

## Carrboro Fights Sprawl With Containment Plan

By KELLIE DIXON  
Assistant City Editor

As other cities in the Triangle and across the state continue to expand, the Carrboro Board of Aldermen is looking to keep the town's growth contained with a plan called "infill."

Infill is the board's attempt to keep development concentrated. Developers would be encouraged to build in areas that already have infrastructure such as water lines and sewer lines.

The point of infill is to curb sprawl while constructing a diverse community, easing transportation problems and sparing Mother Nature, said several aldermen.

Alderman Allen Spalt said the primary motivation behind the plan is to encourage development in areas that are already developed.

"Our town already has roads, streets, water and sewer, and there are a few empty lots that aren't using their space up to its potential," he said.

But he also said the aldermen are not looking to build too high.

"We're not talking about skyscrapers here, but buildings maybe three or five stories high," he said. "If you built a building at least one-story tall behind Main Street and left the underground to be a parking lot, you wouldn't lose parking. And all of the people living downtown can commute without driving."

Alderman Jacqueline Gist said for the past 20 to 25 years the town has struggled with the situation but said infill could be the answer they have sought.

"For about six to seven years we have had an ordinance in place that says if you develop a large area, then 40 percent of that space has to be open (area)," she said. "Houses that are close together might not have a big backyard, but there's a lot of open growth between

them."

Behind the scenes, Carrboro Planning Department is responsible for facilitating infill-related projects and enforcing regulations, said Trish McGuire, planning administrator.

"If the board is encouraging infill, we will create regulatory context that will support it," she said.

Spalt said that by encouraging concentrated development, the area can achieve many goals.

"It's everything from building a community to being kind to the environment to making a more sane transportation system," he said.

He said town leaders are also discussing a trolley system that would link Carrboro residents to the UNC campus.

"We need to encourage development that makes it economical to have something other than car transportation."

He said that because the areas will be more compact, public parks and community recreational centers will be provided as well - and all within walking distance.

"We want to continue that density, but we want to do that without changing the character of the town," he said.

Carrboro Town Manager Robert Morgan said he thinks the basic purpose of infill is to provide affordable housing and to require open areas.

"It is cost effective," he said. "It takes advantage of the infrastructure we already have."

Carrboro Mayor Mike Nelson said the town wants to keep certain areas untouched.

"We're trying to preserve as much of the green areas as possible," he said. "The point is to fill in rather than fill out and spread out."

The City Editor can be reached at citydesk@unc.edu.

## Officials Doubt Class Cap's Impact

Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools has already enrolled 150 more students than had been projected for the year.

By COURTNEY MABEUS  
Assistant City Editor

Some officials say the implementation of an enrollment cap designed to combat severe overcrowding at McDougle Elementary School might not be enough to alleviate the problem.

On Aug. 17, the Chapel Hill-Carrboro Board of Education approved limiting class size to 26 students in grades K-2 and to 29 in grades 3-5.

Students who enroll after class capacity has been reached will be reassigned to Carrboro, Estes Hills or Glenwood elementary schools, said Neil Pedersen,

superintendent of Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools. No students have been turned away yet, he added.

At McDougle, almost all classes already meet or exceed state legal guidelines with nearly 25 or 26 students per class. McDougle Principal Sam Roman-Oertwig said the cap provides some needed relief. "We need less kids; that's the solution," she said.

Ultimately, enrollment caps and redistricting will not provide an ample solution to overcrowding, she said. The real issue, Roman-Oertwig said, is increased development, which attracts more people to the area each year.

"We need to have a slow down on building in this town," she said. "We need to have a cap on that."

Board members also considered two alternatives to the enrollment cap, Pedersen said. They discussed adding a twenty-ninth classroom teacher but

decided that would cut down on space and displace a program such as music, art or physical education.

"We're trying not to add another teacher," Pedersen said. "And, (McDougle officials) didn't want us to."

Board members also decided against relocating a pre-kindergarten class at McDougle to another area school.

But even with the cap, McDougle teachers and administrators are feeling the pressure of overcrowding.

"They're concerned about the fact that we have 26 students in a class," Roman-Oertwig said. "That doesn't do anybody any good."

Ann Taylor has 26 four- and five-year-olds in her kindergarten class at McDougle and one assistant to help her during class time. She called the overcrowding "insane."

"It's sheer numbers to begin with," she said. "The problem is just having

that many little bodies here."

With more than 9,400 students enrolled in the school system, the district has already exceeded its projected enrollment by nearly 150 children this year, Pedersen said.

McDougle and Seawell elementary schools have more than 650 students enrolled. Other area schools enroll 375 to 550 students at the elementary level.

In light of these figures, Pedersen said overcrowding is an issue the school board will be examining in the future.

But, for now, the board does not anticipate adding caps at other schools.

"We'll continue to watch enrollment figures, but I don't think we'll need to institute caps at other schools this year," he said. "It will be something to be considered for next year."

