

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Town Council

FROM: W. Calvin Horton, Town Manager

SUBJECT: Public Hearing: Parks and Recreation Master Plan

DATE: May 13, 2002

This public hearing has been called to hear public comment on whether the Council should adopt the draft 2002 *Parks and Recreation Master Plan* as part of the Town's Comprehensive Plan.

The Manager recommends referring the comments received to the Town Manager and schedule Council action on the issue at its May 29, 2002 or June 10, 2002 regular meeting, depending on the number and type of questions and comments received this evening. Council consideration of adoption of the plan would likely take place at the next meeting.

BACKGROUND

Section 11A-7 of the Town's Comprehensive Plan contains an objective "To develop and implement a plan to meet future community needs for park and recreation facilities." In 1999, the Council authorized the Manager to develop a Parks and Recreation Master Plan as a component of the Town's Comprehensive Plan and to help guide parks related decisions over a 10 year period. Major themes and goals of the Comprehensive Plan that are addressed in the proposed Parks and Recreation Master Plan include:

- Relationship of the Town to the existing Urban Service District and Rural Buffer
- Regional planning efforts
- Preservation of existing neighborhoods
- Conservation of the Town's natural setting
- Completion of the Town's greenway/bikeway/sidewalk system
- Development of financial strategies to achieve parks and recreation goals

In 2000, the Parks and Recreation Commission appointed Parks and Recreation Master Plan Committee representatives that included members of the Parks and Recreation Commission, Greenways Commission, Planning Board, and citizens at-large. The Committee first met in June 2000. Seven focus group meetings were held in September 2000. Public forums were held in September 2000 and January 2001. The Committee approved the draft plan on December 19, 2001.

On February 25, 2002, the Council adopted a resolution that referred the draft report to the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board, Chapel Hill Public Arts Commission, Greenways Commission, Housing and Community Development Advisory Board, Library Board, Parks and Recreation Commission, Planning Board, Transportation Board and the Town Manager for comments and recommendations. The resolution also called a public hearing to consider adding the master plan to the Comprehensive Plan. In addition, courtesy copies were provided to the Orange County Commissioners, Carrboro Board of Aldermen, and the Intergovernmental Parks Work Group.

DISCUSSION

Major Recommendations found in the draft 2002 Parks and Recreation Master Plan: The Report contains a number of specific recommendations for development and maintenance of a park system in Chapel Hill. Major themes and recommendations include:

Partnerships: Further development of parks and recreation facilities and programs must increasingly rely on partnerships with the schools, the County, and neighboring municipalities. Opportunities for joint use of schools and school properties should be explored. The Town should work with the County to promote regional parks. Opportunities to work with adjacent jurisdictions including Carrboro should be used.

Land Acquisition: Very few land acquisition opportunities remain. Any land acquisition should be made as soon as possible before all developable land is taken for development purposes. The Town should purchase two neighborhood park sites, if possible. One of the sites should be in the northwest portion of Town and the other should be in the southeast. The Town should consider purchasing open space/park land outside of the Town limits both to the south of Town and north of I-40 to act as a buffer from surrounding development. The Town should designate a portion of the Dry Creek open space as a neighborhood park.

Renovation and Repair: A major focus of the Town in the next 10 years should be repair and renovation of its existing parks facilities.

New Construction: The Town should build a new aquatics facility, Meadowmont Park, Southern Community Park, and 6-7 miles of improved greenways by 2011.

Funding: The Town should adopt a strategy to find about \$ 8,000,000 of new funding by 2011 to implement the majority the report's recommendations.

Comments and Recommendations: All Town Boards and Commissions voted to recommend adoption of the concept plan. A number of additional recommendations and suggestions were made throughout the review process.

1. **Program Assessment:** Members of the Planning Board and Housing and Community Development Advisory Board noted that the plan would be more useful if it included an assessment of programs.

Comment: A program assessment would be a major undertaking that exceeds the scope of the original master plan project. We recommend that a program assessment be considered at some future date when funding levels would allow such a study.

2. **Use of Town Land:** A member of the Planning Board recommended that the Town develop land it already owns before it considers purchasing additional property.

