

ORANGE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
SPECIAL USE PERMIT and CONDITIONAL REZONING
CHAPEL HILL, NORTH CAROLINA

STATEMENT OF JUSTIFICATION

A. Existing Use Summary & History Presented by the Church

Orange United Methodist Church (OUMC) is the oldest Methodist Church in Orange County. The church has been in existence for over 180 years and was founded by Orange county landowners. As such, it has been an active and vital part of the life of the community for nearly two centuries. We are known throughout the community as a friendly and welcoming church that is actively involved in the community. Our current facilities are used heavily for both church and community-based activities. Community outreach programs our church has or is involved in include:

- We actively participate in the Inter-Faith Council shelter and project Homestart. Many of the meals for these programs are prepared on-site. Future expansion plans include a new kitchen facility (in the Gymnasium building) that should improve our ability to deliver meals.
- A new Korean congregation is using our facilities on Sunday afternoons. They will need more space as their congregation grows.
- We host several growing boy and Girl Scout troops.
- We run a large pre-school. Most (over 90%) of the children are from families that do not attend OUMC. Future plans call for adding a kindergarten and seeking full state accreditation – a step that will require new classrooms, but will help us serve the community better.
- We run an afterschool program for Seawell and Estes Hills Elementary schools. This is a very significant need for working parents in our community. The afterschool program is “out of room” and needs expansion space to grow. We also fund scholarships for families that cannot afford to pay.
- We have hosted Narcotics Anonymous meetings and similar organizations.
- Other organizations frequently use our facilities for meetings and fundraising events.
- We have partnered with other local organizations, including Chapel Hill High School, on Habitat for Humanity house-building projects.
- We have a very active youth program that involves middle and high school youth in numerous community service and outreach activities.
- We have been active for a long-time in local prison ministry. We recently hosted a “one day with God camp” that brought inmates at the Orange Correctional Facility together with their children for a day of fun, games and relationship building.
- We have a great desire to do more with the Hispanic community in the future.

B. Context of Project

The last facilities expansion of the church was in 1990 with the addition of a fellowship hall/education building. A long-range planning committee reported in 1991 (one year after occupancy of the new facility) that the church had critical space needs in terms of increased education space and worship space. The current sanctuary was built in the 1920's and has a maximum seating capacity of 240.

In 2003, the church appointed a facilities assessment team to review current and future space needs. The team met for almost 18 month and conducted an in-depth survey of the various constituent ministries at OUMC. The team found that there were currently significant or soon-to-be significant space limitations in four areas: (1) Education space (particularly for youth and adults), (2) Parking, (3) Worship and worship support space, and (4) Office and work space.

In January 2004, OUMC engaged Mr. Wes McClure to develop a program document summarizing our current and near-future space needs and to provide a master plan for the campus. This plan was completed and approved in October 2004. This is also the plan that we are seeking approval for, and reflects a multi-year, multi-phase build-out of the campus.

A building team was appointed in November 2005, and based upon assessment of recent changes in worship demographics, recommended that the first building phase should address these needs: worship, nursery, youth and adult education space and parking. In June of 2005, the administrative council approved the conceptual design of a worship/education building and has recommended to the church that this be the first building built. This building would initially be built with a seating capacity of approximately 450, but would be expandable to 660. Because of our service structure, we anticipate that we will continue to use the current sanctuary for early services as a Chapel. Further, it may be necessary to continue to hold worship services in the fellowship hall. Because these services could eventually run concurrently with services held in the new sanctuary, we will serve as many as 900 worshipers on the campus at one time. For this reason, expansion of paved parking is included in Phase I expansion plans.

It is anticipated that the second building phase would begin in four or five years and encompass a new education building and addition of an administrative core building. This building would serve as a link between the education buildings and the new worship building. We then anticipate addition of the gymnasium/new fellowship building beginning in eight to nine years.

C. Specific Criteria

The project has been designed and will be developed in accordance with the Town's Design Guidelines and with LUMO.

