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SUMMARY



Chapel Hill, like most communities in the United States, is experiencing change. We move into the new millennium as a vibrant, diverse, prosperous, and attractive community, referred to by many as the premier and quintessential university town in the country, located in the context of the highly successful Research Triangle Region. The changes occurring in and around Chapel Hill and the nation can move us forward or hold us back. Thus a fundamental challenge for the future is: how do we manage change in a manner that best promotes the overall well-being of the community?

This Comprehensive Plan is designed to respond to that challenge by setting a positive course for Chapel Hill's future. Based on an analysis of where Chapel Hill is today, the Plan articulates a vision and directions in which we want the community to move. It suggests the ways in which we can invest in our community and build value for the 21st century. And, most importantly, the Plan focuses on specific actions that will help us achieve the future we desire.

The Plan is organized around 12 major themes, each growing out of the community values that have been identified and which, taken together, form a strategy for Chapel Hill's future. These themes are:

- Maintain the Urban Services Area/Rural Buffer Boundary
- Participate in the regional planning process
- Conserve and protect existing neighborhoods
- Conserve and protect the natural setting of Chapel Hill
- Identify areas where there are creative development opportunities
- Encourage desirable forms of non-residential development
- Create and preserve affordable housing opportunities
- Cooperatively plan with the University of North Carolina
- Work toward a balanced transportation system
- Complete the bikeway / greenway / sidewalk systems
- Provide quality community facilities and services
- Develop strategies to address fiscal issues

Using these themes as a foundation, the Plan explores ten substantive areas, each the subject of a separate chapter. Each of these chapters provides an overview of the subject area and then describes a set of goals and objectives that describe what we want to accomplish. Then, in a departure from previous Comprehensive Plans for Chapel Hill, each chapter outlines a set of specific actions to be taken along with a timeline for accomplishing priority tasks. These proposed actions are pulled together in Chapter 13, which summarizes what needs to be done to implement the Plan and lays out a timetable for action. The Plan also includes a Land Use Plan, which indicates desired present and future land uses for all land within Chapel Hill's planning jurisdiction. The final chapter of the Plan presents goals, objectives, and policies related to the role of Town government in the Chapel Hill community.

The best method to fully understand what is being proposed (and why) is to read the entire Comprehensive Plan, Chapters 1 through 14. A reading of the Glossary included as Appendix C also is helpful to get a flavor of the ideas being proposed. For the casual reader of this Plan, or those wanting to cut to the bottom line, a sense of the "big picture" can be gleaned by reading Chapter 2, "Major Themes," and Chapter 13, "Implementation."

There are some significant new ideas being proposed in this Plan, along with re-affirmation of some time-tested concepts. The following is a sampler of some of the ideas that are put forth:

Growth Management Protocol: The Plan proposes that the Town initiate a process or "protocol" to manage the growth of the community in tandem with provision of adequate public facilities. A key component of this protocol will be an annual Growth Management Report submitted to the Town Council in the spring of every year, describing the community's growth patterns over the last year along with an assessment of the capacities of each element of public infrastructure. The Report will also update projections and anticipate future demands on public facilities and services. Tying this information into deliberations on annual Capital Improvements Programs (Town, County, OWASA, and State) will help assure balanced and sustainable growth.

Downtown: Downtown Chapel Hill is not only the historic center of the community; it is also the community's future. As

this Plan has considered all areas of Town and their potential to accommodate additional growth, downtown comes up as a desirable place for this to occur. The focus is on West Franklin Street and all of the downtown portions of Rosemary Street. A set of design guidelines will help ensure that new development complements the fabric of existing buildings.

Funding for Bikeways, Greenways, and Sidewalks: Bikeways, greenways, and sidewalks have been a major focus of Town policy over the past decade. This Plan concludes that the efforts to date have not fully addressed the need, and that existing paths are discontinuous or lacking in key areas. A prime component of the Plan's vision for a shift in our transportation focus is to identify realistic and available funding sources that will allow completion of the Town's pedestrian, bicycle, and greenway networks.

These are just three of the many recommendations included in the Comprehensive Plan. Keys to successful implementation of the Plan include a fast start and sustained momentum. Annual updates are critical in order to monitor changes in the community and mark accomplishments in the action strategies. After five years, a complete reassessment of the state of Chapel Hill should be undertaken and a revision to the Comprehensive Plan begun.

Implementing the Plan will take full community effort. The first step is to decide to do it.

1.0 INTRODUCTION



This Comprehensive Plan is the culmination of a year of work by the citizens of Chapel Hill. Based upon the community values identified during plan development, it lays out a vision for the future and describes the strategies the Town should pursue to achieve the future its residents desire.

The Town's last Comprehensive Plan, adopted in 1989, was the starting point for preparing this plan. This plan reaffirms the values articulated in the 1989 document, as reflected in similar statements of goals and objectives. At the same time, the plan focuses on new issues that have emerged over the last decade, such as the need to manage change in the context of Chapel Hill as a maturing community and the effects of rapid growth in the Research Triangle Region. A major emphasis of the current plan is on implementation: i.e., the specific actions that should be taken to turn the vision for the future into reality.

Preparation of the Comprehensive Plan has been led by the Comprehensive Plan Work Group, comprised of Planning Board members and citizens appointed by Town Council. The Work Group developed the plan recommendations in numerous work sessions over the course of a year. Community meetings were held at key points in the planning process to ensure public input into the plan.

The first product of the comprehensive planning effort was a Data Book published in January 1999, which provided facts and statistics regarding Chapel Hill today and trends for the future. The Data Book is part of the Comprehensive Plan and will be updated every year to provide a current "snapshot" of the community.

The Comprehensive Plan itself is organized into several major sections. Chapter 2.0 describes twelve major themes that form the conceptual framework for the plan. Chapters 3.0 to 12.0 – the plan elements – are the heart of the plan. They present goals, objectives, strategies, and actions for the specific components of community life, such as community character, relations with the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and University Health Care System, regional context, etc. Chapter 13.0 lays out

a program for implementing the Comprehensive Plan. This program sets priorities for short, mid, and long-term actions; establishes a monitoring process to track progress in implementing the plan; and suggests statistical indicators to be used to help assess the health of the community. Chapter 14.0 addresses the role of Town government in community life.

Several appendices are included at the end of the Comprehensive Plan. These include a list of plans previously adopted by Chapel Hill that are considered part of the Comprehensive Plan; a summary of issues and recommendations for four key “focus areas” within the Town; and a glossary of terms used in the plan.

2.0 MAJOR THEMES

2.1 OVERVIEW



The context for this Comprehensive Plan is Chapel Hill at the beginning of the new millennium. Chapel Hill is a mature, historic, vibrant community with unique characteristics. The following are some key facts:

- The historic and still dominant center of the community (physically and culturally) is the University of North Carolina.
- The Town is adhering to an “Urban Services Boundary” that establishes the limit of Chapel Hill’s growth.
- Most of the land within that ultimate urban area is currently developed or spoken for.
- Chapel Hill is widely viewed as an attractive place to live, work, study, and visit.
- Chapel Hill is part of a rapidly growing metropolitan region.

Considering these facts together, it becomes clear that the challenge facing Chapel Hill is one of managing change. This will involve anticipating the nature of change that is on the horizon, along with its likely consequences, and then articulating a response designed to ensure a result that is consistent with the values and aspirations of this community.

Chapel Hill natives are largely outnumbered by more recent arrivals. Long-time residents fondly recall the Town as it was. Yet most residents agree that they live in Chapel Hill because, in spite of its growth and change, it offers a quality of life and a sense of community that remains unique. The characteristics that residents point to as elements of this special quality of life include a number of intangibles, such as small town friendliness; a sense of place and the historic roots of the community; and the youthful exuberance and interchange of ideas fostered by the University. There are also a number of very tangible assets, such as good schools and neighborhoods; a healthy downtown; parks and open spaces; and other evidence of care for the natural and the man-made environments.

Retaining these good and unique qualities is a primary motivation of this plan. However, the plan also strives to create initiatives to *enhance* a community that is already exceptional. In this sense the plan aims not merely to “hold the line” on erosion of community character, but also to “raise the bar” of expectations for such characteristics as pedestrian and bicycle friendliness, the diversity of activity downtown, and the integration of greenways and open space into the fabric of the community. The plan also emphasizes the community’s stated intention to continue to value and maintain its socio-economic diversity.

How will this be accomplished? This Comprehensive Plan is organized around twelve major themes, each growing out of the community values that have been identified, and which, taken together, form a strategy for the community.

2.2 MAJOR THEMES

The major themes (not listed in order of priority) are:

- *Maintain the Urban Services/Rural Buffer Boundary:* This policy was established in 1986 and has helped the community avoid the patterns of sprawl that characterize many high-growth areas. Maintaining the integrity of this boundary is of paramount importance and sets the context for the rest of the plan.
- *Participate in the regional planning process:* Because of the growth of the region and its inevitable impact on Chapel Hill, the Town cannot afford to plan for its future in isolation from the region as a whole. Instead, the community needs to be actively represented in planning and decision-making at the regional level.
- *Conserve and protect existing neighborhoods:* Some residential neighborhoods will face pressures for infill development and redevelopment. This is especially true for neighborhoods immediately surrounding downtown and the main campus of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC).¹ The character of these neighborhoods needs to be conserved.

¹ Throughout this document, “UNC” refers to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.



- *Conserve and protect the natural setting of Chapel Hill:* The Town's beautiful natural environment, including open spaces, meadows, forested areas, scenic vistas, wildlife habitat, and creeks, lakes, and wetlands, is a key component of community character. While some of these areas are identified and protected, others need to be inventoried and guidelines established for their conservation.
- *Identify areas where there are creative development opportunities:* Conversely, there are areas of Chapel Hill that represent opportunities for growth and/or redevelopment that support community objectives. Identification of these areas and consideration of creative new development forms, such as "mixed-use" and "conservation" developments, is an important part of achieving a positive future for Chapel Hill, in a manner that meets the needs of current and future residents and enhances community life.
- *Encourage desirable forms of non-residential development.* Maintaining a mix of private, non-residential uses (e.g., office, retail, and service establishments) is important to the future health and economic vitality of the community. In addition to augmenting the tax base, appropriate forms of non-residential development can help achieve such objectives as making it easier for people to live and work in Chapel Hill, increasing local shopping opportunities, and supporting mixed-use development forms.
- *Create and preserve affordable housing opportunities:* The historic and valued diversity of Chapel Hill is threatened by a robust housing market that results in high housing costs. Aggressive intervention tactics can help ensure that some segments of Chapel Hill's housing stock will remain affordable to low, moderate, and middle income families in the future. By emphasizing affordable housing, the Town can help maintain Chapel Hill's traditional socio-economic diversity.
- *Cooperatively plan with the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill:* The fulfillment of the missions of UNC and the UNC Health Care System will be accompanied by growth of those institutions. Good communication and cooperative planning are critical to assuring that this growth can be absorbed by and integrated into the surrounding community.

- *Work toward a balanced transportation system:* This plan suggests an aggressive, new approach to transportation. This approach shifts the emphasis from the automobile to other means of travel – walking, biking, transit, and park-and-ride – in order to achieve a community-wide, multi-modal transportation system. One positive result of efforts in this direction should be increased use of non-automobile forms of transportation. However, another result is likely to be increased levels of traffic congestion, as the emphasis shifts away from widening streets and accommodating automobiles as the top transportation priority.
- *Complete the bikeway/greenway/sidewalk systems:* A major component of the new transportation approach is an aggressive program to complete Chapel Hill's town-wide network of sidewalks, bikeways, and greenways.
- *Provide quality community facilities and services:* With the continued growth of Chapel Hill and UNC, parts of the Town are developing a more urban character and form. This growth creates the need to develop or upgrade community facilities and services in order to provide the level of quality that citizens expect.
- *Develop strategies to address fiscal issues:* Many of the recommendations of this plan require sound funding programs to ensure implementation. This fact, combined with a desire to maintain and improve the fiscal health of the community, suggests the need to develop specific strategies to allow us to identify how we will pay for what we want.