Comment: The plan recommends that a portion of the Town owned Springcrest property on Dry Creek be designated a neighborhood park. We believe that the only other potential sites suitable for park development would be the open space areas of the Town's greenways corridors and the open space areas found within Cedar Falls Park, Southern Community Park, Ephesus Park, Jones Park, and North Forest Hill Park. We do not recommend that these areas be designated for active facility development.

3. **Bus, Pedestrian and Bicycle Access:** Members of the Parks and Recreation Commission, Planning Board, Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board, and Transportation Board commented that it is important to provide functional bus, pedestrian and bicycle access to the various park sites, mini-parks, and greenways.

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board recommended that exhibits 4-1 (Community Parks), 4-2 (Neighborhood Parks), 4-3 (Recreation Centers and Special Facilities), and 4-4 (Composite Proposals) be amended to include an overlay illustrating actual trip times to various parks and facilities, in addition to geographic proximity, for service radii.

Comment: We agree that the plan should better address bus, bicycle and pedestrian access issues. We believe that a list of recommended access improvements be inserted in Chapter 4. These recommendations should be on a park by park basis and should address parks that do not have adequate pedestrian, bicycle, or bus access.

Although we believe that the idea of preparing overlays that detail travel time to various parks would result in useful information, we also believe that it would be a significant task that is beyond the scope of the master plan project.

4. **University Recreation Facilities:** A member of the Planning Board recommended that the report list all of the university's recreation facilities in the report's inventory of recreation facilities.

Comment: We agree that the report should list those facilities that are generally open and available to the public. For example the UNC Botanical Garden is an important facility that should be listed. However, most of the university's facilities are not generally available for public use. We believe that listing these facilities might be misleading to anyone trying to assess the scope of facilities available to the general population of the Town. We are especially concerned that administrators of grant programs might perceive that the Town has more facilities available to its citizens than we do in actuality. In addition, the managers of

facilities not owned by the Town may not desire the publicity for their facilities by the Town of Chapel Hill.

5. **Shared or Combined Facilities:** Members of the Planning Board recommended that the Town continue to work with the schools and neighboring jurisdictions to share facilities.

Comment: The report recommends that these types of partnerships be strengthened. We believe that the report's summary should include a synopsis of the major recommendations of the report to give these points extra emphasis. One of the recommendations in the synopsis that would be highlighted would be to increase partnerships.

6. **Location of Neighborhood Parks:** A member of the Planning Board questioned the location of neighborhood parks proposed for the northwest and southeast areas of Town. The Parks and Recreation Commission recommended that the maps be changed to clarify the conceptual nature of the proposed park locations.

Comment: The locations shown on the map are conceptual in nature and are not intended to show specific sites or even specific areas. They are meant to indicate regions that should be served by neighborhood parks. We agree that the maps should be changed to clarify their intent.

7. **Parks Facilities for the Downtown Area:** A member of the Planning Board suggested that the plan should concentrate more on park facilities for the central portion of Town.

Comment: We believe that all potential sites for development of facilities in the downtown area were examined. Because most of the downtown area has already been developed we could find no cost effective means of providing additional recreation facilities in this area. The plan recommends changes at the Hargraves Park site and extension of the Bolin Creek Greenway.

8. **Redevelopment of Existing Facilities:** A member of the Planning Board recommended that a greater emphasis should be made on renovating existing parks.

Comment: A major focus area of the report is repair and renovation of existing facilities. We believe that the summary chapter of the report should include a synopsis of the major recommendations of the report. One of the recommendations in the synopsis that would be highlighted would be to focus on repair and renovation of existing facilities.

9. **County Funding for Park Development:** A member of the Planning Board suggested that parks located on the edges of Town should be financed through the County government because users would likely be County residents living outside the Town limits.

Comment: We believe that the neighborhood parks proposed for the southeast, northeast and northwest areas of the Town would be of a scale that would likely attract primarily

neighborhood use. We agree that community size parks located near the Town boundaries should be funded at least in part by the County. We note that the County has provided funding for both Homestead and Southern Community parks.

10. Dog Parks: A member of the Planning Board recommended that the Town not build dog parks.

Comment: We believe that dog parks should be a part of our park program. Use of the existing Homestead Dog Park is high. We expect that the proposed dog park at Southern Community Park would also receive significant levels of use.

