

# OWASA Nears Stage 3 Restrictions New Housing and Retail Space Planned for Rosemary Street

By NATE DEGRAFF  
Staff Writer

As a parched southern Orange County slips into its driest months of the year, area water officials warned Monday that emergency water restrictions are "probably just days away."

Cane Creek Reservoir is 16 feet below full. Water levels at University Lake are 6 feet short of their high mark.

The Orange Water and Sewer Authority has called the current drought "the worst on record."

"It's the first time ever that (the reservoirs) did not refill over the winter," said Ed Kerwin, OWASA's executive director, during a report to the Chapel Hill Town Council. Kerwin said the restrictions could go into effect within days.

Members Pat Evans and Bill Strom responded to Kerwin's report by suggesting that emergency restrictions be implemented immediately.

"It seems prudent to keep as much

water (as possible) in the reservoirs at this point," Strom said.

Though OWASA has no set group of emergency measures, it has several options at its disposal, including banning all outdoor water use. It could also discontinue or reduce service to some areas to preserve water for health and safety facilities, like hospitals and fire houses.

Last week, OWASA asked Chapel Hill, Carrboro and Orange County to put Stage 2 water restrictions - a stage below the emergency measures - into effect. These measures limit outdoor watering to Mondays for odd-numbered houses and Thursdays for even-numbered houses. The restrictions also effectively shut down commercial car washes and pressure cleaners.

In July, the area's water demand dropped to 11 million gallons per day from 13 million gallons per day in June. But last week's levels averaged close to the June levels.

At current usage, 109 days of water

remain in the two reservoirs, according to OWASA's Web site. Traditionally, autumn is the area's driest season, and Kerwin said the utility will prepare for the worst - bone-dry reservoirs later this fall.

On Tuesday, a special committee of the OWASA board of directors met for the first time to discuss conservation measures. It will meet again next week, said OWASA spokesman Greg Feller.

If the area receives heavy rains over the next few days or water usage drops measurably the emergency restrictions could be avoided.

Scattered showers and thunderstorms are expected through Friday, according to weather.com.

But Kerwin said last weekend's rains, which drenched parts of neighboring counties, made no appreciable dent in local reservoir levels.

Even if the area avoids disaster this year, the reservoirs could start next year at historically low levels if the rest of the year remains dry.

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Forty-two new residences are coming to downtown Chapel Hill. So is more than 6,000 feet of street-level retail space.

And all that infrastructure will be housed in one building.

The Chapel Hill Town Council unanimously voted for downtown mixed-use space at its Monday meeting, clearing the way for a four-story structure on the northwest corner of Rosemary Street and Mitchell Lane.

"This is a move in a different direction for Chapel Hill," said Mayor Kevin Foy. "But it's a direction we wanted to take."

The development's residential units will house two- and three-bedroom units, according to site developer Tom Tucker.

Tucker said small businesses, to be housed on the building's lower level, will have an opportunity to locate downtown without paying pricey

Franklin Street rents.

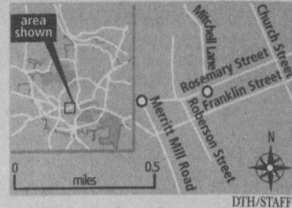
"If you look at Rosemary Street (now), there really aren't many opportunities for retail," Tucker said.

But before council members approved the plan, they discussed parking issues. The plan placed 45 parking spots on-site and a 7,800-foot off-site lot west of the development at 109 Merritt Mill Road.

Some council members were concerned that overflow parkers could crowd other Northside residents. The council discussed reducing the development's residential units from 42 to 39 to reduce car counts but decided against it.

"I don't like cutting back on three places to live downtown because of parking," said council member Dorothy Verkerk.

Instead, the council will deal with residents' parking concerns as the need arises. Town Manager Cal Horton said the town could issue parking permits to



neighbors on a house-by-house basis, thereby disallowing intruding parkers. But Northside residents could still face parking problems.

"We can have the rules," said council member Jim Ward. "But without the enforcement, they're meaningless."

Six of the 42 residential units will be offered at affordable housing prices.

Tucker said construction will begin in the spring and will last about one year. Before the vote, council members viewed a virtual image of the completed project from both sides of Rosemary Street. The computer program popped the development right into a photograph of the neighborhood.

"You could see how much open space is available on Rosemary Street on up toward Pantana Bob's," said Foy. "All of that area in between is ripe for development."

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

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The Daily Tar Heel  
P.O. Box 3257, Chapel Hill, NC 27515  
Kim M'Inugh, Editor, 962-4086  
Advertising & Business, 962-1163  
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**For the Record**

The Aug. 27 article "Students Not to Blame for Water Depletion" inaccurately reported that the average weekly water use in August was about 11 million gallons. The article should have stated that the average weekly water use in August was about 11 million gallons per day. The graphic reported that the nearly 12 million gallons of water have been used this month. The graphic should have stated that the average water use was 12.7 million gallons per day last week.

The Aug. 27 headline for the article "Aussie Talent Boosts Tar Heel Depth" inaccurately identified Laura Douglas as Australian. Douglas is from New Zealand. The Daily Tar Heel regrets the errors.

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