These themes provide the framework for thinking about Chapel Hill's future. The following chapters of the Comprehensive Plan address specific components of community life. Each chapter begins with a summary of existing conditions and a statement of future goals and objectives. These sections are followed by specific recommendations for actions to achieve the future that we desire. "Measures of progress," in the form of calendar dates or numeric targets to strive for, are provided for priority actions. Chapter 13 of the plan is an implementation section that describes the sequence of steps the Town should take to turn the plan into reality. This chapter contains suggestions for indicators to help assess the health of Chapel Hill and to allow us as a

community to monitor how we are doing over time in implementing the Comprehensive Plan.

3.0 COMMUNITY CHARACTER

3.1 OVERVIEW



An essential attribute of Chapel Hill is its special community character and sense of place. As defined by residents, Chapel Hill's distinctive character encompasses both physical and social aspects of the community. Highly valued elements include:

- The scale and ambience of the *downtown* and its role as the center of the community.
- Attractive and diverse *neighborhoods* surrounding the downtown and elsewhere in the community.
- The *University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill* (UNC) and its contributions to community life.
- The beautiful *natural setting*, including trees, green spaces, and the Rural Buffer surrounding Chapel Hill.
- The town's *history and traditions*, including its physical, social, and economic diversity.
- The social fabric and *sense of community*, as reflected in such qualities as the small town atmosphere, high degree of civic participation, and concern for other people.

Maintaining Chapel Hill's special community character in the face of growth and change represents a fundamental challenge for the future. The forces of change include, among others, the rapid growth of the Research Triangle region; the expansion of UNC and the UNC Health Care System; increasing automobile traffic related to both external and internal growth; and Chapel Hill's attractiveness as a place to live, which is affecting the traditional socio-economic diversity of the community. The town's response to these forces will to a large extent determine what the character of the community will be in the future.

Certain areas of Chapel Hill are more susceptible to change than others because of particular growth pressures or the potential availability of land for development. As depicted on Figure 1, these areas include:

- ***Downtown.*** The traditional role of the downtown as Chapel Hill's commercial core has been fundamentally changed by automobile-oriented commercial development in suburban locations. While remarkably healthy compared to the central business districts of many other American cities and towns that have experienced the same phenomenon, the downtown will continue to be affected by economic and societal changes, as well as by the growth of UNC. Certain parts of the downtown, most notably West Rosemary Street, have underutilized parcels of land that could be redeveloped. Several of the properties along West Rosemary Street have recently been developed with new uses, enhancing the vitality of the downtown.
- ***UNC Campus.*** As described in Chapter 4.0, the UNC campus will be affected by the University's expansion plans.
- ***Close-in residential neighborhoods.*** The older, established neighborhoods surrounding the downtown and UNC campus are subject to influences such as the demand for off-campus student housing and institutional development at the edges of the campus. Key neighborhoods include Cameron/McCauley, Northside, and Pine Knolls.
- ***Airport Road, Fordham Boulevard/15-501, E. Franklin Street, and NC-54 corridors:*** The roadway corridors connecting Chapel Hill to Interstate 40 contain most of the Town's retail commercial development and are subject to increasing traffic volumes and potential land use changes.
- ***Horace Williams property.*** As the town's largest remaining undeveloped parcel, development of this property has the potential to significantly affect the future of Chapel Hill.
- ***Northwest and Southern Areas.*** These two planning areas contain the largest concentration of undeveloped land not owned by UNC within Chapel Hill and its extraterritorial jurisdiction.



Other parts of Chapel Hill are mostly residential areas that may experience some infill development or redevelopment but are generally not as susceptible to the forces of change as the areas shown on Figure 1.

The central purpose of the strategies and actions contained in the Comprehensive Plan is to manage growth and change so that Chapel Hill will continue to have a special community character and quality of life in the future. This will involve retaining the best of the past and the present while developing new, creative responses to the challenges of the future. The strategies primarily focus on the areas shown on Figure 1 because the changes that occur in these areas are most likely to shape the future character of Chapel Hill. Other areas should be monitored for signs of change and the need for action to maintain quality of life for residents.

All of the Comprehensive Plan elements are designed to work together to support community character. The strategies and actions contained in Chapter 7.0, for example, address housing choice as a way to foster socio-economic diversity, while Chapter 9.0 describes strategies for the preservation and enhancement of the town's natural setting. This chapter addresses certain key elements of community character, including neighborhoods, historic resources, the downtown, public art, and town entranceways.

3.2 GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal

Conserve and enhance those elements that define Chapel Hill's special community character and the heritage of Chapel Hill's historic neighborhoods.

Objectives

Physical Environment: Implement and fund policies and programs to protect the Town's beautiful natural setting, distinctive buildings, and that capture these historic, unique features in future development.

Neighborhoods: Protect the physical and social fabric of Chapel Hill's neighborhoods.

Downtown: Implement and fund policies and programs to maintain and enhance the downtown's role as the center of the

Chapel Hill community, with a pedestrian orientation and human scale.

Historic Districts: Maintain the integrity of the Historic Districts and promote their preservation and conservation for the education, pleasure, and enrichment of all the residents of the Town, County, and State.

Diversity: Enhance Chapel Hill's socio-economic diversity. Promote involvement of all groups and residents in Town functions and community activities.

Entranceways: Protect the visual character and design quality of entranceways into Chapel Hill.

STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

3A. Neighborhood Protection

Chapel Hill residents believe that protecting the physical and social fabric of neighborhoods is key to maintaining the Town's community character. Of particular concern are the neighborhoods that touch and circle the downtown and central campus. These neighborhoods are rich in history and tradition, are highly valued by residents, and are among the areas of Town that are most susceptible to change. As indicated in Figure 2, these neighborhoods are designated as "residential conservation areas."



What does this designation mean? It means that it is the stated policy of Chapel Hill that neighborhood protection issues in these areas are paramount. It means that, when policy choices that affect these areas are before the Town Council (road issues, rezoning proposals, public investment decisions), the balance should tilt in favor of protection and preservation. It means that when new neighborhood protection initiatives are being considered (small area plans, design guidelines, occupancy or parking restrictions), these are the areas that should be considered first.

The neighborhoods that have been designated as residential conservation areas are Cobb Terrace, Northside, Cameron-McCauley, Franklin-Rosemary, Westwood, Purefoy Road, Mason Farm, Gimghoul, Laurel Hill, and Glenview. All neighborhoods in Chapel Hill are important, and all face issues

of one kind or another. But when the forces of change threaten to significantly damage the existing fabric of our residential areas, it is these “inner circle” neighborhoods that are likely to feel the pressures first and hardest, and it is here that policy makers need to be particularly attentive. Strategies and actions should be designed not only to protect these areas, but also to make them attractive for a spectrum of longer-term residents, through improved amenities, enhanced safety, and other initiatives that encourage age and income diversity. Local residents should be actively involved in any proposed changes to their neighborhoods through an open public process.

3A-1. Extend the small area planning process to established residential areas.

Past small area plans have largely focused on areas of Chapel Hill and its extraterritorial jurisdiction that have relatively high proportions of undeveloped land (e.g., the Northwest and Southern Areas). As Chapel Hill matures, addressing the character of established parts of the community is becoming more of a focus for long-range planning than determining the direction of areas whose character is not yet set. The Downtown Small Area Plan is a good example (see Strategy 3C-1 below). Given the importance of neighborhood quality of life to Chapel Hill's character, established residential areas facing significant issues are primary candidates for future small area planning.

Numerous models of neighborhood or residential area planning are available from communities throughout the country. Several factors need to be taken into consideration in developing a planning process for established residential areas tailored to Chapel Hill:

- *The plans should be developed as a collaborative process between the Town (Council and staff) and local residents.* The Town's role will be to define the parameters of the plan (including the policy context set by the Comprehensive Plan), provide technical expertise in developing the plan, approve the plan, and assist in implementation. Residents will assist in assessing neighborhood strengths and needs, articulating a positive vision for the future, and developing an action plan to address local issues.
- *The study areas for the plans should be defined based upon the issues to be addressed.* The scale could range from a

single neighborhood with unique needs to a group of neighborhoods with common issues.

- *The planning process should be designed to reach as many residents as possible.* Improving the participation of traditionally underrepresented persons should be a key objective of the process.
- *The plans should emphasize physical and social connections, both within the study areas and between the study areas and the rest of Chapel Hill.* Another key objective should be to bring residents and neighborhoods together in ways that build a heightened sense of identity as part of the larger Chapel Hill community.

The residential area plans will be implemented through coordinated action by local residents and the Town. Town actions could include, among others, capital improvements and adoption of regulatory changes. Resident-driven projects could include items such as special community events and landscape maintenance and improvements on public properties. The need for neighborhood parks should also be addressed as part of the residential area plans.

Two residential areas should be selected for development of “pilot” residential area plans. The Northside and Cameron-McCauley neighborhoods are prime candidates because of their importance to Chapel Hill’s character, the significant issues they face, and the availability of a good base of information for each area (see Appendix B). Following completion of the pilot plans, the program can be evaluated for application elsewhere in Chapel Hill.

3A-2. Develop local design guidelines and implementing regulations.

Chapel Hill’s current design guidelines for new development, adopted in conjunction with the 1989 Comprehensive Plan, contain town-wide standards for site development, architectural character, and landscape character. The intent of the Town was to develop additional, more detailed guidelines for several sub-areas within Chapel Hill. So far, draft guidelines have only been prepared for the downtown area. Design guidelines tailored to local characteristics are particularly appropriate to the older neighborhoods surrounding the downtown, which have an established, often historic character that is potentially vulnerable

Actions: Residential Area Planning

- Define a formal residential area planning process (Town staff)
- Conduct outreach and select pilot residential areas (Town staff, local residents, Town Council)
- Prepare and adopt residential area plans (Town staff, local residents and property owners, Planning Board, Town Council, Advisory Boards, Historic District Commission)

Measure of Progress: Residential Area Planning

- Initiate at least one residential area plan no later than 12/31/2004

Actions: Local Design Guidelines

- Adopt design guidelines for the downtown (Planning Board, Town Council)
- Prepare and adopt local design guidelines as part of residential and other small area plans (Town staff, local residents, Historic District Commission)

Measure of Progress: Local Design Guidelines

- Adopt downtown design guidelines no later than 5/31/2000

Actions: Vehicular Impacts on Neighborhoods

- Implement measures to address vehicular traffic/parking issues as part of residential area plans (Town staff, neighborhoods)
- Develop a plan to address UNC traffic and parking impacts on neighborhoods (Town/UNC work group)

Measure of Progress: Vehicular Impacts on Neighborhoods

- Complete a plan to address UNC traffic and parking impacts on neighborhoods no later than 12/31/2004

to infill and redevelopment pressures. To ensure that infill and redevelopment complements the fabric of established neighborhoods, guidelines specifically tailored to local areas should be developed based upon the characteristics of existing development. The guidelines should address site and architectural elements such as setbacks; building height, scale, and massing; façade articulation; accessory structures, fences, and landscaping; and parking.

Local design guidelines are most appropriately developed with the involvement of residents as part of the residential area planning process (Strategy 3A-1). Again, the Northside and Cameron-McCauley neighborhoods are good possibilities because of their unique development patterns and identified pressures for change. For maximum effectiveness, the guidelines should be adopted into the Town's Development Ordinance. This could be in the form of a Residential Conservation Overlay District or, in the case of a designated Historic District such as Cameron-McCauley, an updating of the Historic District Commission's design guidelines handbook tailored to the characteristics of the district.

3A-3. Reduce vehicular impacts on residential neighborhoods.

High volumes or speeds of vehicular traffic on local streets and parking demand related to UNC are destabilizing influences on neighborhoods adjacent to the campus and the downtown. Vehicular impacts on neighborhoods such as Cameron-McCauley affect quality of life, historic character, and pedestrian safety. Thus steps should be taken both to minimize adverse effects of traffic and parking and to improve pedestrian accessibility within affected neighborhoods. Specific measures include maintaining the pattern of small lanes and streets; consideration of 24-hour, resident-only permit parking; prohibiting large commercial vehicles; and use of traffic calming devices where appropriate.

Solutions to traffic and parking problems of individual neighborhoods can be identified as part of residential area plans (Strategy 3A-1). This approach does not preclude Town action in response to specific problems. In addition, the Town should work with UNC to address the impacts of UNC-related traffic and parking on neighborhoods adjacent to the campus.

