

Uses and Impacts

The Obey Creek site has been identified as an economic development opportunity for the town and, based on rudimentary data, it is clear that the town will benefit economically from a number of different options; however, at this point, additional expertise and discussion is needed to identify the “best use (or mix of uses)” for this site.

Overall, development at this site should contribute to an integrated southern Chapel Hill; working synergistically with Southern Village’s Market Street, increasing connectivity and community across S15-501 and expanding opportunities within the southern part of town.

Critical to the success of development at this site is careful consideration of economic, environmental, socio-economic and transportation benefits and impacts.

Principles

- Development at this site will benefit from an “anchor” presence that helps animate the site (ie: retail, performing arts venue, conference center....)
- The mix of uses must not generate vehicular traffic that exceeds what the ~~existing~~ road system can support, given normal growth ~~projected by the MPO~~ projections for the next 20 years. (See Traffic section of report.)
- The land on the east side of the creek should be placed in a conservation easement in perpetuity, managed or owned by a third party conservation organization, with stewardship funds provided by the developer. (Revise to include specificity of prohibited development and types of recreation – passive, active, etc. ?)
- The overall mix of uses and density of development should be determined by balancing economic, environmental, socio-economic and transportation benefits and impacts.
- This development should complement Southern Village and help knit southern area neighborhoods into a strong community by augmenting Southern Village Market Street – drawing residents to a common location for shopping, entertainment, community or professional activities.
- The connection between Southern Village and this development should be leveraged to the advantage of both by creating commercial activities on both sides of 15-501 that draw people from one side of the street to the other.

- Within the site, the mix of uses should complement each other and reduce the amount of traffic that those uses would generate at the same time. Shared parking, counter-cyclical traffic generation, maximizing internal trip capture are important considerations.
- Revenue from development at this site must exceed 100% of the cost of town and county services required to service and maintain it (include parameters regarding net gain to Town), including the cost of any incentives extended.
- The impact of public school students generated from residential uses on the site should be planned for and accommodated. (Add language about concurrency.)

Recommendations

- Give strong preference to uses that create a distinctive identity for the site.
- Additional retail expertise should be utilized to create a Retail Strategy for Southern Chapel Hill which address the following: retail opportunities, constraints and mix, synergy with Southern Village (including the Park & Ride lot), identity.

Specific uses

The committee considered the following uses to be acceptable for the site, but did not identify the appropriate mix or size of the uses. Different combinations create different traffic, economic and social impacts, and the mix of uses should strive to minimize traffic impacts while maximizing economic benefits to the town and county. (Move to section above.)

Commercial

Retail uses. ~~Potential~~ Permissible retail uses include:

- Neighborhood retail. Grocery/pharmacy anchor.
- Anchor retail_ that supports smaller retailers.
- ~~Big box~~ Large format, "urban" style retail.

Hotels.

- Considered attractive because of low impact on traffic, high impact on revenues, positive impact on community thanks to public gathering places like restaurants, event spaces, and bars.
- Good fit with conference centers and some commercial office uses.
- Proximity to hospital and university-serving transit

Office.

- Space that attracts start-ups, recent incubator graduates, tech-centric companies and UNC spin-offs is desirable. ([Make this more comprehensive.](#))
- Careful about medical office. It creates heavy traffic impacts.

Residential

- A mix of housing that that attracts diverse residents and families is preferred.
- New models for integrating affordable workforce housing should be explored.

Civic

- Houses of worship, stimulate community building and offer counter-cyclical programming.
- Public space and public and private community amenities are appropriate and encouraged.
- Did we decide on passive recreation for preserved land? If so, include here or in principle above.

Public input related to uses/impacts

Support for

- Increasing the town's commercial tax base
- [Preserving land across the creek](#)
- [Creation of community space \(senior center, teen center, "multi-age" center\)](#)

Some support for

- Hotel
- More convenient access to retail
- Affordable housing

Concern about

- Size of proposed development.
- Negative impacts on surrounding property values.
- Undermining Southern Village Market Street.
- Amount of traffic generated by retail.
- Phasing commitments
- Property ownership passing to owners w/o community connections
- Increases in light pollution, noise, crime
- School impacts
- Movie theater traffic

More information needed on

- Net economic impact
- Traffic impact of proposed uses

- Retail market research