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Designing Franklin Street is a bad idea

Perhaps for all the talk of "development" on Franklin Street, the businesses that survive are merely those that respond to the demands of the residents of downtown Chapel Hill: horny, binge-drinking college students.

Cheap, heart-burn inducing restaurants and smoky hookup bars filled with the fake-ID crowds fulfill the few desires of 18- to 21-year-olds, while T-shirt shops satiate the demands of their proud parents.

Little else explains the inability of mainstream businesses to find success on Franklin Street.

The Rathskeller's long and successful run — cut short by declining quality and poor financial management rather than a lack of demand for such an establishment — clearly demonstrates the demands of the local clientele. When thinking back to college, few students remember the pair of chinos they bought, whereas most fondly recall the boozing nights they spent in underground establishments of questionable repute.

While such pontification is comparable to claiming knowledge of the best play to call during the final few seconds against Maryland, the efforts of meddling individuals often result in actual consequences regarding the appearance of Chapel Hill. Political actors and organizations should not attempt to influence — through positive assistance such as tax breaks or negative roadblocks such as zoning restrictions — the businesses that open on Franklin Street or the surrounding area.

From the perspective of the businesses, opening a venture on the main drag of a college town is clearly risky. Liabilities are notably high, establishing loyal customers is literally impossible as the residents almost completely turn over every four years, and the fickle tastes of students are well known.

The Gap on Franklin Street dealt with issues no other branches of the company faced, specifically concerns about patrons occasionally jumping over burning copies of The Daily Tar Heel outside the front door at 1 a.m. While the popularity of stone-washed jeans might fade from year to year, in Chapel Hill light blue shirts misspelling Duke with a cruder term of similar intonation never go out of style.

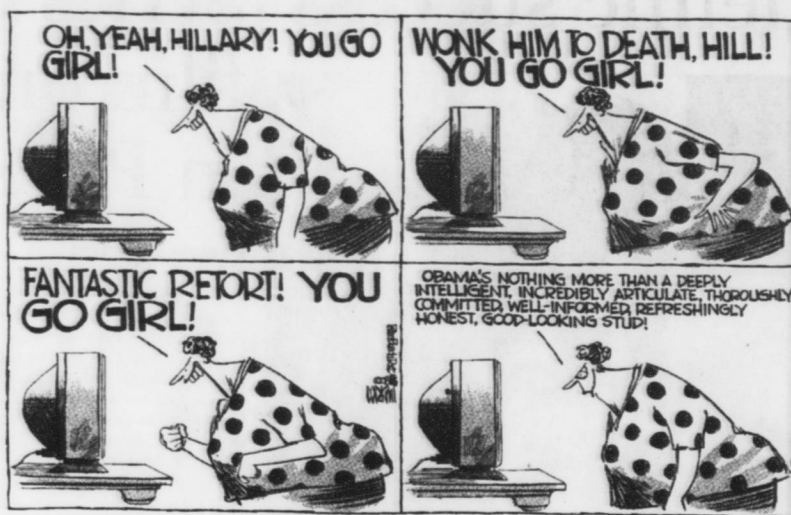
Attempts by the town government and local organizations to spur "development" are counterproductive. The idea that a community might be engineered is nonsensical, and the types of businesses that local officials usually encourage are simply not logical additions to Franklin Street.

While national brands — no matter how hip or contemporary — might briefly boost the cosmopolitan image of Chapel Hill in the eyes of local elites, the barren storefronts that result create a cycle of failure that is counterproductive.

Thankfully, North Carolina passed legislation limiting eminent domain to hinder a community from transferring existing businesses to alternative owners to maximize tax revenue. Yet methods of encouraging and discouraging commercial and residential enterprises, such as tax incentives and zoning restrictions, are wielded by local politicians and community organizations.

