

The Case Against the Proposed Site For the IFC Men's Shelter

Presentation Given to the
Chapel Hill Town Council
By Citizens of Chapel Hill

19 October 2009

Thank you for your time!

Who we are:

- Organized group of concerned local residents in Chapel Hill
- Opposed to the re-location of the Community House men's homeless shelter to the proposed site at MLK and Homestead Roads.

We speak in accordance with section 3.2 of the Comprehensive Plan for Chapel Hill: Community Character--Strategies and Action for Neighborhood Protection

“Plans should be developed as a collaborative process between Town (Council and Staff) and local residents.

Residents will assist in assessing neighborhood strengths and needs, articulating a positive vision for the future, and developing an action plan to address local issues.”

We Oppose the Proposed Site of the IFC Men's Homeless Shelter for three reasons:

1. Proximity of the shelter to a park, residential neighborhoods, and daycares, afterschool programs, and schools
2. Unintended consequences of the shelter that raise safety concerns
3. Inequitable distribution of human services in NW Chapel Hill incurred by placing the shelter at the proposed site

Proximity to Homestead Park Raises Safety Concerns:

Homestead is one of the largest and busiest parks in the Chapel Hill Parks and Recreation System:

- Families on the playground
- Rainbow , YMCA, and Chinese School soccer
- YMCA tee-ball and baseball
- School, church, and adult baseball and softball leagues
- Community gatherings and birthday parties at the picnic shelter
- Swim teams at the aquatic center
- Dog park users
- Joggers and walkers on trails
- Basketball court users
- Skateboard park users
- Batting cage users

Proximity to Schools and Daycares Raises Safety Concerns:

- The proposed shelter location is within 1,000 feet of two (2) pre-schools
- The proposed shelter location is within 1,000 feet of two (2) after school programs.

Proximity to Residential Developments Raises Safety Concerns:

- Parkside
- Parkside II
- Northwood
- Northwoods
- Old Northwoods
- Vineyard Square
- Rainbow Heights
- North Forest Hills
- Windsor Park
- Larkspur
- Chapel View/Chapel Ridge apartment complexes

Proximity to At-Risk Populations Raises Safety Concerns:

- Freedom House
- HomeStart Women's and Children's Shelter
- Rainbow Heights Neighborhood

We are helping the residents of these areas. The shelter's residents add unnecessary challenges to their already challenging situations.



Opposition 1: Proximity

Human Services

Areas used by Families with children

0.25 Mile Radius shaded in green
Blue Marker represents proposed men's homeless shelter



Opposition 1: Proximity

0.5 Mile Radius shaded in blue

Blue Marker represents proposed men's homeless shelter

Why is proximity to these areas an issue?

In Orange County there is a direct link between homelessness and:

- Crime
- Substance Abuse
- Mental Illness

While homelessness can affect any of us due to illness to divorce or job loss, many of the homeless population are proven substance abusers and/or mentally ill, conditions which cloud their reasoning and ability to function normally and safely in public areas, let alone in a residential neighborhood.

In Orange County homelessness is Directly Linked to Crime, Substance Abuse, and Mental Illness

- 30% of homeless individuals in North Carolina were found to be released from the criminal justice system
- 23% of the homeless population in Orange County were found to be severely mentally ill
- 37% had chronic substance abuse issues.

From the Orange County Ten Year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness:
(Section 2.2, The Nature of Homelessness in North Carolina and Orange County)

In Orange County homelessness is Directly Linked to Crime, Substance Abuse, and Mental Illness

From the website of the Orange County Sheriff's Office
(www.co.orange.nc.us/SHERIFF/sexoffenders/offenderpics.htm)

- On October 16, 2009 two (2) registered sex offenders list the homeless shelter as a primary residence

From section VIII of the The North Carolina Sex Offender and Public Protection Registration Programs

An offender who is required to register shall not knowingly reside within 1,000 feet of the property on which any public or non-public "school" or "child care center" is located. A "childcare center" is defined by N.C.G.S. § 110-86(3) as an arrangement where, at any one time, there are three (3) or more preschool-age children, or nine (9) or more school-age children receiving child care.