- Significant tree masses will remain as a part of the streamside and managed use zones within the RCD all along Booker Creek and all along the southern boundary of the project. More than sixty percent of the site will remain undisturbed throughout this campus development project.
- The project will incorporate state of the art devices for storm water control, storm water quality and erosion control. The site borders Booker Creek, in close proximity to Lake Ellen. The Church is well aware of the neighborhood concerns about Lake Ellen and desires to conduct this project as a "model" effort to mitigate impacts from erosion, storm runoff and water quality. We will plan and design and build a "state-of-the-art" storm water facility to protect our downstream neighbors.
- In addition to "state-of-the-art" facilities, vegetative buffers will be maintained along perennial and intermittent streams, and all disturbed areas will be re-vegetated as quickly as possible to maintain maximum stream quality.
- The RCD Area and extensive buffers along the northeast, east and south sides of the project will provide a permanent buffer for our residential neighbors.
- The Airport Road and Homestead intersection already have some of the best sidewalk and light-controlled pedestrian crosswalks within the Town limits of Chapel Hill. OUMC will provide new sidewalk connections and a pedestrian movement plan that will compliment and enhance the fine public system.
- Paved parking will be increased, and this is an important feature of the Campus Master Plan. The current sanctuary seats 240 and there are currently about 110 paved spaces. The new worship areas will accommodate 900 persons and parking will expand to 267 spaces, an increase of 157 spaces. Nine (9) of the new spaces will be handicap spaces, which will bring the campus into conformance with accessibility standards. The Town guidelines suggest that the minimum number of spaces should be 225. We believe that the proposed parking is wise because there is no opportunity for street parking or nearby (walking distance) offsite parking. Adequate parking is a key element and strong needed for this worship community.
- Impervious surface ratio for new surfaces is projected to be 17.50% of the gross land area.
- Two dumpsters, a recycling area, and underground utilities will all be part of the new plans.
- Street access will remain at the same locations as presently exist. The southern-most entrance will be right in/right out. The main, two-way entrance, controlled by the Homestead Road signal, will be enhanced by adding two exit lanes on the site that will

channelize all on-site traffic, and provide adequate, interference-free stacking distance to the signalized intersection. Because Orange United Methodist operates primarily on Sunday morning, the church will not cause any new significant traffic impacts and this has been demonstrated in the Town Traffic Study.

- The most important feature of the new designs will be the preservation of the NC 86/Martin Luther King Blvd. Streetscape and entryway appearance. Orange Methodist has been at this entrance for 180 years, as an entryway “asset” to Chapel Hill. The church is determined, and believes that the conceptual plans reflect this determination, that the next 180 years will be as good and as attractive as the first 180 years. Therefore, the architecture is scaled and the existing vocabulary is repeated so that the “streetscape” appearance of this campus will maintain the same, pleasant, welcoming appearance that has drawn residents to this Orange County landmark for the past 18 decades.

REQUIRED FINDINGS

FINDING #1

“That the use or development is located, designed and proposed to be operated so as to maintain or promote the public health, safety and general welfare”.

The current church property has access to water and sewer from Orange Water and Sewer Authority, is served by the Town of Chapel Hill’s solid waste and recycling collection services, and is served by the Town’s public transportation services.

The access to the property will remain the same at the current signalized intersection into the property, and the southern most entrance will become right in/right out. This will further enhance the already well structured street, pedestrian and bicycle services in this area.

The drainage and runoff from the property will be treated on the property and then safely discharged to flow through the existing Resource Conservation District on the east side of the property. The existing discharge condition will be preserved as part of the development plan.

FINDING #2

“That the use or development complies with all required regulations and standards of this chapter, including all applicable provisions of Articles 3 and 5 and the applicable specific standards contained in Article 6 and with all other applicable regulations”.

This proposed expansion of the church SUP Modification complies with all required regulation standards as set forth in the current Land Use Management Ordinance.

In prior SUP Approvals, the Council has authorized, and the church has provided, an Alternative Buffer along a portion of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard frontage.

This includes all dimensional, height, setback, parking, buffers and intensity requirements except for a small portion of the site as outlined below:

Description of Exception Requisite:

In the rear of the Proposed Worship Building, there is the need for a small retaining wall to allow for access to the lower level of the building. The retaining wall is located directly against the sidewalk which abuts the parking lot. This is to allow a view of the small "courtyard" created between the building and the retaining wall. The "courtyard" will be landscaped to provide a natural vegetative view for the windows facing east on the lower level of the worship building. This thirty five (35) foot section does not technically meet the five (5) foot minimum planted area requirement between the retaining wall structure and the parking lot because the plantings are below the level of the cars. The five (5) foot minimum green area is being met between the parking lot and the building itself by the courtyard which is five and $\frac{1}{4}$ feet (5.25') wide at its narrowest point.

The applicant respectfully requests that an exemption be granted for this 3.5 feet of landscaping to be placed below the level of the parking per Section 5.9.6 (a) of the LUMO. A Letter of Request for Modification of Regulations is submitted with this application.

FINDING #3

"That the use or development is located, designed and proposed to be operated so as to maintain or enhance the value of contiguous property, or the use or development is a public necessity."

There will be no change in the current use of the property. The proposed design to expand the church facilities has taken all aspects of the current surroundings into consideration. The character of the surrounding areas will be enhanced by the proposed improvements to the church property.

The proposed use is in accordance with the Zoning Atlas and is in harmony with the Comprehensive Plan for Chapel Hill.

FINDING #4

"That the use or development conforms with the general plans for the physical development of the Town as embodied in this Chapter and in the Comprehensive Plan".

The applicant believes that this proposed expansion plan for the church is in accordance with the Town's Comprehensive Plan, that it will improve and enhance the public safety, and that it will maintain or increase the contiguous property values. It also believes that it will maintain and improve the current Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. streetscape and entryway appearance into Chapel Hill.