When I leave Chapel Hill, I won't remember how I procured a certain pair of pants but will fondly recall fatty sandwiches at The Rat and cheese fries at Linda's. While I'll lament the absence of such establishments for current students, I won't be so bold as to force those positive memories upon others. If those businesses don't succeed and future generations of Chapel Hill denizens prefer memories of shopping for cargo pants and trucker hats, I can't imagine anyone qualified to stand in their way.

EDITORIAL CARTOON By Don Wright, Palm Beach Post



Tying up the loophole

Congress and treasurer work together on a good bill

Reconciliation is something that Student Congress and the executive branch have struggled with lately.

That's why it is so encouraging that a deal was brokered between Congress and Student Body Treasurer Jordan Myers that closed a loophole in a financial law.

Congress Speaker Tyler Younts introduced a bill in mid-January that would have forced the treasurer to get the approval of Congress before making any financial allocations from the student government fund, since Congress is charged with distributing student fee money.

However, the original form of the bill would have made it difficult for the executive branch to function effectively by restricting its ability to pay for logistical costs, such as phone bills and printing fliers, particularly in the summer when Congress meets infrequently.

Enter the compromise. The original bill was split in two, and the restrictions on the treasurer were softened, meaning

that he will retain the authority to spend money from the student government fund for the day-to-day expenditures of the executive branch.

The treasurer will also retain the ability to give student groups approval to use earmarked funds for something other than the explicit purpose for which they were allocated.

For example, in the event a group wanted to put money earmarked for bringing a speaker to campus toward putting on a different kind of event, the treasurer could approve that.

The treasurer will no longer be allowed to allocate money to student groups out of the student government fund without the approval of Congress.

We are glad to see the compromise for two reasons.

First, the intent of the bill is a good one. If Congress has control over the allocation of funds to student groups but the treasurer is able to transfer money to groups without congressional approval, it in effect removes a significant amount of power from the hands of Congress.

Because the primary purpose of Congress is to allocate money to student groups, it doesn't make any sense to rob them of that power.

The extent of what Congress should have authority to do has been one point of contention with the executive, as it was during last year's vetoed congressional spending caps, so it is good that this possible source of further conflict has been resolved.

Second, we are glad to see Congress fixing a potential problem with the Student Code before it becomes a major issue.

The loophole came under scrutiny after Myers reimbursed Homecoming expenses without the approval of Congress, which had been talking about the possibility of withholding money.

While the Homecoming money was not a major issue in itself, it drew attention to the discrepancy in the law.

We're glad that a deal could be made that helped to close the loophole before it caused any major problems.

Time for a new era?

UNC should issue ultimatum to apparel manufacturer

Sometimes, it's best to take things slow.

At its meeting last week, UNC's committee on licensing did just that by recommending that the chancellor take more time before cutting ties with New Era, a licensed manufacturer of apparel for the University.

The proposal to cut ties stemmed from concerns over recent allegations of labor violations against the company, including racial discrimination and firing workers for attempting to unionize.

The company also has come under fire for its refusal to let members of the Worker Rights Consortium, a labor rights advocacy group representing 179 colleges and universities, including UNC, into the company's Mobile, Ala., plant.

While it's certainly an ominous sign that New Era is not allowing workers' rights investigators into its manufacturing

plant, the licensing committee made the correct decision by refusing to recommend the immediate cancellation of New Era's contract.

It can be hard, especially as a university, to resist the temptation to acquiesce in the face of pressure from activist groups with a bee in their bonnet, but by doing so, UNC now is better positioned to end any possible labor violations at the plant.

Its recommendation that the chancellor issue an ultimatum giving the company the chance to allow the labor rights investigators into the plant by the next licensing committee meeting in February could actually lead to better results for the workers.

The appropriate result of the ultimatum, if it is not met, would be a termination of UNC's contract with New Era.

But by continuing its contract with New Era for now, UNC retains its influence over

the company's actions.

Had the committee followed in the footsteps of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, which canceled its contract with New Era last month, UNC would have lost its bargaining position with the company.

