

# CONCEPT PLAN PROPOSAL

***Applicant Information***

Name: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill  
Address: 103 Airport Drive - Giles F. Horney Building - CB# 1090  
City: Chapel Hill State: NC Zip: 27599  
Phone (Work): 919-843-2085 FAX: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail: sarthur@fac.unc.edu

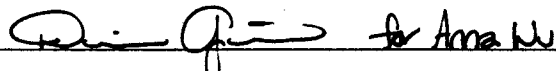
***Property Owner Information (included as attachment if more than one owner)***

Name: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Phone 919-843-2085  
Address: 103 Airport Drive - Giles F. Horney Building - CB# 1090  
City: Chapel Hill State: NC Zip: 27599

***Development Information***

Name of Development: North Carolina Botanical Garden  
Tax Map: 7 Block: 73 Lot(s): 1 Parcel ID #: 9788-54-5304  
Address/Location: Old Mason Farm Road - South Side  
Existing Zoning: R-1 New Zoning District if Rezoning Proposed n/a  
Proposed Size of Development (Acres / Square Feet): 35.0 ac. / 1,524,600 s.f.  
Permitted / Proposed Floor Area (Square Feet): 115,869 s.f. / 76,746 sf  
Minimum # Parking Spaces Existing: Parking 112 sp. # Required: 211 sp. # Proposed 164 sp.  
Proposed Number of Dwelling Units: 0 # Units per Acre \_\_\_\_\_  
Existing / Proposed Impervious Surface Area (Square Feet): 48,351 / 135,356 sf  
Is this Concept Plan subject to additional review by Town Council? Yes

The undersigned applicant hereby certifies that: a) the property owner authorizes the filing of this proposal; b) authorizes on-site review by authorized staff; and c) to the best of his/her knowledge and belief, all information supplied with this proposal is true and accurate.

Signature:  Date: 6/1/04

Please submit **20 sets** of all materials, or **35 sets of all materials including reduced (8 1/2" by 11") copies of all plans if the Concept Plan is subject to additional review by the Town Council**, no later than the first day of the month. **Materials must be collated and folded to fit into a 12" x 15" envelope.**

The Community Design Commission meets regularly on the third Wednesday of each month. Meetings with the Town Council will be scheduled after the Community Design Commission meeting. For confirmation of a meeting dates and the placement of your request on the agenda, please call the Planning Department at (919) 968-2728.

## NC Botanical Garden Visitor Education Center

### Program

In 1990 a Master Plan for the North Carolina Botanical Garden was approved by the UNC-Chapel Hill Building and Grounds Committee and Board of Trustees. The master planning process identified the need for two significant new buildings: a Visitor Education Center and a Herbarium/Library. Initial design for the Herbarium/Library (approx. 36,500 gross square ft) was completed in 1999, but the project remains on hold pending State funding. The Herbarium/Library will house the most significant research and reference collection of the southeastern US flora (currently located at Coker Hall), and associated botanical library.

For the past three years, Botanical Garden staff and an architectural team led by Frank Harmon Architects have been working on the design of a Visitor Education Center. Private, as opposed to State, funds are being identified and solicited for this project. The Visitor Education Center (approx. 29,500 gross square ft) is a facility designed to act as a visitor "gateway" to the Botanical Garden. All systems and materials have been designed to minimize environmental impact and support human health. This project will set a new standard for environmentally friendly public buildings in our state and region. Upon completion, we will submit our project for certification under the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) rating, a voluntary Green Building Council Rating System™. We anticipate being one of the first – perhaps the first – LEED Platinum building in North Carolina. The facility consists of three sections connected by covered breezeways: a Classroom building, an Exhibit and Information Hall and a Multipurpose Auditorium, all sited and designed to celebrate the surrounding Piedmont forest and associated botanical display areas. The Visitor Education Center will address the severely cramped conditions currently being experienced by staff and volunteers, who work out of the Totten Center (approx. 5,000 gross square ft), which was dedicated in 1976. The Visitor Education Center project also includes improvements to the current visitor parking lot and entrance off Old Mason Farm Road.

