

THE NEWS & OBSERVER

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UNC outlines plans for 'Carolina North'

By ANNE BLYTHE
STAFF WRITER

CHAPEL HILL — First there was Research Triangle Park. Then N.C. State University started Centennial Campus. Now everyone can see the UNC-Chapel Hill model for a satellite research campus of its own.

Top UNC-CH administrators said Tuesday that they hope to start construction in 2005 of Carolina North, a mix of offices, labs, homes and stores that they hope will be the Triangle's next hub for research and academia.

"That at this point is my optimism and just my best guess," Tony Waldrop, the UNC-CH vice chancellor for research and development, said Tuesday.

The draft plan for Carolina North, rolled out in visual form

Tuesday, calls for 8.35 million square feet of buildings on 240 acres nearly a mile and a half north of the main campus and the Franklin Street shops and restaurants.

The project would be built in seven phases over 50 years. The first phase, which would be built over five to seven years, would accommodate 1,500 to 2,100 employees, university officials say.

The notion is to provide space for research and private companies that spin off from it, to complement the 18 million square feet of classrooms, labs and other buildings on the 580-acre main campus.

Half a century from now, there could be as many as 18,000 employees and 1,400 to 1,800 homes at Carolina North.

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UNC

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"We're not looking for this to be a real estate development," Waldrop said. Businesses that want to locate in Carolina North must have a connection to the university.

Hurdles ahead

Many hurdles must be overcome before ground is broken. The Horace Williams Airport, which is on a central part of the project site, would have to close. Chancellor James Moeser tried to close the in-town landing strip once already, but state legislators intervened and dictated that it stay open at least until Jan. 1, 2005.

The draft plan presented Tuesday by Waldrop and Mark Crowell, associate vice chancellor for economic development and director of the office of technology development, must clear another university committee and the UNC-CH board of trustees. The project would then be subject to approval by officials in Chapel Hill and Carrboro.

There also is a question about where the money will come from to build the project. Infrastructure alone — the streets, water and sewer systems, sidewalks and other transportation corridors — is estimated to cost nearly \$100 million in today's dollars, according to Doug Firtenberg, a consultant with Stonebridge Associates Inc. who helped develop the economic model.

On Tuesday, when presenting the proposal to several advisory committees, Waldrop and Crowell got a taste of some of the flash points that might await them. There are concerns about traffic and the environment, for example.

Under the plan, the new campus would have 19,125 parking spaces. University planners tout the development as one that would encourage the use of bicycles and mass transit. But some say the university did not think futuristically enough.

Joe Capowski, a former Town

CAROLINA NORTH

The seven-phase plan, to be completed over the course of the next 50 years, would include 6 million square feet of office and research space, 1,400 to 1,800 homes, and 300,000 square feet of restaurants, coffee shops and other retail businesses for the 13,000 to 18,000 employees that might one day work on the satellite campus.

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| Phase 1:
■ 700,000 sq. ft. research and office
■ 300,000 sq. ft. residential
■ 70,000 sq. ft. service retail
The first phase contains a mix of uses and sets the tone for the rest of the development. | Phase 2:
■ 600,000 sq. ft. research and office
■ 400,000 sq. ft. residential
■ 40,000 sq. ft. service retail
The second phase contains a mix of uses and becomes more residential as it gets closer to existing neighborhoods. It shows incremental growth of the grid and pedestrian grid. | Phase 3:
■ 800,000 sq. ft. research and office
■ 300,000 sq. ft. residential
■ 60,000 sq. ft. service retail
This phase expands west. It includes a north-south road envisioned to relieve traffic on Airport Road and improve access north to I-40. | Phase 4:
■ 1.1 million sq. ft. research and office
■ 200,000 sq. ft. residential
■ 50,000 sq. ft. service retail
Phase 4 extends north and west with some additional housing to the north. | Phase 5:
■ 500,000 sq. ft. research and office
■ 900,000 sq. ft. residential
■ 60,000 sq. ft. service retail
This phase, which is nearly three decades away, extends into Carrboro with a mixed-use community that is mostly residential but includes research and | Phase 6:
■ 1.25 million sq. ft. research and office
■ 20,000 sq. ft. service retail
At least 35 years in the future, this phase will include mostly research and office space to complement the residential component of Phase 5. It is also convenient to a potential transit link. | Phase 7:
■ 1 million sq. ft. research and office
Projected as more than four decades away, the final phase fills in a small area of the development. |
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Source: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

MICHAEL BATES, GREY BLACKWELL / The News & Observer

Council member, encouraged the campus administrators to cut the number of parking spaces drastically to keep roads from getting clogged with traffic.

"As long as you have more parking spaces than you have employ-

ees, mass transit will never work," Capowski said.

The Horace Williams property, the state-owned parcel where Carolina North is proposed, is a wooded 963-acre tract. Although the plans call for developing less

than a third of the property south of Municipal Drive, university officials have been reluctant to agree to put most of the undisturbed land into a legally binding conservation agreement.

Several advisory board members

urged Waldrop and Crowell to agree to such a preservation measure. "If you don't put a significant portion of it off limits forever, it will be developed," said Allen Spalt, a former Carrboro alderman. But Waldrop said, "We don't

BY COMPARISON

CAROLINA NORTH

- 240 acres
- When complete:**
 - 6 million square feet of research and office space
 - 13,000 to 18,000 employees
 - 1,800 homes, or 2 million square feet of homes
 - \$100 million for infrastructure

CENTENNIAL CAMPUS

- 1,334 acres
- \$340 million invested in infrastructure to date
- 15 million square feet of space in 16 buildings
- 8 additional buildings under construction
- When complete:**
 - 12,500 corporate and government employees
 - 1,800 university faculty, staff and postdoctoral students
 - 7,000 residents, 600 middle school students, 2,400 support services personnel

RESEARCH TRIANGLE PARK

- 7,000 acres
- An estimated 38,500 full-time employees
- Capital investment exceeds \$2.7 billion

know 50 to 70 years from now what the needs of our university will be."

Another unknown is how the university, which is exempt from property taxes, will pay for municipal services such as fire protection.

The presentation Tuesday was the kick-off for three public airings today and Thursday. The proposal will be presented to university faculty and staff at 3:30 p.m. today in Gerrard Hall. Community presentations are set for 7 p.m. today at Smith Middle School and 7 p.m. Thursday at Orange United Methodist Church off Airport Road.

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