



### ***Staff Recommendation***



Staff recommend that Council **approve the project** and **the requested modifications to regulations**, subject to the conditions in Ordinance A.

### ***Project Overview***

- Thomas and Hutton, on behalf of Holy Trinity Anglican Church, requests to rezone a 15.5 acre parcel from Residential-Low Density-1 (R-LD1) to Residential-4-Conditional Zoning District (R-4-CZD).
- The site is located off of Old Lystra Road and at the end of Wave Road, in the Joint Planning Area shared between the Town of Chapel Hill and Orange County.
- The proposed development consists of a place of worship and up to 10 dwelling units.
- Proposed building heights are up to 50 ft for the place of worship.

### ***Staff Analysis***

**1. Procedure for zoning change in Transition Area**

The majority of the site is in the Chapel Hill Transition Area, as defined by [the Joint Planning Area Land Use Plan](#).<sup>1</sup> The remainder of the site is in Chapel Hill's Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ). Applications for rezoning in the Transition Area are subject to Chapel Hill's zoning regulations but require review and approval from both the Chapel Hill Town Council and the Orange County Board of Commissioners.

**2. Modifications to Regulations:** Staff recommend Council and Commissioners approve all requested modifications.

Staff reviewed all modifications to regulations and find that the public purpose is served to an equivalent or greater degree. All modifications are shown in draft Ordinance A and the applicant materials.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.orangecountync.gov/3031/Long-Range-Comprehensive-Planning>, see 'Joint Planning Area' section




CONDITIONAL ZONING  
1651 Old Lystra Road

Planning Commission

**Summary of Comprehensive Plan Consistency**

Viewed through the holistic lens of the [Complete Community Strategy](#), this project **meets** the Town’s strategy for growth. No single issue raised below should be considered in isolation.

 Consistent    
  Somewhat Consistent    
  Not Consistent    
 **N/A** Not Applicable

	<b>Chapel Hill will direct growth to <u>greenways, transit corridors, large infill sites with existing infrastructure, and smaller infill sites.</u></b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This development is not located in any of the areas the Complete Community Strategy describes as best suited for new growth. The lot would not be considered an infill development and no multi-modal improvements are planned for this area of Chapel Hill. However, the density and intensity of the proposed development are compatible with the surrounding area and the proposed use is consistent with the Future Land Use Map.</li> <li>The majority of the site – and all of the proposed development area – is outside the Urban Service Area. As a result, the project will not be served by public water and sewer infrastructure. Recent studies by OWASA identified major limitations to the feasibility of expanding water and sewer service east of Wilson Creek.</li> </ul>	
	<b>Goal 1: Plan for the Future Strategically</b>	Associated Comp. Plan Elements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Future Land Use Map (FLUM)</a></li> <li><a href="#">Shaping Our Future</a></li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The site is in the Rural Residential land use category of the FLUM.</li> <li>Small-scale residential and “place of assembly, less than 2,000 seats” are appropriate uses for this area.</li> <li>The FLUM encourages rural development designs to preserve open space or environmentally sensitive areas. The site design preserves the Resource Conservation District around perennial streams onsite.</li> <li>At least 30 percent of the existing tree canopy will be maintained.</li> </ul>	
<b>N/A</b>	<b>Goal 2: Expand and Deliver New Greenways for Everyday Life</b>	Associated Comp. Plan Elements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Mobility &amp; Connectivity Plan</a></li> <li><a href="#">Connected Roads Plan</a></li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff did not request that the developer construct greenways on the site because there are no planned greenways in this area of town.</li> <li>Transit expansion is not planned in this area of Chapel Hill.</li> <li>There are no sidewalks on Old Lystra Road or Wave Road. Staff did not request sidewalks for this development because there is no planned pedestrian infrastructure in this area.</li> <li></li> </ul>	
	<b>Goal 3: Be Green and Provide Housing</b>	Associated Comp. Plan Elements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Climate Action &amp; Response Plan</a></li> <li><a href="#">Natural Features Model</a></li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The project will include up to ten dwelling units, including tiny homes.</li> <li>The Natural Features Model indicates that this area may have significant natural features. As discussed in more detail below, a large habitat patch may encompass most of the site. The site could not develop as proposed and maintain the extent of the estimated habitat patch. However, the site’s soil conditions and unique shape</li> </ul>	

