



**CONCEPT PLAN REVIEW SUMMARY MINUTES
COMMUNITY DESIGN COMMISSION
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2006, 7:00P.M.**

Chairperson Jonathan Whitney called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. Commission members present were George Cianciolo, Chris Culbreth, Eleanor Howe, Laura King Moore, Charlotte Newby, Amy Ryan, and Robin Whitsell. Staff members present were Development Coordinator Gene Poveromo, Senior Planner Kay Pearlstein, and Planning Administrative Clerk Renee Zimmerman.

SUNRISE RIDGE SUBDIVISION (File 7.17..20, 22)

A request for a Concept Plan Review has been submitted to construct a multi-family development with 50 dwelling units. The Habitat for Humanity of Orange County proposes to construct affordable housing in collaboration with Orange Community Housing and Land Trust. The development is proposed to be located on the east side of Sunrise Road (see area map on back). Access to the site is proposed from Ginger Road and through the recently approved Bradley Green Subdivision. The 19.4-acre site is located in the Residential-2 (R-2) zoning district with portions in the Resource Conservation District. The property is outside the Town limits. The site is identified as Chapel Hill Township, Tax Map 17, Lots 20 and 22.

CITIZEN COMMENTS AND PRESENTATION

1. A citizen stated that the Noise Report produced by Stewart Acoustical Consultants is highly annoying because of the lack of evidence and incorrect criterion. He provided a 15 page evaluation of the Stewart Report and commented that HUD standards are ignored and that federal funding is not mentioned (we have included the report evaluation as an attachment).
2. A member of the Sunrise Coalition reported that the majority of the property was uninhabitable and that no safe point of egress existed with the proposed design.

In addition, he faulted the development because:

- the subdivision was designed without sufficient neighborhood input from the surrounding neighbors;
- that higher density was closest to the existing neighbors rather than located at a further point on the property;

- inadequate buffers on the southern part of the property closest to the existing neighbors;
- the Comprehensive Plan showed a different use;
- the subdivision was not compatible with the neighborhood;
- the density proposed is not reflected by the surrounding neighborhood; and
- single-family dwellings should be the dominant housing type in order to be compatible with the existing neighborhood.

A summary of these comments is attached.

3. The Sunrise Coalition showed a video focusing on Ginger Road and reasons for not widening the road.
4. The Sunrise Coalition shared a power point presentation that displayed the design proposal of the 50 units laid out on a 6 acre site.
5. A member of the Sunrise Coalition believed that a fatal flaw exists with the design. The density proposed with the application is too much. Comments are attached.
6. A member of the Sunrise Coalition stated that the existing pine trees offer little in the way of buffering because they are all trunks and no foliage. She further stated that widening Ginger Road will exponentially increase traffic and less safety will be provided for children. It was noted that the increase in the volume and amount of outdoor noise will create a less desirable outdoor living experience for those in the adjacent neighborhoods.
7. A member of the Sunrise Coalition believed that the creation of the 45-foot right-of-way for Ginger Road will create a large swath through the existing woods creating less vegetation for buffering.
8. Another member of the Sunrise Coalition believed that the increase in traffic on Sunrise Road will be unsafe as a result of the proposal. It was pointed out that East Chapel Hill High School joggers currently run in Sunrise Road because there are no sidewalks. Speeding cars coupled with poor sight lines getting onto Sunrise Road create a hazardous situation for pedestrians and drivers.
9. One member of the Sunrise Coalition believed that any new access road should line up with existing roads on the other side of Sunrise Road. He also believed that an independent Noise Study should be conducted in addition to additional noise information on:
 - Day/night calculations
HUD thresholds;
 - Future noise levels;
 - Open window/outdoor living noise levels; and
Results of tree cutting on noise levels.

A summary of comments is attached.

10. A member of the Sunrise Coalition stated that the Coalition strongly oppose the project. They believe that the Noise Study was fatally flawed and that downstream impacts from the development have not been sufficiently studied.

COMMISSION COMMENTS

1. Commissioner Amy Ryan asked if Orange County Habitat for Humanity had any maintenance issues with other of their residential units. The applicant replied that since these will be owner occupied, there will not be an issue with Habitat maintenance.

Commissioner Ryan believes that this is a great improvement over the previous plan that was presented.

She believes that the two existing single family homes are proposed too close to the proposed development and suggested that the applicant look at providing a buffer in those locations.

She would like to see a different design that responds to the noise analysis and supported the “dipping” design over the “arching” design.

