

January 26, 2007

Bill Webster, Interim Director
Parks and Recreation Department
200 Plant Road
Chapel Hill, NC 27514

RE: Concept Plan for the Bolin Creek Greenway (Phase III) Comments

Dear Mr. Webster,

We have had the opportunity to review the Concept Plan for the Bolin Creek Greenway (Phase III) document and would like to share our opinion with you and others. We applaud the overall plan effort and look forward to enjoying the connectivity that the implementation of Phase III can provide.

The concept plan appears to be composed of three major phases: a) from MLK Blvd. to Pritchard Ext., b) from Pritchard Ext. to Estes Drive Ext. and c) from Estes Dr. Ext. to Seawell School Rd. The first phase is well-documented in the concept plan, but subsequent phases are loosely discussed. Presumably, this is because phase a) is imminent while phases b) and c) will be implemented at a later time. During the public workshop you conducted, you estimated that barring unforeseen funding availability, the last phase of the plan would be implemented around 2015.

There seems to be a chasm between the public involvement process in place and the timing of the project. It is odd that the public is asked to participate in 2006 and 2007 even though some phases of the project will be built until 2010 or 2015. Neighbors move in and out with considerable frequency, so the closer the public comment period to the actual construction, the better. This enhances participation, empowers neighbors, and allows the town to be more responsive to the needs of actual residents affected by a project as opposed to the views of residents from the previous decade. We encourage you and the Council to consider the project in phases and have the public comment and town commit to separate phases in due course.

In a similar vein, the later phases of the plan are extremely vague. For example, for phase c) the preferred alignment east of the railroad tracks was selected over the alternative alignment which is on the Carrboro side, further away from the Ironwoods neighborhood. The alternative alignment noticeably decrease's the deleterious impacts of proximity to the trail (see the very recent experience of the Durham Tobacco Trail with increased home invasions for neighbors on the trail) while still allowing for the beneficial


impacts to accrue. The reasons for why the preferred alternative was selected over the alternative are unclear, despite the fact that the 1998 Facilitated Small Area Plan for Carrboro's Northern Study Area (approved by Carrboro, Orange County and Chapel Hill) includes the greenway on Carrboro's side. Furthermore, the alternative alignment also satisfies the concept plan objective of minimizing the negative impacts on residents. We believe the alternative alignment deserves further scrutiny because it may be less expensive for the town of Chapel Hill, more pleasing aesthetically, with fewer negative impacts on Chapel Hill residents, and with better connectivity to Carrboro's greenway and bicycle lane network. The distance from the trail to the Bolin Creek suggests that either alignment would have minimal environmental impact.


It may be that the reason why the alternative alignment was not selected is that it lies within Carrboro town limits. If this is the case, the additional administrative and coordination burden that the alternative alignment might create must be weighed against the negative impacts of the recommended alignment. For some property owners (us included) the alignment recommended in the plan is within a couple dozen feet of our house. By contrast, the alternative alignment would remain within 100ft, so the negative impacts of propinquity to the trail would be mitigated with the alternative alignment. In both alternatives the trail is close to Ironwoods properties, so this is not a matter of NIMBYism. It is a matter of weighing negative impacts on town taxpayers and voters against presumed administrative expediency.

Finally, we understand the importance of having an adopted plan (as vague as it may be) when NCDOT moves to improve Estes Dr. Extension. This would allow the town to request that NCDOT shoulder some of the Greenway costs, like tunneling under Estes Dr. Extension. We suggest that a concept plan that covers the area immediately West of Estes Dr. Extension would suffice for this purpose. This limited scope also would enable planners to study in more detail the alternative alignment thereon to Seawell School Rd,

We are grateful for the opportunity to provide input into this important process and want to reiterate our support for the development of a greenway network.

Sincerely yours,


Daniel A. Rodriguez


Pia D. M. MacDonald

cc: Jim Ward, Glenn Parks, Gary Barnes, Heidi Perry