

Greene Tract Forest History of County, Town and Community Workgroup Discussion:

Preserving the majority of the Forest while also providing affordable housing have been dual goals for nearly 20 years.

Background: The Greene Tract Forest consists of 164 acres held jointly by Chapel Hill, Carrboro, and Orange County. The Forest is located in northern Chapel Hill and is the largest town-owned undeveloped woodland in Chapel Hill. A look at the written historical record we have of discussions about the Forest shows that preserving the majority of the forest as town-owned forest and open space along with a portion of the forest dedicated to affordable housing have been twin goals for decades. ***At no time has anyone suggested as part of the below community meetings or governmental work groups that the community should sell off parts of the Forest for development of market-rate private homes as is now proposed. At no time has anyone in these discussions brought up running two major roads through the Forest from Eubanks and Rogers Road as now is being proposed.***

In 2000, the Orange County Board of Commissioners stated its intention that the “total tract” should be preserved “to the greatest extent possible.”

“Based on the Triangle Land Conservancy inventory and the Wildlife Corridor Study, and in concurrence with the Town of Chapel Hill’s resolution on parkland preservation for the Greene tract, the total tract should be preserved as open space and protected to the greatest extent possible.”

--March 24, 2000 letter from Board Chair Moses Carey and the Orange County Board of Commissioners to the Town of Chapel Hill. See:
<https://greenetractforest.files.wordpress.com/2021/05/orange-county-cmmsrs-2000-letter-greene-tract.pdf>

In 2001, the first formal intergovernmental work group on the Greene Tract Forest held a public hearing. Overwhelmingly people were interested in preservation and affordable housing.

“[T]he Greene Tract Work Group, comprised of two elected representatives of each governing board met twice in October 2001 and conducted a facilitated public forum on November 15, 2001 to hear a dialogue among interested citizens regarding proposed basic uses of the Greene Tract; and...most people who spoke at the public forum indicated a preference that the Greene Tract be used solely for the public purposes of open space, affordable housing, and/or recreation in some combination of uses.”

-- 2001, Greene Tract Work Group, *A Resolution Regarding Recommended Uses of the 109 Acres of the Greene Tract that Remain in Joint Ownership*, 2001. See: http://www01.townofcarrboro.org/BoA/Agendas/2013/03_05_2013_D2A.pdf

In 2002, County and Town of Chapel Hill representatives on the Green Tract Work Group made clear their preference for preservation.

"My first wish would be to keep [the Greene Tract] 100 percent open space. Neighbors should support the use of a conservation easement." -- Bill Strom, Chapel Hill Council member and member of the 2001-02 Green Tract Work Group.

"[Orange County Commissioner and member of the 2001-02 Greene Tract Work Group Margaret] Brown **envisions a massive area of parks and protected natural space on the Greene Tract. She predicts that, once the final development decisions are implemented, the Rogers Road area will become one of the most desirable neighborhoods in the region....** Brown similarly envisions permanent protection for the land. The commissioner is resolute on fighting for a conservation easement to protect the acreage against the possible change of heart of future politicians."

--June 19, 2002, *Indy Week*, "How Green the Greene Tract?"
<https://indyweek.com/news/archives/green-greene-tract/>

In 2002, the Chapel Hill Planning Board recommends that the Council adopt the draft resolution prepared by the Green Tract Work Group

The resolution recommends 85.9 acres for open space and 18.1 acres for affordable housing on the jointly-owned 104 acres. [Note: the remaining 60 acres was intended for preservation by Orange County – see Carey letter above <https://greenetractforest.files.wordpress.com/2021/05/orange-county-cmmrs-2000-letter-greene-tract.pdf>]

--October 15, 2002, "Summary of Planning Board Action, Subject: Disposition of the Greene Tract," Chapel Hill Planning Board. See: <https://townhall.townofchapelhill.org/archives/agendas/ca021021/9-attach7.PDF>

In 2002, the Town of Chapel Hill adopted the resolution from the Green Tract Work Group that recommended over 80% of the 104 acres under joint town and county ownership be preserved with the remaining 20% used for affordable housing.

"NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the Town of Chapel Hill that the Council accepts the accompanying map as shown in Attachment 3 of

the Manager's Memorandum to Council of October 21, 2002, as the concept plan for that portion of the Greene Tract not deeded exclusively to Orange County, with the acreage to be set aside for open space protected by conservation easements approximating 85.9 acres and the acreage for affordable housing approximating 18.1 acres." [Note: the remaining 60 acres was intended for preservation by Orange County – see Carey letter above
<https://greenetractforest.files.wordpress.com/2021/05/orange-county-cmmsrs-2000-letter-greene-tract.pdf>]

Town of Chapel Hill, "Memorandum and Attachments, Subject: Disposition of the Greene Tract," Chapel Hill Town Council, October 21, 2002, Page 5. See:
<https://www.townofchapelhill.org/Home/ShowDocument?id=25365>

In 2008 the Rogers Road Small Area Plan Task Force Report concluded "the Greene tract can remain largely passive open space."

"Open Space Plan

To the east of the Rogers Road community, an area has been identified by the town as preserved open space, the so-called Greene tract; there were discussions about the character of this space.

- Should the Greene tract remain a passive natural area, or should there be plans for more active recreation?

- **The team feels that the Greene tract can remain largely passive open space, much of it preserved as typical landscape of the Piedmont.**

- However, it seems appropriate to create trails and a parkway across the tract."

There was also a discussion of how fixed the boundaries of the open space should be. There was some sentiment to borrow some of the land for the proposed school and other community uses in order not to take away land area from the 18 acres designated for affordable housing."

2008 Final Rogers Road Small Area Plan Task Force Report, Consensus Recommendations, p. 34-5 See:

<https://www.townofchapelhill.org/home/showdocument?id=1091>

In 2016, The Rogers Road: Mapping our Community's Future Report recommended 80% of the Greene Tract be permanently preserved.

"Ensure that large parts (80%) of the Greene tract are permanently preserved as open, natural, space. We, and many other community members, have long used the Greene tract for recreation, education, enjoyment and even as a food supply. This vacant land is a unique opportunity for residents, working with local government and groups such as the Black Family Land Trust and the Conservation Trust for North Carolina to devise an innovative conservation plan which centers the value of the land to the area's Black residents. Already, residents have identified a few areas for special conservation priority, which are

sketched on the map, but more field- work is needed to specifically identify their boundaries.”

Rogers Road: Mapping our Community's Future (The compilation of an intensive 9 month planning effort with community stakeholders to create a shared vision for Rogers Road development for the next 10 years & beyond), May 2016, See: <https://www.townofchapelhill.org/home/showdocument?id=34438> pp. 22-23.