She would like to see the wetlands better protected.

2. Commissioner George Cianciolo believes that this proposal is an improvement over the previous design but does not like parking proposed between the duplexes. He believes that it is visually busy and the duplex-cars, duplex-cars pattern proposed is unattractive. He would like to see a design that proposes parking behind the units.

He supported the use of street trees and cautioned that the street lighting not interfere with the trees.

He wanted to know who will be mowing the lawn and how the sharing of the maintenance of common areas will realistically work, especially if neighbors do not like each other. He wanted to know if these units were truly sellable.

Commissioner Cianciolo supported consideration of an independent Noise Analysis and getting parking better integrated with the residential units.

3. Commissioner Robin Whitsell expressed grave concerns with the density proposed, the lack of neighborhood involvement, and a lack of transparency.

She has concerns concerning parking and maintenance. She wants clarification on how the common areas will be maintained.

Commissioner Whitsell believes that an increase in traffic will require traffic calming techniques. She also believes that noise and light from the proposal will spill over onto the existing neighborhood homes. She wants a better level of scrutiny and transparency of the proposal.

4. Commissioner Laura King Moore wants to see a better job of wetland protection.

She is concerned about the friction evident with the neighbors and wants to see better communication in the future. She believes that compatibility of duplex residents can be difficult.

Commissioner Moore wants to see the parking better managed on the site and that the maintenance of the street design should be more curvilinear. She offered that the street design may be improved with a reduction of density.

5. Commissioner Charlotte Newby mentioned the 2003 Mayor's Committee and 17 points that were adopted (see attached). She would like to see those points addressed by the applicant.
6. Commissioner Newby had several additional concerns that she would like to see addressed with this project including:
 - noise from I-40;
 - widening of Ginger Road;
 - connections to the site other than by car (no buses or pedestrian connectors);
 - density too great;
similarity between Chancellor's Green, Bradley Green, and Sunrise Ridge neighborhood and not distinct neighborhoods;
 - recreation area should be active, maybe a tot lot and equipment;
 - maintenance (Applicant responded that a Homeowners' Association would specify the maintenance responsibilities and that mortgages would include the HOA dues to be paid);
 - adjacent neighbors left out of development discussion; and
 - importance of project because of use of public money and therefore something everyone in the community should be proud of.

She would like to see the Orange County Habitat group join with other groups like the Orange Community Housing and Land Trust for project development.

7. Commissioner Eleanor Howe was concerned with the noise levels and that some the existing homes already fell into the noise area.

Commissioner Howe was also concerned with the number of driveways that were proposed to cut across sidewalks. She would like to see the parking behind the units and perhaps shared driveways to cut down on the number of curb cuts.

She was also concerned about the density and would like to see better integration of the development with the site and adjacent neighborhood.

8. Commissioner Chris Culbreth sensed anxiety associated with change amongst the neighbors. He believes that Habitat has revised many of the things previously asked for but there is a need to make the neighbors feel comfortable with the proposal. He suggested traffic calming measures and additional buffers to improve the project.

He believes that houses will sell well even though they are close to the highway, Nothridge Estates as an example.

9. Commissioner Jonathan Whitney would like to see a collaborative spirit and compromise with better open communication between the developer and adjacent neighborhood. He appreciates efforts being made on both sides.

Commissioner Whitney believes that the proposed plan is maxed out and doesn't provide adequate buffers adjacent to Ginger Road. He suggests that the design be improved by placing houses on one side of the proposed street rather than both sides.

Commissioner Whitney believes a goal of between 25 to 30 units with proper amenities could be a handsome development however the limits are being pushed now.

He is not concerned with noise from the highway.

SUMMARY

The Commission agreed that it generally supported this concept proposal for a multi-family development. Many of the Commissioners were concerned about the friction noticeable between the developer and the existing neighborhood evidenced by a citizens group called the Sunrise Coalition and felt that better open communication was necessary.

An increase in traffic requiring traffic calming, density that needed to be reduced, an increase in noise levels as a result in a reduction of vegetation and buffers, and maintenance of the property held in common by the Homeowners' Association were mentioned frequently as concerns. Other concerns mentioned by several Commissioners was the need for wetland protection, use of street trees, and different parking area layouts. Although the Noise Report and 1-40 noise was mentioned as a concern, several of the Commissioners did not believe that noise was a major issue with this development.

Prepared by: Jonathan Whitney, Chair

KP for JW

Kay Pearlstein