3A-4. Consider development of selected “opportunity sites” to help alleviate growth pressures on existing neighborhoods.

This strategy is fully described in Chapter 8.0, Strategy 8A-1. From the standpoint of community character, a major objective is to direct growth pressures to locations that can accommodate them, thus helping to maintain the integrity of established neighborhoods. An example is the development of apartments along West Rosemary Street to absorb some of the rental demand that is impacting the Northside neighborhood. Development plans for West Rosemary Street should exhibit sensitivity to the adjacent Northside residential neighborhood.

Other locations identified by the Future Land Use Plan include the Horace Williams tract and selected parcels along Airport Road (see Chapter 8.0).

Action: Development Opportunity Sites

- In implementing Strategy 8A-1, designate appropriate locations as “development opportunity sites” to alleviate neighborhood growth pressures (Town staff, Town Council)

3A-5. Implement a strategy to address the effects on neighborhoods of the conversion of owner-occupied residences to rental properties.

Residents of the neighborhoods near the UNC campus, particularly Northside, are concerned about the effects of conversion of traditionally single-family, owner-occupied structures to rental properties for students who reside off-campus. Specific concerns include housing affordability, noise, front-yard parking, and effects on the physical character of the neighborhood. A multi-faceted strategy is proposed to address these issues, as follows:

- *Improve the effectiveness of existing regulations through enhanced enforcement and appropriate ordinance modifications.* The Town’s Development Ordinance restricts occupancy of single-family homes to no more than four unrelated individuals. In addition, the portion of the front yard devoted to parking and drive areas is limited to 40 percent in the Historic Districts; this area must be maintained with an all weather surface or gravel and access limited to approved curb cuts. The Town also has a noise ordinance in place that is typically enforced in response to complaints. This ordinance is being evaluated for changes to reduce noise levels and enhance enforcement.

Actions: Rental Conversions

- Undertake coordinated enforcement of occupancy, parking, and noise regulations (Town staff)
- Develop and adopt a rental licensing and inspection ordinance (Town Council)
- Develop and adopt ordinance modifications to address issues such as noise and front-yard parking (Town staff/Town Council)
- Institute a neighborhood outreach program to student residents (UNC)
- Establish a First Option Fund (Town Council)

Measures of Progress: Rental Conversions

- Address rental licensing and inspection, noise, and front yard parking in the comprehensive development ordinance revision (no later than 12/31/2001)
- Achieve a reduction in the number of nuisance complaints received by the Chapel Hill Police Department in neighborhoods adjacent to the campus to below the annual average between 1995 and 1998
- Bring Historic District properties that do not conform to front yard parking requirements into compliance by August 2000

- Determining how many individuals occupy a house can be difficult, but enforcement could be facilitated through institution of a rental licensing and inspection program (see below). The Town has initiated a program to enforce the front yard parking restrictions. Extension of these restrictions to other neighborhoods or even town-wide should be pursued, possibly coupled with modification of the off-street parking requirement for single-family dwellings. The Northside neighborhood, for example, is not a designated historic district and thus is not subject to the front yard parking regulations. Residential Conservation Areas are especially high priorities for the application of such restrictions. In addition, the Town's noise ordinance should be strengthened.
- Educating property owners and renters regarding relevant Town regulations (occupancy, front-yard parking, noise, etc.) could reduce the need for enforcement. The rental licensing and inspection program could be designed to disseminate such information.
- ***Implement a rental licensing and inspection program.*** A rental licensing program would help to ensure that rental units are maintained in compliance with code requirements (see Chapter 7.0, Strategy 7C-1). It would also provide a vehicle for periodic inspection and enforcement of related regulations, such as the occupancy and front yard parking requirements.
- ***Initiate positive communications with student residents.*** Education and outreach to students about what it means to be good neighbors and involving them in neighborhood activities can help to establish positive relationships with other residents. UNC could take the lead in initiating such a program, following models that have been used in other university communities.
- ***Develop design guidelines to address the aesthetic effects of converting single-family homes to rental properties.*** This idea is covered under Strategy 3A-2 (local design guidelines).
- ***Establish a "First Option Fund."*** This fund would encourage owners of affordable homes to provide a local nonprofit or the Town with the first option to buy when they are considering selling their properties. This approach

was suggested by the Northside Focus Area Report as a way to keep home prices affordable and prevent further loss of single-family homes through conversion to rental units (see Appendix B).

3B. Protection of Historic Resources

Chapel Hill's rich historic resources include four National Register Districts (UNC campus, Rocky Ridge, West Chapel Hill, and Gimghoul); three local Historic Districts (Franklin/Rosemary, Cameron/McCauley, and Gimghoul - see Figure 3); and numerous individual properties and structures listed on the National Register. The Historic District Commission has established a series of goals and objectives for the three neighborhood Historic Districts. These goals and objectives are summarized as follows:



1. Conserve the heritage and character of the Historic Districts, including building architecture, outdoor spaces, and landscape qualities.
2. Strengthen public awareness and conservation of the Historic Districts.
3. Foster neighborhood communication and information regarding historic values.
4. Maintain and improve quality of life by addressing issues such as neighborhood stability, the balance between owner-occupied and rental housing, and property maintenance.
5. Identify and protect potential future Historic Districts or sites that are eligible for Landmark Status.
6. Establish congruity between state and local enabling legislation.
7. Integrate historic preservation concepts more fully into Chapel Hill's planning process.
8. Address the integrity of Historic District boundaries.
Discourage demolition of existing housing stock.
9. Reduce transportation impacts on the Historic Districts.

Because of the significance of Chapel Hill's heritage for community character, it is important that the strategies contained in the Comprehensive Plan be implemented in a manner that is sensitive to historic resources and contexts. Examples include:

- Mixed-use development (Chapter 8, Strategy 8A-2), which may be appropriate in some but not all historic contexts.

- Downtown enhancement (Strategies 3C-1 and 2), which should be implemented in a manner that respects surrounding neighborhoods, including the historic districts.
- Park and recreational facility development (Chapter 11, Strategy 11A-7), which should take into account the unique character of historic districts if proposed in these areas.

3B-1. Strengthen the existing Historic District regulations.

Implementation of the neighborhood protection strategies described above will contribute greatly to maintaining the integrity of Chapel Hill's historic neighborhoods. (The residential conservation areas shown on Figure 2 contain both existing and potential future neighborhood Historic Districts.) To further protect historic resources, the Town should review the current Historic District regulatory structure to identify opportunities for improvement. Specific recommendations include:

- *Update the Historic District design guidelines handbook.* The design guidelines handbook is provided to applicants for Certificates of Appropriateness and is used by the Historic District Commission in reviewing applications. It was prepared in 1979 and does not adequately address contemporary issues. An update to the handbook could be coordinated with the development of neighborhood design guidelines per Strategy 3A-2 to address the physical characteristics of individual neighborhoods.
- *Define a more specific approach to dealing with demolitions.* Under the current regulations, the Commission may not deny an application for demolition of a building or structure within the Historic District but may delay demolition for up to 365 days following approval. This requirement could be strengthened by requiring a plan describing how a property is to be used and maintained following building demolition and by developing a systematic approach to negotiating with the property owner regarding alternatives to demolition during the 365-day waiting period.
- *Revise the review criteria for determining congruity with historic aspects of the Historic District.* Used by the Historic District Commission in making decisions on applications for Certificates of Appropriateness, the current criteria focus on site architectural issues and do not adequately address

Actions: Historic Districts

- Update the Historic District design guidelines handbook (Historic District Commission/Town staff)
- Develop and adopt revisions to the Historic District regulations dealing with demolitions and review criteria (Historic District Commission/Town Council)
- Consider designation of new or expanded Historic Districts as part of neighborhood plans (Historic District Commission/Town staff/neighborhoods)

Measure of Progress: Historic Districts

- Adopt revisions to Historic District regulations as part of comprehensive development ordinance revision (no later than 12/31/2001)

effects of changes to individual properties on the neighborhood as a whole.

- *Extend regulatory protection to other potential historic districts.* This recommendation involves identifying potential future historic districts or extensions of existing ones and securing their designation as formal historic districts by Town Council. Residents of affected neighborhood plans should be actively involved in the designation process. The residential area planning process (Strategy 3A-1) will be a good vehicle for involving local residents, providing them with the opportunity to consider historic district designation as a potential neighborhood protection tool.

3C. Downtown Enhancement

Chapel Hill's identity is closely tied to the downtown. Formerly the primary commercial center before the advent of suburban development, the downtown still functions as the cultural heart of the community and a symbol of what makes Chapel Hill a special place to live. Reinforcing the downtown's role in the Chapel Hill community is an important objective of the Comprehensive Plan.

3C-1. Implement the Downtown Small Area Plan.

The Downtown Small Area Plan was adopted in March 2000. A central goal of the plan is to "maintain and enhance the existing downtown as the social, cultural, and spiritual center of Chapel Hill." To achieve this goal, the plan recommends a range of implementation strategies designed to conserve the downtown's special character and increase its vitality. Key recommendations of the plan include:

- Construct a physical scale or computer-aided visualization of downtown as a tool for examining issues, opportunities, problems, and possibilities.
- Pursue opportunities for redevelopment and preservation.
- Adopt design guidelines specific to the downtown.
- Develop an expedited regulatory review process for downtown development projects.
- Develop and implement a plan for Town Parking Lot #5.
- Fund downtown streetscape improvements.



Action: Downtown Small Area Plan

- Develop a schedule for implementation of the Downtown Small Area Plan (Town Council, Town staff)

Measure of Progress: Downtown Small Area Plan

- Develop schedule to implement the Downtown Small Area Plan no later than 12/31/2000

- Develop a downtown parking strategy.
- Improve the downtown refuse collection and recycling systems.

The Downtown Small Area Plan is addressed in more detail in Appendix B.

3C-2. Invest in public improvements such as public buildings and public spaces in the downtown.

Public facilities promote activity in the downtown and contribute to its function as the social and cultural center of the community. These facilities include civic buildings, sidewalks that allow people to enjoy the ambiance of downtown, and open spaces and plazas that serve as community gathering places. Targeted investment in public facilities can help the downtown remain a vital center of community activity into the future. The Downtown Small Area Plan recommends streetscape improvements as a key implementation strategy and also identifies opportunities for development of mini-parks or plazas on town parking lots. Another concept endorsed by the plan is the development of a major cultural institution, such as a music hall, theater, or museum in the downtown.

In implementing the Downtown Small Area Plan, the Town should make streetscape improvements and development of public spaces that promote social interaction a high priority. In addition, the downtown area should be the preferred location for new town buildings that serve the entire community if an appropriate site is available.

Action: Downtown Public Investment

- Adopt a policy designating the downtown as the preferred location for new town buildings that serve the entire community, assuming that an appropriate site is available (Town Council)

3D. Public Art

Public art is a means of defining a community's identity and sense of place, promoting social interaction and discourse, bringing the arts into everyday life, and memorializing the past while expressing shared values for the future. Chapel Hill has an established tradition of public art in outdoor spaces, as evidenced by numerous murals, sculptures, and special installations.

3D-1. Implement a "percent for art" program for town capital improvement projects.

Numerous communities across the country have active public art programs. Many of these programs involve the provision of grants for the design and creation of specific artworks. Another common initiative in place in many cities is to require that a



percentage of the construction budget of public projects be dedicated to art that is integrated into the project and made accessible to the public. Chapel Hill should develop and implement a percent for art program that would apply to new buildings and other major capital improvement projects funded by the Town. As an example, public art could be incorporated into the Town's greenway system.

Percent for art programs are typically implemented through an ordinance, often in conjunction with a community-wide plan for public art. Key considerations in developing a percent for art program include:

- Funding parameters (the amount of dedication [typically one to two percent of the construction budget], maintenance allocation [if any], minimum value of projects subject to the program, etc.)
- Criteria for selecting artworks
- Selection process (including the degree of community involvement)

Ways to encourage voluntary participation in the program by private developers should also be considered.

