

8-2

## SUMMARY OF PLANNING BOARD ACTION

**Subject:** University Development Plan Modification No. 1 – Application for Development Plan Modification

**Meeting Date:** June 3, 2003

### **Comments Regarding the Form of the Planning Board Recommendation, Review Process, and Timetable for Action**

The Planning Board report to the Council presents no recommendation for approval or denial of the requested Development Plan Modification. Rather, the report presents comment and concerns about items that the Board believes the Council needs to have clarified before it takes any action on the UNC Development Plan Modification request.

The Planning Board does feel that the current 90-day time period for review and action is insufficient. The process did not allow the Board to solicit additional information and defer a decision until a second meeting—as would be the case with a subdivision or a special use permit. Additionally, a number of Board members felt that the short period of time between the receipt of the staff report and applicant materials and the Planning Board meeting significantly hindered their ability to thoroughly review the application and vote for a recommendation of approval or denial.

**Recommendation:** The Planning Board forwards the following comments, questions, and concerns to the Council for Consideration in its deliberation on the requested UNC Development Plan Modification request.

**Vote:** 8 – 1 (Motion by Ms. Eddy, Second by Mr. Day)

**Ayes:** Scott Radway (Chair), Sally Greene (Vice Chair), Coleman Day, Gay Eddy, Thatcher Freund, Nancy Gabriel, Suzanne Haff, Ruby Sinreich

**Nay:** Timothy Dempsey

### **Comments, Issues, and Questions**

#### 1. Mason Farm Road - Student Family Housing:

**The Board supported** several aspects of the proposed new arrangement of buildings, parking and drives. This included support for:

- The proposed increase in the number of dwelling units.
- The reduction of impervious surface afforded by the reduction in the number of buildings and the placement of parking underneath the buildings.
- The early construction of additional sidewalks on Mason Farm Road.

**The Board highlights** the following concerns:

- There is no pedestrian connection to Manning Drive identified in the proposed changes. With the units being on the south side of campus, direct pedestrian access to the north toward classrooms and other campus facilities seems essential.
- Also, there is no identified vehicular connection to Manning Drive. It appears that all traffic from the student housing will be required to use Mason Farm Road, from which there is no left turn onto 15-501. Thus the route out to many destinations, including Glenwood Elementary where many resident children will go to school, is unnecessarily long and cumbersome.
- The proposed plan should clearly delineate and maintain the options for the transit corridor.
- The placement of the utility corridor in the area of the transit corridor should be clearly delineated so as not to preclude transit corridor options.
- The landscape buffers and commitments in the Development Plan should be maintained in any modification approved by the Council.

2. Relocation of Parking to the Interior of the Campus

The Board notes that by eliminating the Manning Drive Parking Deck and proposing two new parking decks closer to the center of the UNC Campus, the proposed Development Plan Modifications seem to exhibit a philosophical shift from the 2001 Development Plan by moving some parking from the perimeter of the Campus to more interior locations. The resulting traffic increase will work against the goal, shared by the Town and the University's own Master Plan, of having a walkable campus. Reduced traffic and greater walkability are important goals for Chapel Hill as a whole. This issue, combined with the related no. 3 below, was of the greatest concern to the Board.

3. Jackson Circle Parking Deck

The Board is seriously concerned that the development of the Jackson Circle Deck will result in a higher level of traffic on South Columbia Street than previously anticipated, which may put further pressure on the Town to widen the street.

Several members felt strongly that the Council supported improvement plan for South Columbia Street should be implemented as soon as possible (and that had it already been completed, many of the traffic, pedestrian, and bicycle safety concerns would have been resolved.)

4. Cobb Hall Parking Deck

Some Board members questioned why this deck was necessary at this time. The Board recommends that prior to the approval of any plans for the construction of the proposed Cobb Hall Deck, those plans should be reviewed for details regarding:

- The height of the parking decks,

- The “building” architecture and elevations, particularly where the buildings are visible from the Cemetery and nearby roadways,
- The improvements to the County Club Road intersection and other roadway improvements needed to handle the additional traffic that will be attracted to the parking deck.

The Board appreciates that the applicant proposes to work with the Town to maintain and improve the Cemetery. These discussions should include:

- 1) Attention to the northern edge of the Cemetery so that cut-through pedestrian traffic will be eliminated and the Cemetery appropriately separated from vehicular traffic,
- 2) Seeking ways to reduce vandalism in the Cemetery,
- 3) Locating appropriate pedestrian passages around the Cemetery, and
- 4) Maintaining the integrity of the historically significant Cemetery.

#### 5. Proposed Chiller Plant

Some Board members questioned why it was necessary to place the Chiller so near the Cemetery. The Board recommends that if the Chiller Plant is approved, potential noise impact evaluations be made by an acoustical engineer to assure that Playmakers theater, the Cemetery, and especially the dormitory rooms are sufficiently protected from undesirable noise.

The Board agreed that it would be important for the University to work with the State Department of Cultural Resources regarding the Cobb Hall Deck/Chiller Plant proposal next to the National Register Cemetery.

#### 6. Utility Corridor Adjustments

In general, the Board supports the proposed utility corridor adjustments, particularly with the removal of the proposed utility corridor from Jones Park.

#### 7. Information Technology Building to replace Bennett Building -

The Board supports this change.

#### **Explanation of Dissenting Votes:**

The dissenting member was concerned that the forwarding of comments and concerns might be interpreted as a Planning Board Recommendation for approval of the proposed Development Plan Modifications rather than a recitation of issues to be resolved prior to a Council action on the proposed modifications.

Prepared by: Scott Radway, Chair, Chapel Hill Planning Board *SR*  
J.B. Culpepper, Staff