

OVERVIEW

Prior to submittal of a formal development application, all major development proposals are required to be reviewed while they are still at a "conceptual" stage. In particular, it is the intent of the "Concept Plan" review process that citizens and members of the Community Design Commission have an opportunity to review a site analysis and a conceptual plan in order to evaluate the impact of a major development proposal on the character of the area in which it is proposed to be located. This process is intended to take into consideration the general form of the land before and after development as well as the spatial relationships of the proposed structures, open spaces, landscaped areas, and general access and circulation patterns as they relate to the proposed development and the surrounding area.

BACKGROUND

The Community Design Commission conducted a Concept Plan Review for this potential development on Wednesday, May 15, 2002. The Concept Plan Review was for a proposal to construct new Ground Services and Printing Services Facilities on a triangular-shaped 23.5-acre site. The site is located south of Estes Drive Extension, west of Justice Street, and north of Barclay Road, Hartig Street and Powell Street. The concept plan proposes to construct approximately 61,500 square feet of floor area, including several buildings and structures for administrative offices, vehicular and equipment repair shops, landscaping and equipment storage areas, a fueling station, and a bulk storage area. A total of 160 on-site parking spaces are proposed. The site is located in the Office/Institutional-2 (OI-2) zoning district.

The site is located in Orange County and is identified as Chapel Hill Township Tax Map 29, Lots 1 & 1C. This proposal would require Council approval of a Special Use Permit application.

CITIZEN COMMENTS ON CONCEPT PLAN

Many citizens spoke on this Concept Plan at the meeting. Several written letters were submitted and are attached to this summary. The issues raised by citizens at the meeting are as follows:

- Several citizens expressed concern about increased noise pollution, due to the clear-cutting of the existing forest, from both the new facility and traffic on Estes Drive Extension.

- Several neighbors expressed their belief that this use is not appropriate for this site. Alternatively, the neighbors believed that the proposed use would be more appropriately placed on the Horace Williams tract.
- Several citizens expressed concern about the large amount of impervious surface proposed on the site and the negative effects on the surrounding area. In particular, neighbors were concerned about the flood-prone Umstead Drive area and the existing drainage problems in the surrounding neighborhoods.
- Several neighbors noted that increased fuel vapors from the fueling station could diminish air quality around the proposed facility.
- One citizen criticized the proposal as incompatible with the surrounding area, noting that the Town would not approve a commercial gas station adjacent to such an established neighborhood.
- Several neighbors voiced concern about the loss of the huge variety of wild life that currently inhabits the proposed area.
- A citizen observed that the proposed facilities are spread out and sprawled across the 23.5-acre site. The citizen suggested developing a plan that would conserve as much of the natural environment as possible.
- Several citizens expressed concern that possible future traffic pressures may eventually lead to a new vehicular connection to Barclay Road. The citizens suggested considering this project in context with bigger issues such as the widening of Estes Drive and the possibility of a new Estes Drive main entrance to the University's Horace Williams tract.
- Several citizens voiced concern that the proposed development does not protect and preserve the character of the existing neighborhood, and requested that if this facility must be constructed, that the natural undisturbed buffer between the facility and the surrounding neighborhoods be increased to a minimum of 100 feet.
- Several nearby residents expressed their belief that the current plan would destroy the character of their existing neighborhood.
- One citizen encouraged the development of alternative forms of transportation, through the installation of new bike lanes and sidewalks on Estes Drive Extension.