Action: Public Art

- Develop and adopt a percent for art ordinance (Public Arts Commission, Town staff, Town Council)

Measure of Progress: Public Art

- Adopt a percent for art ordinance no later than 12/31/2001

3E. Town Entranceways

Because of the high volumes of traffic they convey, the visual character of major roadway corridors leading into Chapel Hill is a key component of community character. Key entrance corridors include the US 15-501/15-501 bypass, Franklin Street, NC 86/Airport Road, and NC 54.

3E-1. Update the Master Landscape Plan for Town Entranceway Corridors.

The Master Landscape Plan for Entranceway Corridors was completed in 1988 as part of the last Comprehensive Plan. The focus of the plan is to maintain and enhance the landscape character of Chapel Hill's major corridors through preservation of forested buffers and scenic vistas, installation and maintenance of landscape and streetscape improvements at key locations such as major intersections and gateways, etc. The locations of the entranceway corridors addressed by the Plan are shown on Figure 4. An update of this plan should be considered because conditions along Chapel Hill's major corridors and the Town's planning philosophy have changed significantly since it was first prepared. The update should set priorities for specific



Action: Town Entranceways

- Update the 1988 Master Landscape Plan for Entranceway Corridors (Town staff, Town Council)

Measure of Progress: Town Entranceways

- Update the Master Landscape Plan for Entranceway Corridors no later than 12/31/2004

projects (land acquisition, landscape improvements) recommended to preserve or improve the appearance of entranceway corridors. The recommendations of Chapter 9.0, Strategy 9C-1 with respect to tree preservation and planting along entranceway corridors should also be pursued, with an emphasis on keeping entranceways “green.” Long-term funding and maintenance requirements (including the need to maintain Town Markers) is another issue that should be addressed.

4.0 Relations with the University / Health Care System

4.1 OVERVIEW



The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC) is the original reason for the existence of Chapel Hill and remains central to the Town's identity today. UNC and the UNC Health Care System are the Town's largest employers and function as the local "economic engine." Other benefits the University brings to Chapel Hill include its attractive campus and relationship to the downtown; its lively array of cultural and other activities; and the intellectual environment fostered by an academic community. While they value the contributions that UNC and the UNC Health Care System make to Chapel Hill, many residents are concerned about less positive impacts such as traffic, the fiscal implications of the institutions' tax-exempt status, and changes in neighborhoods near the campus caused by institutional growth.

Both UNC and the UNC Health Care System have grown in recent years and are likely to continue growing. The number of students, UNC employees (including faculty), and employees of the UNC Health Care System grew by 5.7%, 36.3%, and 23.0%, respectively, between 1987 and 1998.² While the growth in the student population was less than in the other two categories, a larger increase is expected over the next ten years as part of the expansion of the University of North Carolina system. (As of March 2000, it was estimated that the UNC student body would increase by approximately 2,200 between 2002 and 2008.) Thus a fundamental challenge for the future is to manage University-related growth and change so as to minimize adverse impacts and maximize positive benefits for the Town and the two institutions.

This challenge applies not only to growth of the main campus adjacent to the downtown, but also to potential development of

² The 1998 totals were 24,238 students, 10,020 UNC-CH staff, and 5,082 UNC-CH Health Care System staff (source: UNC-CH Registrar's Office and Human Resources Department, UNC-CH Health Care System).

outlying properties owned by UNC (see Figure 5). These properties include Mason Farm and the Horace Williams tract. Because most of Mason Farm is already committed to existing uses and/or has high environmental value, only a small portion of the property will be developed in the future.³ The Horace Williams tract, on the other hand, is by far the largest remaining property at 981 acres (675 acres in Chapel Hill and 306 acres in Carrboro).

4.2 GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal

Provide an environment where the Town of Chapel Hill, UNC, and the UNC Health Care System can collaborate to maximize mutual benefits.

Objectives

University-Hospital-Town Coordination: Enhance on-going joint planning processes between the Town, UNC, and UNC Health Care to address issues of mutual concern.

Neighborhood Impacts: Address the effects of UNC and UNC Health Care activities on Chapel Hill's neighborhoods as part of joint planning with those entities.

STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

4A. Cooperative Planning

The Town and UNC have an established planning relationship, as evidenced by cooperative endeavors such as the *Outlying Parcels Land Use Plans* for the Horace Williams and Mason Farm properties. As of the date of adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, UNC was in the latter stages of preparing a Master Plan for the main campus and the Horace Williams property. The fact that the Town's Comprehensive Plan and UNC's Master Plan were prepared simultaneously provides a major opportunity to reinforce the established relationship as the two plans are implemented over the years to come.

³ According to the 1998 *Outlying Parcels Land Use Plans*, 128 acres out of the 1,356-acre property will be made available for future development.

The Town and the University have in place a good structure for cooperative planning comprised of the following:

- A Coordination and Consultation Committee comprised of representatives of UNC, UNC Health Care, Chapel Hill, Carrboro, Orange County, and Chapel Hill/Carrboro Schools. This committee meets quarterly to discuss issues of mutual concern.
- A Town/Gown Committee comprised of staff from the Town, UNC, and UNC Health Care that meets on a bimonthly basis.
- A policy of cross-representation on Town or University planning projects that affect both parties.
- Ad hoc groups that are established on an as needed basis to address specific issues.

4A-1. Coordinate with UNC and the UNC Health Care System in developing and implementing the Master Plan for the main campus.



The purpose of the Campus Master Plan is to provide a guide for future development on the 740-acre main campus, including both UNC and the UNC Health Care System, during the next 20 to 50 years. It is designed both to accommodate the projected increase in the University's enrollment over the next ten years and to establish an ultimate vision of what the campus will be at build-out. A guiding principle of the plan is to:

Recognize that the University's future development and well-being are inextricably tied to the growth and well-being of Chapel Hill and the Triangle; thus, campus plans for housing, parking, transit, utilities, and growth must be coordinated with the Town and region.

From the perspective of Chapel Hill, issues related to the Master Plan relate to the effects of growth of UNC and the UNC Health Care System on the Town. Key issues include:

- Neighborhood impacts (increased demand for off-campus student housing, traffic/parking, etc.). Residential areas that directly abut the campus are sensitive to "edge" effects such as abrupt transitions from institutional to residential scale buildings and acquisition of private properties by the University to accommodate expansion plans.
- Effects of UNC/UNC Health Care growth on Town infrastructure and services (e.g., increased traffic on corridors)

leading to the downtown as more persons commute to work or school).

- The route of potential future transit to and within the main campus and from the main campus to the Horace Williams tract.

The Town and UNC should take advantage of this established structure to address issues related to campus growth, including sharing of growth projections for UNC and the UNC Health Care System to allow the most accurate assessment possible of potential impacts. Cooperative planning to address these issues should focus on solutions that mutually benefit the Town and UNC. Examples include initiatives to encourage park-and-ride and use of transit (Strategy 4A-2) and to develop housing for Town/UNC employees (Strategy 4B-2). Transportation options for the increasing numbers of visitors to UNC and the UNC Health Care System are needed. Another important issue is design review of buildings constructed at the edge of the campus to assess their compatibility with adjacent residential areas. Neighborhoods affected by growth on the campus should continue to be included in the planning process. In addition to neighborhoods being invited by the University to participate in UNC planning endeavors, UNC representatives should be invited to participate in residential area plans prepared per Strategy 3A-1.

4A-2. Coordinate with UNC in developing a park-and-ride master plan and other strategies to manage traffic and parking as the University grows.

A major challenge facing the Town and the University is the potential for increased traffic and parking demand in areas surrounding the main campus as a result of growth of UNC and the UNC Health Care System, coupled with other development in the downtown. In developing the Campus Master Plan, UNC has indicated a commitment to reducing the impact of automobiles by decreasing the ratio of cars to employees below current levels. This policy underscores the need for a coordinated transportation program designed to increase transit usage, ride-sharing, etc. and reduce the number of persons driving alone. Chapter 10.0 proposes a range of actions by the Town to promote alternative transportation modes (i.e., transit, biking, walking) and reduce automobile dependency. UNC similarly promotes use of alternatives to single-occupancy vehicles among members of the University community. Current policies include providing locations for park-and-ride lots on University property and granting incentives for park-and-ride

Actions: Cooperative Planning with UNC/UNC Health Care System

- Use the existing Town/UNC cooperative planning structure to address issues related to campus growth (Coordination & Consultation Committee, Town/Gown Committee, joint work groups)
- Include UNC representation in residential area plans and other Town planning initiatives affecting the University, and vice versa (Town Council, UNC)

Actions: University-Related Traffic and Parking

- Develop a joint Town/UNC park-and-ride master plan (see Strategy 10C-3) (joint UNC/Town work group)
- Continue joint planning to maximize the benefits of potential regional transit service for UNC and the Town (see Strategy 10C-2) (Coordination & Consultation Committee, Town/Gown Committee, Triangle Transit Authority)
- Develop a plan to address UNC parking impacts on neighborhoods (see Strategy 3A-3) (joint work group)

Measures of Progress: University-Related Traffic and Parking

- Adopt a plan and committed funding source for an expanded park-and-ride system no later than 12/31/2004
- Achieve at least a 10% reduction in the number of faculty, employees, and students who commute alone to campus (Based on 1995 figures, this means a reduction from 70% to 63% of employees who drive alone and from 29% to 25% of students who drive alone)

Action: Horace Williams Property

- As part of the cooperative planning process, work with UNC on the plan for the Horace Williams property (joint work group)

usage (free service coupled with increased fees for on-campus parking). Cooperative planning between the Town and UNC should continue to explore ways to promote alternative transportation modes and reduce the impacts of automobiles on the campus and surrounding areas. As part of cooperative planning, it is important to ensure that adequate transportation facilities, including the land and express bus service necessary to support increased park-and-ride usage, are in place to serve projected future growth.

4A-3. Continue the Town's involvement in planning for the future development of the Horace Williams property.

The Land Use Plan for the Horace Williams property, published in the 1998 *Outlying Parcels Land Use Plans Report*, is a good model for cooperative planning between UNC and the Town. Developed by a joint work group, the report recommends a mix of development, recreation, and open space, as well as a dedicated busway or rail transit service along the rail corridor that links the property to downtown Chapel Hill and to potential future development in the Northwest Area. Proposed development on the Horace Williams tract includes, among other elements, a mixed-use "University Village" (e.g., academic and administrative functions, research/incubator facilities, convenience commercial, housing, etc.); "independent uses" (e.g., research or educational facilities) on discrete sites; and housing for faculty, staff, students, and/or visitors.

UNC is developing the conceptual land use plan contained in the *Outlying Parcels Land Use Plans Report* into a more detailed "precinct plan" as part of the Campus Master Plan. The Town should continue to be involved in planning for the Horace Williams property, with a focus on exploring ways in which future development can help achieve Comprehensive Plan goals and objectives in areas such as transit, mixed-use development, employment, and University housing.

4B. University Housing

Housing for students and staff of UNC and the UNC Health Care System is a key issue for both the University of North Carolina and the Town of Chapel Hill and should be a primary focus of cooperative planning. Comprising about 33 percent of the Town's population, UNC students are a vital part of the Chapel Hill community and contribute greatly to the local

economy.⁴ However, the demand they generate for off-campus housing is affecting neighborhoods adjacent to the main campus (see Chapter 3.0). UNC and UNC Health Care staff are similarly essential to Chapel Hill's economy and sense of community. Developing suitable housing for students and staff of the University can reinforce the positive benefits they bring to Chapel Hill while helping to lessen impacts such as traffic along major corridors caused by commuting from outside of Town.

4B-1. Encourage the University to construct student housing on UNC property.

In 1999 34 percent of UNC's student population lived off-campus in Chapel Hill.⁵ As described in Chapter 3.0, the resulting demand for off-campus housing is creating pressures on neighborhoods that are close to the campus, such as Northside and Cameron-McCauley. These pressures will increase as the student population grows, unless the University develops on-campus housing for the additional students.