	<p>limit opportunities to reconfigure the site to reduce potential impacts on the habitat patch.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The applicant commits to sustainable design features such as interior LED lighting and fixtures and appliances with WaterSense and Energy Star ratings.</li> <li>• The site will be equipped with electric vehicle charging stations.</li> </ul>
<b>N/A</b>	<b>Goal 4: Plan for Excellence in the Public Realm and Placemaking</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is no public streetscape element applicable to this development.</li> <li>• The district-specific plan requires the applicant to construct a pedestrian area for the place of assembly. The pedestrian area will be complemented with shade trees and seating.</li> </ul>

### *Natural Features Model*

**Composite Map:** The project site is marked with light green, dark green, and dark brown on the composite map, which indicates the potential “significant influence” of natural features. A review of the habitat, hydrology, and land-use sub-models that impact this scoring are summarized below.

**Habitat Sub-Model (50% of composite):** The project site is marked with light and dark greens, indicating a high habitat score relative to the rest of Chapel Hill. A possible habitat patch, as modeled by the Triangle Connectivity Collaborative (TCC<sup>2</sup>, <sup>[OBJ]</sup>) may overlap with the site. The TCC model estimates the habitat patch: has an area of approximately 334 acres; extends north and south of the project site; and may have high value for wildlife connectivity.

Outputs from data modelling benefit from field verification because the model produces high-level, low-resolution data. The developer provided an existing conditions survey as part of their application which may be considered field verification.

**Hydrology Sub-Model (30% of composite):** The project site is marked with light blue because two perennial streams originate at the southwest corner of the site and flow to Wilson Creek.

**Land Use Sub-Model (20% of composite):** The project site is marked with a light purple, indicating it is moderately supportive of natural open space. The site is currently undeveloped and has a significant amount of existing tree canopy coverage.

**Staff Assessment:** In light of the unique constraints of the site, staff find that the proposed development is reasonably responsive to the environmental features that may be located on the site.

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<sup>2</sup> Durham County Open Space Program and Eno-New Hope Landscape Conservation Group. 2022, revised 2023. Upper Neuse-New Hope Landscape Connectivity Network Geographic Information System (GIS) data. Available from <https://www.dconnc.gov/countydepartments/departments-a-e/engineering-and-environmental-services/open-space-and-realestate-division/durham-county-open-space-program> and <https://connectedconservationnc.org>. (Accessed: April 15, 2026).

- Impacts to the Resource Conservation District (RCD) are limited to driveway improvements in the Upland zone that support adequate vehicle and emergency access through the site.
- The draft ordinance requires preservation of existing tree canopy along its northern and southwest boundaries.
- The approximately 15.5-acre site could represent about 4 percent of the 334-acre estimated habitat patch<sup>3</sup>(ibid).
- The draft ordinance would allow the developer to disturb land and remove trees on approximately 7 acres, which would represent about 2 percent of the estimated habitat patch area.
- The unusual shape of the site limits opportunities to preserve large areas of undisturbed land.
- Wildlife connections between habitat patches may be achieved at locations near this site, such as the stream culvert for Wilson Creek under Wave Road.
- Portions of the habitat patch located east of Wilson Creek and are highly unlikely to redevelop.

### *Public Engagement*

Areas of concern identified by members of the public are noted below. Engagement related to this project has included one concept plan meeting and one virtual public information meeting. Staff have not received significant numbers of phone calls or emails regarding the project.

