

Introduction

This summary of findings and recommendations on transportation planning for the proposed Carolina North development is based on public opinion data gathered from residents of northern Chapel Hill and Carrboro between April 12 and May 6, 2009 by Neighbors for Responsible Growth (NRG). For the purposes of this report, the comments and ideas shared by citizens have been consolidated under five major themes that underscore their importance:

1. Engaging in comprehensive transportation planning
2. Monitoring and mitigating impacts on neighborhoods
3. Accommodating safe, sustainable mobility
4. Promoting active public participation
5. Ensuring adequate safeguards and accountability

Many important issues are being addressed in deliberations between the Town of Chapel Hill and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill as they work to craft a Development Agreement that will govern the initial phase of construction at Carolina North. Transportation planning has emerged as an issue of immense concern because 1) key transportation planning studies have been delayed and are only now being completed and presented to the public and 2) the additional traffic generated by Carolina North will have an immediate and significant impact on the greater Chapel Hill/Carrboro community.

The Chapel Hill-based grassroots organization Neighbors for Responsible Growth (NRG) undertook a targeted public outreach effort on traffic and transportation in order to complement an ongoing series of general public meetings on Carolina North sponsored by the Town and the University. NRG collected the information using a multi-pronged approach that included six facilitated neighborhood focus groups, an online survey completed by nearly 600 citizens from more than 50 neighborhoods, and a public forum attended by more than 100 citizens that provided opportunities for them to discuss transportation issues with other citizens, members of the Town Council and UNC officials. A map representing the residences of participants is included in Appendix A. Survey results and concerns about specific roads and intersections have been shared with the Town of Chapel Hill and are referred to in the recently completed Transportation Impact Analysis.

The results of the focus groups, the online survey, and concerns and suggestions raised during the May 3 public forum are available on the NRG website at www.nrg-nc.net.

Some of the recommendations in this report already enjoy the support of Town and University officials, while others may require additional discussion and clarification. NRG is presenting these recommendations to the Town Council and UNC Board of Trustees with the expectation that citizens will be provided with feedback on each of the recommendations before a final version of the Development Agreement is adopted. Formal feedback on citizen input promotes confidence in local governance and the process, and will set a positive precedent for public participation throughout the build-out of Carolina North.

Recommendations

I. Engaging in comprehensive transportation planning

- A. The Town of Carrboro should be made a more active participant in transportation planning decisions related to Carolina North.
- B. All new proposed development in northern Chapel Hill and Carrboro, including Carolina Commons, and all secondary development along main corridors like MLK Boulevard, should be included in assumptions and models for Transportation Impact Analyses, Short Range Transit Plans (SRTP), Transportation Management Plans and other key milestones in the transportation planning process.
- C. All future transportation planning for Carolina North should reflect broader planning efforts such as the Long Range Transit Plan and the recommendations of the new Sustainable Community Visioning Task Force.

II. Monitoring and mitigating impacts on neighborhoods

- A. The impacts of cut-through traffic should be minimized and mitigated along connecting corridors such as Piney Mountain Road, Cedar Hills Drive, Lakeshore Drive, Rogers Road, Hillsborough Street and Northwood Drive.
- B. Non-resident parking in residential areas close to the Carolina North property and adjacent to major bus routes serving Carolina North should be closely monitored and discouraged. The Town should work with neighborhoods such as Colonial Heights, Elkin Hills, Ironwoods, and those along Piney Mountain Road to explore solutions such as permit systems and neighborhood watch programs.
- C. The resources and manpower necessary to enforce laws at the neighborhood level should be reflected in fiscal planning for Carolina North.

III. Accommodating safe, sustainable mobility

- A. We applaud the Council's emphasis on sustainable public transit. The Town should expand park-and-ride facilities and other infrastructure improvements necessary to facilitate its utilization.
- B. The widening of roads, new road construction, and other activities that ultimately increase traffic on our roadways should be minimized to the greatest extent possible.
- C. Parking spaces at Carolina North should be added at constrained ratios, following the recommendations of the Sustainability Committee (proposed Section G.8.2.(a)).
- D. Transportation improvements that encourage walking and biking should be emphasized. Suggestions include continuous, fully connected sidewalks and bike lanes on MLK Boulevard and other corridors serving Carolina North,

improved crosswalks, and upgrades and connecting extensions of existing facilities such as the Bolin Creek Greenway.