Representatives of UNC have indicated a commitment to providing on-campus housing to accommodate the increased number of undergraduates ("a bed for every head"). New student housing has been programmed for the main campus as part of the Campus Master Plan. The Land Use Plan for the Horace Williams tract calls for housing for students and other members of the University community as the property is developed in the future. The Town should support UNC in constructing on-campus housing for students, with the objective of keeping the number of undergraduates who live off-campus at or below 1999 levels. This strategy is intended to help control student impacts on neighborhoods while retaining the benefits they provide to Chapel Hill (tax revenue, income for landowners, positive involvement in the community, etc.). It should be coupled with broader strategies to increase the availability of housing for all members of the Chapel Hill community, as described in Chapter 7.0. These strategies should include encouraging private developers to construct appropriately designed and located housing oriented towards students.

Action: On-Campus Student Housing

- As part of the cooperative planning process, encourage UNC to construct housing on UNC property to accommodate future increases in the student population (Coordination & Consultation Committee, Town/Gown Committee)

Measure of Progress: On-Campus Student Housing

- Maintain the number of UNC undergraduates who live off-campus in Chapel Hill at or below 1999 levels

⁴ Approximately 15,000 UNC-CH students live in Chapel Hill, either on or off campus (source: UNC-CH Housing Department and Registrar's Office, Chapel Hill Planning Department). This represents 33 percent of Chapel Hill's estimated 1998 population of 45,000.

⁵ The 1999 student population was 24,605, of which 8,287 lived off-campus in Chapel Hill (source: UNC-CH Housing Department and Registrar's Office, Chapel Hill Planning Department).

4B-2. Establish a Town/UNC partnership to develop off-campus housing for employees.

The projected expansion in enrollment will result in a proportional increase in the number of UNC faculty and staff. This will in turn create increased local demand for housing for faculty members, staff, and graduate students not covered by the “bed for every head” policy. Given the high cost of housing in Chapel Hill, many will not be able to afford to live in the Town, a dilemma shared by most Town employees. To address this need, the Town and UNC should seek opportunities to develop housing targeted to University and Town employees, as well as graduate students, in appropriate locations. The most promising immediate location is the West Rosemary Street area. Designated as a potential development opportunity area in Chapter 8.0 (Strategy 8A-1), West Rosemary Street offers a number of advantages for off-campus housing development:

- Its proximity to campus would allow residents to walk rather than drive to work or school.
- It would reinforce many of the objectives for the downtown set by the Downtown Small Area Plan, such as promoting housing, mixed uses, and street life in the downtown and preventing Rosemary Street from becoming a service street for Franklin Street.
- It would alleviate housing demand in the adjacent Northside neighborhood.

Actions: Off-Campus Employee Housing

- Jointly develop off-campus housing for Town and UNC employees on West Rosemary Street (joint work group)

Measure of Progress: Off-Campus Employee Housing

- Initiate construction on joint UNC/Town employee housing development no later than 12/31/2001

A joint Town/UNC work group has been established to investigate the feasibility of developing housing for UNC and Town employees in the West Rosemary area. This study is focusing on for-sale housing made affordable to employees through a combination of techniques, particularly loan guarantees, ground leases, interest rate reduction loans, and partial tax abatements. The Town and UNC should move forward with this project and explore similar opportunities in the future, for example on the Horace Williams tract as it is developed in conjunction with enhanced transit service.

5.0 REGIONAL CONTEXT

5.1 OVERVIEW



Chapel Hill is part of the rapidly growing Research Triangle Region (Figure 6). From 1960 to 1990, the population of the metropolitan statistical area (defined as Chatham, Durham, Franklin, Johnston, Orange, and Wake Counties) grew from 442,523 to 858,385 people – an increase of 94 percent. Between 1990 and 1997, the population of the four counties that form the core of the region – Chatham, Durham, Orange, and Wake – increased by 166,181 (22 percent). During the same period, the population of Chapel Hill increased by 5,150 residents, or 13 percent. The Greater Triangle Regional Council projects that 600,000 new residents will move into the region by 2020, equal to the current populations of Raleigh, Durham, Chapel Hill, and Cary combined. As accelerated growth continues in the region, Chapel Hill will more and more be affected by regional problems such as traffic congestion, loss of open space, and increased demand for public facilities and services.

While governmental responsibilities in the Triangle region are divided among numerous counties and local municipalities, there are several organizations whose primary mission is focused on regional planning and development issues. These organizations include:

- *Triangle J Council of Governments.* One of 18 regional councils established in 1972 by the General Assembly, the Triangle J Council of Governments is a voluntary organization of municipal and county governments in North Carolina's Region J (Chatham, Durham, Johnston, Lee, Orange, and Wake Counties – see Figure 7). The Council's functions include coordinating planning activities of local governments, providing technical assistance, and acting as an informational clearinghouse.
- *Triangle Transit Authority (TTA).* The TTA operates inter-city bus service that connects Raleigh, Durham, Chapel Hill, and Research Triangle Park. In addition, TTA has developed a Regional Transit Plan that includes rail service,

expanded bus service, shuttles, park-and-ride, and enhanced pedestrian and bicycle access.

- *Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)*. The Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro MPO is responsible for transportation planning in the western portion of the Research Triangle Region and is currently developing a 2025 Regional Transportation Plan. A separate organization, the Capital Area MPO, serves the eastern part of the Triangle region.
- *Greater Triangle Regional Council*. Comprised of academic, civic, government and business leaders, the Greater Triangle Regional Council was established in 1993 to set strategic long-term directions for the region. A primary initiative of the Council is Regional Development Choices, which developed three scenarios for future development of the Research Triangle Region to spur community dialogue about the future.
- *Triangle Land Conservancy*. The Triangle Land Conservancy was established in 1983 to protect the most important natural and scenic areas of the six-county Triangle J region. It uses funds to identify the most important natural areas in the region, acquire protective interests in property, manage land under its protection, and educate landowners and the public about the region's natural areas and wildlife.

In addition to the Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro MPO, Chapel Hill participates in several planning initiatives that involve interjurisdictional cooperation with the Town's immediate neighborhoods. These include the Durham-Chapel Hill Work Group, the Chatham County-Orange County Orange Group, the Joint Planning Land Use Agreement with Carrboro and Orange County, and Shaping Orange County's Future.

5.2 GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal

Establish effective regional cooperation that promotes sustainable growth patterns, recognizing that economic development, land use, transportation, environmental, natural area linkages, and other planning issues transcend the boundaries of Chapel Hill.

Objectives

Regional Planning: Support multi-jurisdictional planning initiatives to address regional issues.

Rural Buffer: Maintain the Rural Buffer's role in providing open space and rural character, limiting sprawl, and reinforcing Chapel Hill's special community character.

STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

5A. Regional Cooperation

Enhanced regional cooperation is key to effectively addressing the many issues affecting Chapel Hill's future that go beyond Town borders. Efforts at regional cooperation should build on existing organizations and initiatives that involve collaboration at different levels of government (municipal, county, regional, and state). In addition to actively participating in existing initiatives, Chapel Hill should promote new ones on important issues that require an inter-jurisdictional or multi-jurisdictional response, with the objective of mobilizing regional resources to bring about positive change.

5A-1. Seek opportunities for formal and informal communication with other Triangle Area jurisdictions on regional planning issues.

The Town of Chapel Hill alone cannot implement a number of the strategies proposed in the Comprehensive Plan. Transportation planning is a prime example; increasing automobile traffic is driven by growth both external and internal to Chapel Hill. Other strategies have regional implications (e.g., affordable housing) or would be more effective if tied to a broader initiative (e.g., regional greenway planning).

Comprehensive Plan strategies with regional dimensions include the following:

Economy and Employment

- Cooperating with Orange County on economic development opportunities (6A-1)

Housing

- Collaborating with Orange County providers on affordable housing initiatives (7A-1)

Land Use and Development

- Maintaining the Urban Services Area/Rural Buffer (5B-1)
- Developing small area plans for areas that adjoin neighboring jurisdictions, such as the US 15-501 Corridor (8C-1)

Natural Environment

- Developing a network of greenways (should have regional connections) (9B-1)
- Improving air quality (9E-1)
- Managing watersheds, stormwater, and water quality (9F-1, 9F-2)

Transportation

- Developing a comprehensive pedestrian and bicycle network (should have regional connections) (10A-2)
- Improving transit service (10C-1)
- Exploring potential regional transit service (10C-2)
- Increasing use of park-and-ride lots (10C-3)
- Developing a Transportation Demand Management program (10D-1)

Community Facilities and Services

- Providing water and sewer service (Orange Water and Sewer Authority) (11A-1)
- Managing solid waste (11A-2)
- Providing public education (Chapel Hill/Carrboro School District) (11A-5)

Cooperation on these many issues needs to take place at two levels. The first involves working with Chapel Hill's immediate neighbors, primarily Orange County and Carrboro, to address issues of mutual concern. Examples of issues that should be cooperatively addressed with Orange County and Carrboro include maintaining the Urban Services Area/Rural Buffer (5B-

1), cooperating on economic development opportunities (6A-1), managing solid waste (11A-2), and planning ahead for school facilities (11A-5). Orange County and Carrboro are Chapel Hill's most active interjurisdictional partners. The Town should also work with its other immediate neighbors – the City of Durham, Durham County, and Chatham County – as well as the Town of Hillsborough (which abuts the Rural Buffer to the north) on specific issues. For example, development of a small area plan for the US 15-501 corridor (8C-1) would need to be coordinated with the City of Durham. Conversely, future development along the US 15-501 corridor in Chatham County will affect Chapel Hill's Southern Area.

The second level of regional cooperation needs to take place at the scale of the Triangle region as a whole. Regional transit service is an example of a strategy with region-wide implications. Another is development of a regional system of greenways, bikeways, and natural habitat corridors. (The Triangle Greenways Council, a private, non-profit group of citizens, is planning and promoting a regional trail network.) Region-wide concerns should be taken into consideration when implementing solutions at the scale of Chapel Hill or Chapel Hill and its immediate neighbors. The ultimate form of the 15-501 corridor in Chapel Hill and Durham, for example, will be influenced by the results of planning for regional transit service. Greenway planning in Chapel Hill should address both connections to neighboring municipalities and the broader context of a potential region-wide greenway system.

In addition to taking into account the regional implications of local issues, the Town should be an advocate for sustainable policies at the regional level on land use, transportation, environmental, and other issues. This dialogue should include the Research Triangle Park (RTP), whose future development will have a major influence on the sustainability of the region. Approximately 50,000 persons currently work in the RTP, with an additional 18,000 projected when the park is built out. Shifts in land use patterns in the RTP to incorporate mixed-use development (i.e., employment, residential, and institutional uses) would help to alleviate the effects of growth of the park on the region's housing markets, public facilities and services, roads, and air quality.

Actions: Regional Cooperation

- Continue to work with neighboring jurisdictions on issues of mutual concern (interjurisdictional work groups)
- Continue to participate in region-wide initiatives of concern to Chapel Hill (Town Council and staff, regional jurisdictions and planning entities, RTP Foundation)
- Act as a regional advocate on issues of concern to Chapel Hill (Town Council)

Measure of Progress: Regional Cooperation

- Include a report on progress on regional cooperation issues in the annual growth management report prepared per Chapter 8.0, Strategy 8B-1

5A-2. Maintain coordination with Shaping Orange County's Future Task Force to ensure coordination of planning and community building strategies.

Shaping Orange County's Future (SOCF) is a citizen-based initiative launched in the fall of 1996 by Orange County and the Towns of Chapel Hill and Carrboro, in cooperation with the Town of Hillsborough. The 30-person SOCF Task Force is charged with developing a vision for Orange County's future that will serve as a policy base to coordinate future long-range decisions and plans by municipal and county governments. As part of its work, the SOCF Task Force has developed the following "Shared Set of Values for Shaping Orange County's Future":

- A sense of a shared community and vibrant community life
- The basic well-being of all individuals
- Development that is sustainable
- The character of the towns
- The rural character of the County
- Development of young people
- Responsive and responsible governance

A major focus of the SOCF Task Force's work has been on sustainability and community building, which are considered to be over-arching issues for the future. Mixed-use development, including small villages where people can live, work, and shop within walking distance and employment areas designed as integrated communities, is a key concept under consideration by the Task Force.

