

# School and town plan to add business, vibrancy to downtown

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The Town of Elon and Elon University will partner in coming years to further develop and redesign the downtown Elon area.

According to Gerald Whittington, senior vice president for business, finance and technology, the university asked prospective students who ultimately choose not to attend the school what influenced their decisions. The most common response was the lack of a successful downtown area.

"This includes business such as small dress shops, drug stores and a bank," Whittington said. "We have long wanted to have more of a retail set of operations in the town."

Davis Montgomery, a member of the Town of Elon's Board of Aldermen, said it is something the town has always been looking into.

"We formalized the plan and put together a committee to look at the downtown area and keep it a part of what we are working on," he said.

Montgomery said he would like to see downtown Elon become a destination to visit for both residents and tourists.

"It should be a place that people like to come to because it offers a variety of services and amenities, such as shops and restaurants," he said. "And the kinds of things that develop a small-town feeling and make Elon unique."

This could include a pharmacy, dry cleaner, more restaurants, a movie theater and an ice cream shop, Whittington said.

Montgomery also suggested further landscaping, including a roundabout, antique clock tower and more park benches, some of which the university is willing to help finance.

"I can see us helping to fix infrastructure, such as sidewalks and lighting, to attract businesses," Whittington said. "The university would also be involved in selling and leasing property that we currently own."

As development plans continue, Montgomery said it's important to keep numerous constituencies in mind. Besides just Elon students, year-round residents of the area are also important.

"If we were to try to appeal to only one group, it would ultimately fail," he said. "We must have the support of year-round residents and go from there because much of what appeals to them will appeal to everyone else."

Whittington said it is in the best interest of the business to have the complete support of the faculty and students of Elon, as well as visitors and the town.

"If you're a business person and only cater to students, you lose your main draw for a quarter of the year," he said. "That's a bad business model."

At this point, the town plans to include shop owners



MOLLY CAREY | Staff Photographer  
Members from the Town of Elon Board of Aldermen Davis Montgomery and Mark Greene met with Elon University officials Gerald Whittington and Ken Mullen to talk about ways the town and school can work together to create a better downtown.

who currently own businesses downtown.

"We don't want to leave them out of the plan because they have investments that must be recognized," Montgomery said. "We want to work with what we already have and set a long-term vision."

Although no specific date has been set to begin working on the plan, an initial meeting was held last week to gain a broad overview of the project and prepare for the next steps. Whittington said the entire process could take up to a decade to complete.

According to Montgomery, the town is still currently looking into funding the project, but there is the possibility for federal grants designated for redevelopment projects.

"We are in the early stages of figuring out who can do what," he said. "It is very important that we cooperate with the university because they are very much part of the plan and will be in the future."

Whittington said he hopes the plan will add vibrancy for students on campus.

"I hope to see a variety of options of things to do for students and amenities to support them," he said.



MOLLY CAREY | Staff Photographer  
The field next to the Town of Elon Fire Department is the proposed site for development of downtown Elon.

## Sandy's under investigation

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be performing checks periodically and using undercover officers to assess the situation.

"We always do undercover operations throughout the year," Lovette said. "Especially when it gets warmer."

Each state only has a limited number of ALE officers and there is only one assigned to the region Elon is located in.

The Town of Elon police are also working with the university to create educational programs about risk management, the types of actions law enforcement officials can and will take and the consequences.

"Generally we are not going to shut down an event unless there are complaints, but we do have to go by,"

Lovette said. "Unless there is criminal activity.

Lovette said the complaints are usually a result of students living off campus and their neighbors working 8-5 p.m. workdays.

Lovette said her officers will patrol the area more often on busy nights, which include Wednesday and Thursday

But Lovette said Sandy's is not the only business in the area that has experienced complaints and problems. Fat Frog also has had underage drinking infractions, noise violations and conflicts.

"If there continues to be fights and really drunk patrons, (Saldanna) will lose his license," Lovette said. "Alcohol is the primary problem."

## New masters programs for Elon

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advantage in the job search, students who earn a masters degree can make as much as 30 percent more than those with only a bachelor's degree.

"The in-depth learning that comes in a graduate program is stimulating, exciting and rewarding," House said.

Elon currently has a one-year graduate program, the Interactive Media program, as well as several others that take two to three years. The iMedia program is the first successful program following the 4+1 plan. The program provides students with an additional year of study solely in the area of interactive media. Copeland said there is also a possibility that the School of Communications will add a doctorate program.

"I see students grasping and understanding the role of media and communications in the role of society that I am not sure you always get as an undergraduate," Copeland said.

In addition to the iMedia program, Elon University is looking to add a Physician's Assistant program. The program would require about 28 months of study.

House said if everything were to be approved immediately, the program would be able to begin in 2012.

"We have not decided if all of the pieces are in the right order to launch (the Physician's Assistant program)," said Connie Book, the associate dean of the School of Communications.

House said this program not only fulfills The Elon Commitment's goal to increase the graduate program, but also to increase the science program. As the university looks to add more programs, the faculty is looking for programs that need more



HEATHER CASSANO | Staff Photographer  
David Parsons works on a project in the iMedia editing suites on the second floor of the Powell building.

professionals. Book said that there could be more health related programs in the future.

"Everybody in the hospitals, the people at Wake (Forest), the people at Duke, have all told us they are very supportive," House said. "We need more primary care health providers."

During the next ten years, other programs will be developed or adapted. One possibility is a revamping of the Master of Business Administration and the Master of Education programs. Book said they could either redesign the programs to be completed in less time or change how they market the programs to graduates. Currently, the MBA takes two to three years to complete, and the M. Ed. takes a little over two years.

"We are in the phase of being creative and stimulating ideas," House said. "It really depends on what the faculty come up with as this is a good fit for our department and our faculty."

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