

March 27 Meeting

At the March 27 meeting, the university and Ayers Saint Gross presented three possible designs for Carolina North — Grid, Centers, and Interwoven. Several university programs that may use Carolina North, including the School of Pharmacy, the Institute for the Environment, and RENCI (the Renaissance Computing Initiative), also presented posters about their research and how it could benefit from the new campus.

Below are comments responding to information presented at the March 27 meeting, arranged by topic. Comment cards were provided with checkboxes for the appropriate presentation. Email carolinanorth@unc.edu if you'd like to add a comment.

Preferred Designs

- The Centers and the Interwoven plans offer more fingers of green space into the development. This allows for better integration of the environment into development. This provides a better opportunity to have the development follow the natural terrain. It is also preferable to provide as much natural means and protection for storm water as possible.
- Prefer either the Grid or Interwoven concept. This is a fantastic potential growth engine for Chapel Hill and the State; it is not a "number-of-parking-spaces" problem.
- Prefer grid, then Centers, then Interwoven. Develop transit and traffic patterns BEFORE anything else.
- Best plan would be a hybrid of Interwoven and Centers. Centers has a nice concept but the east-west axis is confining and will create dense traffic patternless easily expanded on in the future. If you use the Centers design of "wheels" around transit nodes but distribute them as in Interwoven, you'll have a pleasant, graceful community to which you can easily add future nodes/wheels.

Program

- We favor a larger number of housing units and supporting commercial and social infrastructure be built on the tract, as many as can be reasonable placed there in buildings up to six stories. We do not favor a plan that increases automobile traffic to the site along MLK Blvd only.
- (Checked Institute for the Environment) Would be great to partner with towns, county, power companies to efficiently burn land fill gas. Good for reducing greenhouse gases. Part of reducing carbon produced from waste. (10% of landfill is from UNC.)
- I believe the Institute for the Environment should be chosen because of its broad impact on both the University and state as a whole. The University has committed, along with the town, to 60% reductions of emissions and NC is in the midst of an energy shift to more renewable forms of energy. Someone needs to be responsible for making sure these projects are implemented, in addition to serving as a leader for sustainable development throughout NC.

Grid

- Grid — consider a modified grid — has the potential to activate Estes Drive.
- Grid — no recognition of natural, subtle grade of the natural land.

- The Grid was the least desirable design. There is too much potential for lots of roads in campus and lots of driving. It seems the least pedestrian and bike-friendly. The Grid will produce the most storm water runoff polluted with oil and grease and metals; more car emissions, too.
- I like the Grid design and the connections to Estes. I question the connection to the transit corridor on the west side — who owns it? I'm worried about the road to Homestead.
- Regarding Grid: mixed use buildings requires market research; maybe too much of a good thing for students, researchers.
- (Checked RENC) The Grid is the best plan because it leaves more of the natural area undisturbed.
- (Checked Grid) It's important to have some analysis of how CN will communicate with UNC main campus (and downtown Chapel Hill and Carrboro) — people flow. There will be thousands of daily journeys, and transit plans need to accommodate this.
- Grid — mixed-use concept is intriguing. Interwoven — looks practical and more conducive to efficient use of space. Centers — most conducive to foot traffic and would probably be most time-efficient for moving within CN.
- Interwoven/Grid street network = BORING. You have a broad canvas — give us some interesting streets/terminated vistas!
- The Grid pattern works really well for cities, but I fear it would be too congested with traffic and separate uses too much at Carolina North.

Centers

- Village Project's comments on the Centers plan (April 20, 2007)
- The car-free center and "park once" environment in Centers plan make it superior.
- (Checked Centers) I love the separation of cars and other transportation modes. The centers also promise to be vibrant 24/7 spaces with lots of interaction among different uses and departments. The Interwoven pattern has the greatest impact on the old growth trees.
- The Centers approach boldly demonstrates that vehicular traffic is secondary. It also offers great potential to more good use of the existing train corridor. Green buffers are good attributes. Telling people about the interesting programs planned for CN is also really helpful. Thanks.
- Centers plan marries ideas of minimal impact through transit-oriented development; enables adequate green space of different types (active, passive); supports blend of academic and research opportunities well; conserves energy, reduces CO2.
- (Checked Centers) Great concept for planning. Restricts parking and vehicles to perimeter, and leaves "center" of development to pedestrian and transit-only — very friendly and inviting to users. Go with this concept for future planning!
- Centers is the most urban plan. I really like the idea of the large car-free area, keeping cars on the outside, as I am someone who walks/cycles to work. However, I wonder how housing fits into this scenario, realistically.
- The Centers plan is overall the best because it contains the development in close proximity reducing need for excess vehicle use. It is the most pedestrian-friendly. However, this plan should incorporate green/natural areas within the developed areas. I like the water management plan associated with the interwoven plan, but that can be achieved with the centers plan as well, if not better, because it doesn't disturb that land.