Development of the Chapel Hill Comprehensive Plan has been coordinated with the SOCF project. Comprehensive Plan strategies, actions, and supporting measures of progress in areas such as Housing (Chapter 7.0), Land Use and Development (Chapter 8.0), Natural Environment (Chapter 9.0), and Transportation (Chapter 10.0) are designed in large part to achieve a more sustainable community. Similarly, "building community" is a fundamental principle of the Comprehensive Plan, reflected in strategies designed to foster diversity, bring the community together, and reinforce Chapel Hill's unique sense of place. Specific community-building priorities identified by SOCF include increased involvement by UNC in community problem solving; preservation of open space, natural resources, and environmental quality; and improved inter-jurisdictional governance, all of which are priorities for the Comprehensive Plan.

Action: Shaping Orange County's Future

- Continue to coordinate with the SOCF Task Force in developing and implementing planning and community building strategies, including development of a Town strategy (Town, SOCF Task Force, Orange County, Carrboro)

Measure of Progress: Shaping Orange County's Future

- Develop and adopt a Town strategy for addressing the recommendations of Shaping Orange County's Future no later than 12/31/2001



Reflective of shared values among residents of Chapel Hill and Orange County, the high level of agreement between Comprehensive Plan and SOCF goals and policies sets a promising framework for future cooperative planning endeavors involving the County and local municipalities. The Town should continue to coordinate with the SOCF Task Force and Orange County in implementing the two planning initiatives.

5B. Rural Buffer

Established by the 1987 Joint Planning Agreement, the Rural Buffer and the related concept of the Urban Services Area are considered important to maintaining the character and identity of Chapel Hill, Carrboro, and Orange County. The Rural Buffer is defined as land that will remain rural in character, contain low-density residential uses (one unit per two acres), and not require urban services (public water and sewer). The Rural Buffer and other planning areas in Orange County are shown in Figure 8. Defined by an Urban Services Boundary, the Urban Services Area is the area within which public utilities and services are currently available or will be provided in the future. The Urban Services Area includes the urban areas of Chapel Hill and Carrboro and adjacent “transition areas” which are in the process of changing from rural to urban land uses. The Chapel Hill Urban Services Area is shown in Figure 9.

The Rural Buffer and Urban Services Area have effectively functioned to limit sprawl, promote compact development patterns, and retain a small to medium sense of scale for Chapel Hill. Residents of the Town and Orange County alike value the open space character of the Rural Buffer and the role it plays in reinforcing Chapel Hill's distinctive town character. However, there is concern that the character of the Rural Buffer will be eroded by the pressure for development created by regional growth.

5B-1. Work with Orange County and Carrboro to evaluate and implement options for strengthening the Urban Services Area and Rural Buffer.

A variety of techniques are available to strengthen the Urban Services Area and Rural Buffer. For the most part, these techniques will need to be implemented by Orange County because the Rural Buffer is located outside of Chapel Hill's jurisdiction. However, Chapel Hill and Carrboro should work with Orange County to develop and evaluate options because of the joint nature of the planning challenge. *The list of potential*

strategies presented below has been developed to provide ideas regarding options that could be explored, not as a definitive recommendation. Several of the techniques were proposed in the *Facilitated Small Area Plan for Carrboro's Northern Study Area*, adopted by the Town of Carrboro in 1997.

Consider creative zoning options. The current density permitted in the Rural Buffer (one unit/two acres) is more reflective of low-density suburban development than of rural land uses. In practice, the relatively poor suitability of the underlying soils for on-site sewage disposal, combined with the prohibition on extension of public sewer lines, represents more of a constraint to development than the permitted zoning. Creative zoning options more responsive to the carrying capacity of the land and in keeping with the desired character of the Rural Buffer should be considered. One example would be to reduce the base density to one unit per five acres for conventional developments while allowing the density to be increased to current levels for subdivisions that follow conservation development principles (i.e., that concentrate development in more suitable areas while preserving a large proportion of the tract as open space).

Develop an area-wide map of potential conservation lands. The principal characteristics of the Rural Buffer are its undeveloped woodlands, wetlands, fields, and pastures. To protect these essential features as growth pressures continue to mount in the future, it is essential that the special elements of the rural landscape that should be preserved be identified before development takes place. In this approach, a preliminary designation is made of those parts of undeveloped properties that have a high value for conservation, thus establishing a framework around which new development can be designed to create an interconnected network of open space and natural features. This approach does not involve condemnation or public acquisition, but instead relies upon creative ways of accommodating full legal density on other parts of the properties in question. Therefore, it does not obligate governmental jurisdictions to costly future actions, nor does it diminish the development potential of any parcel. This tool is closely associated with certain zoning and subdivision techniques known as "conservation development" (see Chapter 8.0, Strategy 8A-3). In applying the conservation development concept to the Rural Buffer, the issue of on-site septic systems and wells will need to be addressed.

Use Purchase of Development Rights (PDRs). Typically used as a farmland preservation technique, PDRs allow properties to remain in private hands while precluding future development. This technique is inherently limited as an area-wide protection tool by the relatively high land values created by suburban zoning densities. Nevertheless, PDRs can be an excellent way to conserve individual properties or portions of properties that have particular significance (working agricultural land, viewsheds, etc), and thus can supplement other techniques such as conservation development. Orange County has a PDR program in place; the key to effective use of this technique is adequate funding.

In a variation on the PDR concept, the landowner who sells the development rights could voluntarily use the proceeds to invest in a coordinated investment opportunity that meets the community's needs (e.g., affordable housing). Such a program would need to be coordinated by a private, non-profit organization or other agency.

Explore Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs). In this approach, regulations would be enacted to allow developers to purchase the rights to develop one parcel of land and to exercise those rights on another parcel within the jurisdiction. Such an ordinance would determine the areas from which those rights may be "sent" and those that would "receive" them, either by designating special districts for these purposes or by establishing certain objective criteria to be met in each case.

Because the density permitted in the Rural Buffer is essentially a suburban one, this area could theoretically generate a fairly large number of potential units needing accommodation within TDR "receiving districts." Therefore, this technique should not be viewed as playing a major potential role in keeping the area open, and is realistically a tool mostly for use on an occasional basis (similar to PDRs in that respect). Furthermore, North Carolina law does not currently enable TDRs.

If state enabling legislation were to be obtained and a TDR program implemented, designation of the areas to receive additional development rights will be a key issue. The concept of "Village Centers" under development by the SOCF Task Force could provide the basis for designating receiving areas. Design standards should be developed to control the appearance of these areas. The standards should specify that receiving areas resemble historic hamlets and villages with traditional streetscapes and

neighborhood greens, rather than higher-density groupings of attached housing arranged in suburban development forms.

Encourage landowner compacts. A "landowner compact" is a voluntary agreement among two or more adjoining landowners to essentially dissolve their common boundaries and to plan their separate but contiguous landholdings in an integrated, comprehensive manner. Areas for development and conservation could be located so that they would produce the greatest benefit, allowing development to be distributed in ways that would preserve the best parts of the combined properties. In a simple example, all the development that would ordinarily occur on two adjoining parcels could be grouped on the one containing the best soils or slopes, or having the least significant woodland or habitat, leaving the other one entirely undeveloped. Similarly, the concept could be used to preserve a working farm on one of the properties. The two landowners would share net proceeds proportionally, based upon the number of house lots each could have developed independently.

5B-2. Revise the boundary of the Urban Services Area.

Chapel Hill's Southern Small Area Plan designates a significant amount of land for low-density residential development. Largely undeveloped, this land is located within Chapel Hill's extraterritorial jurisdiction, the Joint Planning Transition Area, and the Urban Services Area. The Town should change the boundary of the Urban Services Area to delete this area, effectively making it part of the Rural Buffer. This change is reflected on the Land Use Plan (Figure 11) and is official Town policy as a result of adoption of this plan.

Actions: Urban Services Area/Rural Buffer

- Develop and implement enhanced protection strategies for the Rural Buffer (Orange County, Chapel Hill, Carrboro, Hillsborough)
- Explore a coordinated TDR/PDR/conservation easement strategy as a priority Rural Buffer protection action (Orange County, Chapel Hill, Carrboro, Hillsborough)

Measure of Progress: Urban Services Area/Rural Buffer

- Initiate discussions on coordinated TDR/PDR/conservation easement strategy no later than 12/31/2001
- Evaluate options for a joint Urban Services Area/Rural Buffer strategy no later than 12/31/2004

6.0 ECONOMY AND EMPLOYMENT

6.1 OVERVIEW



Chapel Hill benefits from a strong economy driven by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC) and the UNC Health Care System at the local level and regional growth in the Research Triangle Area. The unemployment rates for both Chapel Hill and the region in 1998 were under 2%, as compared to 3.5% and 4.5%, respectively, for North Carolina and the United States. The number of jobs in Chapel Hill grew from 20,320 in 1990 to 24,200 in 1998, a rate of growth twice as fast as the increase in population during the same period.

Chapel Hill residents have identified several issues of concern related to the local economy and employment. One issue is the desire for a balance among employment, housing, and commercial opportunities within Chapel Hill, so that the prevalent pattern is less one of nonresidents commuting into town to work and residents driving out of town to work and shop. Providing local workers with opportunities to live in Chapel Hill through housing affordability/diversity strategies is a key consideration (see Chapter 7.0). A second issue is the extent to which UNC and the UNC Health Care System dominate the local economy. While the economic benefits these institutions provide to Chapel Hill are indisputable, their tax-exempt status and the fact that they comprise over 70 percent of the Town's employment suggest that diversification of the local economy should be considered.

A strategic approach to promoting non-residential development and related employment and commercial opportunities in Chapel Hill is proposed to address these issues. A basic premise is that economic development should occur in a manner that supports the Town's high quality of life and community character, which are key to Chapel Hill's economic prosperity. Thus economic development initiatives should be measured not only by how much they increase employment opportunities or the tax base, but also by the extent to which they help fulfill other objectives of the Comprehensive Plan. Implementation of the strategies proposed in this chapter should be coordinated

with such other Comprehensive Plan strategies as creating mixed-use environments, increasing housing choice, and promoting alternatives to use of the private automobile.

6.2 GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal

Increase employment opportunities for residents and satisfy local demand for commercial and retail services.

Objectives

Economic Diversity: Promote diversification of the Town's economy and employment opportunities for residents, consistent with supporting a high quality of life.

Commerce:

- Develop and maintain commercial uses that are compatible with the character and scale of Chapel Hill.
- Develop and maintain the downtown as a pedestrian-oriented focal point for the community's commercial and retail needs.

Mixed Use: Provide opportunities to create "living and working neighborhoods," or mixed-use developments in appropriate locations.

STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

6A. Non-Residential Development

Non-residential development in Chapel Hill includes a variety of uses, such as office buildings, retail and service establishments, and institutions. As Chapel Hill's primary employers, UNC and the UNC Health Care System are the driving forces in the local economy. The contributions of these two institutions to the economic vitality of the community should be recognized and supported in the future as the Town and University jointly address issues associated with growth (see Chapter 4.0, Relations with the University/University Health Care System). Given the tax-exempt status of these institutions and the objective to diversify the economy, appropriate forms of private non-residential development should also be encouraged. This strategy

is intended to achieve a variety of purposes – to make it easier for people to live and work in Chapel Hill, increase local shopping opportunities, augment the tax base, support mixed-use development, etc. – in a manner compatible with the Town's character and scale.

6A-1. Encourage desirable forms of non-residential development.

A multi-faceted approach is called for to attract and retain desirable forms of non-residential development. Elements of this approach include the following:



- *Designate appropriate locations for new non-residential development.* As a maturing community, Chapel Hill has relatively little vacant land remaining that is suitable for non-residential development. Chapter 8.0 (Land Use and Development) identifies appropriate locations for office and commercial uses, wherever possible in mixed-use settings, with the objective of achieving a balance between residential and non-residential uses.
- *Define desirable types of non-residential development.* Certain uses, such as heavy industry or regional shopping centers, are not suitable for Chapel Hill because of their character, scale, and/or community impacts. As part of a proactive economic development strategy that builds on the strengths of the community, the types of development that are appropriate to Chapel Hill should be identified. Berkeley, CA is an example of a community that used this approach at a larger scale. Berkeley worked with business interests and citizens on strategies to develop an “environmental economy” that emphasizes “green business” development. (“Green business” refers to economic activities that avoid harm to the environment, or help protect the ecosystem in some way.⁶)

In Chapel Hill, desirable types of non-residential development are those that are attracted to and complement the Town's quality of life and high standards for community character. Examples include appropriately scaled office and research facilities, businesses that involve the humanities or the fine arts, and retail uses that serve the local community. The presence of UNC and the UNC Health Care System suggests that businesses derived from University-related research activities

⁶ Roseland, Mark, *Toward Sustainable Communities: Resources for Citizens and their Governments*, New Society Publishers, 1998, p. 160

may be good candidates (see Strategy 6C-1). Office uses provide the greatest net fiscal benefits to the Town (see Chapter 12.0, Fiscal Conditions).

