

BOARD OF ALDERMEN

ITEM NO.: **D(1)**

AGENDA ITEM ABSTRACT

MEETING DATE: JANUARY 17, 2012

TITLE: Presentation on Conservation Easements at Carolina North

DEPARTMENTS: PLANNING	PUBLIC HEARING: No
ATTACHMENTS: A. Resolution B. Excerpts of Development Agreement for Carolina North; miscellaneous maps and provisions relevant to Carrboro C. Maps of updated conservation areas	FOR INFORMATION CONTACT: ANNA WU – 966-5171 PATRICIA MCGUIRE - 918-7327

PURPOSE:

The Board of Aldermen requested information on the status of conservation easements at Carolina North. UNC Staff will make a presentation on recent activities. A resolution accepting the presentation has been provided for the Board's use.

INFORMATION:

While discussing Greenways Commission appointments in June 2011, the Board of Aldermen requested follow up information, including a report on the status of conservation easements at the 947-acre Carolina North property (304 acres in Carrboro and 607 in Chapel Hill). Development at the property is controlled by an agreement between the Town of Chapel Hill and the University; modifications may be approved by the Chapel Hill Town Manager. For twenty years, the agreement anticipates development of up to 3 million square feet of mixed use campus activities on 133 acres in the southeast portion of the property.

The agreement allows other activities, including trails and utilities, outside the 133 acres as specified in Article 5 of the agreement and includes maps showing existing features, planned development. The full development agreement may be found on the Town of Chapel Hill website at <http://www.ci.chapel-hill.nc.us/index.aspx?page=1232>. Excerpts of the agreement, including provisions describing greenways (primarily in the Chapel Hill portion of the property) and uses of existing trails are attached (*Attachment B*). In particular, the agreement specifies that the University will establish conservation easements over six areas totaling approximately 311 acres.

UNC staff had updated Carrboro staff in the spring of 2010 on the status of establishing the easements, including corrections to the mapping of the areas based on "ground-truthing" the natural areas/environmental features and shifting the boundaries to capture areas with higher ecological value. The additions and subtractions are balanced so that the total area in conservation is to remain at 311 acres. Since a map of the areas was included in the agreement, the University will be requesting a modification to the agreement that reflects the revised conservation areas. A map showing updated limits of the conservation areas is attached (*Attachment C*). The University staff has also determined that restrictive covenants with third-party monitoring will be the mechanism for protecting the conservation areas. UNC staff will make a presentation on these changes on January 17th.

The Board of Aldermen has also requested a report from staff on conservation easements in Town. This report will be provided in a separate agenda item, likely in the late winter/spring of this year.

FISCAL AND STAFF IMPACT:

Some staff time will be involved in the review of plans and other documents associated with activities in areas of Carolina North that fall within the Town of Carrboro.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Board of Aldermen adopt the attached resolution accepting this report (*Attachment A*).