The daycares and afterschool programs within 1,000 feet of the proposed site fit this definition.

In Orange County homelessness is Directly Linked to Crime, Substance Abuse, and Mental Illness

From the Chapel Hill Police Department:

Since January 1, 2009...

- 39 Police reports filed for issues at 100 West Rosemary
- 25 arrests related to 100 W. Rosemary

In Orange County homelessness is Directly Linked to Crime, Substance Abuse, and Mental Illness

From the Developer's Concept Plan (page 2, Goals and Objectives):

“Community House's beneficiaries are homeless men facing a myriad of challenges including chronic mental illness, substance abuse, and health issues.”

It is at best unfair, and at worst dangerous, to place these populations in such close proximity.

Proximity is an issue because it conflicts with Section 8A of Chapel Hill's Comprehensive Plan for Land Use and Development

From the Chapel Hill Comprehensive Plan section 8A:

Development opportunity areas include...selected sites along Airport Road that are either undeveloped or developed below their zoning capacity.

Effects on community character and established land uses will need to be taken into consideration, for example:

- *Transportation impacts*
- *Visual character, in particular views from public roadways*
- *Interface with adjacent residential neighborhoods*

The proposed shelter location degrades the community character and quality of life in adjacent residential neighborhoods.

Unintended Consequences Raise Safety Concerns

- Homeless men who are denied entrance to the shelter may take shelter in Homestead Park and or nearby housing developments.
- Emergency beds and floor space as well as the planned Robert Nixon Free Clinic for the Homeless (to be located at the shelter) will draw an additional homeless population to Homestead Park.
- The HomeStart women's and children's shelter is supposed to be a safe haven for women and young children. The shelter creates a less secure environment for the residents of HomeStart.
- There is no plan for the homeless women who currently accompany the men staying at the shelter who won't have a place to stay.
- According to the Chapel Hill Police department (response to a citizen's phone inquiry) there is currently no plan to increase police presence in Homestead park and the surrounding neighborhoods as currently exists near the Rosemary Street location.

Unintended Consequences Raise Safety Concerns

Moving the shelter to the proposed location hurts populations that the town is already trying to help.

- Citizens of Rainbow Heights, the nearest public housing development, believe the proposed location will create additional trouble for their children and families.
- Rainbow Heights has a small community park and community residents worry that this will be an attractive location for homeless loitering.

Unintended Consequences Raise Safety Concerns

Currently neither the IFC nor the town of Chapel Hill plan to take responsibility for managing the unintended consequences of the proposed shelter location.

Quotation from the IFC in the Chapel Hill News:

So I [Mark Schultz, editor of the Chapel Hill News] asked Moran [Director of the local IFC] what happens to the homeless men who don't buy into the restrictions, the ones who just want to crash, even if that means a mattress on the floor. "That's a good question," he said. "And the way I will answer that is how will the county respond to that? Who takes ownership of that?"

Inequitable Distribution of Human Services

There are three main transportation corridors identified in Chapel Hill:

- Highway 54
- 15/501-Fordham Boulevard
- Martin Luther King Boulevard


Highway 54 and 15/501 host few human services

Inequitable Distribution of Human Services

Public housing and social services such as the IFC Men's Homeless shelter should be integrated throughout all of Chapel Hill, not concentrated in one area of town

Currently near the proposed site:

- Freedom House, a substance abuse and mental health facility that provides out-patient services with two half-way houses for recovery
- HomeStart, a shelter that provides emergency services for women and children.
- Robert and Pearl Seymour Center, a center that provides meals and other services for senior citizens
- Much of federally funded public housing in Chapel Hill is concentrated downtown and along MLK Blvd. The area includes a public housing complex with twenty-four duplexes



The main challenge of Chapel Hill's
Comprehensive Plan is stated as:

“A fundamental challenge for the future is:
how do we manage change
in a manner that best promotes the
overall well-being of the community.“

Moving the shelter to MLK and Homestead
does NOT promote
the overall well-being of the community.

Thank you for your time!

We respectfully encourage you to

vote against

moving the shelter to the proposed site

at the intersection of

Martin Luther King Boulevard and Homestead Road.

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