- Centers — like the forward-thinking transportation ideas; might need loading and unloading for groceries, office equipment, furniture. Interwoven — housing along creek would be more marketable to a traditional residential audience. Consider bike paths/overpasses a la Davis, CA.
- (Checked Centers) The idea of car-free zones is intriguing. I like this concept for that reason.
- Centers — you might want to map existing walking and biking trails (fire roads in particular).
- Centers is attractive in its reliance on transit and a wonderful campus/intellectual climate.
- Prefer Centers because of transit-orientation — everything within a quarter-mile. Maybe some shared streets, though — not only parking at perimeter — possible combo with Grid?
- (Checked Centers) Focuses development between railroad and MLK (west to east) — a plus. Does not impact Crow Branch or Bolin Creek watershed areas. Uses Horace Williams Airport area where the land is already disturbed. Incorporates green spaces in each center (large open areas). Buildings are in centers, which encourages use of public transportation. Higher buildings toward center. Design looks very unique.
- Centers plan looks to be more transit-friendly. This plan keeps cars in parking lots on periphery and in outlying lots. Consider innovative ways to move people around in center — electric train or cars. Also utilize transit plan for moving people around to and from site.
- Centers concept. Mixed-use from Grid model is good; could apply here. Very strong model for encouraging public transit and keeping pleasant pedestrian environment. This will sell development if you can solve transit challenge.
- I believe the Centers proposal has some important features that stand out. Namely, the focus on parking hubs on the outskirts of the site that then turn into pedestrian and bicycle forms of transportation. I think there is less fragmentation also, especially compared with the Interwoven model. Furthermore, Centers relies on the rail line to connect the site from the west to MLK. I also like this choice because of the consistent accessible green space. Sustainability initiatives are also a crucial component of any economic development.
- Centers approach is preferable. I like the separation of pedestrian/bike paths from main arteries. Want to ensure Centers focus does not usurp solar orientation. Building on existing developed area is better than culling more forest. The approach does not exclude improvements of both watersheds. Suggest some separation of residential from labs and academic buildings.
- Centers scheme also seems to perhaps create more density than folks spending a lot of time at work, research might want.
- I like the pedestrian/bicycle-oriented and the campus-like nodes of the centers plan.
- (Checked School of Pharmacy and Centers) Probably the best design.
- Centers seems most efficient. However, needs more information about design logistics. Issues:
 - Point out development goal as 50-year plan and maximum accommodation
 - Better discussion about
 - off-site parking at the north rim
 - ratio of parking spaces to number of people at x date
 - incorporating low-impact development to minimize storm water runoff into Bolin Creek watershed
 - impacts outside the perimeter, such as widening existing road

Interwoven

- Prefer Interwoven because of balanced "spread" — east-west and north-south; less sense of lock-step blocks; more graceful and most ecologically aware.
- Interwoven — not a fan of northern terminals. You might consider moving tail toward middle school and high school entrances.
- Prefer Interwoven, but don't restrict to only one watershed. Centers seemed to ignore sensitive watershed NW of existing runway 27.
- Interwoven concept seems to offer the best mix of transit plus private vehicle use (some graduate students will have spouses and/or children.)
- Interwoven seems like the most interesting plan — a complex, visually interesting, interesting-over-time plan. Leaving the Bolin Creek watershed development-free is appealing. This is the small-town plan. Do build connections with local greenways and adjoining neighborhoods as early on as possible to encourage people to get into the habit of not driving their cars to work.
- I like the Interwoven best. It seems to have the greatest amount of natural edge.
- Not Interwoven. Get real about railroad...won't be easy.
- (Checked Interwoven) Do not use the rail line as mass-transit; instead, orient toward MLK Blvd. Orient all building grids for greatest solar gain.
- Interwoven appears to be the most disruptive. I do not have a priority between Grid and Centers but prefer either of them to Interwoven.
- (Checked Interwoven) As a UNC faculty member, the quality of life afforded by this land is a major portion of what makes Chapel Hill so special. The Interwoven plan would do irreparable damage to some of the most beautiful sections of the property and fails to fully take advantage of the airport land that has already been cleared.
- I like the watershed planning in the Interwoven. The roadway access to Homestead seems a bit unnecessary/not worth it unless development is oriented North-South.
- I dislike the Interwoven approach because it splits the natural area in half. Better to focus development together on the south side of the CN tract.
- Interwoven plan: the only strong point is that it keeps development out of Bolin Creek. Much too much sprawl. Breaks up wildlife corridors. Less compact and not transit-friendly.

