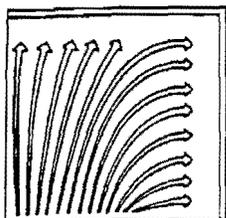


**Town of Chapel Hill, North Carolina  
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

**EAST FRANKLIN STREET  
CORRIDOR STUDY**

October 14, 1991



**Town of Chapel Hill, North Carolina  
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

## I. INTRODUCTION

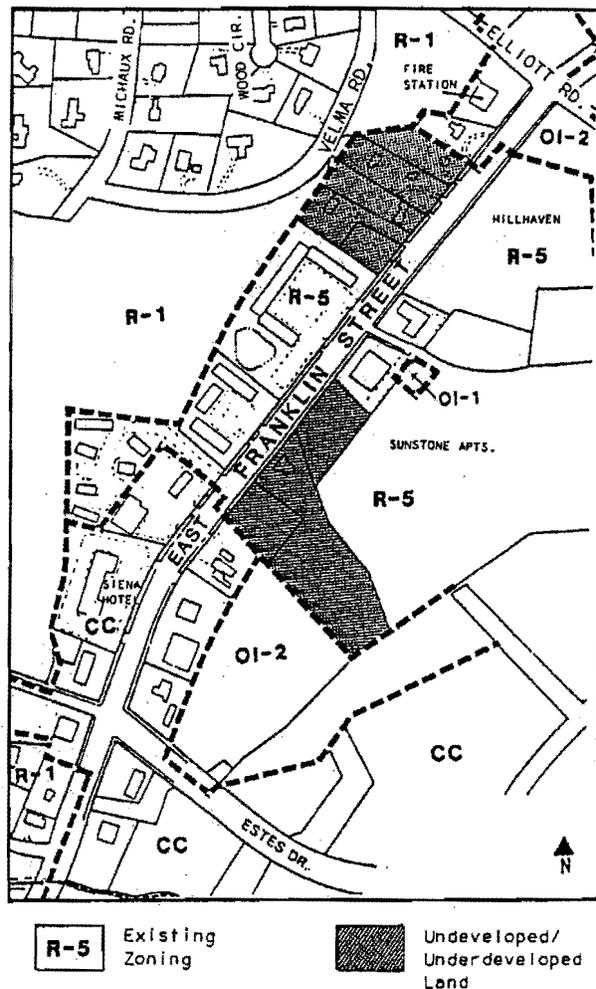
Franklin Street is one of Chapel Hill's most significant entranceways, a major route winding up to the historic district, Town Center and the University of North Carolina. The block of Franklin between Elliott and Estes traditionally has had intense public scrutiny of development proposals, in part because of the block's key location on this major entranceway.

In April, 1991 the Town Council authorized a design study of this corridor to take a fresh look at historical patterns of development, current Town land use policy, and ways of encouraging high-quality design in the area. The focus of the study is undeveloped land fronting on Franklin Street as shown on the accompanying map.

The project brought together property owners with the Design Review Board to explore these issues. The proposed plan is the result of the interplay of creative ideas from this diverse group of people who came together in a Design Charette on May 14, 1991.

The plan begins with examining the setting of the streetscape -- the view from the road. It then focuses on two areas of potential development within the corridor.

Accompanying this narrative is a series of maps that illustrate the concepts described here.



## II. THE STREETScape

**Objective:** Enhance the village pedestrian character of Franklin Street as a major entranceway into the center of Chapel Hill which expresses a human scale.

**Criteria:**

Identify and protect landmark trees in the area.

Incorporate landmark trees into project site design.

Develop a consistent pattern of planting new trees and shrubs in order to enhance the overall image of the roadway.

Use 20 feet of existing right-of-way on both sides of Franklin Street to plant trees between the curb and the sidewalk in order to reestablish the street tree character and to provide pedestrians more separation from the vehicles and noise of the street.

Supplement existing pink crepe myrtles ("Near East") along Franklin Street with new areas of planting where needed.

Study the feasibility of incorporating landscaped medians along Franklin Street.

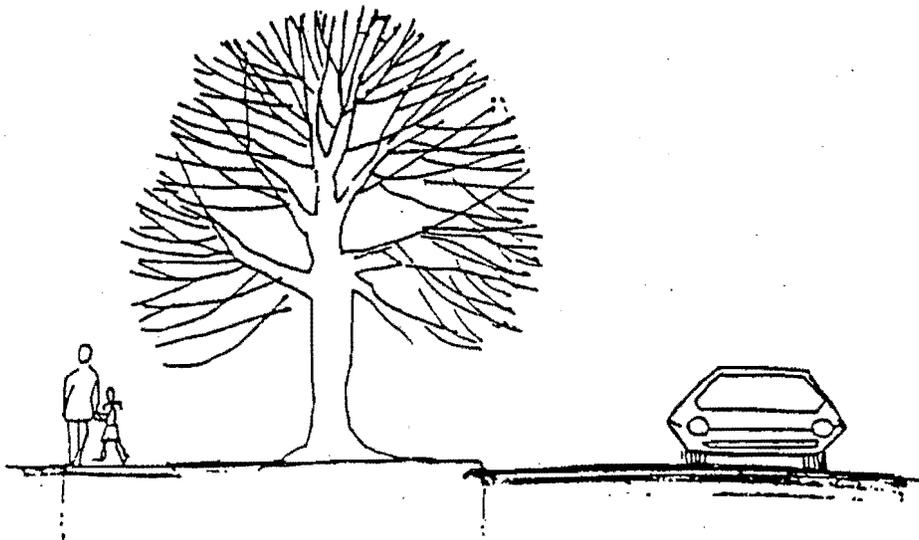
Through landscaping, achieve a sense of buildings receding from the roadway.

