

October 15, 2006

Re: The Residences at Chapel Hill North

To the Town Council:

I apologize for the length of this letter, but I probably would have exceeded my 3 minutes had I been in Town to address the Council!

I am very concerned, not only about the application for the Residences at Chapel Hill North, but about the future of the entire NW Quad of Chapel Hill. I'd like to address the specifics of this application first and tie it into my larger concerns.

I live in Northwoods VI, one of 7 existing communities directly west of the MLK Jr Blvd and Weaver Dairy Rd intersection. These neighborhoods (Northwoods V, Northwoods VI, Parkside I, Parkside II, Northwood, Larkspur, and Vineyard Square) consist of over 500 homes and will soon be joined by Claremont, Chapel Hill Watch Village, and the Eubanks Rd Town designated Neighborhood Serving Mixed-Use Center, at MLK Jr. Blvd. and Eubanks Rd. Additionally, my neighborhood is scheduled to meet with RAM Development regarding concept plans for a Gateway development at the SW corner of WDR and MLK **and their plans for a Walgreens for the SE corner** as well. There is obviously a lot happening in a very small radius. I ask you consider these specifics:

1. Even after improvements are made, Weaver Dairy Road has limited capacity. As a member of CARR, I argued, along with other CARR members, in favor of a 3 lane WDR because it is populated by schools, shopping, Cedar Falls Park, and homes. The addition of 121 residential units and parking spots, with a matching number of EXTRA spaces, will be burden on WDR.
2. There is a large safety issue. One of the planned egresses from this development is at Perkins Drive and WDR. Some cars leaving Chapel Hill North use this intersection and it is already an extremely dangerous one. In order to have a clear view of coming traffic, cars leaving Chapel Hill North at Perkins Drive have to jut out because the view to the east is obstructed. This is at the same point where cars turning right or headed west on WDR have to move over to the right in order to avoid being in a left turn only lane. I would invite all of you to come and see this for yourselves because it is hard to believe such a poorly planned traffic pattern. There are currently no plans to obtain at right of way at this intersection in order to improve the visibility problem.
3. A similar problem exists at the other planned entrance/egress on MLK Jr. Blvd and Perkins Rd. There are no plans to obtain a right of way for a right turn only lane. Although the applicant may show pictures of this spot with no cars (!) traveling on MLK Jr. Blvd., with the abundance of projects on this corridor, traffic will be increasing exponentially. Cars slowing down significantly to make a right turn into the Residences at Chapel Hill North

5

while a large volume of traffic from the south is headed straight, pose a safety problem.

This brings me to the larger concerns that I have. Although I listed the 7 communities that are just to the west of this area, the real impact of traffic on this area is much larger because of the number of large developments in process just beyond this intersection. The SW corner of Homestead Rd and Seawell School Rd townhomes will most likely turn left at Homestead and WDR to get to shopping and I-40. The Townhouse Apartments and Northhampton Terrace at Hillsborough Rd. and MLK Jr. Blvd. will also add to the MLK Jr. Blvd traffic problem. The largest concern, of course, is Carolina North, the traffic impact of which can only be looked at with trepidation. Not considering the thousands of cars that Carolina North will attract, the other three projects alone will potentially add hundreds of trips to this area. (And don't forget Walgreens!)

This area must be looked at holistically. We need to take a step back and look at the quagmire that will be this quadrant of Chapel Hill five years from now, if each of these projects is approved and built piecemeal. We instead need to take the time to consider that the pieces of this puzzle all have to fit together and that each of these projects must be looked at in relation to one another and their effect on the Town as a whole. Perhaps the Town should consider forming a Northwest Planning Committee to consolidate information in this one area. Then, of course, you could always consider a temporary building moratorium in this corner until the Carolina North plans are more definitive....

I believe the property slated to be the Residences at Chapel Hill North should remain zoned MU-OD. There seems to be a trend among developers to obtain an interest in a specifically zoned property and then apply for rezoning. We should not turn a blind eye to this practice. The MU-0/I designation is more cost effective for the town, generating a greater financial return. It is also a more appropriate one for this property which lies in close proximity to I-40. The high number of residences surrounding this property already create a walkable community. In any event, I hope that a new traffic study that takes pending projects into account will be done, along with analyzing the differing infrastructure needs between MU-01 and residential zoning. I would also like to know the impact of all the traffic on the Town's participation in the Community Carbon Reduction Plan, and, at the least, I hope that you consider scaling down any residential component of the plan.

Thank you for letting me share my concerns with you in this overly long letter.

Del Snow
111 Tremont Circle
Chapel Hill NC 27516