

-----Original Message-----

From: James Coley [<mailto:jpcoley@email.unc.edu>]

Sent: Monday, March 22, 2004 5:58 PM

To: Town Council

Subject: Grocery Store Downtown.

I read today in a newspaper report about the study of our downtown that "The firm found that, given that 10 groceries are within just a few miles of downtown, there wouldn't be sufficient demand for a full-sized grocery downtown."

I can not help but wonder whether the firm is assuming that everyone will drive automobiles to get their groceries, and I wonder if they are considering the synergies of more housing downtown right there along with a new grocery store. I also wonder what they mean by "full-sized."

I see an urgent need for a grocery store of the appropriate size downtown, along with more housing, to make it possible for people living there to get their staple (not specialty) groceries on foot and without having to drive. Many of us remember Fowler's food store, and the increase in automobile use after it closed.

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**From:** Maja544@aol.com [mailto:Maja544@aol.com]

**Sent:** Tuesday, March 23, 2004 12:03 PM

**To:** Town Council

**Cc:** jstainback@sppre.com

**Subject:** ERA Market Analysis Report 3/17/04

March 23, 2004

To Chapel Hill's Town Manager, Mayor & Town Council, and John Stainback and associated consultants:

Please make this email letter a permanent part of the Town's Downtown Revitalization file.

There are 7 major topics related to Chapel Hill's Downtown which I think we should consider as major:

1. **Adequate convenient parking is paramount.** People just will not come to an area if they cannot use their personal cars. The subset of people who will consult bus schedules and wait for buses is small, and even smaller at dark. So many people are buying hybrid-motor cars there are waiting lists for manufacturers. These cars emit far less air pollutants than conventional cars and indicate less car polluting into future years.

2. **Riding the wave of interest and the low-interest-rate environment is important,** as Virginia Knapp, Associate Director of our Chamber of Commerce, urges. The March 23, 2004 *News & Observer* reports that "two businesses interested in the [downtown Raleigh] mall have backed out and eight others have put their plans on hold because they were unsure when the work would be complete...." Margaret Mullen, president and chief executive of the Downtown Raleigh Alliance, points out, "It's a bigger financial risk for a small company." Chapel Hill is particularly interested in small businesses to make our Downtown a distinctive destination. **We must stay on track and on time.**

3. Betty Maulsby, a Chapel Hill business owner, highlights that **shopping must offer a fun experience because shopping is a discretionary activity.** Her suggestion to seek European specialty stores, not just standard American chain brands, sounds wise. **Our two downtown cinemas are an important part of the fun/entertainment draw to the area.**

4. **It is costly to renovate a building** and particularly to expand screens in a movie theater. So it seems to me, while we need to proceed apace for an overall downtown design, we should **draw in new and improved retail stores as fast as possible to demonstrate an economic base for further business investment.**

5. **Town-owned Lots 2 & 5 on Rosemary Street probably are best-suited for in-town residences with shops and/or a small grocery at their ground level.** If underground parking is feasible for construction and cost, that would be ideal. Page 85 of ERA's Market Analysis Report, March 17, 2004 notes Athens, Georgia's plan: "To further mitigate the parking shortage downtown, new residential developments must arrange for parking for their residents within 1,500 feet of the project site."

6. **A Downtown Bus Transit Center sounds sensible,** but we should **consider both central Franklin Street and central Rosemary Street as possible sites.** If a retail business sees the former Chrysler dealership as a prime location, which it is, we should bring in new business there. The idea of **indoor public space combined with the**

**Transit Center is appealing, especially food vendors and retail shops that will serve commuters well.** However, I question why UNC's Hanes Auditorium is not acceptable for occasional large public events in Chapel Hill. It seems that school auditoriums can accommodate 600 people and are often available also. Perhaps the timing for the one Arts Commission event to be held soon just did not work with the schools' schedules this time.

7. Examples of vertical shops and parking towers in NYC plus other **ideas from metropolitan areas should not be ignored**, since they have the population and multiple neighborhoods to try new ideas ahead of smaller towns. However, while treasuring our local artists and their sensibilities, **a single downtown center area must develop on business decisions with economic viability.** NYC has a vast local and visitor market; business investors have a variety of markets by which to cover their expenses and make a profit. **We must be realistic and count on residents as our regular shoppers. Downtown housing will help, but cost-effective design ideas will also be very important.**

I have seen and heard developers before our Town Council seeking Special Use Permits (SUP's), and I wonder what it costs them in engineer, architect, and attorney fees to appeal to Chapel Hill's officials, often likely thousands of dollars, even tens of thousands. Please let us not forget that developers and investors can go elsewhere. **We need more business in Chapel Hill to provide goods and services to those who live here and to expand our local tax base to relieve residential real estate tax burdens. Downtown Revitalization is indeed vital. Prompt planning without unnecessary requirements and restrictions will make Downtown Revitalization happen.**

I offer my opinions and recommendations as a resident who has been surrounded by small business owners and entrepreneurs all my life. I have had some years' successful experience with real estate and marketing though I have no formal business training. My overall concern is that too few residents in Chapel Hill understand the costs and personal risks of financial loss that individual business owners take on. **Investors need a do-able plan and a do-able time frame.**

Thank you to Town departments, Town elected officials, Downtown business owners, the Chamber of Commerce, UNC planners, and our professional consultants for your time in reading this.

Sincerely,

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Lynne K. Kane, (11 Lark Circle, Chapel Hill, NC)  
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-----Original Message-----

**From:** andrea.l.rohrbacher@gsk.com [mailto:andrea.l.rohrbacher@gsk.com]

**Sent:** Monday, March 22, 2004 3:31 PM

**To:** Town Council

**Subject:** availability of materials for review - Downtown CH Market Study

Dear Mayor and Council,

I am frustrated at the short timeframe citizens were given to review the Downtown Chapel Hill Market Study. The date on the report cover is March 17, it became available to citizens Thursday March 18, allowing only five days for review. It is difficult to synthesize a report of this length and provide thoughtful feedback in such a short time period. Based the date on the cover, it is my belief the delay was from the consultant, not the Town staff making it available to citizens.

Would it be possible to negotiate with the consultant to provide the town with information for which a public hearing will be held a minimum of 10 days before the hearing to allow distribution to citizens and adequate time to review.

Regards,  
Andrea

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