

The Orange County Comprehensive Plan Coalition

Position Statement on Proposed Comprehensive Plan Update, November 5, 2008

The Orange County Comprehensive Plan Coalition (Coalition) consists of [nine local organizations](#) that represent thousands of stakeholders including citizen activists, social service providers, community volunteers and business owners. Although our member organizations have diverse interests and responsibilities, we share a vision that Orange County should thrive and prosper in a sustainable manner.

In June of 2007 our coalition members came together to work together for a common purpose. We believed that our partnership offered us a new opportunity to be active participants in the [Comprehensive Plan Update](#) (CPU) process. We began by discussing our common values and views about how the comprehensive planning process was important for all residents and other local stakeholders, especially as it relates to economic development, housing, social services, land use, and transportation policy.

We realized the CPU would lay the foundation for how the County nurtured and managed its long-dormant potential for residential, commercial, and industrial growth. The CPU would also have to respond to local and global challenges which differ significantly from those in 1981 when the County's first Comprehensive Land Use plan was adopted.

Now, more than one-quarter century later, Coalition members felt a strong need to work together in the hope that the CPU will encourage development and redevelopment that boosts the county's commercial tax base and improve its stock of affordable and workforce housing for those who need it.

In addition, in the context of global warming and the cost of fossil fuel, we believe the CPU should encourage a network of compact, urbanized areas within the County's planning jurisdiction that can be efficiently connected with public transportation and that will accommodate the County's fair share of growth anticipated in our region over the next generation.

Having forged a consensus amongst our diverse membership, the Coalition has:

- Released a [Vision Statement](#) stating our belief that the CPU should be clear about where compact, walkable, mixed-use, transit-supportive development would occur within the county's jurisdiction, as well as make commitments to providing infrastructure investments to stimulate such development.
- Completed [recommendations for all seven elements](#) of the CPU: economic development, housing, social services, land use, natural and cultural systems, parks and recreation, services and community facilities, and transportation.
- Requested that public input in the CPU process begin earlier than April 2008 and due to the resulting schedule change participated in the January 2008 community outreach session, as did several dozen other citizens.
- Presented our [written recommendations](#) to all Planning and Advisory Board members prior to the January outreach session.
- Met regularly throughout winter & spring 2008 to keep our constituents and the public informed about the CPU process.
- Attended advisory board meetings during this period and reviewed both drafts of the plan.
- Submitted in April 2008 detailed [written comments on the draft plan](#) and [spoke out at the May Public Hearing](#) when the plan was presented to the County Commissioners (BOCC).
- Monitored the Planning Board's (PB) review of the CPU and public comments this summer, as well as their preparation of recommendations for the BOCC.

As the process unfolded it became evident that the Planning Board did not have sufficient time to consider all the comments received from the Advisory Boards, County Commissioners, and members of the public, as well as discuss their own concerns about the [300 page plan](#), and still meet the [timetable](#) mandated by the County Commissioners -- which required the Planning Board's written recommendations be completed by October 7.

The Coalition believes the Planning Board's cumulative meeting time of less than ten hours spread over four meetings this summer was not sufficient to evaluate the draft plan, review all citizen recommendations and comments, and prepare the final text changes for such an important policy document.

All comments submitted by the public and community organizations deserved more in-depth review and discussion by the Planning Board. Instead, County Staff prepared a [Table of Proposed Revisions](#) for the Planning Board's consideration that excluded many of our recommendations. We presume that comments and input from others were also overlooked in the review process. In the case of Coalition comments, less than 30% of our highest priority recommendations were even discussed by the Planning Board during their summer meetings (see table below).

As a result the Coalition members believe the integrity of the public participation process was compromised. We acted in the belief that a diversity of community interests would bring a valuable perspective to the effort to update the comprehensive plan. Coalition members invested substantial time and energy in the CPU process and encouraged others to do the same. Unfortunately, due to the limited time available for the Planning Board to complete its task and the manner in which proposed revisions were brought forward for Planning Board discussion, the contribution of local stakeholders to the proposed CPU declined as the process proceeded.

Hence, while the CPU may be comprehensive in its compilation of data and in reference to existing county policies, the sum of its parts does not present a citizen-driven vision for the County's future. Absent a greater degree of community input and support the Coalition is concerned that the CPU may not be effective in its aims to foster sustainability within Orange County.

We wish the CPU's approval could be delayed to remedy this situation. However, the Commissioners have indicated that they plan to adopt the proposed plan this November. As a consequence the Coalition is unwilling to endorse the proposed CPU at this time.

Adam Klein, Chapel Hill-Carrboro Chamber of Commerce & Foundation for a Sustainable Community

Dolly Hunter, Community Action Network

Fred Black, Community Action Network

Jean Earnhardt, Community Action Network

Delores Bailey, EmPOWERment

Desiree Goldman, Greater Chapel Hill Association of Realtors

Frank Thomas, Homebuilders Association of Durham, Orange, and Chatham Counties

Chris Moran, Inter-Faith Council for Social Service

Holly Reid, Walkable Hillsborough Coalition

Allan Rosen, The Village Project

James Carnahan, The Village Project

ATTACHEMENT: On May 5, 2008 the Orange County Comprehensive Plan Coalition submitted comments regarding the Economic Development, Housing, Land Use, and Transportation elements. Our 38 highest priority recommendations suggested major text changes or additions to the plan's objectives. We also recommended eight objectives be removed from the proposed plan. Based on our observation at Planning Board meetings this summer and an analysis of Table of Proposed Revisions our records indicate that **eleven of the 38 Coalition's (29%) high priority recommendations were discussed by the Planning Board.**

Plan Element	Coalition High Priority Recommendations			TOTALS
	Major Change	Add an Objective	Remove an Objective	
Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 of 5 adopted with or without changes. Only 1 of 5 discussed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 of 7 adopted with changes. 3 of 7 not discussed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 of 4 removed. 2 of 4 discussed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 of 16 adopted with changes. 9 of 16 not discussed.
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 of 7 adopted with or without changes. 7 of 7 not discussed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 of 6 adopted with or without changes. 6 of 6 not discussed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 of 2 removed. 1 of 2 discussed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 of 15 adopted 14 of 15 not discussed.
Land Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 of 1 adopted with or without changes. 1 of 1 discussed by BOCC. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 of 1 adopted with or without changes. 1 of 1 relegated to Attachment K. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 of 2 removed. 1 of 2 discussed by BOCC. 1 of 2 discussed by PB. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 of 4 adopted. 3 of 4 relegated to Attachment K. 1 of 4 discussed by BOCC.
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 of 4 adopted with or without changes. 4 of 4 not discussed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 of 7 adopted with or without changes. 5 of 7 not discussed. 2 of 7 relegated to Attachment K. 	NA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 of 11 adopted. 5 of 11 not discussed. 2 of 11 relegated to Attachment K.
TOTALS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 of 17 adopted with or without changes. 1 of 17 discussed by PB. 1 of 17 discussed by BOCC. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 of 21 adopted with changes. 3 of 21 discussed by PB. 3 of 21 relegated to Attachment K. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 of 8 removed. 2 of 8 discussed by PB. 1 of 8 discussed by BOCC. 	