- **Consider proactive approaches to attracting new development.** Having defined appropriate locations and types of non-residential development, the Town should consider public/private partnerships and other proactive ways to make desired developments happen on designated opportunity sites. Examples include providing incentives, expedited development reviews, or soliciting developer proposals on specific projects (e.g., downtown projects that combine office and/or retail with housing).
- **Encourage small business development.** An important part of a diverse economy, small businesses promote local self-reliance, increase employment opportunities for residents, and are appropriate to the scale of Chapel Hill. The Town should maintain a policy/regulatory climate that is supportive of small businesses. An example is development review and approval procedures that expedite minor projects, thus helping to make Chapel Hill more affordable for small businesses. The Development Ordinance revision should include consideration of provisions to facilitate small business development.
- **Support the incubation and growth of entrepreneurial/start-up businesses.** As part of a strategy of encouraging small business development, the Town should pursue regulatory and other mechanisms to facilitate and promote the start-up of new businesses in Chapel Hill. This effort could include partnering with UNC and the UNC Health Care System to identify entrepreneurial opportunities associated with research and development activities at these institutions
- **Retain existing businesses.** In contrast to traditional economic development strategies, which often focus on attracting companies from other locations, contemporary practice emphasizes growing and retaining local businesses. For this strategy to be most effective, land and facilities that can accommodate the various stages of business development (from startup through growth and maturation) should be available in the community. Chapel Hill's ability to accommodate business expansion needs is constrained by the amount of suitable land available. Nevertheless, the Town should keep apprised of the needs of local businesses

Action: Non-Residential Development

- Develop and implement a proactive strategy to encourage and retain non-residential development, including small businesses (Town staff, Town Council, Orange County Economic Development Commission)

Measure of Progress: Non-Residential Development

- Develop and adopt a non-residential development strategy no later than 12/31/2004

Action: Non-Residential Development Design Guidelines

- Review and strengthen existing design standards and guidelines for non-residential development (Town staff, Design Commission, Town Council)

Measure of Progress: Non-Residential Development Design Guidelines

- Address non-residential development design guidelines in the comprehensive development ordinance revision (no later than 12/31/2001)

and assist in meeting those needs where possible. This effort should include working with the Orange County Economic Development Commission and Chapel Hill-Carrboro Chamber of Commerce to encourage Chapel Hill businesses that are considering relocating to stay in Orange County.

6A-2. Strengthen design standards to ensure that new non-residential development is compatible with existing development.

It is important that new non-residential development be in keeping with the character and scale of Chapel Hill. Development in the downtown, for example, should be compatible with the form, proportion, and pedestrian scale of existing buildings and streetscapes. The Eastowne Office Park off of US 15-501 is an auto-oriented office development but has a wooded character typical of Chapel Hill and is located next to apartment buildings, creating opportunities to walk to work.

The proactive approach to encouraging non-residential development recommended by Strategy 6A-1 should be coupled with strengthened design standards and guidelines to ensure that such development complements Chapel Hill's built and natural environment and promotes transit, pedestrian, and bicycle usage. Issues that should be addressed by these standards include visual character and scale; relationship to adjacent land uses; transportation issues (traffic, transit, and pedestrian/bicycle connections); and protection of natural resources. The standards should encourage mixed-use development forms and be linked to the criteria for the location and design of mixed-use centers proposed in Chapter 8.0, Strategy 8A-2.

6B. Mixed-Use Development

As described in Chapter 8.0 (Land Use and Development), an important concept of the Comprehensive Plan is to foster mixed-use environments that create opportunities for living, working, and shopping in close proximity.

6B-1. Encourage new non-residential development in mixed-use settings.

The conventional suburban development pattern isolates office developments, shopping centers, and residential subdivisions from each other. To counteract this prevalent trend, the Town should encourage non-residential development to be located in mixed rather than single-use settings wherever possible. Regulatory or other issues that are hindering efforts to create true mixed-use developments should be addressed as part of this

effort. The mixed-use development concept is addressed in more detail in Chapter 8.0, Strategy 8A-2.

6C. University-Related Business Development

Many universities across the country have strategic relationships with host communities designed to parlay research and related activities into local economic development opportunities. Northwestern University and the City of Evanston, IL, for example, jointly own a 24-acre mixed-use research park adjacent to the campus. This park contains nearly 350,000 square feet of office, laboratory, commercial, and residential space occupied by 90 companies and organizations employing nearly 1,000 persons. Georgia Tech University in Atlanta has “incubator” facilities located both on and off campus. These facilities accommodate University research activities while providing space and assistance for start-up companies.

6C-1. Work with UNC to identify opportunities for private entrepreneurial activity related to University research.

As part of the strategy to encourage appropriate non-residential development recommended by Strategy 6A-1, the Town and UNC should explore opportunities to establish University-related private businesses in Chapel Hill. Potential areas include medical sciences, communications, engineering, and other research/technology functions. The Horace Williams tract is a logical candidate for this type of development; the Land Use Plan developed by a joint UNC/Town work group recommends uses such as research-oriented facilities and incubator facilities for technology transfer on portions of the property. Ways to capture revenues for the Town from private businesses located on University-owned property should be explored in implementing this recommendation. Appropriate sites not owned by UNC should also be considered in order to generate local property tax revenues. Potential sites include areas designated for mixed-use development on the Future Land Use Plan and smaller sites or buildings that could serve as incubators for small business enterprises.

Action: Mixed-Use Development

- In implementing Strategy 6A-1, encourage mixed-use developments that integrate uses such as office/employment, retail, and residential (Town staff, Town Council)

Action: University-Related Business Development

- Initiate discussions with UNC to explore opportunities for University-related business development (Chapel Hill, UNC)

Measure of Progress: University-Related Business Development

- Include University-related business development in the non-residential development strategy adopted per Strategy 6A-1

7.0 HOUSING

7.1 OVERVIEW



A variety of housing opportunities is available in Chapel Hill to accommodate the needs of its diverse population, including a wide range of housing types and styles that reflect the Town's history and unique character. There is concern that this diversity is being eroded as the Town becomes more affluent and the price of housing escalates. While the growth of Chapel Hill's housing stock has remained constant and stable for the last ten years (at approximately 2% annual growth), the majority of all new residential construction consists of higher end housing and the value of existing homes has greatly increased. There is a strong consensus among Chapel Hill citizens that the need to provide quality housing affordable to all segments of the community is a major priority for the future, and that an aggressive affordable housing program can contribute to enhancing the Town's socio-economic diversity.

The issue of affordability affects persons and families who fall within a range of income levels. Low and very low-income residents (the latter being those who earn considerably less than 80 percent of the median household income) are most severely impacted by the lack of affordable housing and need to be a special focus of housing strategies.⁷ Middle income households are also finding themselves priced out of Chapel Hill's housing market. As a general rule of thumb, housing is considered affordable if a household pays no more than 30% of its income for housing costs. Based on this figure, a family would need to earn a minimum income of \$82,933 to afford the 1998 average sale price of \$276,443 for new and existing homes in Chapel Hill. This figure is well above the Town's 1998 median family income of \$69,149.⁸

⁷ Current housing programs in Chapel Hill are directed towards low-income residents, defined as those who earn less than 80 percent of the median household income. This figure is based upon the definition used by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. A household is defined as an individual or group of people, whether related or not, who share a housing unit.

⁸ As opposed to households, families are limited to two or more people related by birth, marriage, or adoption.

Rental housing is only relatively more affordable than for-sale housing. Based on a 1998 survey of the Triangle Apartment Association, the average monthly rent for a 2-bedroom apartment was \$762. This figure is considered affordable for households with annual incomes of \$30,000.⁹ However, a number of low-income households in Chapel Hill earn less than this figure annually. In addition, the rental housing market in Chapel Hill is complicated by the number of University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC) students that live off-campus. Thus low-income households often find it difficult to locate affordable housing in the community.

The supply of subsidized housing for low-income households and persons with special needs is very limited. The Chapel Hill Housing Department manages 336 units of public housing located in 13 different sites (including one in Carrboro). In addition, Orange County issues approximately 355 Section 8 housing vouchers to families in the Chapel Hill/Carrboro area.

Another housing-related issue is maintaining housing diversity. On one hand, there is concern that the style, type, and scale of new housing may be affecting the character of the Town's traditional neighborhoods and threatening their "small town" atmosphere. On the other hand, the current market trend in Chapel Hill is toward high-end housing, decreasing the likelihood that the diverse housing needs of moderate- and low-income households, and of special populations including the homeless, the elderly and the handicapped, will be met by private housing providers.



7.2 GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal

Increase the availability of well-designed, affordable, safe, and sanitary housing for all citizens of Chapel Hill.

⁹ Current median household income figures are not available for Chapel Hill. However, assuming the same rate of escalation between 1990 and 1998 as for family incomes, the 1998 median household income would be \$41,983.

Objectives

Housing Availability: Increase the availability of quality housing affordable to all citizens who live and work in Chapel Hill.

Housing Quality: Require all housing development to meet applicable local, state, and federal standards and guidelines, including design quality, safety, health, and energy efficiency.

Housing Variety: Establish policies, regulations, incentives and programs to promote the availability of a full range of housing types, densities, costs, and tenancy options in Chapel Hill, both within new developments and existing neighborhoods.

STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

7A. Affordable Housing

The provision of housing at a cost affordable to all of Chapel Hill's residents is a major priority for the Town. Because a significant percentage of the population is being priced out of the private housing market, government at every level should work to increase affordable housing opportunities.

7A-1. Work with housing providers to aggressively develop affordable housing in Chapel Hill.

To achieve its housing goal and objectives, the Town will need to work with public agencies, private enterprises, and non-profit organizations to create housing opportunities for households of all income levels. Private developers, non-profits, and financial institutions all have key roles to play in expanding housing choice. The magnitude of the housing production and rehabilitation challenge facing the community calls for collaboration with other agencies and related organizations that may bring needed development services and/or other resources for this effort. Thus Chapel Hill should continue to encourage the full cooperation and active involvement of these groups to generate and maintain significant volumes of affordable housing.

In the past, Chapel Hill has entered into several such partnerships with success, although the extent of the initiatives has typically been modest. Between 1997 and 1999, for instance, HOME and Community Development Program funds were allocated to Habitat for Humanity for projects such as the construction of six new houses on scattered sites throughout Orange County, and the development of a 4.86-acre, 11-home

“Millennium Celebration” project. The Town assisted Habitat on this project with the purchase of a site on Rogers Road, as well as with predevelopment expenses.

The Town has also worked with neighborhood-based non-profits (e.g., Empowerment, Inc.), providing Community Development Program funds for scattered property acquisition, structure rehabilitation, and homebuyer assistance activities through the Neighborhood Revitalization Program.

Similar efforts have been undertaken in conjunction with the Orange Community Housing Corporation to develop and improve affordable housing in Chapel Hill. The Scarlette Drive townhomes will provide 14 units for first-time low-income homebuyers (i.e., earning less than 80% of median income) on a Town-owned parcel.

The recent creation of other organizations, including the Community Land Trust in Orange County and ABODE: Coalition for Housing Diversity in Orange County, is evidence of a commitment by the various jurisdictions, housing developers, and housing service providers to coordinate their resources to provide the best possible housing assistance to all residents.

In addition to working with housing providers, the Town should consider committing additional funds if the production of affordable housing is to be significantly increased. Town funding sources could include traditional revenue generators such as property taxes and General Obligation Bonds, or new techniques such as tax-exempt Private Activity Bonds or Mortgage Revenue Bonds. Private Activity Bonds are typically issued to support development of multi-family housing while Mortgage Revenue Bonds are used to finance affordable homeownership housing. A list of criteria, to be locally established, would need to be met by housing developers to qualify for use of these bonds. The criteria would include requirements for a certain percentage of the units to be reserved for moderate income individuals or households.

