

## Dear Pittsboro Commissioners and Planning Board:

Thank you for the opportunity to express concerns about the over development of the area around our town and the dire need to preserve woodlands, green ways, and river quality. I first came to the area as a college student in Chapel Hill in 1968. I paddled the Haw River before Jordan Lake existed. I have hiked trails and enjoyed the beautiful countryside of Chatham County for nearly 50 years and my roots, and many of my friends' roots, go deep here. In 2000, I began teaching at Central Carolina Community College in Pittsboro. Because I am retired now, I have time to speak about the importance of keeping the water quality of the Haw River, the tree canopy, and other natural resources from the disturbance new developers are creating in the rural character of our county. I speak for many who live here who do not have time, energy, or hope enough to speak out about our concern for maintaining the quality of life we treasure here. We urge you to prevent misguided or insufficient planning that will result in traffic congestion, overbuilding, and too many hard surfaces that do not absorb rainwater or provide oxygen as trees and greenery do.

Many of us were dismayed by a recent request to rezone 91 acres at 64 and 15-501 for mixed use development right next to the high school and across the road from the new city Chatham Park is putting in the watershed of the Haw River. Residents have learned of plans for a 264 unit apartment complex right across 64 in Powell Place. They feel they have no say in stopping it. (Several years ago some home owners there were told the woods on the steep slope across the street from them would remain a natural view and instead a multistory building was built with its back to the neighborhood; the Powell Place residents learned they had no power, not enough money to fight "city hall" despite many meetings with the town board when it had another mayor.)

Can't the county's residents be considered in decisions to turn the ETJ of Pittsboro into a Cary- or Apex-like maze of construction and importation of a whole new population into the expensive housing planned for the area? Many county respondents to surveys and public input in the comprehensive plan adopted in 2017 indicated the top reasons they chose to live in Chatham county were its "rural character, lifestyle, or scenic beauty."

Last year's survey for the Chatham County Comprehensive Plan (adopted November 20, 2017 after careful analysis, extensive public input, many meetings, and thorough vetting over the course of two years) included a wish to preserve our natural heritage. From the county's public input into county planning, two big ideas included one to permanently protect 20,000 acres of additional land by 2040 and another for our county to remain carbon negative—that means saving trees and grass, utilizing sustainable energy, not an overabundance of commercial buildings and parking lots.

At a meeting of Friends of the Lower Haw River, Hillary Pace with the Chatham County Planning Department presented an update and survey results about parks, recreation, and natural resources from the Comprehensive Plan that will guide development of the county over the next 25 years; she provided some highlights on that survey I hope the planning board and town commissioners will keep in mind before allowing more developers to have their rezoning plans approved:

- Top two concerns about the future is "loss of rural character, lifestyle, or scenic beauty" and "urban growth pressure"
- What survey respondents like best about living in Chatham County is "rural/small town character"

- Top two priorities for future growth and development are “more parks, public open space, recreation facilities, and programs” and “preservation of existing tree canopy and natural areas”
- Top priority for parks and natural resources are “preserve natural areas, forests and wildlife habitat”
- Highest priorities for recreational facilities for the county are “conservation of natural areas” and “greenways and hiking trails”
- Top reason survey respondents chose to live in Chatham County is “rural character, lifestyle, or scenic beauty.”

Traffic congestion results in anxiety and irritability while nature provides calm and peace. The quality of life for residents of Chatham County should be prioritized over the desires of developers to make profits. How many shopping centers do we really need in a 10 mile radius?

Plopping commercial centers and apartment complexes willy-nilly every which way at 15-501 and 64 will be a nightmare that traffic lights and more roads can't fix. County taxpayers will be paying higher prices for restaurants and other services that those from wealthier parts of the country can already afford. Don't make us pay the ultimate price with lost quality of life. The town has a responsibility to those who live in the ETJ but have no vote to ensure their day to day lives are not negatively impacted by even more ill-considered developments.

Already the drinking water for those using the Haw River or Jordan Lake has been compromised. Storm water runoff, without the conservation of forested land that can help mitigate some of the damage from Chatham Park, will impact water quality, but as one homeowner in Pittsboro asked me, where is the water for

all these new people to come from? How far down the road is the planning board looking with increasing the density of population and the problems it will bring?

What about the tree protection ordinance in the town of Pittsboro and the ETJ? Will all the trees be gone before that is implemented? The planning board has already heard from those working on the tree ordinance, so I won't go into all the benefits a tree canopy and wildlife corridors provide to a community, but money from tourism with Chatham's scenic beauty and its wonderful river system should be considered along with development profits. Chatham Park's plans for limited greenspace are not sufficient to meet our needs.

The Department of City and Regional Planning is right down the road at UNC, yet no traffic assessment was done for Chatham Park nor environmental impact assessments used. The NC Wildlife Resources Commission has expressed concerns about impacts on the Haw River. Again, strategic planning is required to keep the ETJ from becoming a major mess.

Please, you still have time to get some of it right. For those of us who love the beauty of Chatham as it has been and for future generations that will need some place to get away from the madness of city sprawl and commercialism, let Briar Chapel's mega site and Chatham Park's city bomb dropped into the woodland of our county be enough. Just mitigate their damage with careful planning to preserve some of the forests and water that they impact. We will need those resources!

Thank you for letting me express some of my concerns even if I've been told the town and planning boards don't care about what you have to say if you don't live in the city limits. Just remember I earned North Carolina wages and would live in town if I could afford a decent house here. So don't push our voices out in the cold just because we loved Chatham County enough to stay here in the country and

have only a 27312 zipcode to call ourselves Pittsboro-ites. We are still Circle City folks who shop and eat in the already existing businesses. Please work with our county commissioners to consider reasonable land use plans that preserve the integrity of our environment. Isn't it your ethical duty to do so?

-- Joy Hewett,

Chatham County resident