

# Viabile Opp

## As officials laud UNC's Master Plan, critics ask if the University can balance its needs for expansion and its duties as a neighbor.

### Town, UNC Maintain Positive Ties as Plan Takes Shape

Despite many divisive issues surrounding UNC's Master Plan, Chapel Hill officials remain optimistic about the relationship between the town and University.

The Master Plan is a blueprint for future campus growth that has sparked controversy between UNC officials and town residents who fear UNC's borders will begin to creep into their neighborhoods. University and town officials have worked to ensure that issues of mutual concern over the Master Plan between the University and town are addressed appropriately.

by Ben Gatling

Town Council member Jim Ward said it is not in the UNC's best interest to plan without town input.

He said the interests of the town and University are intertwined and neither side can act exclusively.

"The University does not benefit at all by trying to go at it alone and go against the town," Ward said. "Chapel Hill is a vibrant place to live because of the University."

"What's good for the town is good for the University, and what's good for the University is good for the town."

Chapel Hill Mayor Rosemary Waldorf said the drafting of the Master Plan is essential for the University so they can adequately project their needs and desires.

"A Master Plan is certainly appropriate," she said. "It's a good planning exercise to go through."

Town Council member Flicka Bateman also said UNC is doing what is necessary by planning for growth.

"(The University) is doing what they are expected to do by taking on more students," Bateman said. "They probably do need to expand."

But she said the plan does have some drawbacks. Bateman said UNC should further investigate other facets of the plan, including a special-use permit for the Smith Center.

A provision of the special-use permit states that there can be no construction within 200 feet of the University's property border, creating a buffer between UNC and surrounding neighborhoods.

"I have questions about the revising of the special-use permit for the Dean Dome to reduce buffering for the surrounding neighborhoods," she said. "Also, I'm concerned about the road change in the Mason Farm neighborhood."

But Ward said that while the plan is reasonable for the University to ask, it does have some problems such as additional traffic caused by more students and patients at the hospital and, of utmost concern, a proposed transit corridor, which would cut through neighborhoods to alleviate traffic on Manning Drive.

"I don't think that we all understand the traffic implications," he said. "The lightning rod for debate is the mass transit corridor."

UNC, in conjunction with Chapel Hill, Durham, Duke University, the Triangle Transit Authority and the N.C. Department of Transportation, is studying the possibilities for a transit system between Ninth Street in Durham and UNC Hospitals.

This could include a light railway commuter train, a bus-only roadway or a bus system similar to what now connects Chapel Hill to the rest of the Triangle.

Ward said the plan now includes a corridor which would accommodate the most invasive method — light rail. If adopted, noise levels in the affected neighborhoods could increase, the corridor would be wider and eight homes would be demolished. Ward said he is opposed to that option but would support a busway because the impact on Chapel Hill neighborhoods would be less.

"The technology being focused on has a restricted ability to fit into the rather tight community of Chapel Hill," he said. "My belief is that a dedicated busway is better for the community."

Town Manager Cal Horton said that although the University and the town have differed over housing and road improvements in the past, they have always found common ground.

"The history of town-University relations is that the University has always been willing to work together to resolve issues of mutual interest," Horton said.

Despite some drawbacks of the plan, Chapel Hill Planning Director Roger Waldorf said one aspect of the plan he especially likes is its focus on preserving UNC's natural spaces.

"The emphasis on protection and restoration of the natural environment that the plan proposes is very helpful," he said.

Even with all the divisive issues surrounding the plan, Waldorf said UNC has not involved her or the council directly in the planning process. She said they have only participated in informal informational sessions. "I've been on committees and meetings," she said. "It is more the (Town Council) being exposed to the planning process."

Waldorf said University officials have invited him to respond to each planning detail affecting the town. Waldorf also said he has been to committee meetings to offer his input on the Master Plan.

"Everybody around here has appreciated the way the University has acted," he said. "There is a lot of communication between (UNC and the town)."

Horton said UNC's new chancellor, James Moeser, could create some new challenges in town-gown relations. He said it takes time to develop a good working relationship between UNC and town officials.

"With any new person taking the helm, there is always a period of adjustment," Horton said. "(Moeser) has to learn an awful lot of information."

Despite Moeser's new arrival, Waldorf said it has not been very difficult to adjust. She said he has been very helpful and eager to work in

conjunction with town officials on all issues including the Master Plan.

"(Moeser's) great," she said. "I think he's very open-minded. He seems very committed."

Waldorf and Moeser formed a committee Oct. 18 composed of Master Plan Director Jonathan Howes, UNC Senior Counsel Susan Ehringhaus and UNC Board of Trustees member Richard Stevens as University representatives, and to represent the town, council members Kevin Foy, Lee Pavao and Bill Strom. Waldorf said she chose the council members because they have no ties to UNC.