11. Site Furnishings: Members of the Transportation Board recommended that the plan include recommendations to add benches along greenway trails, appropriate lighting along footpaths, and drinking fountains.

Comment: We agree that sections addressing lighting and site furnishings should be added to the plan.

12. Greenways: A member of the Transportation Board recommended that the plan increase the number of miles of greenway trail to be built by 2011. The Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board recommended that the Parks and Greenways master plans show more continuity and integration. They also recommended that greenways, as linear parks, should be considered as access points to the various parks and facilities, and should be illustrated as such in the exhibits.

Comment: We believe that the 6-7 miles of improved trail stated in the report is a reasonable goal for the next 10 years without a major increase in funding and staff levels.

We also believe that the plans are well integrated as shown. We have examined both plans and believe that every reasonable opportunity for linking parks to the greenway system has been made. Parks that are directly linked to the greenways system include: Cedar Falls, Community Center, proposed Dry Creek, Hargraves, Homestead, future Meadowmont, Southern Community, and Umstead. All other park sites are in areas that prevent greenways links because of prior development. We also believe that the exhibits currently show the access function of greenways in a clear manner.

13. Bicycle Standards: The Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board recommended that the Town's bicycle standards, as outlined in the Design Manual, should be included in the Park and Recreation Master Plan.

Comment: We believe that although the bicycle standards are important the Parks and Recreation Master Plan is not an appropriate place to include the full set of standards. In addition, we would expect standards in the Design Manual to be modified from time to time. Such modifications would render out of date what could be included in the Master Plan. We

recommend that a statement be included in the Policy section of Chapter 2 that would refer to the standards for the development and renovation of any park.

14. Light Pollution: A member of the Transportation Board recommended that the plan address light pollution.

Comment: We believe that a statement should be added to Policy section of Chapter 2 that it would a goal of the Town to reduce or eliminate any unnecessary light pollution in and surrounding our parks.

15. Land Acquisition: A Transportation Board member recommended that the Town exceed national standards for development of parks and greenways.

Comment: There are no standards for greenways or open space land of which we are aware. However, we have a greenways master plan and have been actively pursuing the goals stated in that document. We agree that ideally it would be beneficial to exceed national standards for park acquisition. However, opportunities for purchase of additional park lands are very limited. We believe that additional large park land purchases and development should be undertaken by Orange County. The Town could continue to search for land suitable for open space, greenways, neighborhood parks and mini-park sites with local funds.

16. Mix of Small Neighborhood and Regional Parks: Transportation Board members recommended that the Town pursue a system of smaller neighborhood parks and larger regional parks.

Comment: We believe the report already recommends a system of parks that range from mini-parks to regional parks.

17. Fee Waiver Policy: The Housing and Community Development Advisory Board and the Parks and Recreation Commission recommended that the Town's fee reduction policy be referenced in the document. The Housing Board recommended that the user fee sliding scale remain in place and the fact that the user fee scale could go down to zero be advertised in the Parks and Recreation brochure.

Comment: This document is facility oriented. We believe that insertion of fee waiver information would be better placed in a document that is program oriented. However, we are currently following the recommendations of the Housing and Community Development Advisory Board and the Parks and Recreation Commission in our day to day operations. In addition, the Council addressed these policy issues on an annual basis as part of the budget approval process.

18. Meadowmont Park: The Parks and Recreation Commission recommended that the plan should be updated to include what has been approved for Meadowmont Park.

Comment: We agree that Chapter 4 should be modified to include the most up to date information.

19. **Arts:** The Public Arts Commission recommended that the Percent for Arts ordinance and policy resolution be attached as an addendum to the Park and Recreation Master Plan.

Comment: We believe that, although the Percent for Arts program is important, the Parks and Recreation Master Plan is not an appropriate place to include the ordinance. In addition, we believe the ordinance might be modified from time to time. Such modifications would render out of date anything that was included in the Master Plan. We recommend that a statement be included in the Policy section of Chapter 2 that would refer to the Percent for Arts ordinance and policy resolution.

PROCESS

The following steps were followed thus far in developing this draft master plan.

