

Shopping center project irks Chapel Hill residents

By SUSAN ODENKIRCHEN
Staff Writer

Raleigh Road residents are opposing a shopping center project proposed for the Highway 54 entryway into Chapel Hill because they say it will threaten children who attend a nearby school.

Philip Szostak Associates, a Chapel Hill firm, is developing University Village for the owners of the University Inn.

"University Inn Associates own this land, which is the last piece of commercially zoned land on (Highway 54) in Chapel Hill, to the best of my knowledge," said Chris Gurley, operations manager for the University Inn.

The development plans call for eight movie theaters, several retail stores and 300 underground parking spaces.

But residents on Raleigh Road have become concerned about the hazards of locating the development so close to Glenwood Elementary School.

"We are very concerned about the children's safety as they walk to school," said Persis Van Wyk, a resident who lives behind the school in Highland Woods. "I would hate to have a child hurt or killed before anyone takes action."

But Gurley said the complex would not threaten the children's safety. "The movie theaters will run at night so that the peak traffic will not be

during school hours," he said.

Van Wyk also said there is no need for that type of development. "Before something is built, we need to study the need," she said. "We have so many shopping centers and so many blank spaces in them already, not to mention all the movie theaters the students have within walking distance."

Van Wyk said she and other residents on Burning Tree Road, Oakwood Drive and Roberson Drive will try to bring public attention to the project. "If we wait until this project has been approved by the town council, then it will be too late," she said. "We must fight it now."

David Roesler, a development coordinator for Chapel Hill, said

there are several problems with the proposed plans for the development.

Proposed zoning for the project is incompatible with the comprehensive land-use plan, which does not permit retail uses on the property, he said. The land is zoned for mixed-use purposes.

"Right now, the plans are for straight commercial use, and they have no plans for offices or residential

use," Taylor said.

The town planners want developers to combine the complex with residential and office uses, he said.

"We're also recommending for the developers to increase the number of parking spaces because the theaters seat 1,000 people and there are only 300 spaces proposed in the plan," Roesler said.

The developers want the shopping center to share traffic access with the

University Inn, according to Mike Taylor, engineering technician for the town engineering department.

But the engineering department wants to keep traffic off Highway 54 by routing it from Raleigh Road onto Finley Golf Course and Hamilton roads, Taylor said.

Roesler said the developers probably would not support this plan because they would have to improve these roads, which are now gravel.

Group considers regulations for downtown newspaper racks

By KARI BARLOW
Staff Writer

At the recommendation of the Chapel Hill Downtown Association, the appearance commission has established a committee to look into regulating the number and locations of newspaper racks on Franklin Street.

The committee consists of members of the Downtown Commission and representatives from newspapers that own some of the estimated 68 racks on Franklin Street.

The committee is considering two tentative proposals: writing an ordinance that would place minor restrictions on the locations of the racks, or installing some different, space-

saving machines.

The Chapel Hill Newspaper and the Herald-Sun Papers are among the newspapers represented.

Some committee members have said the high number of newsracks is hurting the appearance of Franklin Street and downtown Chapel Hill.

"They get rusty and dirty and left unattended," said Michael Helpingstine, a member of the committee and the Downtown Association.

Members of the Downtown Association have also complained that advertisements and inserts fall out of newspapers when they are removed from the racks and litter the streets. Merchants then have to clean up the

sidewalk in front of their businesses.

The committee members have already reached a consensus to designate more centralized locations for the newsracks so that widespread littering and interference in the pedestrian's right-of-way would be reduced.

"Downtown is very vital," Helpingstine said. "If we let it get trashed, it's just another detriment."

Newspaper representatives who are working with the committee on the issue have said they are optimistic about reaching an agreeable solution. The committee held its first meeting on the issue Nov. 2.

"We have seen how it's clear that the appearance can be a problem," said Ed Rose, Chapel Hill circulation manager for the Durham Morning Herald.

Rose said that restricting the newsracks to certain locations would be a workable solution, and that the Durham Morning Herald would be willing to work within the guidelines.

The committee members are anxious to reach a decision, Helpingstine said, but they realize they must study the solution adequately before acting.

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permanently establish the homeless shelter and soup kitchen in the old municipal building on West Rosemary and North Columbia streets.

He said the non-voting student position on the council will be a high priority during the term, but he does not know yet how the other council members will respond to the proposal.

Incumbent Bill Thorpe lost his bid for a third term with 2,807 votes, and Appearance Commission Chairman Cassandra Sloop trailed him with 1,807 votes. UNC senior Rob Friedman finished seventh with 1,449 votes, retired businessman Robert Varley was in eighth place with 1,178 votes and UNC junior Charles Balan finished last with 360 votes.

Thorpe, who has said he will not run for office again, attributed the low voter turnout to his loss. "There was a low student turnout, which I was hoping would really carry me through," Thorpe said. "I wouldn't do anything different in my campaign."

A campus voting site would improve student response in future elections, he said.

Wilkerson, who was endorsed by the South Orange Black Caucus and the Rainbow Coalition, captured much of the black vote, which also hurt Thorpe.

He attributed his success to

endorsements and visibility, which were problems in his unsuccessful bid for council in 1985.

"I think the thing that came out of this was not so much that I learned more about issues, but people saw that I am a concerned candidate and I listen," Wilkerson said.

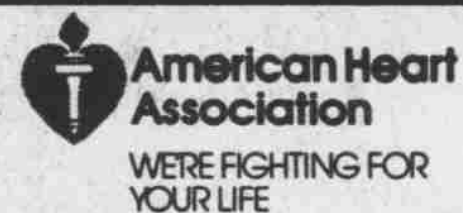
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his defeat. No first-time runners captured any seats, he said. The candidates who finished in the top five spots had all run before.

The community was also skeptical about electing a student to town council because students have not grown up in Chapel Hill and do not have any ties to the town other than through the University, he said.

He said a student has not been elected to a council seat since the early 1970s, but that he hoped this would change in the near future.

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