

MEMORANDUM

TO: Roger L. Stancil, Town Manager

FROM: J. B. Culpepper, Planning Director
David Bonk, Long Range and Transportation Planning Manager
Garrett Davis, Long Range Planner

SUBJECT: Public Forum: Rogers Road Small Area Plan

DATE: November 16, 2009

PURPOSE

Tonight the Council receives public comment on the Final Report of the Rogers Road Small Area Plan Task Force (Attachment 1) and considers its possible inclusion as an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan.

BACKGROUND

The Rogers Road study area is located in Orange County in the northwestern most area of Chapel Hill's planning jurisdiction. It is also adjacent to the Town of Carrboro. The study area is located in the Chapel Hill Joint Planning Transition Area, an area which is anticipated to become part of the Town of Chapel Hill (Attachment 1, pg 7). The future growth of the Town of Chapel Hill and the Town of Carrboro in this area was established with Orange County, through a Joint Planning Agreement in 1987.

Recent History

Below is a chronology of recent events in the Rogers Road Small Area planning process. You can also find a more detailed timeline that includes more history on page 5 of Attachment 1.

December 6, 2006: The Council adopted a resolution to set the schedule for the process and composition of the Task Force and identified the following topics to be addressed:

- *Desirable Land Uses and a Revision to the Land Use Plan*
- *Water and Sewer Extension Plan*
- *Roadway Network*
- *Transit Service Plan*
- *Zoning Ordinance and Map Amendment*

June 2007: The Task Force met first in February of 2007 and delivered an interim report to the Council in June of 2007.

June 2008: The Town hired Durham Area Designers to lead a community design workshop.

February 2009: The Task Force endorsed a final report.

March 2009 to November 2009: The Council received the Task Force report and referred the document to advisory boards and local government agencies. It was also a topic of discussion at the March 26, 2009 Assembly of Governments meeting.

DISCUSSION

The Rogers Road Small Area Plan report is a document that provides recommendations for the future of the Rogers Road neighborhood. The recommendations address future land uses, infrastructure investment, community preservation, transportation improvements, as well as open space and recreation improvements.

After the Task Force completed its work in February of 2009, the Council received and referred the Final Report (Attachment 1) to Town advisory boards, Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools, Orange County and the Town of Carrboro for comment. These comments are provided with this memorandum along with the report's recommendations.

The Final Report of the Task Force included a series of recommendations and related maps pertaining to Transportation and Infrastructure, Open Space and Recreation, Design and Land Use, and Community Preservation (Attachment 1, pg 20-21). The basis for these recommendations and maps was a document prepared by the Durham Area Designers (DAD), a non-profit design collective, hired to lead a community design workshop and report their findings to the Task Force (Attachment 2 is the recommended Land Use Plan). The DAD report was a milestone for this process as it provided a foundation for the Task Force's final recommendations and proposed Land Use Plan (Attachment 1, pg 18).

Recommendations by the Rogers Road Task Force

The recommendations of the Rogers Road Small Area Plan Task Force included (pages 20 and 21 of Attachment 1):

Transportation and Infrastructure

- Bus service should be provided to the existing community and bus service should be extended as the community develops.
- Transportation access through all modes (vehicles, bicycle and pedestrian, transit) should be improved.
- New points of ingress and egress to the community should be established.
- A road should be built that connects the neighborhood to Weaver Dairy Rd.
- Water and sanitary sewer mains should be extended to the community.
- The Towns of Chapel Hill, Carrboro, Hillsborough, and Orange County should collaborate to identify and secure funds to be used for financing the entire cost of OWASA water and sewer connections for individual homes within the Historic

Rogers-Eubanks community as part of the compensation for the 37 years of hosting the Orange County Landfill and other solid waste facilities.

Open Space and Recreation

- Active recreation opportunities need to be provided for the Rogers Road community.
- Passive recreation opportunities such as trails should be constructed on the Greene Tract. In order to do so, the Greene Tract Concept Plan should be revised by the local governments to reflect changing conditions along with this plan.
- If a school is built in the community, explicit facility sharing relationships should be established prior to construction.

Design and Land Use

- The recommended Master Plan should become the basis for a future land use plan amendment for the Rogers Road area.
- The Town should take the lead in initiating intergovernmental land use discussions (as required by the Joint Planning Agreement) by articulating a new vision for growth in the area.
- New development should be compact and offer a range of housing types. This will facilitate the development of a neighborhood core in the eastern part of the study area, as will the presence of a school and a neighborhood commercial district.
- Minimum setback requirements for new development should reflect the Task Force's desire to have a front porch community where life meets the street. Houses should be built close to sidewalks.
- The Task Force desires that the currently developed areas near Rogers Road and the peripheries of the study area maintain their current densities. This would allow this part of the community to maintain its rural feel.
- New roads near the neighborhood core should have curb and gutter.
- A maximum building height of 45 feet is recommended to maintain the community's character.

Community Preservation

- The two remaining historic buildings in the study area should be preserved and integrated into future community facilities.
- The Town should explore options similar to the Homestead Exemption that would enable current property owners, particularly long-time residents, Habitat residents, and descendants of the Historic Community, to retain ownership of their property.
- Local governments should collaborate with the community to develop strategies that help ensure that the majority of the housing stock be affordable to those making 80% of the Area Median Income.
- Residents need to be informed of development pressures and opportunities in the Rogers Road area. This could happen through information sessions periodically hosted by the Town.

- The Town and the Community should collaborate to find innovative ways to rehabilitate declining residential properties in the area.
- Local governments with jurisdiction should revisit ordinances pertaining to the replacement of manufactured housing and strive to develop rules to allow existing housing to remain in place.
- The Town and the Rogers Road community should maintain the type of meaningful dialogue that was made possible by the efforts of the Task Force and by the work done during the design workshop.