- Council adopted the Town's Comprehensive Plan in 1999.
- In 2000, the Parks and Recreation Commission appointed the Parks and Recreation Master Plan Committee.
- Seven focus group meetings in September 2000.
- Public forum in September 2000
- Public forum in January 2001.
- Committee approved the draft plan on December 19, 2001.
- In February 2002 the Council referred the draft report.
- Boards and commissions reviewed the draft document in April 2002.

Next Steps: We will continue to receive comments until the Council considers this plan again on either May 29, 2002 or June 10, 2002. At that meeting the Council could consider any changes and adoption of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan as part of the Town's Comprehensive Plan.

If the Council adopts the Parks and Recreation Master Plan we would then revise the text to address any changes authorized by the Council. Once the master plan has been modified and corrected we would then print the document and make it available to the public and the Council. It would also be posted on the Town's website, as is the current draft.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Complete recommendations of all Boards and Commissions are attached.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board: On March 26, 2002, the Board voted unanimously (6-0) to recommend that the Council adopt the *Parks and Recreation Master Plan*. Please see the attached recommendations.

Chapel Hill Public Arts Commission: On April 17, 2002, the Commission voted unanimously (10-0) to recommend that the Council adopt the *Parks and Recreation Master Plan*. Please see the attached recommendations.

Greenways Commission: On March 27, 2002, the Greenways Commission voted unanimously (6-0) to recommend that the Council adopt the *Parks and Recreation Master Plan*. Please see the attached recommendations.

Housing and Community Development Advisory Board: The Board met on March 26, 2002, and voted unanimously (7-0) to recommend that the Council adopt the *Parks and Recreation Master Plan*. Please see the attached recommendations.

Library Board: The Board met on March 18, 2002, and voted unanimously (7-0) to recommend that the Council adopt the *Parks and Recreation Master Plan*. Please see the attached recommendations.

Parks and Recreation Commission: The Commission met on March 27, 2002. The Commission voted unanimously (7-0) to recommend that the Council adopt the *Parks and Recreation Master Plan*. Please see the attached recommendations.

Planning Board: The Planning Board met on March 5, 2002, and voted unanimously (9-0) to recommend adoption of the *Parks and Recreation Master Plan*. Please see the attached recommendations.

Transportation Board: The Transportation Board met on March 19, 2002, and voted unanimously (7-0) to recommend that the Council adopt the *Parks and Recreation Master Plan*. Please see the attached recommendations.

Manager's Recommendation: We recommend that the Council refer the comments received tonight to the Town Manager and consider possible modifications to the plan and adoption as part of the Comprehensive Plan at the Council's business meeting of May 29, 2002 or June 10, 2002, depending on the level of questions and comments received this evening.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board Recommendations
2. Chapel Hill Public Arts Commission Recommendations
3. Greenways Commission Recommendations
4. Housing and Community Development Advisory Board Recommendations
5. Library Board
6. Parks & Recreation Commission Recommendations
7. Planning Board Recommendations
8. Transportation Board Recommendations
9. Draft *Parks and Recreation Master Plan*

SUMMARY OF BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN ADVISORY BOARD ACTION

Subject: Master Plan Report: Park and Recreation Master Plan

Meeting Date: March 26, 2002

Recommendation: The Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board recommends that the Council approve the Park and Recreation Master Plan, with the following comments:

- That Exhibits 4-1 (Community Parks), 4-2 (Neighborhood Parks), 4-3 (Recreation Centers and Special Facilities), and 4-4 (Composite Proposals) should be amended to include an overlay illustrating actual trip times to various parks and facilities, in addition to geographic proximity, for service radii. Geographic proximity alone does not account for the actual travel time it takes to travel to neighborhood-serving parks.
- That the Park and Recreation Master Plan should have more continuity and integration with the Greenways Plan.
- That greenways, as linear parks, should be considered as access points to the various parks and facilities, and should be illustrated as such in the exhibits.
- That the Town's bicycle standards, as outlined in the Design Manual, should be included in the Park and Recreation Master Plan.

Vote: 6 - 0.

Aye: Eva Metzger (Chair), Debby Freed, Kate Millard, Tom Mills, Alice Neebe, Wayne Pein

Nay: none

Comments: None.