Companies are more likely to listen to those who buy from them than those who don't.

Furthermore, it's also important to remember that there is often a trade-off between better labor standards and more jobs.

If the audit reveals employees in the Mobile plant simply aren't paid well, it's probably a good idea for UNC not to cancel the contract and risk putting people out of jobs, particularly during this time of increasing economic uncertainty.

If the audit turns up anything much worse than that, however, it might indeed be time for a new era of manufacturers of UNC apparel.

Ben Buck
Freshman
Political Science

Gender-neutral language is a step UNC needs to take

TO THE EDITOR:

I was pleased to see that the guest column in Monday's paper was about gendered language ("Patriarchal language at UNC must be dropped," Feb. 4).

I thought that the columnist's comments were insightful and inspiring.

I was, however, frustrated to find that Chancellor (James) Moerser did not take the Student Advisory Committee to the Chancellor's petition as a call to action.

It has been more than 30 years since the American Psychological Association enacted a nonsexist language policy, and top universities have had policies in place for quite some time now.

Changing "freshman" to "first-year" in official university documents is a simple change that would demonstrate commitment to inclusivity and equality.

As Win (Chesson) noted, we wouldn't hesitate to change the word if it were "freshwhite." Why should "freshman" be any different?

Hannah Allison
Junior
Anthropology

SPEAK OUT

WRITING GUIDELINES:

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- ▶ Faculty/staff: Include your department and phone number.
- ▶ Edit: The DTH edits for space, clarity, accuracy and vulgarity. Limit letters to 250 words.

SUBMISSION:

- ▶ Drop-off: at our office at Suite 2409 in the Student Union.
- ▶ E-mail: to editdesk@unc.edu
- ▶ Send: to P.O. Box 3257, Chapel Hill, N.C., 27515.

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Senate should spend less time worried about sports

TO THE EDITOR:
On the eve Super Bowl XLIII the Boston Herald reported more videotaping by the New England Patriots, this time, prior to Super Bowl XXXVI against the St. Louis Rams.

The report by the Boston newspaper joins a slew of videotaping allegations held against the Patriots. Sen. Arlen Specter plans to meet with NFL commissioner, Roger Goodell soon to discuss this "Spygate" issue. Who knows if an investigation will ensue?

This December, former Sen. George Mitchell released a report that concluded a 20-month investigation on the use of steroids in Major League Baseball.

According to his report, he made it clear many professional baseball players had used steroids. What could a lengthy investigation on the Patriots conclude? Does anyone really care — because I do not.

What is wrong with these washed-up senators? Do they have nothing better to do than investigate the integrity of professional sports?

Although cheating in sports is an important issue (I guess) does it measure up to other issues this country is faced with? How about a 20-month investigation of the Bush administration for deceiving the American people and going to war with Iraq?

Unsurprisingly, I doubt it will happen. Only in America do politicians worry more about the ethics of sports than the ethics of preemptive war (or has the media's ballyhoo about our struggling economy caused you to forget we are still in war?).

Never mind the thousands of young men fighting and dying for America's ego, let's figure out which baseball players used steroids and continue debating whether or not the New England Patriots (almost) undefeated season should be forever tainted.

Casey Ellis
Junior
Exercise & Sport Science

Stop sexist language; don't say the word 'man' again

TO THE EDITOR:

I agree with Mr. Win Chesson's column ("Patriarchal language at UNC must be dropped," Feb. 4); "sexist language" has got to go.

For far too long, it has created a harmful mental environment — pardon me, personal environment — for people of all genders.

Sadly, UNC has been one of the worst malefactors — oops, I mean, personfactors — in this regard.

If only everyone was as adamant — sorry, adapersonal — about this issue as Mr. Chesson!

Then, at last, UNC would have a mandate — er, persondate — to finally make sexist language history! I mean persontory, of course.

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The Daily Tar Heel

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