E. Traffic impacts on school safety and operations should be closely monitored. Planning should minimize the disruption of school bus routes, provide safe routes for students walking or biking to school, ensure safe pick-up and drop-off options, and implement necessary mitigation measures on Seawell School Road, Estes Drive and other roads heavily used by children and parents during school hours.

F. Construction traffic should be quarantined as much as possible. Effective staging areas should be created to minimize construction traffic and as much construction infrastructure as possible should remain within Carolina North.

G. The Transit Transfer Station should be completed as soon as possible.

IV. Promoting active public participation

A. Public participation requirements should be developed around each Transportation Impact Analysis (TIA), Short Range Transit Plan (SRTP), Transportation Management Plan (TMP) and other key milestones in the transportation planning process.

B. The Mayor of Chapel Hill should appoint a citizen liaison to coordinate communication between local neighborhoods, the Town and the University on issues pertaining to Carolina North development. Re-appointment would be reconsidered annually with input from the public and the Town Manager.

C. The Town and the University should adopt additional strategies for engaging the public at key points during the Carolina North build-out, including more emphasis on interaction and discussion during public meetings, leveraging social networks and other online resources, focusing events on specific topics, and exploring alternative times and locations.

D. Transportation planning should be more transparent. Relevant information should be shared as early as possible and it should be clear how key decisions are being made and what other options are being considered. The public should have opportunities to learn enough about the variables used in transportation planning to develop an appreciation for how changes to those variables will affect outcomes. Online tools should be explored that allow some degree of public interaction with the planning projections and assumptions.

E. The Town should involve citizens and neighborhood groups such as NRG in the formulation of specific public participation activities, both before and after the adoption of the Development Agreement.