Actions: Affordable Housing Development

- Continue to make maximum use of state and federal funding programs (Town staff)
- Pursue public/private partnerships to develop affordable housing (Town Council, Town staff, private non-profits)
- Identify and enact a funding sources to generate revenues for affordable housing production and/or first-time homebuyers assistance (Town staff, Town Council)

Measures of Progress: Affordable Housing Development

- Enact an affordable housing funding source no later than 12/31/2001
- Generate 250 affordable housing units by 12/31/2004 through public-private partnerships
- Initiate at least one assisted housing development project per year, with a target of a minimum of 20 units per initiative

Affordable housing initiatives should address the need to assist residents of publicly assisted housing in making the transition to permanent housing and self-sufficiency. Efforts should also be made to promote the development of single room occupancy (SRO) units. Because of their small size compared to apartments, SRO units often serve as the only affordable housing option for low-income individuals. In addition to meeting the needs of low and moderate income residents, the Town should seek to increase the supply of housing for middle income residents who currently cannot afford to live in the community. This should include initiatives such as the proposal to develop joint UNC/Town employee housing described in Chapter 4.0 (University Relations).

7A-2. Provide incentives for housing providers to develop affordable housing.

Funding limitations hinder the Town's ability to fully meet local affordable housing needs on its own, particularly in the field of new housing production. As a result, private housing developers are looked at as key partners in addressing this problem. Effective incentives are needed to encourage developers to assist in achieving the Town's affordable housing goals and objectives, including full integration of affordable housing units into the community. Such incentives should compensate developers who produce, maintain, or rehabilitate lower-cost, affordable housing units that meet the Town's standards.

As a general policy, the Town should encourage developers of residential developments of five or more units to 1) provide 15 percent of their units at prices affordable to low and moderate income households, 2) contribute in-lieu fees, or 3) propose alternative methods so that the equivalent of 15 percent of the units will be available and affordable to low and moderate income households. At the same time, the Town should continue to seek state enabling legislation for inclusionary zoning (see Strategy 7A-3).

Currently, the Chapel Hill Development Ordinance provides a density bonus for rental projects that include units affordable to low-income families. However, this bonus appears to be insufficient and more positive inducements are required. Recently, Town Council adopted a Residential-Special Standards-Conditional (R-SS-C) Zoning District, whereby density of up to 12 units per acre with reduced development standards can be permitted in the context of an affordable

housing proposal. More incentives of this kind should be considered as appropriate to reduce the cost of development.

Additional steps to consider include providing supporting capital improvements or creating rehabilitation incentives (see Strategy 7B-1). The latter is an important consideration because, although new housing is a significant factor in achieving adequate availability of housing, the Town's needs will not be completely met unless the existing housing stock is maintained in good condition.

Other ideas that the Town may consider to facilitate the development of affordable housing in new and existing projects include the following:

- *Development Fee Rebate Program:* This program would make use of general revenues to rebate development impact fees for developers of affordable housing, provided projects meet specific program requirements. This partial cost offset helps to stimulate private sector development of affordable housing. Orange County has this type of program in place.
- *Development review process:* Chapter 8.0 (Land Use), Strategy 8D-1 recommends that the development review process be improved, including expedited procedures for desired types of development. This could include streamlining procedures for developments that meet the Town's affordable housing objectives.
- *Setbacks, frontage, and yard requirements:* Reductions are especially cost-effective when used in conjunction with allowances for zero lot line and similar techniques.
- *Street and sidewalk requirements:* Relaxation of curb and gutter, right-of-way, and pavement standards can help make housing construction more affordable. However, infrastructure improvements should be designed to be compatible with street and sidewalk conditions in the surrounding neighborhood. In such situations Town funds or alternative funding sources could be considered to help subsidize infrastructure costs.
- *Parking requirements:* Reductions in the number of required parking spaces and in the size of the spaces provide substantial savings in development costs.

- *Flexible standards and use of innovative techniques:* Some traditional development standards, such as minimum lot size, may be reduced or eliminated entirely when dealing with single-family home development under the R-SS-C Zoning District. In addition, the use of innovative techniques should be explored and encouraged, not only because such techniques can generate significantly lower-cost housing that is affordable to moderate and low income families, but also because of the environmental benefits resulting from smaller development “footprints” and overall reductions in impervious surface. Techniques such as clustering, zero lot line development, small single-family or “cottage” housing, and modular construction could be permitted in an as-of-right process when involving affordable housing development, thus expediting processing and curb time/cost and making these options more attractive to developers.

Actions: Affordable Housing Incentives

- Develop a program to stimulate the private production of affordable housing, such as code provisions and construction innovations that reduce the costs of housing development and maintenance (Town staff, Town Council)
- As part of the affordable housing incentive program, explore methods for insuring lasting affordability of housing units (Town staff)

Measures of Progress: Affordable Housing Incentives

- Develop and adopt an affordable housing incentive program no later than 12/31/2001
- Address regulatory aspects of the affordable housing incentive program in the comprehensive development ordinance revision (no later than 12/31/2001)

- *Availability of financing for affordable housing:* While not directly a governmental responsibility unless public subsidies are being provided, the availability of low-cost financing is important to the success of privately-developed affordable housing. The Town should work with the local banking community and housing developers to explore the types and availability of financing and ways that banks can be more flexible in financing private sector affordable housing.

Incentives such as those described above should be combined with reasonable and enforceable restrictions on terms of affordability. Currently, there is no mechanism in place to insure that a housing unit intended for a moderate- or low-income household will remain affordable in the long term. This is important because, although new affordable units are a significant factor in achieving an adequate availability of housing, the Town’s needs cannot be met unless the existing affordable housing stock is maintained. A potential method is to require housing developers/providers to enter into a contract or covenant with the Town to maintain the units as affordable for a specified time period. This period can range anywhere between 15 and 30 years. However, the longer time periods are least attractive to developers, and in most communities that use them they are part of state-enabled inclusionary zoning regulations. Potential occupants of the housing units qualify (first-time

occupancy and periodically thereon) on an income basis, according to criteria and limitations set by the Town.

Specifically established to hold land in order to provide and preserve affordable housing, community land trusts are perhaps the most effective way to achieve long-term affordability. The Town will continue to work with the Community Land Trust in Orange County to achieve its affordable housing objectives. These efforts should include use of the community land trust mechanism to meet the housing needs of very low-income families.

7A-3. Continue to pursue the adoption of inclusionary zoning legislation at the State level.

The term “inclusionary zoning” refers to either a mandatory requirement or a voluntary objective to set aside a percentage of all housing units in new residential developments as affordable housing for rent or purchase by moderate- and low-income households.¹⁰

Inclusionary zoning would provide an effective means for preserving housing choice and opportunity in Chapel Hill, particularly in the current housing market. For this reason, efforts to enable such a program should continue, although there has been no success in advancing the cause of inclusionary housing legislation at the local government and state levels in the last ten years.

If successful in obtaining enabling state legislation, there are several types of inclusionary zoning that the Town may consider. The first option requires developers of residential projects of a certain size to set aside a percentage of the proposed housing units for affordable housing. In a variation of this program, developers may receive density bonuses in exchange for the affordable housing set-aside. A model for this type of program can be found in New Jersey, where inclusionary housing is state-mandated. Another example is Fairfax County, VA, which has a working inclusionary zoning ordinance.

Another option would be to require developers to create affordable housing units in conjunction with large-scale, non-residential development projects that generate new jobs in the

¹⁰ Following a definition by Nico Calavita and Kenneth Grimes in their article on “Inclusionary Housing in California: The Experience of Two Decades”, *Journal of the American Planning Association*, Vol. 64, No. 2, Spring 1998

community. The number of units required is proportional to the number of projected new jobs that would translate into new households requiring adequate housing within Chapel Hill.

Action: Inclusionary Zoning

- Continue to pursue state legislation that would enable affordable housing set-aside regulations (Town Council)

Some communities that manage such programs choose to reduce the economic impact on developers by allowing in-lieu payments or off-site housing construction. However, these allowances tend to run counter to the integration of affordable housing into market rate development projects.

7B. Housing Diversity

Maintaining housing diversity in the face of a predominantly high-end, high-cost housing market is a major challenge to the Town of Chapel Hill. Implementation of the affordable housing strategies described under 7A. will help to create more diversity in new development. Because Chapel Hill is predominantly built out, maintaining the diversity of the existing housing stock is of equal or greater importance.

7B-1. Support preservation of existing housing stock.

Although new construction is necessary to meet the Town's affordable housing demand, the conservation and rehabilitation of existing housing stock is just as important in maintaining housing diversity and can be an effective alternative to new housing construction. In addition, preservation and rehabilitation are often more cost-effective than redevelopment.

Neighborhood conservation practices, as described in Chapter 3.0 (Community Character), should include incentives for the preservation of existing housing units for future use. Stable neighborhoods encourage residents to upgrade, build, and buy housing, resulting in a sound, diverse housing stock. In turn, a sound, diverse housing stock contributes to the stability of neighborhoods.

In Chapel Hill's neighborhoods, the traditional diversity of housing types and sizes may be preserved and promoted by defining special incentives for owners of modest units, in particular, to maintain and improve housing conditions. For example, a density bonus could be offered in exchange for an affordable housing commitment.



Financial incentives are often most effective in accomplishing housing conservation objectives. Chapel Hill already uses Community Development Block Grant Funds to promote diversity through housing rehabilitation and provision of homeownership opportunities for moderate- and low-income households, helping neighborhoods to maintain, stabilize, and improve neighborhood character. In addition to the Housing Loan Trust Fund, which provides zero-interest loan assistance, the Town should consider increased financing (through public bonds, CDBG funds, or taxing mechanisms) for property improvement programs, targeting individual homeowners, multi-family/rental property owners, and other affordable housing providers alike.

7C. Rental Housing

A number of residents have expressed concern that some rental housing in Chapel Hill may not meet current standards and guidelines. This is a particular issue in neighborhoods near the UNC campus, where the conversion of single-family homes to rental housing is a common occurrence. Chapter 3.0 (Community Character), outlines a series of strategies to address this problem, including enhanced enforcement of occupancy and front yard parking restrictions; improvements to the Town's noise ordinance; and new guidelines to address the aesthetic effects of rental conversion. Another proposed initiative is the development of a rental licensing and inspection ordinance.

7C-1. Establish a rental licensing and inspection program.

Rental licensing is a tool used to ensure that all rental units are built to and maintained in compliance with zoning, design, construction, health, and safety code requirements. Communities such as Cumberland, MD, Elgin, IL, Ocean City, MD, and Mankato, MN have successfully used such programs to prevent deterioration of rental housing units, encourage responsible management, and insure maintenance and proper use of the units.

In Chapel Hill, a rental licensing program could help to protect the character and the stability of the Town's residential neighborhoods, while assuring renters that licensed rental units meet minimum housing standards. Town Council is actively considering options for such a program.

In communities that license rental properties, periodic inspections of licensed units are the main vehicle for insuring

Actions: Preservation of Existing Housing Stock

- Reinforce the Housing Loan Trust Fund program to increase renovation, rehabilitation, improvement, and/or maintenance activities for existing affordable housing units (Town staff, Town Council)
- Continue to target areas for conservation/rehabilitation programs in older neighborhoods (Town staff, private housing providers)
- Address the preservation of existing housing stock in the affordable housing incentive program prepared per Strategy 7A-2 (Town staff, Town Council)

Action: Rental Licensing and Inspection

- Develop and adopt a rental licensing and inspection ordinance (Town Council)

Measure of Progress: Rental Licensing and Inspection

- Adopt a rental licensing and inspection ordinance no later than 12/31/2001

compliance with code requirements. Required inspections, set at regular intervals (six-month or yearly periods, for instance) or when units change owner or tenants, can be performed by Code Enforcement Inspectors. Effective enforcement will be dependent upon the Town's ability to deploy these resources. The inspections could help to enforce code requirements, such as occupancy limits and front yard parking, which are important for neighborhood preservation (see Chapter 3.0).