Transit, Transportation, Parking

- The regional transit link may be a pipe dream. The University would have to be very active in promoting it at the regional level. I can see a hybrid where an Interwoven pattern would also allow for a more significant housing program to allow more short, bike/pedestrian trips to Carolina North. Have you thought about all the future trips that will originate in Alamance County and how transit will serve them?
- All areas of the development should be easily reachable by the transit corridor. Less on-street parking to encourage use of transit, bike etc. Centers and Interwoven do this, Grid did not (seemed to be areas that would encourage car usage).
- Housing mixed with commercial and research is good — less transit generated! Commercial and research will bring in traffic.
- Transportation Issues: 1. Since all three plans have the same road accesses, can NCDOT do its analysis on major roads, i.e. MLK, Homestead, Dairyland — to see if existing width of roads is sufficient. 2. Find off-site parking ASAP since roads from OSP to CN will be heavily traveled.

- Making all areas reachable by transit from park and ride will encourage use of transit instead of driving. Mixed use will allow people to stay on site during the day and thus reduce overall traffic during the day.
- I prefer the options that depend less on the rail corridor since it cuts closely to residential areas.
- Utilize the existing rail through Carrboro to Cameron. Make either the fixed transit or dedicated lane through the development such that it is much more convenient to use transit than drive. Bike lanes/sidewalks on all main roads.
- UNC, please be realistic on transit use of railway. TTA built a dream about using rail line and then tripled budget because they had to purchase extra right-of-way — then congress would not fund.
- Why no effort to integrate "plot" roads, etc., and Airport St. into overall plan?
- Issue: Regarding "H" conceptualization — leads planners to underestimate the pressure along the east-west axis outside Carolina North. The more you emphasize the east-west axis, the more you require a change in existing town traffic patterns. Would love to see more attention to dispersing entry-exit patterns in several directions, not just perpendicular to MLK. (Remember, Estes continues in both directions and what will happen to Piney Mountain?)
- Again, about the "H" paradigm, all your drawings highlight MLK and Homestead, as if most would arrive from North or South. The truth is lots of people will come from West/Southwest and East/Southeast (for example, imagine traffic 15-501>Franklin>Estes>Carolina North.). You'll create the best situation for the town if there are several points of entry and exit, not one main one at MLK and one other on Homestead.
- Comments: 1. Avoid design that puts lots of CN traffic on Seawell Rd. (4 schools there). 2. 1000-ft. transit circles don't reach southern incubator and other developments near Estes. 3. On street parking is bad. 4. Parking on periphery is good because it encourages people to use mass transit.
- We wish to see use of the rail corridor as an alternative transportation corridor to the site to spread traffic impacts out.
- We are highly concerned in general about traffic impact and want designs and land uses that minimize increases in traffic impact along the MLK corridor.
- Concepts to consider on the transportation:
 - Be bold (magnetic levitation, etc.).
 - Try to limit the number of combinations to arrive — be it auto, oxcart, canal barge, etc.
 - Remember ease of access for both local residents and people arriving from a distance.
 - Everyone is not fit enough to walk or cycle in an ice storm.
 - Show concepts in relation to environmental information. In Interwoven plan, consider density at transit stop at north of site — locate a focused use there? Example: Environment Institute with a solar green village around it.

Open Space/Environment

- (Checked all three plans) I hope there will be generous wildlife corridors connecting all the preserved areas.
- Lighting — full cut-off lighting: motion sensors, timers. Do not contribute additional "glow" to Chapel Hill skies. Are we looking at Phase I building? Are green areas really protected?

Important to have greenways connecting CN to main campus, N. Chapel Hill, Carrboro, for walking and biking. Less internal parking to encourage transit use/walking/biking.

- We remain highly concerned that changes in the impervious surface are highly likely to increase stream velocity in the Crow Branch watershed thus leading to increased scouring and potential erosion at the toe of the Lake Ellen Dam and want all stormwater management strategies to ensure on site retention at the levels they are now (we do see erosion and sediment even from the minor and apparently non-regulated land disturbing activities that occur there now =- this is based on turbidity in the creek leaving the Horace Williams tract now as well as some minor downstream effects.

General

- I think the height of buildings could be relatively high adjacent to MLK Blvd. Should be low only as it adjoins neighborhoods. (Ken Broun)
- I would like to see some urban public spaces (piazzas, squares). Please send ASG team to Venice, Italy and central Prague for research.
- My main request is to post these plans online and allow people to submit comments via web and/or email. It's hard to get to meetings. Thanks!
- For future sessions, please set aside discrete spaces for each presentation. It was very hard to see and hear in the open space of the atrium.