

April 24, 2018

Mayor Pam Hemminger and Members of the Town Council
Town of Chapel Hill
Chapel Hill Town Hall
405 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
Chapel Hill, NC 27514

**Re: Proposed Modifications to Elliot Road Extension 25% Design
April 25, 2018 Town Council Agenda**

Dear Mayor Hemminger and Council Members:

The significant private and public investments made in the Blue Hill district have accelerated the area's transformation from a auto-dominated, pedestrian-hostile complex of strip malls into a more walkable neighborhood that better accommodates other modes of transportation. On the public side, the completed Phase I of improvements to the area's roadway network has improved the congested intersection at Ephesus Church Road and Fordham Boulevard, providing more predictable traffic flow and improved pedestrian amenities.

However, the improvements to the intersection are a band-aid. To truly become accessible to all people traveling on foot, by bike, and by transit, the Blue Hill district needs an improved street network that provides multiple options with streets that are designed from inception to prioritize multiple modes of traffic. The Ephesus-Fordham intersection continues to serve a high volume of automobile traffic and cannot adequately accommodate other users such as bicyclists. That's why it is so important that the Blue Hill plan includes proposed extensions of Elliott Road and Legion Road. These new roadway connections will help create a street network that is highly supportive of walking and bicycling while also improving automobile traffic flow.

We write to urge Council to approve make the requested minor modifications to the preliminary design of the Elliot Road Extension and authorize staff to move forward on 70% design plans. With respect to the specific modifications, we have the following comments:

1) We agree with the Transportation and Connectivity Advisory Board that allowing full access at the western entrance onto Elliot Road Extension may impact the safety of bicyclists. However, the modification may improve automobile traffic flow by providing multiple opportunities for cars to avoid Fordham Boulevard. In addition, we are confident that Town staff and the consultants designing the road can minimize the risk by designing bicycle facilities such as highly visible, protected bike lanes and by engineering the intersection to slow automobiles leaving the eastern entrance such as through a raised crosswalk at the driveway entrance.

2) We have no objection to the request to move the eastern driveway.

3) We fully support the request to lower the speed limit from 35 mph to 25 mph. According to a 2009 study, a vehicle traveling between 20 and 25 mph can stop in about 40 feet, resulting in a 15% risk of a crash and only a 5% risk of a fatality. A car going 30-35 mph requires 75 feet to stop, almost quadrupling the crash risk to 55% and increasing the risk of pedestrian death to 45%.

However, as everyone who lives and works in Chapel Hill is well aware, changing the number on the speed limit sign does not change behavior. Weaver Dairy Extension today has a 25 mph speed limit, but compliance is low because the road has wide lanes and a wide median, encouraging cars to drive far faster. The National Association of City Transportation Engineers recommends treatment such as narrow lane widths, roadside landscaping, raised crosswalks, and curb extensions to provide behavioral cues to lower automobile speed. The Elliot Road 25% plans reflect a design speed of at least 35 mph. Given the intended speed limit is dropping, the design should be modified accordingly. <https://nacto.org/publication/urban-street-design-guide/design-controls/design-speed/#footnotes>

The proposed Elliot Road Extension is an important part of the Town's future roadway plan and will provide mobility improvements for everyone in the Blue Hill District. We urge the Town Council to approve continued design of the road with the three proposed modifications.

Very truly yours,

Jason Baker
Matt Bailey
Heather Brutz
Allison De Marco
Molly De Marco
Tom Farmer
Geoff Green
Kym Hunter
Sue Hunter
Seth LaJeunesse
Katy Lang
John Rees
Lee Storrow
Alison Stuebe
Alyson West

Amy Harvey

From: Jeanette Coffin
Sent: Wednesday, April 25, 2018 3:12 PM
To: jguilkey@nc.rr.com
Cc: Ben Hitchings; Judy Johnson; Allen Buansi; Donna Bell; Hongbin Gu; Jeanne Brown; Jess Anderson; Karen Stegman; Michael Parker; Nancy Oates; Pam Hemminger; Rachel Schaevitz; Toney Thompson; Town Council; Amy Harvey; Carolyn Worsley; Catherine Lazorko; Flo Miller; Laura Selmer; Mary Jane Nirdlinger; Rae Buckley; Ralph Karpinos; Roger Stancil; Ross Tompkins; Sabrina Oliver
Subject: email...FW: BLUE HILL IMPROVEMENTS
Attachments: Guilkey letter to Council and Mayor re 3 areas to be addressed before summer.doc
Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Thank you for your correspondence with the Town of Chapel Hill. The Mayor and Town Council are interested in what you have to say. By way of this email, I am forwarding your message to the Mayor and each of the Council Members, as well as to the appropriate staff person who may be able to assist in providing additional information or otherwise addressing your concerns.