Prepared by: Eva Metzger, Chair, Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board EM (by TA)
Than Austin, Long Range Planner

SUMMARY OF CHAPEL HILL PUBLIC ARTS COMMISSION ACTION

Subject: Master Plan Report: Park and Recreation Master Plan

Meeting Date: April 17, 2002

Recommendation: The Chapel Hill Public Arts Commission recommends that the Council approve the Park and Recreation Master Plan, with the following comment:

- The Commission recommends that the recently adopted Percent for Art ordinance and policy be added as an addendum to the Master Plan.

Vote: 10 - 0.

Aye: Renee Piechocki (Co-Chair), Barbara Barnes, Lee Butler Bidgood, Jimmie Haynes, Bibb Latane, Susan Leeb, Joan Page, Jean Parish, Linda Passman, Andrew Ross

Nay: none

Comments: None.

Prepared by: Renee Piechocki, Co-Chair, Chapel Hill Public Arts Commission
Karen Slotta, Staff member, Chapel Hill Public Arts Commission



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MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Town Council

FROM: Greenways Commission
Joe Herzenberg, Chair *Bill Au JH*

SUBJECT: Parks and Recreation Master Plan

DATE: March 27, 2002

The Commission voted unanimously (6-0) to recommend that the Council adopt the Parks and Recreation Master Plan as submitted.

Voting yes were Joe Herzenberg (Chair), Audrey Booth (Vice-Chair), Bill Bracey, Peter Calingaert Debbie Morris, and Brenda Nielsen

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Town Council

FROM: Housing and Community Development Advisory Board

SUBJECT: Recommendations on the Parks and Recreation Master Plan

DATE: April 10, 2002

The Housing and Community Development Advisory Board reviewed the draft Parks and Recreation Master Plan on March 26, 2002. The members of the Board unanimously voted to recommend that the Council approve the Parks and Recreation Master Plan with the following stipulations:

- That the user fee sliding scale remain in place
- That the fact that the user fee scale could go down to zero be advertised in the Parks and Recreation brochure

Board members in attendance included Henry Clark , Tracy Dudley, Richard Loeber, Marywinne Sherwood , Elizabeth Welsby, Dorcas Roberson , and Carol Siebert.

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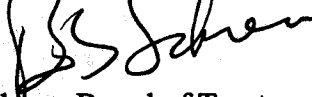
MEMORANDUM

April 16, 2002

TO: Chapel Hill Town Council
W. Calvin Horton, Town Manager

FROM: Bob Schreiner, Chair, Chapel Hill Public Library Board of Trustees

SUBJECT: Endorsement of Parks and Recreation Master Plan



The Board of Trustees of the Chapel Hill Public Library considered the Parks and Recreation Master Plan Report at its April 15, 2002 meeting. The Board voted unanimously to endorse the report.

If I can provide any more information, please call 996-3012 weekdays, 929-7668 home, or bob_schreiner@unc.edu almost always.



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CHAPEL HILL PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

200 PLANT ROAD, CHAPEL HILL, NORTH CAROLINA 27514
VOICE/TTD: (919) 968-2784 • FAX: (919) 932-2923

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor Foy and Council
FROM: John Covach, Chair, Parks and Recreation Commission
RE: Draft Parks and Recreation Master Plan Report
DATE: April 10, 2002

At its March 27 meeting, the Commission voted unanimously (7-0) to recommend that the Council adopt the Parks and Recreation Master Plan as presented with the following modifications:

- Update the Meadowmont Park section to include current plans for the park development
- Include all pertinent updates (example: Southern Village is now within the Town limits)
- Highlight any park/facility access issues for pedestrians and bikers
- Improve maps where appropriate to show future parks in general areas, not specific locations
- Include a statement reaffirming the Town's commitment for access to all programs and facilities for all citizens, regardless of economic status.

The Parks and Recreation Commission voted to forward this recommendation, with voting as follows:

<u>For</u>	<u>Against</u>
John Covach, Chair	none
Andrea Rohrbacher, Vice-Chair	
John JB Anderson	
Bob Broad	
Paul Caldwell	
Pam Hemminger	
Mary Norwood-Jones	

SUMMARY OF PLANNING BOARD ACTION

Subject: Parks and Recreation Master Plan Report

Meeting Date: March 5, 2002

Recommendation: The Planning Board recommends the Town Council adopt the report, taking into consideration the following comments from the Planning Board.

