

Chapel Hill's Greene Tract Forest: Reasons to Preserve the Park

Preservation AND Housing: We can save the beautiful Greene Tract Forest and *also* build mixed-income housing. The 2016 *Rogers Road: Mapping Our Community's Future* report, written by the Rogers Road Community, called for 80% preservation and 20% housing. In contrast, the Town's current proposal is to preserve only 35-50%, build roads through the forest, and designate land on three sides of the forest for development. This is unacceptable.

Honoring Consensus-Driven Community Request:

The 2016 *Rogers Road: Mapping Our Community's Future* report, written by the Rogers Road Community and other community members consistently calls for preservation. The Greene Tract is featured in 25 locations within this 44-page report. Quotes include, "additional land in the Greene Tract should also be preserved for public park use" and "We, and many other community members, have long used the Greene tract for recreation, education, enjoyment and even as a food supply." The report also includes 4 maps, all of which show the Greene Tract as a single, contiguous parcel of land. And most definitively, a quote on page 22 denotes the exact amount of land requested for preservation: "Ensure that large parts (80%) of the Greene Tract are permanently preserved as open, natural, space."

Largest Community-Owned Forest: The Chapel Hill community currently depends on the Carolina North Forest (CNF) for trails, recreation, and green space. However, much of CNF will likely be developed in the coming decades--or sooner. This is a decision up to UNC, *not* the Town. Because of this uncertainty, Chapel Hill residents need parks and open space with trails they know will be preserved for themselves and their children. The Greene Tract Forest is Chapel Hill's only chance for achieving this because it is the Town's largest undeveloped community-owned forest. It can be the centerpiece of the Town's greenway and park system. Preservation of the Greene Tract Forest would counterbalance the loss of land that will likely occur with UNC's development of the CNF. Without preservation of the Greene Tract Forest, Chapel Hill's total open space will fall below the American Planning Association's recommendation of 2 acres per 100 people. Chapel Hill would lag behind both Durham and Raleigh in terms of open space per capita. In fact, Durham and Raleigh would each have three times the amount of open space as Chapel Hill. This would be detrimental to long-term sustainability of the Town. Planning for this open space now is critical, and preserving the Greene Tract Forest is an obvious and smart way to plan for adequate open space for the Town.

Greene Forest Trails Already Popular: The Greene Tract Forest has become a "below-the-radar" Town park, which is currently being used by hundreds of Chapel Hill, Carrboro, and County residents--mostly for walking, hiking, and mountain biking. This level of usage indicates a clear need and desire in our community for these forest trails and for preserved woods and open space.

Center of Future Park and Greenway System: Ownership of surrounding land by the Town, Orange County, and Duke Forest means the Greene Tract Forest is in a prime geographic position to allow future greenways, trails, and other connections between Homestead Park (and pool), the Johnson Mill Nature Preserve, Orange County's future Twin Creeks Park, and Brumley Forest. Preservation of the Greene Tract Forest means the Town can build a world-class park and greenway system for town and county residents. Developing the Greene Tract Forest means destroying the land that connects it all together.

Proposed Development Destroys Trails, Renders Natural Space Largely Unusable: Statistics for trail users show that most users travel 5-8 miles in an outing regardless of whether the user is walking, running, or biking. The current plan for developing the Greene Tract Forest reduces the existing trail mileage from 7 miles to under 2 miles. This would render the trails in the much-reduced preserve space unusable for most trail users.

Climate Change Action is Needed Now: The Greene Tract Forest is a 164-acre mature forest with the capacity to remove the amount of atmospheric carbon dioxide equivalent to removing 400 cars from the road each year. Experts say that the next 12 years are critical in the effort to slow global warming, and forests may be one way to mitigate global warming. Preservation of the Greene Tract Forest could be one important component of Chapel Hill's climate change action plan.

Greenspace is needed for our mental health: As we learn more about anxiety, depression, and ADHD, many studies are clearly showing the importance of green spaces to counteract these challenges. This is especially important to our community's children, who are growing up in a hyper-connected world with ubiquitous internet and social platform connections. We need to protect these green spaces wherever we can for our health, and more importantly our kids health. Once these environmentally sensitive areas are developed and gone, our amazing town will never be able to get these spaces back.

Let's keep 80% Greene!