If your email is related to a development application or a particular issue being addressed by the Council, your comments will be made part of the record. If applicable, we encourage you to attend any public meetings related to the items addressed in your email.

Again, thank you for your message.

Sincerely,

Jeanette Coffin



Jeanette Coffin
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[Town of Chapel Hill Manager's Office](#)
[405 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.](#)
[Chapel Hill, NC 27514](#)
(o) 919-968-2743 | (f) 919-969-2063

From: Joan Guilkey [mailto:jguilkey@nc.rr.com]
Sent: Wednesday, April 25, 2018 1:26 PM
To: Town Council <mayorandcouncil@townofchapelhill.org>
Subject: BLUE HILL IMPROVEMENTS

Dear Mayor and Council,

My preliminary comments as a citizen are attached. I loudly applaud those on Council who have asked for improvement decisions prior to the summer Council recess.

Thank you!

Joan

TO: Mayor and Town Council
FROM: Joan Guilkey, Concerned Citizen
DATE: 4/25/2018

RE: Improvements to Blue Hill District

I have seen the letter from Council members Anderson, Gu, and Schaevitz asking Staff to take a long hard look at the current shortfalls in the Form-Based Code for this district and propose concrete actions to be voted on before Council takes its summer recess.

Item 1 asks for ways to increase the amount of non-residential commercial land use. Rumor has it that staff has suggested increasing the size of Blue Hill. Please delete this suggestion without further discussion. The objective must be to improve the FBC, not make it worse by enlarging the problem. Staff must be tone deaf to what the taxpayers have been saying about Blue Hill if they believe this option is acceptable.

In fact, reducing Blue Hill size would eliminate the need for extension of Elliott Rd. and thereby save taxpayers millions. There would be no mandatory need to build a bridge or a street across the By-pass to the Park Apartment site. The developers seem at least open to talking about affordable housing. That is nice to know. They should also remember there is a considerable flooding issue to be addressed at time of redevelopment—regardless of what use is made of the parcel. Chapel Hill's only pressing residential need now is for low-income dwellings.

Please explore ways to remove The Park Apts. site from the District and revise its purpose because there are more than 100 very low income residents living there (I am told). I am not saying one developer should bear all the costs of relocating these folks who are at or near the 30% AMI, but neither should the Town.

Item 2 specifically asks for affordable housing in the District. We have several hundred low income renters at The Park location, including children. If that tract is to be redeveloped, first priority must be to find a place or places for those citizens. I understand The Berkshire has empty units. And we have a

second high rise underway beside the By-pass (and also in a flood plain). Both high rise owners must be given the option of assisting us in meeting our 300 units of AH goal. Citizens already subsidize AH in significant ways and are willing to do more. We will vote on a \$10 mil. Bond this fall expressly for this purpose. Right now expenses to maintain luxury units already in existence will outstrip any taxes gleaned from luxury units. The Town must not bale out Blue Hill owners by passing those bond monies (or other tax money) through to Blue Hill developers.

Item 3 asks Staff to reduce the massing and building size standards in Blue Hill.

Citizens were told before Blue Hill work began that it would produce a walkable, bicycle-friendly, diverse, and pretty area. Fools that we were back then, we believed staff! We have virtually none of those amenities---only the promise of more luxury buildings, no green space available to the public unless the public pays for it, lots of flooding potential, and high maintenance costs.

Staff discourages the CDC from doing its job and limits its role to less consequential aspects of parcels—the frill if you will. Conflicts of interest by members of the Planning Commission and elsewhere block any citizen attempts to make a positive difference. These problems must be addressed by Council, along with specific structural mandates.

Yes, this can be complicated. It also is MANDATORY that all three topics be addressed in significant ways before Council recesses for summer. I thank you for making the effort and welcome ideas!

Joan Guilkey
919-967-6703