

MEMORANDUM

TO: Chapel Hill Mayor Pam Hemminger, Town Council members, & Town Manager Maurice Jones
FROM: Sunrise Coalition
RE: Habitat for Humanity of Orange County/Carol Woods Community Mixed Use Development
(*Planning Project #18-101*)
DATE: November 7, 2018

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A new high-density development has been proposed along Sunrise Road (***Planning Project #18-101***) that includes a collection of 223 housing units on 34 acres of land, approximately 18 acres of which are buildable. The units are a combination of senior and affordable housing.

The Sunrise Coalition represents the common interests of the nearby community and welcomes solutions to the affordable housing crisis for working families and for senior citizens. However, it also has grave concerns related to this proposed development's size, scale, and potential negative impacts. These include:

- **DENSITY.** The overall density is far higher than the density of any neighboring properties, in any direction, for nearly one mile. The land is zoned R2, and the Mayor's Task Force from previous development efforts stated that *retaining the current zoning was among its top priorities*.¹
- **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT.** The concept plan will completely clear almost 20 acres and remove 4,000 trees, which serve as pumps removing water from the soil. The trees' removal is further exacerbated by their replacement with 80% impervious surface in the buildable area. This will increase the risk of localized flooding and erosion to neighboring properties, the Duke Power easement and I-40.
- **TRAFFIC.** The proposed density is expected to have a significant negative impact on vehicular traffic volume and flow, impacting existing neighborhoods and roads. Several of the nearby roads (notably, the Sunrise Rd bridge across I-40) lack shoulders, will be challenged to handle the additional volume as designed, and may be difficult to improve. 908 additional daily/weekly trips can be expected, which will disproportionately burden neighbors living along Amesbury Drive, Sweeten Creek Road or along Sunrise Road. Pedestrian traffic is another concern, given the anticipated increase in students walking to school, as well as senior citizens attempting to cross Sunrise Road to access Carol Woods facilities.
- **NOISE POLLUTION.** I-40 runs alongside the north end of the proposed development. The volume of noise from I-40 is loud, and there is concern for the children of new residents.
- **SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ISOLATION.** The location is considerably removed from common services. Notably, the proposed development is located in a "food desert," as there is no grocery store within 1 mile, and Carol Woods has indicated these seniors would not be part of their standard food plan. Modern best practices, including Chapel Hill 2020, are to locate both affordable and senior housing within transportation corridors where public services are more readily available, and walking is a healthy and viable alternative.

¹ 2003-2004 Mayor's Task Force findings

The density of the proposed development would be more appropriate for an urban environment where there would be fewer environmental or traffic concerns, services would be more easily accessible, and noise from a nearby interstate would not be an issue. Placing this development on the edge of town next to the Rural Buffer means its residents will be highly dependent on individual automobiles.

The Sunrise Coalition has a 16 year history of working collaboratively with developers interested in this property to address the affordable housing crisis and ensure that the resulting concepts are well-thought out, considerate of negative impacts and work to minimize them, and in line with the character of existing neighborhoods.

To alleviate neighbors' concerns about this new development, the Sunrise Coalition requests that Town Council:

- **Slow down this process** to better incorporate community input from adjoining and impacted neighborhoods.
- **Instruct the developer to work with the surrounding community** to engage in meaningful two-way dialogue in the spirit of collaboration. In negotiating for favorable terms for the use of taxpayer dollars, the developer repeatedly committed to "work with the surrounding neighbors."² To date, the developer has spoken to, but has not worked with, the surrounding neighbors.
- **Instruct the developer to acknowledge and respect past history** related to acceptable negotiated density levels, given the persistent environmental and traffic concerns related to the development of these parcels of land.
- **Conduct a traffic study** to include pedestrians, bicycles, and vehicles.
- **Conduct an environmental study** to better understand the impact of the significant increase in impervious surface and removal of trees.

Sunrise Coalition Mission Statement: *Sunrise Coalition is organized for the charitable and educational purposes of promoting good land use decisions in, along, and among neighborhoods adjacent to and/or served, either directly or indirectly by Sunrise Road in Chapel Hill, NC.*

² Source: March 10, 2010 Letter from Habitat for Humanity of Orange County Executive Director to Mayor of Chapel Hill