A significant element of this concept plan is our request to close Laurel Hill Road extension to through-traffic from Fordham Blvd. to its intersection with Coker Drive. Currently this town road bisects the Garden, separating the visitor parking lot from the Totten Center and core plant collections area. The Garden is requesting that the northern portion of Laurel Hill Road extension be closed for two main reasons: to improve the safety for Garden volunteers, staff, and visitors and to unite the existing plant collection area and Totten Center with the proposed Visitor Education Center, nature trails and natural NC Piedmont woodlands. A majority of Garden visitors are K-5 school groups, families with young children, senior citizens and out-of-state tourists. By removing vehicular through-traffic on Laurel Hill Road extension, a significant safety hazard will be eliminated. The creation of a unified site and visitor experience will allow the Garden to seamlessly present one of the Garden's themes – from planted garden to nature's own garden. In addition, the Garden will be able to close the sound wall, further reducing the impact of noise from Fordham Boulevard on out-of-door educational programs. It will also improve the enjoyment of the Garden for all visitors, whether they are seeking quiet contemplation or botanical and horticultural information.

Over the last two years, Garden staff has been working collaboratively with the Kings Mill / Morgan Creek neighborhood, to address neighborhood concerns related to the construction of the Visitor Education Center and the Garden's desire to close the lower portion of Laurel Hill Road. These discussions have proven to be very productive, as have meetings with the Highland Woods neighborhood.

## STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

### North Carolina Botanical Garden Visitor Center – Site Plan

**David Swanson, Landscape Architect (5-27-04)**

The proposed project is a Visitor Education Center for the North Carolina Botanical Garden. Its purpose will be to educate the public about the importance of preserving native plants and landscapes. The building will follow 'green architecture' principles and the setting will respect the existing landscape.

Therefore, the following 'Key Design Objectives', taken from the "Design Guidelines" section of the *Chapel Hill Comprehensive Plan*, are integrated into all aspects of this site design. Our responses follow each of the objectives.

#### *SITE DEVELOPMENT*

- *Preserve natural land contours and natural drainageways.*

The building and surrounding areas will be sited and designed to minimize the impact on the natural land contours and natural drainageways. We have performed stormwater management studies and the design will make use of water recycling.

- *Keep design compatible with the positive character of the surrounding area in terms of both existing character and desired future character.*

The building and surrounding areas are intended to blend in with the natural setting and character of the existing botanical garden, trails, and streams.

- *Create development that remains pleasant in character and human in scale, while promoting smooth circulation of people and traffic.*

Since this will be a visitor education center, its character and scale will certainly be at human scale and pedestrian friendly; in fact there will be no vehicular circulation except to and from the service area at the rear of the building and around the existing parking lot, which will be redesigned to be more environmentally friendly.

- *Where possible, incorporate significant tree masses and/or specimen trees as an integral design factor.*

The siting of the building and surrounding areas is designed to take advantage of views of the surrounding woods and to minimize the removal of significant trees.

- *Minimize harm and disruption to existing plant and animal life.*

The purpose of the Visitor Education Center will be to educate the public on the importance of respecting and preserving plant and animal life.

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## ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER

- *Buildings should be designed and located so that they provide visual interest and create enjoyable, human-scale spaces.*
- *Building design should blend with the natural terrain by means such as terracing or other techniques that minimize grading.*
- *Designs should be compatible, in form and proportion, with the neighboring area.*
- *Designers should strive for creativity in form and space wherever contrast and variety are appropriate to the larger environment.*

The Visitor Education Center will blend into the existing natural landscape. Its siting will demonstrate sensitivity to the context of the North Carolina Botanical Garden. The building will follow the contours of the natural terrain and is designed in three wings to minimize its massing and promote views through the buildings into the surrounding landscape.

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

- *Landscape theme should foster unity of design and reinforce existing vegetation with compatible plantings. (For example, new seedling plantings could expand an existing pine tree canopy.*
- *Entrances into developments should be sensitively landscaped. Appropriate signs, compatible with the building(s), should be installed to identify the project and frame the entryway.*
- *Appropriate landscaping should be used around structures to blend them with the natural landscape.*
- *Trees should be retained, where they provide screening or soften views of the site.*
- *Landscaping should be massed or clustered – not spread out in linear patterns.*

Proposed plantings will all be native, reinforcing the mission of the Botanical Garden as a conservation garden. Landscaping and signage at entrances will be natural and low-key. The building and surrounding areas are sited to minimize the removal of significant trees. The pattern of the landscaping will reflect a natural, loose form, in keeping with the theme of the Botanical Garden.

# North Carolina Botanical Garden

The University of North Carolina  
at Chapel Hill  
Chapel Hill, North Carolina



North



Scale: 1" = 500'-0"

Date: June 01, 2004  
By: Scale of Drawing is Reduced  
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: DAVID SWANSON - SWANSON AND ASSOCIATES, P.A.

S.U.P. BOUNDARY MAP

CONCEPT PLAN SUBMITTAL

