



PLANNING  
Town of Chapel Hill  
405 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.  
Chapel Hill, NC 27514

phone (919) 968-2728 fax (919) 969-2014  
www.townofchapelhill.org

**CONCEPT PLAN REVIEW SUMMARY MINUTES  
COMMUNITY DESIGN COMMISSION  
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 17, 2009, 7:00 P.M.**

Chairperson George Cianciolo called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Commission members present were Mark Broadwell, Augustus Cho, Chris Culbreth, Kathryn James, Laura Moore, Amy Ryan, Geordie Selkirk, Polly Van de Velde, and Robin Whitsell. Staff members present were Senior Planner Kay Pearlstein, and Administrative Clerk Renee Moye.

**INTER-FAITH COUNCIL COMMUNITY HOUSE MEN'S SHELTER,  
1315 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd, File No. 9880-21-3142**

The Town has received a Concept Plan proposal from the Inter-faith Council for a men's shelter located at 1315 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. The proposed development is located at the northwest corner of Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. and Homestead Road, on a portion of the former Duke Energy site (4700 Homestead Road). The applicant is proposing to lease a 1.6-acre area from the property owner, the State of North Carolina. The proposed leased area is in the northeast portion of the property, adjacent to the United Church of Chapel Hill and Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. The Concept Plan proposes to construct a 16,000 square foot building, including 50 beds, a dining room, offices, meeting rooms, and clinic space. Parking for 18 vehicles is proposed. Access is proposed through the United Church of Chapel Hill. The 1.6-acre site is located in the Office/Institution-2 (OI-2) zoning district. The site is identified as a portion of Orange County Parcel Identifier Number 9880-21-3142.

**CONCEPT PLAN PRESENTATION**

The design team presented a proposal for a men's shelter including a presentation by Chris Moran of the Inter Faith Council and Josh Gurlitz, architect for the project partnering for this proposal.

**CITIZEN COMMENTS**

1. John Walker of 107 Grainger Lane supported the effort but did not support the lack of discipline exhibited by some residents of the Men's Shelter. He supports those who choose to help themselves, but he cautioned that some do not. He is not in favor or moving the Men's Shelter adjacent to residential neighborhoods. His house was recently broken into during the night while at home. He is concerned that a men's shelter located close to his home could increase the risk of break-ins in the neighborhood. He felt that the shelter should be located closer to the police station or further into the countryside. He encourages the applicant to look for a different site.

2. Richard Edens, pastor at United Church, stated that they have partnered with the Men's Shelter for 30 years and the partnership has worked out well. They look forward to working with the Men's Shelter again.

#### COMMISSION COMMENTS

1. Commissioner Mark Broadwell was supportive of the ambitious programs proposed for the shelter. He wanted to hear more comments from neighbors concerning the location of the Men's Shelter.

He also wanted the building to look less institutional and hospital-like and recommended that the architecture reflect a more residential appearance. He suggested the site design include additional outdoor space for residents and less area for parking.

The applicant replied that the building was oriented for solar access therefore keeping an unobstructed path for sunlight, but would look at additional opportunities for plantings for outdoor spaces where solar access was not an issue.

2. Commissioner Robin Whitsell was concerned about the feelings of the neighbors with the location of the shelter and wanted to hear strategies proposed for addressing their concerns.

Commissioner Whitsell wanted a beautiful elevation for the Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. side of the building and wanted the applicant to provide additional green space on the site.

3. Commissioner Laura Moore liked the presentation but wanted to hear from the neighbors. She also had concerns about the lack of landscaping around the building and suggested that the power line easement be used for appropriate plantings.

She noted that access to the site did not include pedestrian access. She recommended sidewalks be provided along the driveway from the church as well as to Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. bus stops.

4. Commissioner Polly Van de Velde liked the design. She was concerned about the social aspects of the 20-bed dormitory room. The applicant stated that the spaces were moveable and individual spaces would be created out of the larger room.

Commissioner Van de Velde suggested a community garden be included to enhance the therapeutic aspects of the program. She also suggested a dark trim on the building façade.

5. Commissioner Chris Culbreth expressed sympathy to the citizen who spoke of the break-in to his home.

He was also concerned with the appearance of the building elevation facing Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. He suggested architectural interested be added with trellises or other add-on features.

6. Commissioner Amy Ryan liked the sustainable aspects of the proposal and encouraged the applicant to make them happen, not just be conceptual. She also suggested that the building be made less institutional looking and more “homey.”

She suggested that parking be shared with the church and a sidewalk be included from the site to the parking lot.

Commissioner Ryan also suggested that an outdoor area be included for congregating, especially cigarette smokers who were likely to congregate outdoors.

Commissioner Ryan recommended a garden/tool shed be constructed to house garden and yard equipment in order for the residents to help with upkeep of the property.

7. Commissioner Geordie Selkirk asked why a section of the roof was higher. The applicant replied that the room held a lot of people and it made the area seem more spacious. Commissioner Selkirk thought the building appeared to be office-like. To make the building appear softer, he suggested the applicant try a variety of different roof forms.
8. Commissioner Augustus Cho liked the sustainable elements of the design and recommended reducing the parking area.

Commissioner Cho asked what happens to the men who do not graduate from the program. Do they become permanent residents?

The applicant stated that some don’t graduate but Homestart offers transitional housing to some of those that do not graduate. He explained that some residents do not meet their contract and are asked to leave.

Commissioner Cho asked Mr. Walker, the homeowner whose house was broken in to, if the men that broke into his house were homeless. Mr. Walker replied that it was not determined who the men were or where they lived, but homeless people lived in the woods behind his house. The applicant, Josh Gurlitz, replied that there are more people unsheltered in this county than are sheltered and homelessness is a complicated issue needing involvement and discussion by the entire community.

9. Commissioner Kathryn James stated that she would like to see as many shelters as possible in the community. She agreed that homelessness is a complicated issue.

She supported others comments concerning the building design and recommended that the building trim be light.

10. Commissioner George Cianciolo asked where the delivery and garbage collections areas were proposed. The applicant replied deliveries were planned for the front door and the dumpster location was not determined. Commissioner Cianciolo asked if water used to flush urinals could be recycled water. The applicant replied that in order to do so, lots of maintenance was required with lots of filter changes and would not be a benefit.

Commissioner Cianciolo asked if a sidewalk to Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. would need steps. The applicant replied that steps would be needed in order to accommodate the grade change.

#### COMMISSIONER COMMENTS SUMMARY

The Commission's summary comments are listed below:

- Interested in hearing neighbors comments on the proposal.
- Supported the orientation of the building for solar access and other sustainable aspects of the design.
- Preferred a residential, homey look for the architecture using different roof forms, trellises, and other add-on architectural features. The building should be less office and institutional looking.
- Concerned about the view of the building from Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. Extra care should be taken for this elevation.
- Provide less parking area and more green space on-site. Include appropriate landscaping in the easement, create congregating areas, provide space for a community garden, and provide landscaping where it won't impact solar access for collectors.
- Provide for more pedestrian circulation – sidewalks to Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., and along the driveway to the church.
- Therapeutic benefits are included with: moveable interior spaces providing privacy with smaller units; a community garden; and construction of a garden/tool shed for residents to use for equipment storage for up-keep of the property.
- Locate the service areas for deliveries and garbage collection on the site.
- Create an opportunity for a community discussion on homelessness.

Prepared for: George Cianciolo, Chair  
 Prepared by: Kay Pearlstein, Staff