

June 19, 2013

Dear Chair Brownstein and CHCCS School Board Members,

This letter is to alert you to possible rezoning along Estes Drive that would impact Phillips Middle School and Estes Hills Elementary. As parents of school children, we have great interest and concerns about any Town considered changes that could create an unsafe situation for children.

The Central West (CW) Focus Area process is underway sponsored by the Town of Chapel Hill. After Chapel Hill 2020, the Town designated 6 Focus Areas for in-depth study and potential zoning changes. The CW planning process is the first one. The CW Steering Committee appointed by the Council will make land use recommendations. If approved by Council, they will become zoning changes. One of your Board members, Mia Burroughs, was appointed to the Steering Committee as a representative of the two schools last fall. The process is designed as a collaborative one -- the Steering Committee shares drafts to the community, takes public input, and then integrates the feedback into its work.

The "Impact Area" of Central West extends from Homestead Rd on MLK Jr. south to Mt. Bolus and from Seawell School Road to Franklin Street. The Carolina North tract is included. As you may know, campus construction has slowed significantly. Any new plans for the CW Focus Area must factor in its already approved permits for 3 million square feet in total, of which 800,000 square feet is included in Phase One. This is likely to occur in the next decade. Given the limited capacity of Estes Drive, this adds even more planning challenges. The new campus is bound to increase traffic on Estes Drive without even counting proposed new developments along Estes.

The CW Focus Area has acutely focused on the 60+ acres of undeveloped land on the both sides of Estes Drive east of the MLK intersection, just across the street from Carolina North. The Town's consultant has presented a number of Concept Maps which envision possible land uses for the properties. However, the Steering Committee has not held detailed discussion, nor have they endorsed any of the concepts to date. The Steering Committee has agreed on "Principles and Objectives" to guide the land use decisions, and these will be presented to Town Council on Monday, June 24th. Several relate to school safety: "Minimize Vehicular Traffic Impacts" and "Enhance the Pedestrian/Bicycle Experience" with more detailed Objectives to support the Principles.

As parents, we view the schools as critical stakeholders in the Central West Focus Area. We regret that the Town has not created more opportunities for the school community to participate and comment. At the last Steering Committee meeting on June 11th, a Town of Chapel Hill Planning Board member stated in public comment that a school administrator contacted him to get more information and that the schools need to be engaged.

We think that parents, teachers and administrators must be better informed about this process. We propose that the School Board indicate its support for two informational meeting to be held in mid-August or early September. Town staff would present an overview along with a few Steering Committee members. There needs to be plenty of time to educate/inform the public and answer the growing questions.

Since this process began late last summer, there is plenty of information available online. After the May 30th meeting, the Steering Committee Co-Chairs began summarizing meetings for public view, found online at this [Town link](#). Central West Citizens also has extensive notes and

commentary. A good summary of the overall CW Focus Area process can be found at this Citizens' [webpage](#) date May 23rd.

A better informed constituency will lead to better recommendations for improved pedestrian, bike, and bus routes to and from the schools. Additionally, the community needs to carefully consider zoning changes that would hinder the mobility of school buses and staff in private vehicles as well as Town public safety vehicular access on Estes and to the schools. Estes Drive will continue as an important thoroughfare, but it must be made safe for walkers, bikers and drivers alike.

If you wish to see additional information, please see these two main links:

Town: <http://www.townofchapelhill.org/index.aspx?page=2184>

Citizens: <http://centralwestcitizens.wordpress.com/our-voices/>

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Erin S. Langston	N. Elliott	Estes Hills parent & walk zone resident
Michelle Siegling	Partin St	Estes Hills 2013 PTA President & parent
Amy Hird	Silver Cedar Lane	Estes Hills 2013-15 SIT & parent
Adam Schwartz	N. Elliott	Estes Hills 2013-15 SIT & parent
Jennifer Villa	Kensington	Estes Hills PTA & parent
Juan Villa	Kensington	Estes Hills parent
Shauna Farmer	N. Elliott	Phillips Middle parent & walk zone resident
Carolyn Brookhart	Clayton	FPG/Estes Hills parent & walk zone resident
Kate Harshbarger	N. Elliott	Estes Hills parent & walk zone resident
Rodgers Harshbarger	N. Elliott	Estes Hills parent & walk zone resident
Christine Ferrell	Somerset	Estes Hills parent & walk zone resident
Ranya Hahn	Michaux	Estes Hills parent & walk zone resident
Leigh Ann Dasher	Rock Creek	Estes Hills parent
William Langston	N. Elliott	Estes Hills parent & walk zone resident
Jeanne Schwartz	N. Elliott	Estes Hills parent

CC: Donna Wyatt, CHCCS Board Clerk  
Chapel Hill Mayor and Town Council  
Central West Steering Committee Co-Chairs and Members  
Central West Town Staff Members