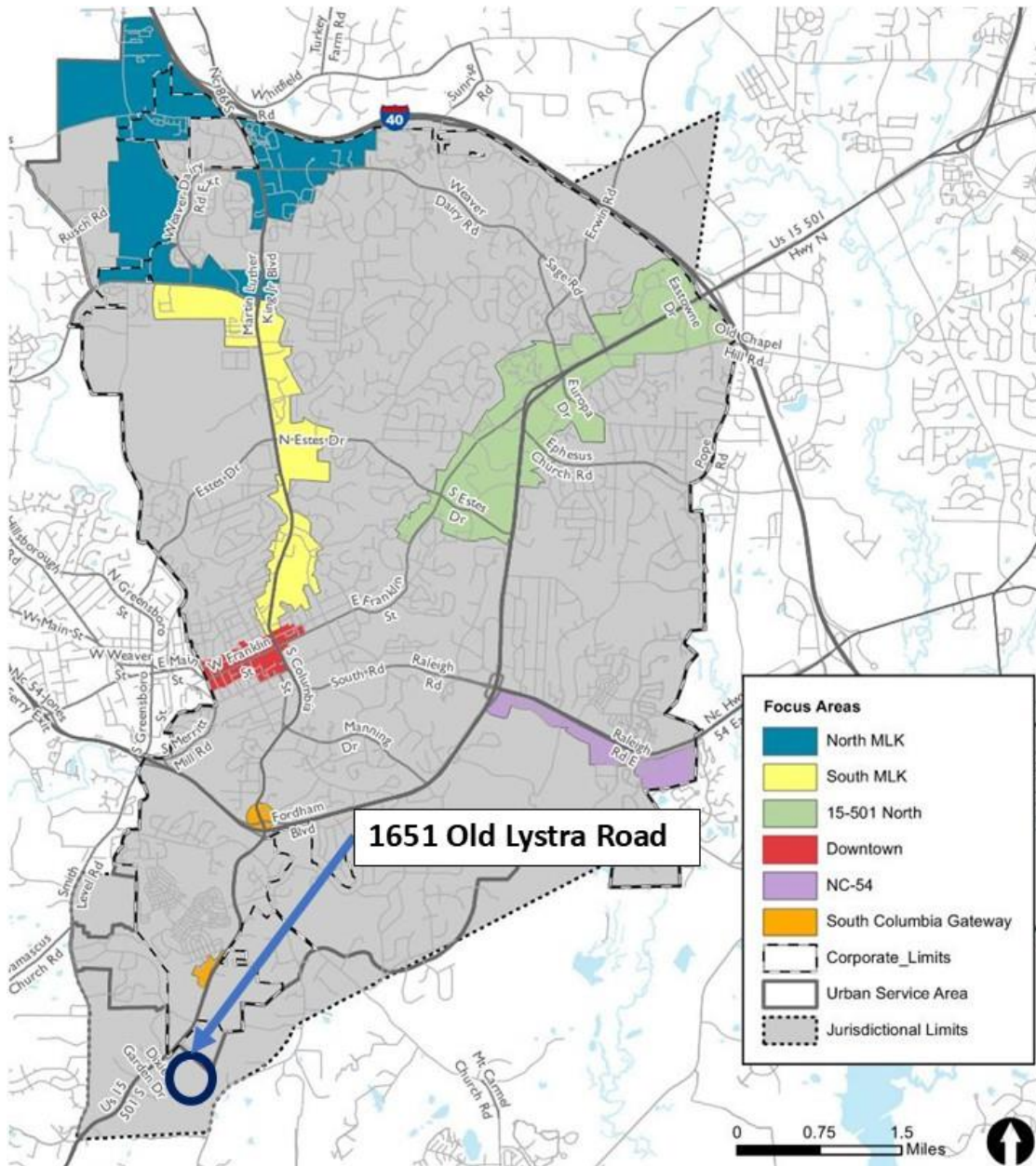
1. **Traffic Impacts:** Residents of Wave Road have expressed concerns around the additional traffic that the church may bring to their neighborhood. Wave Road experienced damage during the Chantal storm in July 2025.

Staff Assessment: The applicant has been involved and engaged with neighbors to address their concerns. Staff reviewed the expected traffic and found that expected volumes fall below the Town's threshold for a traffic analysis.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid

**Project Location**



*Attachments*

**Draft Ordinance and Resolution**

1. Resolution A – Consistency and Reasonableness
2. Ordinance A – Approving the Application

**Applicant Materials**

3. Applicant's Draft Presentation
4. Applicant's Requested Modifications to Regulations and Statements
5. District-Specific Plan
6. Other Applicant Materials

**Staff and Advisory Board Materials**

7. Urban Design Assessment
8. Transportation Impact Analysis Executive Summary