted canopy tree requirements..
 - O: Keep the highest intensity of uses on property near MLK Jr. Blvd. with direct access to MLK Jr. Blvd. and not adjoining low-density residential neighborhoods.
7. Create an effective transportation and land development strategy that will be compatible with and better serve existing and future residents and business users along MLK Jr. Blvd., Estes Drive, and Homestead Road.
8. Land uses should respect the existing natural features of the Central West Planning Area (vegetation, streams, etc.) and achieve the environmental goals of the Chapel Hill 2020 Plan.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety and Connectivity Small Group Principles

1. Provide a safe, multi-use path along the north side of Estes from Caswell westward to connect with Carrboro, Carolina North, and the Campus-to-Campus connector.
 - O: ADA Accessibility on all paths
 - O: Safe and connected access to all transit stops
2. Develop a bike/pedestrian oriented way-finding signage system.
3. Consider MLK/Estes intersection a gateway access point that accommodates safe bike/ped accessibility.
 - O: Construct a pedestrian-friendly grand circle at MLK/Estes
 - O: Incorporate a signature fountain as a focal point of the area – the “New Well”
 - O: ADA Accessibility on all paths
 - O: Safe and connected access to all transit stops
4. Assure that MLK incorporates complete streets principles that provide bike/ped facilities.
 - O: ADA Accessibility on all paths
 - O: Safe and connected access to all transit stops
5. Encourage expanding connectivity and permeability of bike/ped access within neighborhoods.
 - O: Develop a designated, signed bike/ped route from Caswell to the library.
 - O: ADA Accessibility on all paths
 - O: Safe and connected access to all transit stops

Traffic and Transit Small Group Principles

Overall Goal: Central West should serve as a model for a transit-oriented, people friendly community that, over time, reduces VMT and promotes safety and alternate means of transportation.

Planning Principles and Associated Objectives

1. Improved connectivity should be created (N-S, E-W) both within and through the planning and impact areas, inclusive of Carolina North.
 - O: Develop alternate routes through neighborhoods to reduce load on MLK and Estes
 - O: Develop Elliot Road as a complete street
 - O: Connect the “fire cut” to Wellington to divert traffic away from the front to f the two schools
 - O: Provide more complete (360°) access to Carolina North, e.g., from the North)
 - O: Ensure connections to the campus to campus bike route
 - O: Ensure connectivity between all modes of transportation (e.g., bike to bus)
2. Traffic flow through the area should be smoothed and improved, with each street reflecting its environment and use in terms of appearance/aesthetics, width, speed, etc.
 - O: Ensure safe orderly flow around stopped buses, utility trucks, delivery vehicles, etc.
 - O: Use street trees and other similar landscaping means to address sound, microclimate, and appearance
 - O: Ensure that there is sufficient and appropriate lighting for all modes of transportation
3. In order to promote safety, accessibility, and use of alternate means of transportation, there should be separation, buffering, and protection for all modes of transportation on existing and newly-created streets (i.e., complete streets)
 - O: Encourage/develop a “walk-to-school” program
 - O: Use signage and other visual cues to indicate appropriate speed, behavior on various streets
 - O: There should be continuous (inclusive of street crossings) sidewalks/bike paths on both sides of MLK, Estes, and other major streets
4. The entire area should be genuinely transit-oriented, including bus (or other means of public transit) access to newly developed areas and improved access to existing ones. MLK should evolve as a major transit corridor (e.g., BRT); additional routes and service should be implemented to increase utilization and improve access to key social and commercial areas of the Town.
 - O: East-West bus service should be provided on Estes Drive
 - O: Connectivity between modes of transportation should be facilitated (e.g., bike racks at BRT stops).
 - O: Ensure adequate transit service/options for youth
 - O: Create useful destinations (e.g., retail community activities) that are accessible to and integrated with the transit system
 - O: Provide expanded hours of service to allow for round trip utilization of transit in the evenings, etc.

