

Planning board updates development guidelines

BY GWEN SAUNDERS
STAFF WRITER

The Orange County Planning Board is ready to present its updated objectives for county development, some of which reflect concerns about economic problems and water use.

The board will present a round of revisions to the Orange County Comprehensive Plan at today's Board of Commissioners meeting.

The changes range from printing documents on recycled paper to exploring policies that attract new businesses.

"We've had serious droughts ... economic problems, problems in mental health care; we see issues everywhere," said Bernadette Pelissier, a member of the Orange County Planning Board.

"We need to work on how this community is going to address these issues."

Commissioners will vote on whether to adopt the changes — which come primarily in response to resident comments collected during public hearings in May and August — at the Nov. 6 meeting.

The plan — which has not been updated since the original, 1981 version was created to address land use and last about 20 years — addresses seven elements, including economic development, hous-

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BERNADETTE PELISSIER, ORANGE COUNTY PLANNING BOARD MEMBER

ing and transportation.

But the plan needed to be revised because elements of the original version are no longer relevant, said Tom Altieri, the county's comprehensive planning supervisor.

For example, the original opposed locating Interstate 40 in Orange County.

Altieri said that, with 2000 census data available, updates are necessary.

He emphasized that the plan is a policy guide rather than an implementation strategy.

The Board of Commissioners approved in October 2006 a two-phase process for updating the county's current plan.

The updates are intended to direct the county's growth and development through the year 2030.

Craig Benedict, Orange County planning director, said the proposed revisions take county growth into account.

"It has been reorganized to include all the different aspects of

a comprehensive plan instead of being put together in a piecemeal basis," he said.

Pelissier, who is running for a seat on the Board of Commissioners, said the revised development goals reflect issues that have been recently emphasized in the community.

"We can't afford to wait years for our policies to change," Pelissier said. "One of the key things is to make sure we make decisions that look to the long-term health of Orange County."

Pelissier said all of the planning board's proposed changes are interrelated and will work together to improve the quality of life in Orange County.

"We know land use is related to economic development and historic preservation and education," she said. "If we want to have a sustainable future, we need to make sure we don't make decisions in isolation."

Contact the City Editor at citydesk@unc.edu.

Bike rental program talks continue

BY JESSICA BODFORD
STAFF WRITER

Three bicycle-renting stations might be set up on campus as early as the end of the semester, UNC officials said.

The ReCYCLEry, a local organization devoted to providing a reliable source of clean and affordable transportation for the community, began negotiations last year with UNC's Department of Public Safety. Although the talks broke down last year, efforts have recently started again.

ReCYCLEry maintains Blue Urban Bikes, which already has 10 designated hubs in the Chapel Hill-Carrboro area. For a \$10 annual membership, bicycles can be rented for 24 hours at no extra cost.

"You get some folks who haven't invested in a bike, whether they don't have the money to put forth or they don't have the time to work on one," said Chris Richmond, director of ReCYCLEry. "So whatever the reason, the program is designed to get folks to try riding a bike for errands, for fun, for exercise or just for the community."

The urban bikes program was launched in Chapel Hill two years ago.

Hubs already are located in areas such as the Chapel Hill Town Hall, Owen's 501 Diner and Carr Mill Mall.

Tentative on-campus locations include areas near Morrison Residence Hall, the Student Union

and the Gillings School of Global Public Health, Richmond said.

DPS Spokesman Randy Young said the campus could benefit from having its own hubs.

Current construction has cut off many areas once accessible by car, limiting parking to select areas around campus, Young said.

"When we saw the decrease in the number of parking spaces with the development plan, we had to move to entertaining the notion of providing other sources of transportation," he said.

Catherine Lazorko, Chapel Hill's public information officer, said the town hopes students won't be the only ones to take advantage of the bikes.

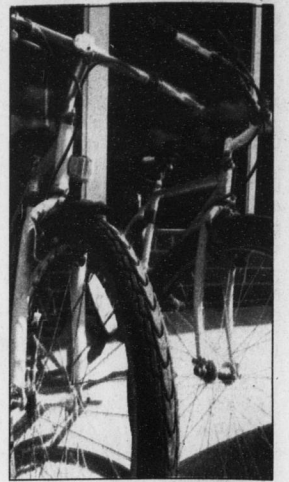
"Whenever an employee needs to go to a meeting nearby, we're hoping they'll take that option," Lazorko said.

Some town employees, such as Sustainability Officer John Richardson, have made use of Blue Urban Bikes.

"They're largely used in cases where either walking isn't fast enough or it's a little far," Richardson said. "It's a good way to get to an intermediate location for meetings or even just for lunch."

Donald Luse, director of the Carolina Union, said the program also offers environmental benefits.

"Anything we can do to make the campus more sustainable and more green is a good thing to consider," Luse said. "I don't think anybody would be against an idea that helps the community save energy



Blue Urban Bikes sit outside of Back Alley Bikes on Graham Street. The ReCYCLEry rents the bikes at hubs around Chapel Hill.

and make things more convenient, especially for our students."

The addition might raise awareness for the ReCYCLEry's goals.

"Any idea that saves energy is well worth investigating," Luse said. "I mean, it would be silly not to. Can we work out all the details? Can we make everything work?"

"That's where we are right now, so I guess we'll see."

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