

Call for a Moratorium on Development Along the NC 54 East Entranceway

Henry Lister, PhD May 19, 2008

Today, I am petitioning the Town Council of Chapel Hill to declare a moratorium on development along the NC54 East Entranceway. This moratorium should be effective for at least 1 year with the goal being to conduct an intensive analysis of the corridor and both re-affirm and revise the Goals for the NC 54 Entranceway that were adopted by the Town Council in 1995. I encourage other neighborhoods to join in this petition.

The product of this moratorium should be to clarify what the character of Chapel Hill should be in the future as re-development and in-fill become the new focus of development. The process should include abundant citizen input through public forums and perhaps include the Council in a series of retreats with town staff, regional planners, and citizens. The future of Chapel Hill's character along this major traffic artery depends on the Council taking appropriate and immediate action.

The NC54 Entranceway into the Town of Chapel Hill is under attack. Traffic has increased to such a level that the road is on the verge of complete failure and is impossible to cross as a pedestrian. Future development applications, proposals under consideration, and current construction threaten the NC54 Entranceway with a transformation into a cavern of office buildings at elevations never before seen in Chapel Hill. And they threaten all neighborhoods along NC54 where families have lived for generations, changing the character for Chapel Hill forever.

To Town Council's May 12, 2008 Public Hearing on Woodmont was opened by the Town Manager who presented two bulleted lists to summarize the various activities occurring relative to the NC54 Entranceway. After briefly explaining each component, the Manager suggested that the Council could proceed according to the agenda or they could delay the public hearing in order to consider Woodmont in the context of the long range transportation plans for NC54 as well as the 6 development projects known to be in the pipeline for NC54. The Town Manager's foresight to offer the Council the option of a delay should be heeded in the form of a moratorium.

Homeowners and neighborhoods are not naïve. Chapel Hill continues to be a popular area to live and work, and we are all aware that re-development and in-fill is the new method of change as raw land becomes scarcer. Most neighborhoods along NC54 are not responding to the rash of development proposals with knee-jerk NIMBY-ism, but instead are asking, "What's In My Back Yard?" This new WIMBY-ism is a situation where those who live in existing neighborhoods are required to navigate through town ordinance documents and policies to monitor and shape complex development proposals

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of very large scales. Neighbors need allies among our elected officials to help them maintain their property against over-development. I ask that you strive to ensure that future proposals and current projects are not threats to the character of nearby neighborhoods and the very fabric that makes Chapel Hill a desirable place to live, work and learn.

Attachments Relative to NC 54 Entranceway

Attachment 1: Goals for the NC 54 Entranceway, a part of the Comprehensive Plan

Adopted as part of the Comprehensive Plan by the Town Council in June, 1995, this document provides more detail to the development goals for the town specific to the NC 54 Entranceway. Future developments along this corridor are intended:

- to be small in scale,
- to have retail and commercial elements in proportion to the neighborhoods around them. Two and three story buildings are specified as building heights.
- to limit the number and use of automobile trips, increasing pedestrian and bicycle use as projects serve surrounding neighborhoods.
- to preserve natural meadows, trees stands, and ridge lines.
- not to place a driveway onto the connector road (i.e., NC 54).

Attachment 2: Letter from Pearl Lane neighborhood.

A letter from 9 residents of a neighborhood bordered by Barbee Chapel Rd. and NC 54 who express their intention to collectively market their property commercially. A major point of their letter is to declare that their residential neighborhood, already negatively influenced by Meadowmont across the street, will be surrounded by commercial development and will no longer suitable to live in once Woodmont is built. This letter was sent before even ONE public hearing was held on the Woodmont proposal.

Attachment 3: Context of Planning and Development Activity in NC 54 Corridor

List of Long Range Transportation Planning

List of Development Activity

These lists were presented by town staff during the Woodmont Public Hearing May 12, 2008. The intention of the presentation was to encourage the CH Town Council to consider the Woodmont proposal in light of all the other projects and traffic projections for the NC 54 corridor.

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Attachment 1

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Adopted by
Town Council Resolution
June 12, 1995

ATTACHMENT 20

GOALS FOR THE NC 54 EAST ENTRANCEWAY

In order to address urban sprawl and achieve sustainable development which incorporates a mix of uses at a pedestrian scale and which strengthens the environmental social and economic fabric of our community, the Town Council adopts the following goals for inclusion as a component of the Comprehensive Plan as it relates to the East Entranceway area of Chapel Hill.

Incorporate a mix of uses including a variety of residential types balanced with neighborhood/community retail, services, and office uses in an integrated development pattern. The office, retail, and housing should not be in large separate zones on the north side of NC 54, but should instead be mixed in fine grains.

Where practical and appropriate to the site, a mix of uses would:

- * Ensure the availability of safe, sanitary, decent, and well-designed affordable housing. The developers of this housing, whether owner-purchased or rental, shall conform with the income guidelines as stated in the Comprehensive Plan.
- * Include a variety of housing types within each neighborhood to accommodate low, moderate, and upper income levels, as well as single dwellers and a variety of residential types and sizes.
- * Include small apartment units, townhouses, single-family houses, and garage apartments on a neighborhood level.
- * Include office and retail located within 1/4 mile of most dwellings in a neighborhood area.
- * Incorporate the office and retail components within neighborhoods in a scale to fit the neighborhoods, for example, with two to three story buildings with living units on the top floors.
- * Limit the office and retail components to accommodate primarily the neighborhood needs.
- * Cluster development so as to provide green space for preservation and community gathering places.

Include pedestrian and bicycle facilities in every aspect of the development to ensure pedestrian-and-bicycle-friendly development.

