

small area plan to address these issues in more detail. Based upon the recommendations of the Focus Area Report, a primary objective of such a plan should be to reach a broad spectrum of the community and foster a dialogue among persons with divergent interests. Other relevant Comprehensive Plan strategies include:

- Develop local design guidelines and implementing regulations tailored to the physical characteristics of the neighborhood (Chapter 3.0, Strategy 3A-2)
- Reduce the impacts of vehicular traffic and parking on residential neighborhoods (Chapter 3.0, Strategy 3A-3; Chapter 10.0, Strategy 10B-1). Development of a plan to address UNC traffic and parking impacts on neighborhoods is a recommended action item.
- Consider development of selected "opportunity sites" to help alleviate growth pressures on existing neighborhoods (Chapter 3.0, Strategy 3A-4). West Rosemary Street is identified as a good candidate for this strategy.
- Address the effects of conversion of owner-occupied residences to rental properties (Chapter 3.0, Strategy 3A-5). Action items include coordinated enforcement, development of a rental licensing and inspection ordinance, and ordinance modifications to address noise and front-yard parking.
- Pursue various strategies to maintain and increase the availability of affordable housing, including working with the Community Land Trust in Orange County and supporting preservation of existing housing (Chapter 7.0, Strategies 7A-2 and 7B-1)

## 4.0 NORTHWEST FOCUS AREA

### 4.1 Overview

The Northwest Area is one of the two sectors within the Town and its extraterritorial jurisdiction that contain the largest concentration of undeveloped land not owned by the University. As such, the Northwest Area is highly susceptible to change.

The boundaries of the Northwest Area are generally Interstate 40 to the north, Weaver Dairy Road and N.C. 86 to the east, Homestead Road, the University-owned Horace Williams tract and Chapel Hill High School to the south, and Rogers Road and Duke Forest to the west. Approximately one-third of the

area is within the Town's corporate limits. The other two-thirds are in the Chapel Hill Joint Planning Transition District, which means that planning is done jointly with Orange County. The remaining portion of the area is located within the Rural Buffer.

A draft Small Area Plan was prepared for the Northwest Area in 1995 but was not adopted. As part of the Comprehensive Plan process, a group of graduate students of the Department of City and Regional Planning at UNC completed a review of the 1995 Small Area Plan in April of 1999. The review was intended to provide information to the Comprehensive Plan Work Group and to define options within the planning process with regard to the future development of the Northwest Area.

#### **4.2 Key Issues**

The 1999 report looked at the issues raised in the draft 1995 Small Area Plan and identified those that remain to be resolved or that have surfaced since. These issues include:

- ***Solid waste activity:*** The Orange County Regional Landfill, managed jointly by Orange County and the towns of Chapel Hill and Carrboro, is located in the northwest portion of the Northwest Area. The landfill occupies 202 acres, and is estimated to have capacity until the year 2003. The future use of the landfill site and of solid waste activities in the Northwest Area are a concern after that time.
- ***Greene tract:*** The Greene Tract is a relatively large, 169-acre parcel located in the center of the Northwest Area that was purchased by the multi-jurisdictional Orange Regional Landfill Owners Group as the location for a future landfill. However, use for a landfill has been ruled out, and the ownership and future use of the land remain in question.
- ***Transportation:*** Specific issues in the area of transportation are the potential uses of the existing rail corridor; the need for pedestrian and bicycle improvements; and a choice of Congestion Management Strategies to deal with projected traffic loads that will result from expected new development.
- ***Employment campus:*** The 1995 draft Northwest Area Plan proposed an employment campus to be located on a site northwest of the intersection of Eubanks Rd. and N.C. 86. Although at the time the Town Council decided against the proposal, it remains an option for future consideration, and potential factors and effects must be considered.

- ***Rogers Road neighborhood:*** This neighborhood straddles the border between Carrboro's Northern Area and Chapel Hill's Northwest Area. Problems faced by the neighborhood include the impacts of the landfill on water quality and the quality of life of residents; the limited access to recreation facilities; the planning challenges associated with the area's complex jurisdictional division; the preservation and generation of affordable housing in light of increased new development pressures; the hazards resulting from traffic speeding through the neighborhood; and the lack of communication with local governments.
- ***Compatibility with other plans:*** Because of the multi-jurisdictional situation of the Northwest Area, there are considerations beyond what Chapel Hill would like to see happen in the area. Other plans affecting the future of the Northwest Area include the ***Outlying Parcels Land Use Plan*** developed jointly by UNC and the Town of Chapel Hill and Carrboro's ***Facilitated Small Area Plan for the Northern Area.***

#### **4.3 Focus Area Plan Recommendations**

The draft 1995 Small Area Plan set a variety of goals and objectives for the Northwest Area that support a concept of sustainability of the essential qualities and characteristics of the Northwest Area. To implement these goals and objectives, the draft Small Area Plan outlined the following key recommendations:

##### **Preservation**

- Use the Small Area Plan as the basis of decision-making through the Town's Development Review Process
- Zone the area in accordance with densities reflected in the plan to protect existing residential areas
- Consider a neighborhood protection program for low-income areas
- Protect the rural vistas in the area by encouraging clustered development patterns
- Implement the Town's Master Entranceway Plan along N.C. 86