After the Task Force adopted a final report in March of 2009, staff initiated the traditional advisory board review process common to other small area plans. The Planning Board, Transportation Board, Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board, Sustainability Committee, and Greenways Commission have reviewed this plan. Several boards submitted comments in addition to endorsing the final report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Town Advisory Boards

Planning Board: On September 1, 2009, the board voted unanimously to endorse the recommendations of the Rogers Road Area Task Force as submitted in the report. A copy of the Planning Board recommendation is attached.

Transportation Board: On August 13, 2009, the board voted unanimously to endorse the recommendations of the Rogers Road Task as submitted in the report with the following comments. A copy of the Transportation Board recommendation is attached.

Special emphasis was placed on the north/south and east/west roadway connections and the mixed use and high density recommendations. A member expressed concern for the potential loss of the historic Roger's Road neighborhood.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board: On September 22, 2009, the motion to endorse the final report with comments passed unanimously with special emphasis on the following recommendations of the Task Force underlined. A copy of the Board recommendation is attached.

“Transportation access through all modes (including bike, pedestrian, transit) be improved”

A member noted that the recommendations in the final report (for the construction of new roadways) should be in keeping with Complete Streets Policy. They further stated that bicycle and pedestrian accommodations should be specific and should reference the Bicycle and Pedestrian Action Plan whenever possible (Chapter 2.1 and Appendix #5- All new or reconstructed streets should include bicycle lanes and sidewalks.)

“The Report recommends that new points of ingress and egress to the community should be established including a connection across the Greene Tract to Weaver Dairy Road Extension.”

A member was concerned that there was a potential for increased vehicular traffic in the study area and surrounding neighborhoods. He suggested traffic calming and traffic control measures be considered for any North-South and East-West roadway.

Sustainability Committee: The Sustainability Committee received the Rogers Road Report in October and will make their official recommendations at their November meeting. We will provide the Committee recommendation at the Public Hearing.

Greenways Commission: On October 28, 2009, The Commission voted unanimously (5-0) to recommend adoption of the plan, with the following changes:

- Insert a new map that includes the road and greenway trail plans together on the same map.
- Use the trail system to provide interconnectivity with the school, roads, and neighborhoods.
- Provide a mix of trails that include natural surface trails and paved greenway trails; consider this more detailed level of planning when the Greenways Master Plan is revised.
- Develop the road system in such a way as to keep the proposed open space area on the Greene tract as large as possible because open space functions best when left in large intact pieces. In addition, consider environmental sensitivity in locating roads and trails. While supporting the principle of connectivity, the Commission suggests the proposed road connection to Weaver Dairy Road through the proposed open space may warrant reconsideration based on these principles.
- On page 20, under Transportation and Infrastructure, second bullet, add “Greenway Trails” to the list of modes of transportation.
- The existing Greenways Master Plan, along with recent changes, should be shown on any map related to transportation, open space, or recreation. The Horace Williams Trail, which is a major greenway, is currently proposed for the area adjacent to the Rogers Road boundary, but would clearly serve the area.
- The Greenways Commission supports revising the Greenways Master Plan to show the addition of trails in the Rogers Road area after the three governments have adopted the Rogers Road Small Area Plan.

The Town also received comments from outside agencies in Orange County that would be involved in the implementation of this plan in some aspect. The comments from Orange County, Carrboro, and the Chapel Hill-Carrboro City School System are provided as attachments.

NEXT STEPS

We recommend that the Council receive public comment on the Final Report of the Rogers Road Small Area Plan Task Force tonight. We recommend that the public comments as well as the advisory board and agency input be referred to the Town Manager and Attorney and the item return to the Council in March for consideration for adoption as an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan.

The Final Report of the Task Force includes a proposed implementation plan which identifies tasks necessary to implement elements of the plan (Attachment 1, pg 24-25). Some of the timeframes need to be adjusted. The staff will update the implementation plan for consideration when the document returns to the Council.

Implementation: A collaborative planning effort

The proposed implementation plan also includes process recommendations unique to this study area. Because the study area is within a joint planning transition area, any change to the Joint Planning Land Use Plan would also need to be approved by Orange County following a Joint Public Hearing. The revised Joint Land Use Plan would become the Land Use Plan recognized by all parties of the Joint Planning Agreement.

Another consideration is the Greene Tract and the concept plan endorsed by the Greene Tract Work Group in 2002. The work group was comprised of elected officials from Chapel Hill, Orange County, and Carrboro and their task was to determine future uses for the 169 acre Greene Tract. Page 14 of Attachment 1 shows the location and acreage of affordable housing and open space the work group endorsed. We will need to compare the Greene Tract Concept Plan boundaries and the Proposed Land Use Plan of the Task Force (Attachment 1, pg 22, Action C₃). This would likely need to occur before specific Land Use Plan amendments are made and taken to a Joint Public Hearing.

The Task Force Report also calls for the formation of a work group to develop a utility funding and phasing plan for water and sewer connections for review by the three local governments (see Attachment 1, pg 22, Action C₁). This recommended implementation step has been addressed with formation of an elected officials' work group at the March 26, 2009 Assembly of Governments meeting. This group was charged with developing a strategy to bring water and sewer service to the community. Council member Jim Merritt was appointed to serve on this committee. The first meeting of this Assembly of Government work group is scheduled for November 19, 2009.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Final Report of the Rogers Road Small Area Plan Task Force (p. 8).
2. Recommended Land Use Plan – Durham Area Designers (p. 36).
3. Advisory Board Review (p. 37).
4. Outside Agency Review (p. 45).