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- * **Neighborhoods are designed with narrow streets and accommodations for pedestrians and bicyclists on most streets where practical and appropriate to the site.**
- * **Office and retail developments are integrated into the neighborhood designs with accommodations for pedestrians and bicyclists on most streets.**
- * **The nature of the business should appeal to pedestrian traffic.**

Develop in such a way that encourages reductions in the number of automobile trips per household per day and that provides choices of routes to users of motor vehicles, as well as transit alternatives to the single occupant vehicle.

- * **Provide an internal transportation network within new developments based on a grid pattern appropriate to the topography rather than a cul-de-sac pattern.**
- * **Streets and parking should be designed to promote easy, safe pedestrian and bicycle traffic, and to inhibit fast traffic in both the residential and retail/office segments of the neighborhoods.**
- * **Neighborhoods, including the office/retail segments, should be built so as not to impinge unduly on the tranquility of already existing neighborhoods.**
- * **Promote transit facilities, including preserving the potential for regional transit in this corridor.**

Develop at densities that allow for the preservation of the meadows, natural areas, green space, and designation of land for public facilities such as schools, parks, greenways, and other possible infrastructure needs.

- * **Preserve, restore, and enhance natural pastoral landscapes and vistas generally as depicted in the 1988 Entranceway Plan taking into account actual terrain.**
- * **Maintain and reinforce ridge lines and edges of the meadows.**
- * **Accept higher densities in interior of properties to assure preservation of the meadows and green space without any buildings.**
- * **Accept higher densities in least environmentally sensitive areas to allow for watershed protection.**
- * **Accept higher densities in least environmentally sensitive areas to prevent wetland disturbance for recreation or residential or office/retail buildings.**
- * **Coordinate location and design of transportation facilities with entranceway landscapes.**

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Other infrastructure needs include the following:

- * **Develop a main collector road north of NC 54 and designate it as a transit corridor.**
- * **Avoid placing driveways on the main collector road.**
- * **Identify and reserve sites for possible infrastructure needs including a school with adjacent community park, fire station, or other Town facilities.**
- * **Incorporate greenways to preserve stream areas and provide recreational opportunities.**
- * **Develop greenways to connect to recreational facilities.**
- * **Develop a range of public parks: Small (5 acres or less), Neighborhood (5-20 acres), Community (20 acres or more) with a variety of recreational facilities.**

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Attachment 2

Letter from Pearl Lane Neighborhood

Dear Town Council
Regarding: Woodmont Development Rezoning Request
Date: March 6, 2008
From: Frank Herlant

I am writing on behalf of the neighbors and property owners along Pearl Lane. Over the years, the area around our neighborhood has changed substantially. What used to be on the outside of town, is now very much part of town. Meadowmont and the adjoining Capital Associates developments have added to the quality of life, but it has also increased traffic & noise to this area..

We feel the proposed Woodmont project should be part of Chapel Hill's long term plan. The project will certainly add jobs & revenue to the area, and will be an attractive addition to Chapel Hill. The Woodmont development will however strongly impact our neighborhood.

- The project will literally "wrap" around our neighborhood, changing it's privacy & feel forever. Our properties will be wrapped by commercial & mixed use land.
- The project will certainly increase traffic & noise to the area.

Because of the current & pending changes to our neighborhood, after meeting with the Town Planning Dept and consulting with real-estate experts, the Pearl Lane property owners have decided to jointly market the Pearl Lane properties for future development. We feel that the long-term use of our corner should be mixed use, and should fit into the overall Woodmont project. The Town Planning Dept has worked with Capital Associates to ensure future tie-ins and easements exist between Woodmont & the Pearl Lane Properties.

As part of the zoning change for the Woodmont project, we would like to see that the following are addressed:

- Additional turning lanes at the Barbee Chapel & 54 Intersection. Currently traffic can back-up on Barbee Chapel past Pearl Lane making it difficult to leave the neighborhood.
- Closure of Stancil drive in front of the CITGO gas station. This is essential for good traffic flow between Barbee Chapel & 54. It has also been the source of many accidents.
- Addition of a traffic light on Barbee Chapel in front of the proposed drive to Woodmont. This will be a necessity for anyone leaving Woodmont or the neighboring condos.
- Inclusion of Woodmont in Chapel Hills long term Transit plan.
- Acknowledgement from the Town of Chapel Hill that rezoning for the Woodmont development will potentially require a future re-zoning of the Pearl Lane properties for future mixed use.

Pearl Lane Property Owners Include:

Frank Herlant	Todd Q. Krantz	Ricky Robertson
Lyn Harwell	Donna Sayers	Don Pendergraft
Sandy Pendergraft	Steve Pendergraft	

Kind regards,
Frank Herlant

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Attachment 3

Context of Planning and Development Activity in NC 54 Corridor
Town of Chapel Hill Planning Department

LONG RANGE PLANNING

Adopted 2030 Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro Long Range Transportation Plan

2035 D-CH-C Long Range Transportation Plan socio-economic projections

Special Transit Advisory Commission (STAC) Report

Chapel Hill Long Range Transit Plan

Farrington Road/Stagecoach Road Corridor Study

Proposed NC 54 Corridor Study

DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY

(along East 54 corridor between Fordham and Town limits)

Under Construction

- Castalia at Meadowmont
- East 54 Mixed Use development

Active Applications

- Aydan Court multi-family
- Gateway Bank at Meadowmont

Concept Plans

- UNC Hospital & Clinics at 54 and Finley Golf Course Rd
- Glen Lennox redevelopment

Vacant /Undeveloped

- UNC property east of Meadowmont