

Honorable Mayor of Chapel Hill, and Town Council
Roger L. Stancil, Town Manager
Gene Poveromo, Coordinator Current Development

My neighbors and I received notice last month for a land use management ordinance text amendment, rezoning and special use permit applications for the projected re-development of the Townhouse Apartment at 425 Hillsborough Street (to be renamed "The Residences at Grove Park"). We were unable to attend the informal public information meeting on Thursday, March 29th due to personal reasons. We wish to express some concerns over the developer's new proposal, particularly over the number of parking spaces, the access to Hillsborough Street, and the request to apply for a rezoning of the site.

Parking Spaces

When the concept plan came under review in front of the Town Council on September 18th, 2007, 524 parking spaces were planned for this project. My neighbors and I opposed the number of parking spaces as excessive, and asked the developer (John Florian), both privately and during Citizens' Comments in the Town Meeting, to reconsider the number of parking spaces. We felt that since most of these vehicles would be going through the Historic District, the addition of so many vehicles would worsen the traffic congestion on our street and in our part of town. This time, the notice we received mentions 601 parking spaces, an increase of 87 parking spaces since the previous concept plan. We find the increase in parking space number puzzling in view of the fact that the developer is well aware of our concerns.

Access to Hillsborough Street

During previous conversations with John Florian, and during Citizens' Comments, we expressed the wish that all traffic to and from the proposed apartment complex be directed to Martin Luther King Boulevard. We explained to the developer that we were greatly worried about the added traffic volume to Hillsborough Street, a small road whose traffic will, in the near future, bear the brunt of the Carolina North development. The proposed concept plan for the re-development of the Town House apartments site as unveiled during the Town Meeting in September showed two distinct types of buildings: one, consisting of taller buildings, nearest MLK Boulevard. The second, consisting of town houses, facing Hillsborough Street. We suggested that the traffic flow to and from the buildings be directed toward MLK Boulevard, while the town houses' traffic could use Hillsborough as their access road. Mr. Florian explained that he wanted "connectivity" between the two sides, allowing traffic to flow

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between MLK and Hillsborough Street through the development. We feel that there is no reason to allow *all* traffic to have access to Hillsborough Street, especially in view of the staggering 601 new parking spaces that the developer intends to build for the residents of the complex. Hillsborough Street is not meant to accommodate this kind of traffic volume. We therefore renew our request that the developers reconsider their plan to give access to Hillsborough Street from all units in the proposed complex. We also would like to respectfully reiterate our request that a comprehensive traffic study for Hillsborough Street (in which projected Carolina North traffic would be factored in) be done to evaluate the impact of this project on adjacent neighborhoods.

Rezoning

In their new Concept Plan for “The Residences at Grove Park” the developer is applying for a rezoning for the site from medium density (Residential-4) to a high-density residential district. We are very concerned by the consequences of a change of zoning on the adjacent Historic District, where we live. We believe that the goal of the developer by applying for a rezoning, is to benefit from R-13 Zoning’s building regulations, which allow for greater building height for the projected development, and therefore to increase the number of units he plans to build. The developer’s request for a Special Use Permit is another cause for concern, as it seems to have a similar goal. We would like to point out that the proposed development is geographically closer to the Historic District (an R-4), than to the center of Town (an R-13). In effect, a change to high-density zoning would assimilate the re-development site to the center of town, instead of the Historic District, which it directly abuts. We fear that, should high density zoning be granted, the proposed development would not fit in with its environment in terms of its scope, look and feel, and would create additional traffic volume, due to the increased number of residents and cars. The proposed development will not, “maintain or enhance the value of contiguous properties” in the Historic District, as stated in the guidelines for the Council to approve a Special Use Permit application. We therefore oppose the proposed rezoning, and the Special Use Permit application for the Residences at Grove Park on 425 Hillsborough Street.

We intend to voice our concerns when the developer presents its plan to Town Council.

Most respectfully,
Elisabeth Benfey

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