

The following two statements were presented at the Orange County Board of County Commissioners meeting on November 6, 2008. They were presented by Allan Rosen and Dolly Hunter, members of the Orange County Comprehensive Plan Coalition.

## **Comments regarding Comprehensive Plan Update Nov. 6 agenda item**

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Presented by Allan Rosen

For nearly one year the Orange County Comprehensive Plan Coalition has engaged in the Comprehensive Plan Update process. It has been our experience that as the process moved forward the attention to public comments diminished.

As a result, the Coalition takes the position not to endorse the proposed plan. A summary of the facts and perceptions that brought us to our conclusion are found in the Position Statement of which you have a copy.

The Coalition has not yet decided if it will make suggestions for how our concerns might be addressed. Personally, I hope we will be able to offer some suggestions later this month. Also speaking personally –and not for the Coalition -- I'd like to share some additional comments.

I think it is commendable that the County will soon have a unified report that addresses seven different functional elements, all chapters completed simultaneously. Hopefully, the plan will not only continue the stewardship of our natural and cultural resources but – just as importantly -- also promote the County's sustainable growth and development. Unfortunately I have little confidence this will happen.

Let me explain. The Coalition members believed we could make a valuable contribution to the public discourse about the County's future. Now that the proposed plan is finished, I wish the contributions of the Coalition – and other members of the public – were more in evidence.

This causes me great concern. The Coalition's Vision Statement says in part: "Sustainability is achieved when stakeholders representing diverse interests work together cooperatively..." (attached).

Sadly, I don't think the proposed plan represents the diversity of interests needed to assure that the outcomes inspired by this Plan will lead the County along a greater path of sustainability, a path that is likely to be of urgent necessity in the not too distant future.

Right now I see no evidence that implementing this plan in its current form will significantly correct two of my greatest concerns: the shortage of commercial and industrial development which places too much burden on residential property taxes and the inadequate supply of affordable and workforce housing in the County.

Other than delaying approval and improving the current plan prior to implementation, I believe the key to obtaining these and other long-desired outcomes is to use the implementation phase to transform the document's encyclopedic character into a visionary document that is clear in its priorities and unequivocally supported by a broad array of interest groups.

Absent such a transformation, I doubt the proposed Comprehensive Plan will significantly alter the Status Quo.

*Allan Rosen, Orange County, NC*

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Presented by Dolly Hunter

My comments tonight are from my experience as a member of the Orange County Comprehensive Plan Coalition. We are an organization of diverse community groups representing many thousands of Orange County citizens. We worked hundreds of hours preparing detailed recommendations to the Comprehensive Plan Update's Goals and Objectives for the Land Use, Transportation, Economic Development and Housing Elements.

Many of our recommendations were declared by the Planning Board as being more pertinent to the Implementation Phase. It surprised us that the Comprehensive Plan Update became a compilation instead of a plan. Our work is visionary planning for a future Orange County that embraces energy efficiency, social equity, workforce housing, a thriving economy and transit-ready walkable mixed use communities.

Therefore, I formally request that, in the Implementation Phase of the Comprehensive Plan, you revisit the recommendations submitted by the Comprehensive Plan Coalition. Our recommendations are carefully and intellectually written as an inspiration for you to achieve a visionary plan for our county's future.

## Vision Statement

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### The Orange County Comprehensive Plan Coalition

August 6, 2007

In October 2006, the Orange County Board of Commissioners initiated a two-year process to update the county's Comprehensive Plan. This presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity for community stakeholders to come together and provide guidance on how Orange County should grow and change in the future.

Coalition members are committed to working together to:

- learn more about the county's Comprehensive Plan and help educate the community about its importance,
- provide input to the county planning and advisory boards, and especially to the County Commissioners, about our shared priorities for promoting a path to sustainability that balances environmental health, social equity, and economic prosperity, and
- present a common voice for diverse stakeholders to express our common interests in planning for a future where environmental conservation, resource efficiency, affordable housing, social equity, economic development, preservation of regional agricultural production and transit-ready, walkable, mixed-use, communities are simultaneously realized.

Coalition members believe the Update should:

- determine where new compact, walkable, mixed-use, transit-supportive growth and development should occur within the county's planning jurisdiction,
- make affirmative commitments to providing public sector infrastructure investments to stimulate development that promotes economic prosperity, social equity and environmental health, and
- provide a framework such that the future of Orange County will be sustainable, just, and equitable.

**Sustainability is achieved when stakeholders representing diverse interests work together cooperatively** to assure a healthy balance among interdependent social, environmental and economic priorities. Our coalition is committed to ensuring that the County Commissioners include these goals in the updated Comprehensive Plan.

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#### Coalition Partners, as of August 23, 2007

Chapel Hill Carrboro Chamber of Commerce

EmPOWERment

The Village Project

Homebuilders Association of Durham, Orange and Chatham Counties

Community Action Network

Interfaith Council for Social Service

Walkable Hillsborough