

TO: Kevin Foy, Mayor  
FROM: Kathleen Kearns, Chair, Horace Williams Citizens' Committee  
RE: HWCC concerns about UNC's Carolina North plans  
DATE: 14 July 2003

The Horace Williams Citizens Committee is concerned about the speed at which the Carolina North Executive Committee is preparing its conceptual plan and marketing its proposed development. University officials have indicated that they plan to submit a conceptual plan to the Town in October. Our Committee believes that significantly more community and Council input should occur before the University prepares a conceptual plan.

Although individual citizens and Council members have participated in Carolina North advisory groups, there are significant points of difference between the principles those advisory groups have put forth and those being developed by the Horace Williams Citizens' Committee. We believe that the earlier the University is made aware of these differences, the more likely it is to take them into account in their planning.

Here are some specific concerns:

UNC Carolina North Executive Committee Meeting 6/12/03:

- The University Uses group said it is **not suggesting providing a school** at Carolina North. No mention was made of the possibility of providing land for a school. The HWCC Community Interface subcommittee asks that the university "consider the facility needs of neighboring and future residents with respect to schools. . . ."
- There was a **lack of clarity about what kind of housing—if any—the university plans to build** on the property. The HWCC endorses the provision of housing for a minimum of 25% of the number of jobs at Carolina North.
- **Economic development goals appeared to override all others.**
- Profit-making businesses like patent attorneys and venture capital firms were recommended without tax issues being addressed. Would the Town and County be able to collect **taxes on the improved property and commercial activities** there even if the land remains University owned?
- There was a **lack of clarity about what types of businesses would be recruited** for the property, how large they would be allowed to grow, and whether production facilities were planned.
- **Plans appear to be in place to open a Carolina North Executive Office within the next few months to begin marketing the property and recruiting businesses.** To the HWCC, the implication is that if a business expresses interest in the site, they would be able to proceed before any overall plans are finalized. While we don't oppose the concept of some type of development office, we are concerned about the timing and the extent of its power. The HWCC is also concerned that **marketing Carolina North before a master plan is approved could lead to a building-by-building approach** instead of a planned development that considered impacts on neighbors and the Town.
- **Zoning issues, fiscal equity issues, and plans for Council and community input were not addressed.**

#### Infrastructure Advisory Group:

- The report **recommends providing parking when demand justifies it**, which would counteract the effort to make the development primarily reliant on public transit.
- The report suggests **retaining the railroad corridor for possible future transit use**. That **would encourage development in some environmentally sensitive areas of the property and would split transit demand** between Airport Road and the rail corridor, thus potentially making it harder to make the financial case for transit infrastructure.
- The HWCC is concerned that the report discusses preservation of the natural Bolin Creek corridor but does not seem to specifically and adequately address the **preservation of the Crow Branch** (Booker Creek tributary) natural corridor.

#### External Relations Advisory Group:

- The report says "it is important to begin now to market the project to prospective partners," which suggests that **business development plans are quite far along without the crucial issue of fiscal equity being addressed**.
- The report recommends well-publicized **public forums**, an excellent idea. But they **need to occur early enough so that public input can have real impact**, and it must be clear to attendees that the university's forums are not the only forums. Residents of Chapel Hill, Carrboro, and parts of Orange County should be encouraged to voice their concerns to their town and county governments as well.

#### University Uses Advisory Group:

- The report recommends keeping undeveloped land "for the needs of future generations of University leaders and students" without specifying **how much land, if any, will be covered by a permanent conservation easement**.

#### New Business Development Advisory Group:

- The report recommends recruiting businesses that would forward "the broad missions of the University in teaching, research, service and economic development" and says that any companies or non-profits funding research at the university "should be presumed to meet the criteria associated with being located on Carolina North." **If the university's mission is expanded to include economic development, almost any business or type of use could be justified for Carolina North**. Clear parameters need to be developed in consultation with the town on what types of businesses can be placed on the property.