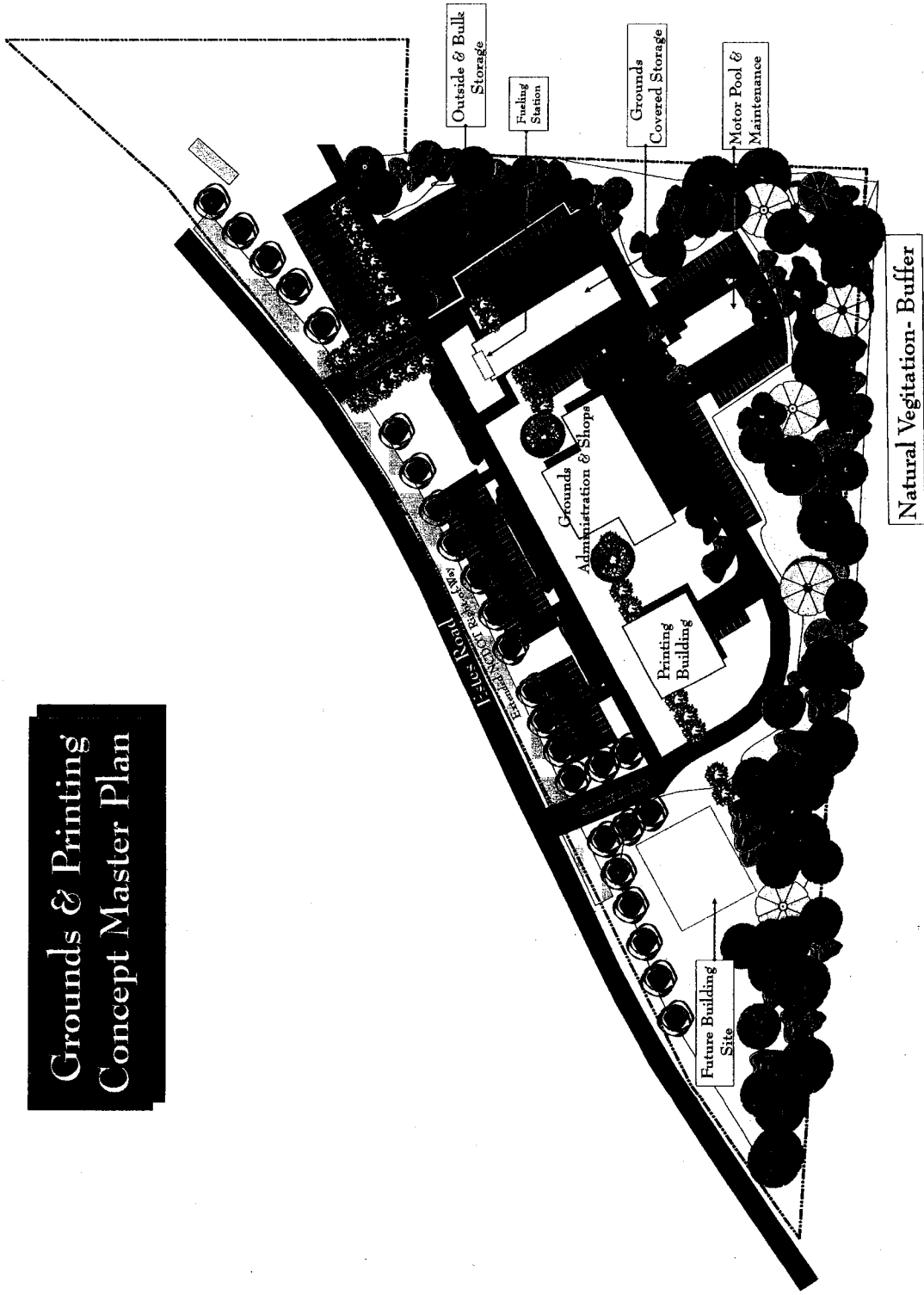
CONCEPT PLAN REVIEW

The Community Design Commission reviewed the conceptual development plan submittal and discussed the following topics:

1. The Commission expressed concern that the proposed development is inappropriate for this site, and would significantly diminish the character of the existing neighborhoods that are adjacent to this site. In particular, several Commission members suggested that the proposed facility seems to be an intense industrial use that is being proposed out of context with its surrounding uses. One Commission member even noted a belief that the proposal was reminiscent of strip commercial development.
2. Several Commission members believed that the proposed facility would be better suited to an alternative location, where it would not infringe upon the character of existing neighborhoods. In particular, these Commission members recommended that the University look to locate these uses on the Horace Williams tract.
3. One Commission member suggested placing bio-retention facilities on the site, but noted that the best place to do this was where the possible "future building area" had been identified on the site plan.
4. A Commission member requested that the applicant revise the plan to incorporate walking trails.
5. One Commission member expressed the belief that the applicant is proposing an excessive number of parking spaces (and too much impervious surface) on the site. The Commission member recommended that the applicant move the proposed buildings closer to Estes Drive Extension and reduce the number of proposed parking spaces, in order to reduce the amount of impervious surface proposed on the site.
6. Another Commission member suggested combining the "alley" through the middle of the site with the parking lot drive aisles in an effort to decrease impervious surface on the site, and to provide a bigger buffer between the building on this site and the adjoining neighborhoods.

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Grounds & Printing Concept Master Plan



Pease Associates

Grounds & Printing
Concept Master Plan

UNC-Chapel Hill
Facilities Services Master Plan