##### **Development**

- Zone the Northwest Area to reflect the densities called for in the plan to provide a range of housing choice
- Use a portion of the Greene Tract for affordable housing

- Investigate the reuse of the Eubanks Road landfill site
- Explore the option of using power line rights-of-way for public and/or private uses, particularly greenways
- Develop a portion of the Greene Tract as a park
- Use Conditional Use Zoning to guide development in the direction of a specific village concept development outlined in the Small Area Plan
- Develop design guidelines for the village concept
- Create an Employment Campus Zoning District, emphasizing small scale "flex-space" uses and office space
- Develop and adopt design guidelines and site development criteria for the Employment Campus

### **Service/Infrastructure**

- Work with OWASA to develop a phasing plan for extending public water and sewer service to the area
- Consider infrastructure assistance as an incentive for developers to generate affordable housing
- Ensure adequate support structures through the Town's Development Review Process and Capital Improvements Program (CIP)

### **Transportation**

- Encourage transit-friendly development by implementing elements from the plan such as the village concept and higher-density zoning areas
- Use the Town's Development Review process to encourage transit-friendly designs
- Undertake a feasibility study of the Transportation Corridor concept along the rail line
- Use the Town's capital planning processes of the Thoroughfare Plan, the Transportation Improvements Program, and the Capital Improvements Program to plan for future roadways and transit improvements
- Use the Town's Pedestrian Plan to ensure that development occurs in a manner that promotes pedestrian movement and alternative modes of transportation

Because of the time elapsed since the preparation of the draft Small Area Plan, the 1999 review report updated the Small Area Plan recommendations through the development of three alternative development scenarios for the Northwest Area. The purpose of creating these scenarios was to offer options for future development of the area, determine the impacts that each scenario might generate, and provide insight into what additional population the area might accommodate.

The scenarios included three base scenarios: a Conventional Suburban Density Scenario, a Village Center Scenario, and a Cluster Development and Open Space Scenario. In addition, a hybrid scenario was developed that combined the best elements and strategies from the three base scenarios.

The strategies for development management proposed by each base scenario are as follows:

**1. Conventional Suburban Development Scenario**

- Zone the Northwest Area to allow medium density single family and multi-family residential development
- Maintain the separation of land uses through zoning to ensure that residential development is buffered from other uses
- Use a portion of the Greene Tract to provide affordable housing
- Utilize a portion of the Greene Tract to provide a passive-use park and open space to residents of the Northwest Area
- Design roadways to accommodate emergency and service vehicles, while minimizing speed and volume of non-local traffic
- Integrate and interconnect new development with existing neighborhoods by establishing walkways and bikeways
- Provide for transit on major thoroughfares

**2. Village Center Scenario**

- Increase permitted density around transit routes to achieve critical mass (recommended 10 du/ac to support enhanced transit)
- Decrease density outside of transit areas to maintain the rural character of these areas
- Create a mixed-use district to allow the combination of residential, office, and commercial uses
- Develop performance criteria to reduce incompatible land uses
- Provide density bonuses for affordable housing
- Revise engineering requirements to promote "pedestrian scale" development
- Create a Transit Overlay District to apply to properties within a ¼ - to M-mile radius from transit
- Develop connectivity standards based on a nodes-to-link ratio to regulate the number of dead ends and promote interconnectivity between roadways and create a street

network that is acceptable to multiple modes of transportation

**3. Cluster Development and Open Space Scenario**

- Rezone developable lands to allow for increased densities, based on usable land rather than on gross acreage
- Provide density bonuses to developers to encourage the development of suitable lands, while discouraging the development of lands best suited for conservation open space
- Establish performance zoning to encourage cluster type development
- Create design guidelines that promote interconnectivity between subdivisions

**4.4 Comprehensive Plan Recommendations**

The Comprehensive Plan contains recommendations' that address many of the issues identified in the draft 1995 Northwest Small Area Plan and 1998 Review report. These recommendations include:

- Encourage mixed-use development forms through land use and zoning designations of suitable undeveloped sites in the Northwest Area, including a portion of the Greene tract and a site on Eubanks Road (Chapter 8.0, Strategy 8A-2).
- Revise the Development Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations to incorporate conservation development principles that will contribute to preserve open space in residential developments (Chapter 8.0, Strategy 8A-3; Chapter 9.0, Strategy 9B-2). The environmental conditions that are found in certain areas of the Northwest are worthy of special protection that can be accomplished through conservation development practices. Further, open space preserved this way will help the Town implement its Greenways Master Plan and proposed Parks and Open Space Master Plan (Chapter 9.0, Strategy 9B-1).
- Complementing the above two strategies, pursue higher density residential development of the Greene tract to expand housing choice, combined with the provision of open space and recreational facilities for the benefit of Northwest Area residents (Chapter 8.0, Strategy 8A-1).
- Encourage regional cooperation, particularly with Orange County and Carrboro, to address the provision of services and infrastructure in the Northwest Area (Chapter 5.0, Strategy 5A-1)

**PLANNING FOR CHAPEL HILL'S FUTURE: THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

- Continue the Town's involvement and collaboration with UNC in planning for the future development of the Horace Williams property, which abuts the Northwest Area on the south (Chapter 4.0, Strategy 4A-3)