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## Tenacious Nuclear Activist Gains Notoriety

By PHIL PERRY  
Staff Writer

Jim Warren has been in the papers a lot lately. Publicly confronting a Fortune 500 company tends to have that effect.

With Carolina Power & Light's proposed expansion of the Shearon Harris Nuclear Power Plant looming in the future, Warren, executive director of N.C. Waste Awareness and Reduction Network, stands out as a vocal opponent of the change.

Originally from Burlington, Warren has been with N.C. WARN for the past seven years. A 1978 UNC graduate with a degree in accounting, Warren was involved in the community long before he was the executive director of N.C. WARN.

"I did activist stuff on the side for a long time," he said. "I got a chance to do it full time and jumped at it."

Since then he has tackled public safety issues, specifically devoting his time to battling CP&L. CP&L has proposed an expansion of a nuclear power plant that Warren and N.C. WARN consider unsafe due to the expanded amount of radioactive nuclear waste at the plant.

"It's an entirely avoidable risk," Warren said. "The potential is there for a nuclear accident which would dwarf anything the industry has ever seen, bar none."

A nuclear accident at Shearon Harris could release up to 790 kilograms of cesium-137 into the atmosphere, according to N.C. WARN estimates. By comparison, Warren points out that Chernobyl released only 27 kilograms.

Due to the potential enormity of any accident, Warren and N.C. WARN are working to block the expansion. It is a "classic no-brainer," Warren said.

Warren's efforts have not gone unnoticed, having won the respect of N.C. WARN and leaders across the state. N.C. WARN board member Lewis Pitts said he works well with Warren and has for 15 years. "He's very thorough and competent in the way he can analyze and write up things. (He is) fair and sincere in relating to people," he said.

Warren has chosen a formidable opponent in CP&L. But Pitts said he is unlikely to back down.

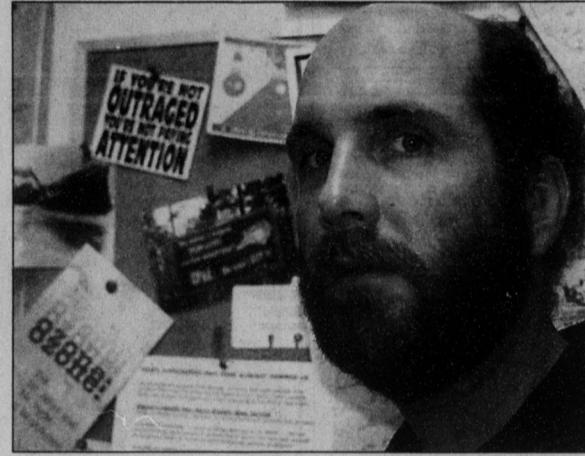
"(There are) often efforts to marginalize his work and him, and he does a tremendous job of not letting that happen," Pitts said.

Chapel Hill Town Council member Kevin Foy said he also is impressed by Warren. "Look at the impact that N.C. WARN has had on a Fortune 500 company," Foy said. "This is an extraordinary individual to accomplish all that he has."

Warren's achievements have been aided by his passion and eloquence. He accuses CP&L of "corporate tyranny" because of its reluctance to have open scientific discussions and its hiring a "gang of lawyers" to push the expansion through.

"CP&L has gone to extraordinary measures to deny any semblance of democratic process," Warren said. "(It's) a corporate abuse of process ... What is it that CP&L is afraid of? Why can't they openly defend this project?"

Warren's tenacity has made him well-known in influential circles, like the



Jim Warren, executive director of the N.C. Waste Awareness and Reduction Network, adorns his office with socially conscious messages.

Carrboro Board of Aldermen Alderman Allen Spalt said he has known Warren for nearly 15 years.

"He has been dedicated to social justice and positive change for all the time that I've known him," Spalt said.

Keeping the possible Shearon Harris expansion in the minds of residents requires Warren to be an authority on nuclear power, local officials say.

"He is a well-informed and highly-respected person in what he does, which is monitor the nuclear industry," Foy said. "He has a wealth of information

about what is going on, not only in North Carolina but throughout the country."

Warren said he is optimistic about N.C. WARN's chances of blocking the expansion and stopping CP&L's "corporate tyranny." He credits the Student Environmental Action Coalition, based in Chapel Hill, with being a tremendous asset in the fight against CP&L.

"Together, we intend to win."

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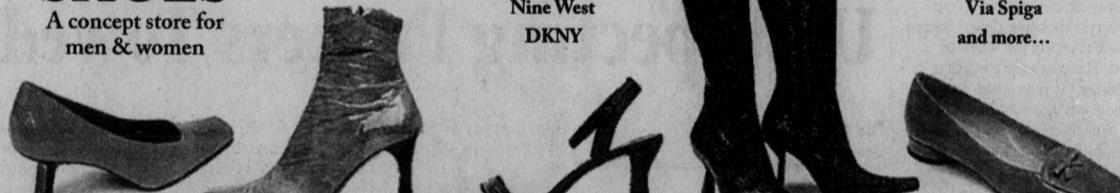
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