

**RESPONSE TO COMMENTS FROM THE CONCEPT PLAN REVIEW
BY THE COMMUNITY DESIGN COMMISSION
Wednesday, AUGUST 16, 2006, 7:00 P.M.**

Comments:

Landscaping/Open Space

- A Commissioner noted the existing large trees along Hillsborough Street and wondered if the trees were to be preserved.
Response: The existing trees are Bradford Pears are not in good condition. The project proposes to replace them with street trees that will thrive in the existing environment.
- A Commissioner noted that kudzu filled the Resource Conservation District on the site and wondered how that was to be addressed.
Response: The project would like to incorporate a plan to improve the vegetation in the RCD, where allowed, and will work with the town during the design process to improve the RCD. The commissioner also asked if we were being limited by the RCD regulations and suggested to us they would support any beneficial change we could provide to the RCD because of its current condition.
- A Commissioner believed that the courtyard appeared more like a hotel and should be made for parties and get togethers. It was an ideal location for a gym/exercise room. They believed that the townhouses should have their own open space as well.
Response: The artist's rendering attempted to portray a festive atmosphere in the courtyard area. The courtyard will be a key pedestrian environment and at the heart of the project and is designed to provide a green corridor throughout the project. The design team will strive to design a space that will be inviting to all the residents. The town home residents, as will all the residents, will have access to the main courtyard and recreational facility and an amenity we can work with the Town to provide in the RCD.

Scale/Mass

- Generally, it was felt that the buildings were too tall, especially adjacent to a historic district.
Response: The project is sensitive to the scale issues surrounding site by locating the taller buildings to the interior where they will be below the treeline and by locating three story town homes along Hillsborough Street adjacent to the residential neighbors. Subsequent redesign work has increased the buffer of town homes at the neighbors request and the height of the closest condo building to the Hillsborough neighborhood has been lowered by 2 stories of residences and 1 level of structured parking since our first presentation.

Traffic/Parking

- Concern with additional traffic on Hillsborough Street remained.
Response: The vehicular circulation has been designed to discourage cut-through traffic through the site. This has been done with stops and turns at key intersections. The use of other traffic calming devices will also be considered. The bulk of the traffic is encouraged to travel via MLK Jr. Blvd as the majority of the residential parking will be on the west side of the site, unlike with the current arrangement where parking and density is concentrated on the eastern half of the site. A traffic signal at the MLK Jr. Blvd entrance will further encourage residents to use that route.

Rezoning

- Rezoning to a Transit Oriented District (TOD) was a concern. Commissioners pointed out that no light rail or regional mass transit was there yet to design a TOD around.
Response: The town has hired an outside consultant to draft the TOD. This project will be instrumental in helping shape the details of this district as it relates to downtown and supports the growth needs projected in the 2035 Long Range Plan. However, our design is built around the ULI data that outlines the densities necessary to support frequent bus service and a Downtown commercial district within a half mile of the site as exists today.
- Other comments made by the Commissioners were answered at the meeting by the applicant and can be found in the minutes.

**RESPONSE TO COMMENTS FROM A PUBLIC HEARING
OF THE CHAPEL HILL TOWN COUNCIL
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2006 AT 7:00 P.M.**

**Item 5 – Concept Plan: Town House Apartments
(The Residences at Grove Park)**

- Mr. Denfey said the developer had been responsive to their concerns, nevertheless there remained concerned about two main points. The first was the potential for increased traffic along Hillsborough Street. He said they strongly recommended that this development be separated into two developments with no access between the two.

Response: The vehicular circulation has been designed to discourage cut-through traffic through the site. The bulk of the vehicular traffic is encouraged to travel via MLK Jr. Blvd as the majority of the access to resident parking will be on the west side of the site. The project is working to obtain a traffic signal at the MLK Jr. Blvd entrance, which will further encourage residents to use that route. Cutting off access between the town homes and the interior condominium poses fire and emergency access concerns and will need to be reviewed by the Fire Marshall.

- Mr. Denfey said the second major concern was that however the area was developed, that improvements be made to make these areas primary pedestrian accesses, including connected sidewalks. He said he believed that one could make a connection from the Bolin Creek Greenway and bring it up through these developments, and that would make a huge difference.

Response: The design team has studied this possibility and the connection to the Bolin Creek Greenway would be difficult due to the lack of land available and terrain in the area where Hillsborough Street crosses the stream leading to Bolin Creek. The project encourages pedestrian traffic toward Hillsborough Street, where planned sidewalk improvements will conduct pedestrians to the Bolin Greenway and also along other established pedestrian corridors toward Downtown. The developer and team are open to working with the other regional land owners to find away to provide access to the Bolin Creek Greenway system, but certainly have already allotted money to make pedestrian improvements throughout our site.

- Ms. Calakos stated that the scale of this project was enormous relative to the current neighborhood, and was concerned about the height of the buildings. She said she expected to see some viable solutions proposed to address these issues.

Response: Massing studies have been done to better evaluate the scale of the project. The larger scaled buildings are located interior to the site to lessen their visibility from the street. The buildings are designed with sensitivity to the site

terrain, using the changing topography and the established tree line of the RCD to conceal much of the buildings. The chief goal of redeveloping this site was to provide the residential opportunity needed to meet Chapel Hill's projected growth while minimizing its impact on the neighborhoods or natural vistas. This is a unique site along the MLK Jr. Blvd transit corridor where this can be done with such a high level of success.

- Ms. Freeman asked that safety be taken into account if plans for this development moved forward. She also asked that the Council consider whether this development would become student housing, noting the amount of noise in the area at 2 a.m.

Response: The product the project is proposing is not geared toward students, but primarily towards professionals. Professionals as neighbors will improve the current noise problems of the student residents.

- Other comments from council members were answered by the applicant at the hearing and are located in the minutes.