

Amy Harvey

From: Jeanette Coffin
Sent: Tuesday, April 25, 2023 9:54 AM
To: pcooper@email.unc.edu
Cc: Britany Waddell; Judy Johnson; Corey Liles; Adam Searing; Amy Ryan; Camille Berry; Jeanne Brown; Jess Anderson; Karen Stegman; Michael Parker; Pam Hemminger; Paris Miller-Foushee; Tai Huynh; Amy Harvey; Ann Anderson; Atuya Cornwell; Carolyn Worsley; CHRIS BLUE; James Baker; Loryn Clark; Mary Jane Nirdlinger; Ran Northam; Ross Tompkins; Sabrina Oliver; Shay Stevens
Subject: FW: Jay Street on Meeting Agenda
Attachments: Cooper -- Council letter 2024.docx

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.

Again, thank you for your message.

Sincerely,

Jeanette Coffin



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From: Cooper, Pamela A <pcooper@email.unc.edu>
Sent: Monday, April 24, 2023 7:55 PM
To: Town Council <mayorandcouncil@townofchapelhill.org>
Subject: Jay Street on Meeting Agenda

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Dear Mayor Hemminger and Council Members,

Please find attached here my letter on the proposed development of apartments on Jay Street.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Pam Cooper.

04/23/23

Dear Mayor Hemminger and Town Council Members:

I write in response to the scheduling of a consent vote for the Council meeting planned for April 26th. One of the items included in the vote is a pathway from the proposed site of the Jay Street development to the Tanyard Branch Trail. Please allow me to remind you of four salient factors pertaining to Jay Street which make it a poor choice for development, even -- and perhaps especially -- if that development is 'affordable.'

Firstly, the Jay Street site was bought by the Town with funds specifically earmarked for open space. Although the Town has found a way around this the Taft/Mills development still represents a betrayal of voters who supported that earlier resolution. With all the controversy surrounding housing at this moment, such a misapplication of funds does not reflect well on the Council's integrity and collective judgement. Transparency and public trust require that the original conditions of purchase be respected.

Secondly, the location of the proposed development is highly problematical. The potential for workable connectivity is low. The Jay Street site has only one road for ingress and egress; widening it will batten on the historical Chapel Hill West African-American Cemetery and bring Jay Street almost up to the decks and porches of bordering town houses. Even then the infrastructure will be inadequate to the projected traffic increase.

Walking anywhere from the Jay Street neighborhood is extremely difficult. Residents will be facing a 45-minute to one-hour walk along Estes and North Greensboro (both heavily trafficked roads) to reach a grocery store. Or they could take a lengthy and dangerous walk along the railway line. I refer of course to able-bodied, healthy residents. Most significantly, the only bus that services the Jay Street area, the N route, runs only once an hour and goes nowhere near any shopping amenities – unless one takes it to the end of the route at Meadowmont. This bus used to run every half hour during the morning and evening rush hours but has now been cut back to every hour.

Recent material released by the Town suggests incorrectly that the A bus also services Jay Street: to catch the A bus residents will have to take another lengthy walk to the corner of Pritchard Street and Umstead Road. Few people would find this attractive given that one would arrive at work sweaty or chilled, and also face a long walk home after a hard day's work. The Town's laudable effort to promote alternate modes of transportation will be of little avail here. More than 200 car trips will be added to the tiny intersection of Jay Street and Village Drive, and there is no traffic light at the intersection of Village Drive and Estes. At a moment when many Chapel Hill residents are protesting about increased traffic, this development will dump even more cars onto Estes, Umstead, North Greensboro, and MLK.

Thirdly, there are socio-economic implications to this plan which will negatively affect the Town's image and undermine its efforts. The Jay Street development will join Estes Park and Village West in a concentrated triangle of low- to moderate-income housing complexes. As

Chapel Hill residents debate affordable housing and struggle to understand the mushrooming of high-priced units throughout the Town, there have been calls on social media and elsewhere to integrate neighborhoods, creating communities that bring together residents of all income levels. The isolating of these three affordable units in one place -- with poor connectivity and on the edge of a (coal-bearing) railway line -- looks like the very opposite of what healthy integration should be. Even while adding to affordable housing stock, the Jay Street development will, ironically, promote inequality in the Town. With all good intentions, it will increase the divisions already existing around housing as an issue and among different neighborhoods.

If, with the proposed upzoning, we are trying to work against the creation of segregated 'wealthy' and 'poor' neighborhoods, how will the Jay Street project help to achieve this goal? The sad truth is that even while we add affordable housing -- much needed and broadly supported -- adding it on this particular site will effectively widen the gulf between different sectors of our population. The fact that these apartments will be rental only further widens this gulf by foreclosing ownership and the building of generational wealth.

Finally, the loss of the pristine woodland of Jay Street will have severe environmental repercussions. The pursuit of housing density by the Town has led to the loss of green space and tree canopy. I understand that density is regarded as ultimately good for the environment in other ways, but surely we must consider what kind of living spaces are being created by this intense urbanization. How will residents in densely filled neighborhoods access nature for recreation and revitalization? It's common knowledge now that access to the natural world is beneficial to people's physical and mental health, and that quality of life must be carefully considered for any community to be truly complete. The Jay Street woodland offers such essential space while also providing habitat for wildlife and storing carbon.

One consequence of housing density is the effective relegation of nature to the margins of the urban core: this is unhealthy and will require those who seek outdoor spaces and recreation to drive to these margins. We should prioritize the conservation of green space and parkland within the town itself or we could easily find that the very people drawn to Chapel Hill will be eager to leave it in search of literal greener pastures.

Thank you for your attention to this lengthy letter.

Pamela Cooper
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