5. Minimize the visual impact of parked cars to those on public streets and on adjoining properties through the use of, for example; underground, under-building, and “hidden” parking, including parking structures wrapped with residential or other uses that shield the parking structures from public view.
6. Promote use of transit and ride-sharing for future residents and employees of new development within the Central West Planning Area and reduced use of vehicles for trips.
 - a. Strategically and with fiscal soundness expand CHT service throughout the Central West area.
 - b. Promote uses and mixtures of uses (retail and service) that can serve [by pedestrian and vehicular access] existing and future residents and employees in the Central West area.
 - c. Encourage zip-car and other shared use/ownership solutions
 - d. Carefully examine the needs for parking of each newly proposed development and when it can be shown- by Chapel Hill based examples - that a reduction in parking (below the minimum now required) will not harm the financial viability of the development grant modifications to standards to reduce on site parking.

Community Character Small Group Principles

General

1. The Central West Focus Area is made up of residential neighborhoods, community institutions and commercial activities that comprise several different types of built/natural environments (for historic and natural features reasons). Likewise the arterial streets within the CW Focus Area serve differing populations with varied neighborhood and regional access needs. Different treatments to achieve CW Goals will be required based upon specific location and use conditions.

Experiential Character

2. The Central West Focus Area – particularly the undeveloped property at the intersection of MLK Jr. Blvd. and Estes Drive – provides the town with a special an opportunity to create an energized private/public place that will compliment Carolina North, and establish destination activities and public gathering areas for residents, Carolina North occupants, visitors to Carolina North, Chapel Hill, and UNC-Chapel Hill, and others passing through the area.
 - O: This Central West activity area should honor the many special physical characteristics of Chapel Hill (University architecture, Franklin St., trees, etc.) and the social characteristics (music, students, farmer’s market, local business, public art, college sports)
 - O: Streets and sidewalks are our public rooms and should be designed (massing, scale, permeability) with an eye to their character.
 - O: The private/public activity center should include public space (either indoor or outdoor) as well as private activity space.
 - O: This “heart” should be of a size and intensity that can draw upon the community as a whole in order to ensure that businesses and services that are primarily neighborhood oriented can be successful and continue to service local residents and workers.

- O: Parking in excess of that needed by the proposed uses in any new development should be approved if/when possible changes in use over time for higher parking demand uses are reasonable to expect. (Something we see often)

Connections

3. Recognize that MLK and Estes act as barriers to connectivity in the area.
4. Development opposite Carolina North needs to complement the new campus.
5. Maximize physical connections (roads, sidewalks, bikeways) and modify major roads so they facilitate cross-connections

Physical Character

6. The tree canopy is an important part of Chapel Hill and this area and a treed community character is a design and functional goal.
 - O: Plant canopy and ornamental trees as visual character markers and visual buffers along the streets on private property as required now. Do not establish a zero street setback for any new zoning district that may apply to this area, maintain a minimum 20' width street buffer.
 - O: Keep street medians green and planted – especially those in NCDOT rights-of-way.
 - O: Plan for maintaining/replacing the tree canopy in public street rights-of-way, by installing new canopy trees and replacing older trees as they die out.
7. Buildings located along MLK that face and have direct access from MLK should be moderate (up to 5 stories) and have a streetscape and private property vegetation buffer that are designed for and appropriately scaled for pedestrians.
8. Buildings located along Estes Drive that face and have direct access from Estes Drive should be no more than 4 floors in height and be reduced in height near existing single-family neighborhoods and taller at the interior of a site.
 - O: The tallest buildings should be located and designed so that they do preserve as much of the tall tree canopy as possible, plant new trees that will reach a similar height as the buildings when mature and by doing so continue the Chapel Hill aesthetic that values a treed visual landscape.
 - O: Use trees and open spaces to transition from higher intensity uses to single-family neighborhoods.
9. Building fronts along pedestrian ways should be articulated and be inviting to passersby.