Waldorf said the committee hopes to create a dialogue between town and University officials on long-term solutions to problems, specifically the Master Plan, housing and transportation.

Ward said UNC and the town need to work for lasting solutions on divisive items. Despite differences, the town and University need to jointly address many other pressing issues, including transportation and the Horace Williams tract, which is owned by UNC but houses many of the town's municipal services, he said.

"Both the University and the town have a number of other topics to discuss," Ward said. "While our agendas are different, we need to work together for our own interests."

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PLAN C includes a new road providing access to UNC Hospitals on property the University owns. In Plan C, the transit service would be provided by buses operating on streets as they are today.

#### AMBIENCE

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University and town officials say the plan favors the latter. "The Master Plan protects a lot of the beauty of campus as it stands today," said Robert Humphreys, director of the Chapel Hill Downtown Commission.

Town residents say the intimate feeling of campus contributes to the appeal of Chapel Hill, helping to connect the town and University.

Maggie Lindquist, interim director of the Chapel Hill Preservation Society, said the academic climate in combination with the manageable size of the town contributes to an integrated community.

"(I like) the intellectual stimulation, the feeling of closeness and (the fact) that it is a smaller, not huge city, but at the same time has a cosmopolitan feel," she said.

New York City native and senior Andy Shapiro, who chose UNC over Cornell University, was impressed by the campus' consistent beauty across a large space. "Although this is a big campus, it doesn't really feel that way," he said.

looking too far into the future. "You can't envision the future with perfect success ... Things are going to happen that you don't anticipate," she said.

"It's not a sign that earlier plans were defective — it's just reality."

Sanders said constant revision as times change will eliminate errors in judgment that could result in mistakes.

"Buildings have a permanence. You have to live with it for a long time to come. Any building commitment is a longtime commitment."

Board of Trustees Chairwoman Anne Cates said the plan likely will need to be revised often, but because of necessity instead of error. "The world is changing so quickly — as the world changes, it will have to be adapted," she said.

Constant growth in the University itself will likely demand constant attention to the plan. With Moeser at the helm pledging to make UNC the best public university in the nation, the University could take ambitious leaps that will send ripples of change through campus.

"To move ahead, to improve the quality of the University's performance, then we clearly are going to need better facilities ... I think the facilities that are to be provided for by the (\$3.1 billion) bond and (the Master Plan) are essential to realizing the kind of vision Chancellor Moeser has projected," Sanders said.

Student Body Secretary Michael Woods said it is the vision behind the Master Plan that sets it apart from past blueprints. "It's much more of an ideology than a concrete plan," he said.

"Although it's a broad vision, as things come up, the Master Plan will alter itself."

Woods said the Master Plan officials have done an impressive job of covering all bases when it comes to assessing the University's needs. "I think they've done a very good job making sure they've consulted a lot of professionals about what can be done here," he said.

"They've been compiling the best minds and the best advice."

But Woods said the plan is lacking a key factor — the voice of students who make UNC what it is today.

"Maybe (student input) is not a crucial part, not necessarily in a critical sense, but important to have."

He expressed concern that in the University's mission to cultivate the intellectual climate on campus, buildings will become more important than recreational space.

Woods suggested that the plan be revised annually by officials — and student representatives — to keep the vision fresh.

Pardue mirrored Woods' opinion, saying the plan is not imperfect but has great potential. "It may turn out that the Master Plan is too ambitious money-wise, and we won't be able to raise the money," he said. "It's a goal for us all to shoot for, but it's going to take many years to get through."

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#### PURPOSE

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Pardue agreed that South Campus is in need of attention and said it is living motivation to plan ahead. "I realize that South Campus will never be as beautiful as North Campus, but we can do a better job than we've done."

Jim Leloudis, director of the James M. Johnston Center for Undergraduate Excellence, said rapid growth in the University's past now haunts the future, creating an obstacle to successful growth.

"Some of the growth was done without plans — I'm not sure they were thinking back then," said Leloudis, who has done extensive research on the history of UNC's campus. "The Master Plan has put a lot of time in, through the experience of the designers, to enhance the growth."

And with Chapel Hill residents putting pressure on UNC to stay within its existing boundaries, officials realize that growth will have to be harnessed.

Board of Governors member John Sanders, also a member of the Master Plan Executive Steering Team, said dwindling land space at UNC demands a plan. "It's necessary because we have a limited amount of land and a great amount of need — those facilities need to be placed on land in a way that makes it efficient for student use," he said.

"Buildings need to be placed in rational relation to each other."

Sanders said any long-term plan will encounter bumps in the road, such as funding limitations, changes in leadership and new trends in culture and technology.

Pulley agreed, saying the current Master Plan should not be criticized for

