

Reasons why E-F should be delayed and changed

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The following is a list of what I and several like-minded concerned citizens believe to be shortcomings of the proposed Ephesus-Fordham Redevelopment project. To expedite review, I have listed them in tabular format and in order of importance. I strongly advise that these exposures be closed before any vote is taken on rezoning. "Decide in haste; repent at leisure."

#	Reason	Explanation	Recommendations
1	E-F won't provide the alleged financial benefit.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The \$ 10M for stormwater and road improvements is inadequate. We've been told by the Town staff that all three Kimley-Horn feasibility studies have been thrown out. We're waiting for another consultant report that won't be ready until the end of March. It will provide the new cost figure. Other infrastructures costs (schools, police, fire, buses, etc.) have been ignored. It likely will be 3 years before the hoped-for tax revenue will begin arriving. In the meantime, the Town will be saddled with payments on the \$ 10M loan. The first four properties to come on line aren't sufficient to keep up with the loan payments. Other properties have long term leases. Paying off the loan will take 20 years. There are many other urbanization projects currently planned across Chapel Hill. How do we know that we won't end with a surfeit of commercial and rental property that can't be sold? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do a complete financial analysis and ensure that all the infrastructure costs have been included and correctly sized. Why does the Town have to fund infrastructure changes necessary to support a development? Costs of water, sewer connection, road connection should be paid by the developer. Do post-mortems on projects like Greenbridge and East54. Have they delivered the tax revenue benefits that were touted for them? Greenbridge went bankrupt, and condo owners are seeking tax relief from Hillsborough. We need a commitment that debt service can be structured in such a way to NEGATE the possibility that the general fund will have to be used. Using it would likely create a need to defund other expenses. We also need a commitment that the County would participate by contributing a portion of the property tax increment. Any contribution from the 1/4 cent sales tax fund will be minimal.
2	E-F will exacerbate downstream flooding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See the Kimley-Horn report. "Flood Mitigation and Stormwater Infrastructure Improvements Feasibility Study" (KHA File # 011159009 dated June 19, 2013). Options vary in cost from \$ 1.5M to \$ 6M. The one that was chosen was the least expensive. It did not address issues beyond the E-F boundary. Impervious surface in the E-F area will increase from 57% to as much as 68%. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hydrology models have not yet been developed to fairly estimate the cost of lowering the risk of downstream flooding. It is believed that this will be completed by the end of March. A full study of the whole Booker Creek watershed is needed before recommending new impoundments. No zoning vote should be taken until the results of the hydrology modeling and repair costs have been factored into the whole fiscal equation.
3	Public input has been ignored.	The present proposals differ substantially from the adopted Small Area Plan (SAP) that emerged from the E-F process begun in 2010. For example, the staff proposal greatly increases the number of housing units, the amount of commercial space, and the allowable height of buildings. This makes a mockery of the collaborative planning process. Citizen input does not mean much if staff does not follow positions developed out of these processes.	Embrace rather than erase public input. See David Schwartz's letter to the Town Council.
4	Building 7-story buildings in the E-F area entails considerable risk.	The soil is Triassic sediment which consists of clays and sand. It has a high shrink-swell ratio. Pilings will have to be dug very deep (at high expense) to mitigate the likelihood of future structural problems. Foundation problems are rampant in the nearby Briarcliff neighborhood.	Honor the publically agreed upon Small Area Plan that specified a maximum of 3 to 5 stories.
5	E-F will exacerbate traffic congestion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Elliott Road extension will quickly become a shortcut to I-40. The 1000 new residents will fill the roads. 	There needs to be a town-wide traffic analysis before rezoning.