Jane Jacobs, Robert Moses, and NIMBYs

By Mary Newsom
Associate Editor, Charlotte Observer
Friday, May. 21, 2010

Do I hear the sound of orthodoxy shattering?

For today's planners the "public process" is a key principle. Listen to the community. The people are the experts. Bottom-up planning. It's a legacy of revered urban thinker, writer and activist Jane Jacobs, who rallied her Greenwich Village neighbors to defeat urban "renewal" and a planned lower Manhattan expressway, among other things.

Let me say up front that I think Jane Jacobs was a brilliant observer of city neighborhoods, and I think expressways and other large concrete projects usually do more harm than good inside cities. But as I have watched planning play out in this not-very-Manhattan-esque Sun Belt city, I've had to squelch the part of my brain that kept noticing that too often, "what the community wanted" was simply not to change.

That's easy to understand. But it isn't a good way to build a healthy city - healthy as in, strong downtown, good transit, neighborhoods where you can stay healthy by walking more and driving less.

I've been to too many meetings where "the community" envisions only single-family houses with big lawns, no apartments or "commercial" zoning, no sidewalks, no traffic - essentially ruling out the city places that community planning champion Jane Jacobs celebrated.

Something is out of whack. And leave it to today's brilliant urban observer, Andres Duany, to pinpoint it.

At a conference last month in Cambridge, Mass., he began ripping "the absolute orgy of public process - it is so out of control." He predicted NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) opposition to windmills and power lines would stymie needed green energy projects. "There's something radically wrong with the public process," he said.

Duany, a co-founder of New Urbanism, has helped change the discourse on city planning, often by zigging when everyone else was zagging. He expounded on his observations in the Atlantic magazine - noting that he makes his living doing bottom-up planning (with public design charrettes):

"If you un-filter what people want –

- * they don't want poor people,
- * they don't want income diversity,
- * they don't want shops anywhere near them,
- * they don't really want rapid transit
- * they don't want streets that connect,
- * they don't want anybody bicycling past their yards,
- * and they don't want density.

So you can't just do unfiltered bottom-up planning."

We saw this play out recently in Charlotte, where residents of suburban Ballantyne swarmed like hornets at a proposal, later scuttled, for subsidized apartments for low-income families. It's in the overall city's best interest- not to mention in city housing policy- to avoid clustering low-income housing in poor neighborhoods. Yet the "public input" didn't reflect those principles.

Mary Hopper, who has headed the Dilworth neighborhood organization and the city-county planning commission, said Duany's observations were "absolutely right." She thinks too many neighborhood activists so rigidly oppose any new development that they give up the chance to negotiate. "People just hate developers," she said. "They just assume they're all the scum of the earth." (Just for the record, she said most developers aren't scum.)

I asked Cheryl Myers of Charlotte Center City Partners, point person for the massively public-processed Center City 2020 Plan, about bottom-up versus top-down planning.

"I began my career as a community participation planner," she says. She believes listening to the community. But, she advises, heed the experts: "You wouldn't want 'the community' doing heart surgery on you."

But doesn't "listening to the experts" align you with Jacobs' nemesis, New York's redevelopment czar Robert Moses? He and other urban renewal "experts" gouged freeways through cities and bulldozed neighborhoods all over, including Charlotte. Yet some urban planners, tired of NIMBY myopia, are starting to say, among themselves, maybe Moses wasn't half bad.

That makes me nervous. Isn't there a better option? Even enlightened planners have done things that later proved horrible mistakes. (Case study: single-use zoning.)

I think we need a public with better information about how cities work. Most Americans graduate from high school having been taught nothing about the places and systems that surround them - how zoning can kill transit, how street widths and block lengths affect pedestrian deaths, how proportions create beauty.

Jane Jacobs' activism was revered not just because it was activism, but because she understood her city and knew what to agitate for. Without that kind of understanding, won't the "public process" continue to be mostly an exercise in frustration?

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