A program needs assessment would be helpful.

Prefer the Town develop land already owned.

Include UNC recreational facilities as part of the stock of facilities available to Chapel Hill citizens.

Continue progress between shared or combined recreational facilities.

Neighborhood parks N-1 and N-3 are on the edges of Town and may not serve the public well – why these locations?

Need for more emphasis for park area in the center of town, e.g., the downtown area, the Airport Road area and Rosemary Street area.

Need for greenways and mini-parks which are accessible without cars.

Parks on the outskirts of town should be funded by the County because they would more likely be used County-wide. It would be more equitable if all users pay their fair share.

There is a need for larger county parks, as a countywide initiative.

Continue work toward coordination between the towns and the county for provision of recreational and park facilities.

The document could include more emphasis on the redevelopment of existing facilities.

The Town should not fund dog parks.

Vote: 9-0

Ayes: John Hawkins, Scott Radway, Julie Coleman, Coleman Day, Gay Eddy, Nancy Gabriel, Sally Greene, Bob Reda, Ruby Sinreich

Prepared by: John Hawkins, Planning Board Chair *JHoy*
Chris Berndt, Long Range Planning Coordinator *lsb*

SUMMARY OF TRANSPORTATION BOARD ACTION

Subject: Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Meeting Date: March 19, 2002

Recommendation: The Transportation Board voted 7-0 to endorse the plan to the Town Council with the following suggestions: benches should be added along the greenways trails, appropriate lighting along the footpaths and drinking fountains in the parks, more miles of pedestrian and bike trails should be added, reduced light pollution, sidewalks, bike, bus shelters and bus access to the parks and greenways should be provided with the coordination of timing, money and fewer parking spaces, land acquisition for parks and greenways should exceed the national guidelines, regional parks and small parks in neighborhoods should be included in the Master Plan as well.

The Transportation Board is pleased with the overall masterplan. We wish to emphasize the need to examine current and future parks so they can be designed so the public can safely reach them without using a private vehicle. Bike routes, bus routes and sidewalks should be designed so the parks can be easily accessed.

Comments from Coalter Lathrop: First, I endorse the document generally and fully support everything Parks and Recreation is trying to do. In the document I would like to see more emphasis on the transportation potential of the greenway system. An emphasis on transportation at least on par with the current emphasis on recreation would have an impact on the decision making process when it comes to prioritizing land acquisition and trail development projects within the greenway system. The greenway system should not be yet another destination for people to drive to, but rather it should provide an alternative route for people moving between destinations.

With transportation in mind, we see that not all miles of trail are created equal. A short segment of trail that is crucial to the safe movement of people from A to B, although perhaps more expensive per linear unit, would enhance the transportation potential of the overall system more than a segment of trail that doesn't go from where people are to where people want to be. Especially important are those difficult-to-navigate missing links

such as an Estes crossing at the end of Bolin and a Franklin crossing at the end of Booker.

I note that the minimum number of miles of new trail recommended by 2011 (6-7 miles minimum) [see SF-8, SF-10] does not correspond to the miles of trails to be purchased and developed by 2011 under the Priorities for Development [see SF-12, SF-13] (maximum 4.5 miles). I recommend that the numbers in Priorities be raised to 3.5 miles of trail to be planned and develop per period, getting us to 7 new miles by 2011.

Under the funding section at Appendix H, I'd like to see a different kind of public/private funding mechanism explored a little further. If the greenway system targets commercial destinations such as University Mall and Eastgate, it seems that there is the potential to bring in the retailers to the planning, funding and marketing of the trail system. "Now you can ride your bike or walk to University Mall." This process would necessarily start with some dialogue between the Town and the businesses. I don't know how feasible it is, but I'd like to see it in there as a possibility.

Vote: 7-0

Aye: Hintz, Cianciolo, Sayle, Schroeder, Hampton, Dobbins, Howe

Absent: Neville, Lathrop

Prepared by: Loren Hintz Chair, Chapel Hill Transportation Board
David Bonk, Senior Transportation Planner, Staff