6	The proposed new FBC process has serious flaws.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Town Manager is given czar-status for approving all FBC projects. • The current FBC proposal is entirely a one-sided deal. The developers get to dispense with public review and the community gets nothing. • The proposed new FBC process omits criteria for stormwater, affordable housing, sustainability, green space, and bike trails. • Lee Einsweiler has structured the new FBC proposal to remove LUMO requirements altogether. Lost are the RCD, steep slopes, tree canopy, and protection of natural resources or any of the other community values embodied in both the Chapel Hill 2020 Comprehensive Plan and the Ephesus-Fordham Small Area Plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A variation of FBC is needed to allow public input. Other cities have done so. Examples: Bradenton (FL), Brevard (NC), Davidson (NC), Flagstaff (AZ), and Denver (CO). • The code needs to be substantially rewritten in order to provide some benefit to the community in exchange for the streamlined permitting process. The Bradenton code shows one way to do this. • The FBC for the Town of Davidson, NC mandates that at least 12.5% of new housing units in a development be affordable housing, requires that every new residence be within 1/4 mile of a neighborhood park, and includes developer incentives such as a density bonus in exchange for providing open space. • FBC needs to be combined with SUP in a parallel process to address these issues. This means that we keep the SUP process, but if a developer is extra good and provides certain amenities, he can be expedited. Combining FBC with SUP can give the Council leverage.
7	E-F does not encourage developers to construct energy efficient buildings.	Research published by the EPA's Energy Star Buildings Program shows that "green" buildings cost barely 5% more (on average) to construct than standard buildings, have a higher occupancy rate, lower maintenance and operating costs due to energy efficient equipment, longer building equipment lifetimes, higher indoor quality leading to more worker productivity, and higher property values leading to higher property tax revenue. Even though building owners can charge higher rents, tenants realize lower net costs compared to standard buildings.	There are developers available who will build more energy efficient buildings to conform to the Chapel Hill 2020 vision. The town staff should seek out such developers from now on.
8	E-F destroys a considerable amount of affordable housing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Park apartments will be torn down. These were affordable rentals. • The Park owner has been in the throes of renovating units - albeit at higher rental cost. • The DHIC project has been proposed to offer affordable rental units, but the number is only a fraction of what Park offered. • There is a risk that DHIC won't get the tax credits it has applied for. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put up a GO (General Obligation) bond for affordable housing, and see if people are willing to pay. • Disqualify developers who refuse to provide some measure of affordable housing.
9	E-F will drive out small businesses.	We are concerned that as the underlying property is revalued and taxed at a higher rate, the small businesses will not be able to afford to get their leases renewed, and those services will move further away.	Consider exempting the small businesses west of Fordham and in Rams Plaza from the FBC rezoning.
10	E-F will lower property values of neighboring properties.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noise, light pollution, traffic, and increased flooding will turn nearby homes into rental properties. • Rental properties will then lower property values of homes next to them. 	Improve the area, ensure environmental standards are included, decrease pollution, and add green spaces. This will increase instead of decrease property values.
11	Aesthetics of the area will decline.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trees will be removed + unsightly 7-story buildings will put up. • There are no green space criteria in the FBC. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Town should hire an urban designer.

12	The area will become less walkable and bike friendly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New roads are being built. • There will be increased car traffic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require that the FBC contain a mobility plan with detailed bike, greenway and pedestrian amenities before approvals. For example, what are the improvements for pedestrians trying to cross Fordham Blvd. at Ephesus, at Elliott? How will bicycles be accommodated on Ephesus, Elliott, Fordham, and the other new roads? • Add some means for safe pedestrian passage across Fordham Blvd. It is recommended that this be a bridge or tunnel.
13	Proposed E-F parking is inadequate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The current plan is to allocate 1.0 parking place per one bedroom apartment. In Flagstaff they allocate 1.5. 1.0 is the number if the unit is affordable housing. Using the 1.0 number will add to congestion. • Punishing people for driving by taking away parking will NOT encourage walking. It WILL encourage people to drive further to shop where they can park, buy groceries, and take them home in their car. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use Flagstaff's numbers. See section 10-50.80.040 in Flagstaff's ordinances.