V. Ensuring adequate safeguards and accountability

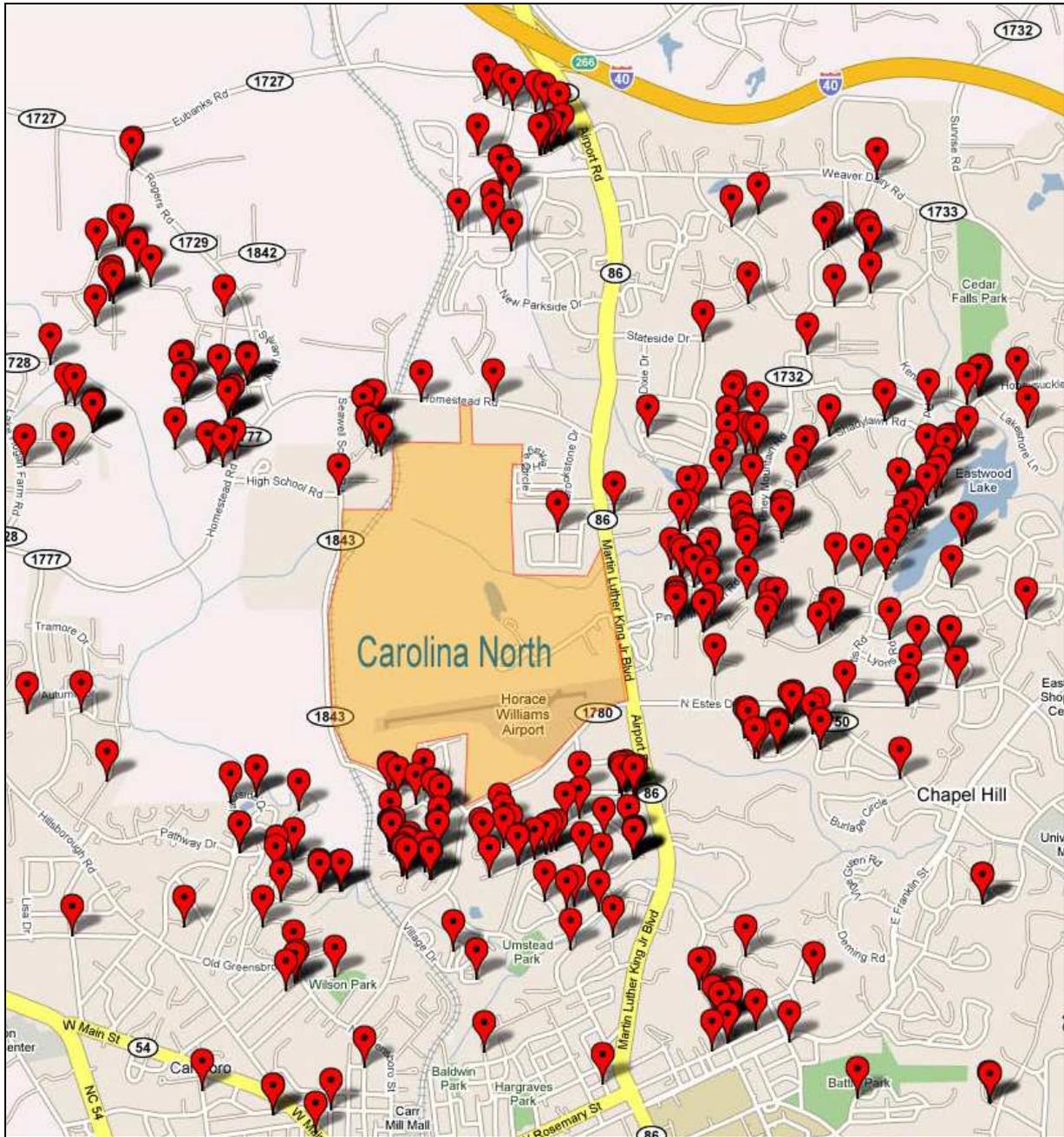
A. New buildings at Carolina North should not be occupied until the transportation improvements designated through each Transportation Impact Analysis (TIA), Short Range Transit Plan (SRTP) and Transportation Management Plan (TMP) are implemented and fully functional.

- B. Before each new TIA, the University should present the Town with the estimated increase in total occupancy expected during the period up to the next scheduled TIA. If occupancy exceeds the estimate at any point during that period, no additional occupancy should occur without the formal approval of the Town Council after a standard public comment period.
- C. A new TIA should be conducted every three years for the duration of the first Development Agreement for Carolina North.
- D. The accepted Level of Service for roads and intersections in the TIA study area should not be any lower than the Town standard, D.
- E. All future TIAs should factor in construction traffic.
- F. All future TIAs should extend bicycle performance metrics to the boundary of the study area.
- G. Four months before the end of the term of each TIA, public concerns and perceptions on local traffic conditions and pedestrian and bicycle safety should be solicited by the Town in coordination with the appointed citizen liaison and neighborhood representatives (see IIB).
- H. At the end of each TIA period, the Town and the TIA consultant should produce a report that evaluates the accuracy of TIA projections and assumptions by comparing them against current conditions and levels of service. The report should be made available for public comment and put on the Town Council's agenda for discussion before work on the next scheduled TIA begins.
- I. A report on statistics for vehicular crashes involving pedestrians, property or other vehicles within the boundary area of the Carolina North TIA should be produced and made available to the public at the end of each fiscal year.
- J. Final recommendations for all SRTPs and TMPs should include discussion about how key decisions were made and about the options that were considered.
- K. We applaud the inclusion of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions analysis in the recent Transportation Impact Analysis. Regular monitoring of vehicular traffic-generated GHG levels should be continued and expanded upon.

Contact Information

For more information on this report and other NRG activities, send email to info@nrg-nc.net or contact Julie McClintock at mcclintock.julie@mindspring.com or 919 967-3661.

Appendix A



This map is an incomplete but representative indicator of the residences of citizens who participated in the aforementioned NRG focus groups, online survey and public forum.



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