Use of architectural elements at the right-of-way line (such as fences, walls, signage) should tie the street together and be compatible with the terrain and in harmony with existing buildings.

Place a special architectural treatment on Franklin Street (such as a sign, shelter, or bus stop) to emphasize pedestrian access to the new public library site.

Restrict visibility of parking lots by placing parking in the rear of buildings or screening them from view.

Place power lines underground.



### III. DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES FOR THE AREA

#### Neighborhood Protection

**Objective:** Be sensitive to maintaining the privacy and quiet of the surrounding residential neighborhoods.

**Criteria:**

Protect the Velma Road area by providing a heavy buffer of trees and vegetation to the north of the study area.

Prohibit automobile access from Velma Road to any proposed development.

Take advantage of the change in topography to protect this area.

Connect existing internal circulation systems.

Consolidate and reduce existing curb cuts where possible.

Interconnect existing and potential development with a pedestrian circulation system, and connect these to the future library site.

Provide pedestrian crosswalks across Franklin.

#### Access, Circulation and Parking

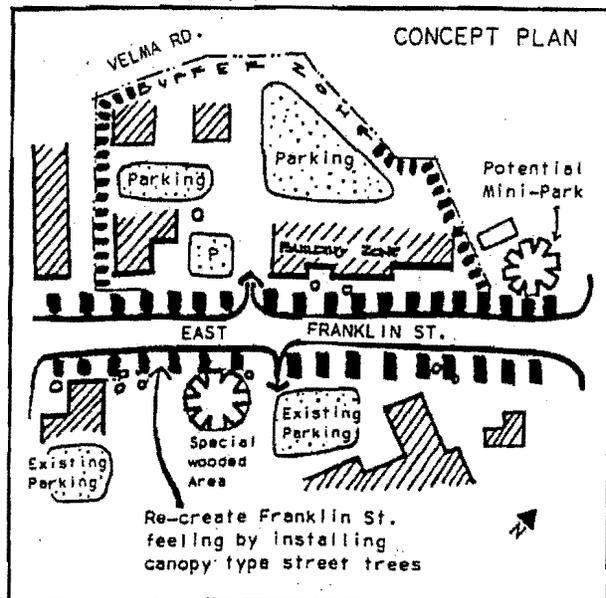
**Objective:** Develop a coordinated system of access for both cars and pedestrians.

**Criteria:**

Minimize curb cuts onto Franklin Street, a major arterial for the area.

Wherever possible, have access onto streets of lesser classification.

Develop an internal circulation system among individual properties which connects them into one access point.



### Uses and Intensity

Objective: Provide for a mixture of uses that are organized around a "village concept."

Criteria:

Allow a mix of residential and office, with some limited commercial uses.

Design small-scale buildings which create a sense of village.

Provide incentives for providing residential on upper floors of buildings or high-density residential.

Organize similar activities into centers (or "nodes").

Develop uses which support the use of transit and alternatives to the automobile.

Discourage commercial uses which are generators of high levels of auto trips, such as fast-food restaurants, convenience stores or gas stations.

Give special scrutiny to commercial uses with drive-in windows which may be difficult but advantageous to locate in this area.

### Building Design

Objective: Design and locate buildings to provide a sense of visual interest, and to provide a sense of harmony along the street.

Criteria:

Buildings should convey a sense of receding from the street rather than dominating it.

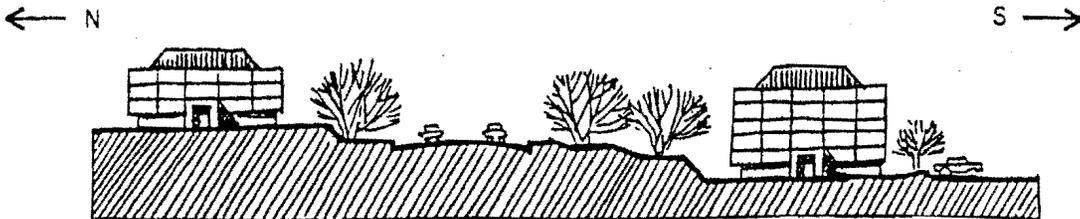
Encourage diversity of design, variation of building height, and energy-efficient features including solar applications.

The height of buildings on the south side of Franklin could be higher than those on the north if they fit in with the change in topography.

Building design should express a "village" concept -- human scale facades, a pedestrian orientation, and a sense of public space to be enjoyed.

Building design should have offsets in walls and building masses to lend visual interest and to help achieve a sense of village. Architectural articulation should be diverse.

Give attention to compatibility of materials, building details, and fenestration patterns.



## IV. AREA-SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

### Martindale Property

#### Guidelines

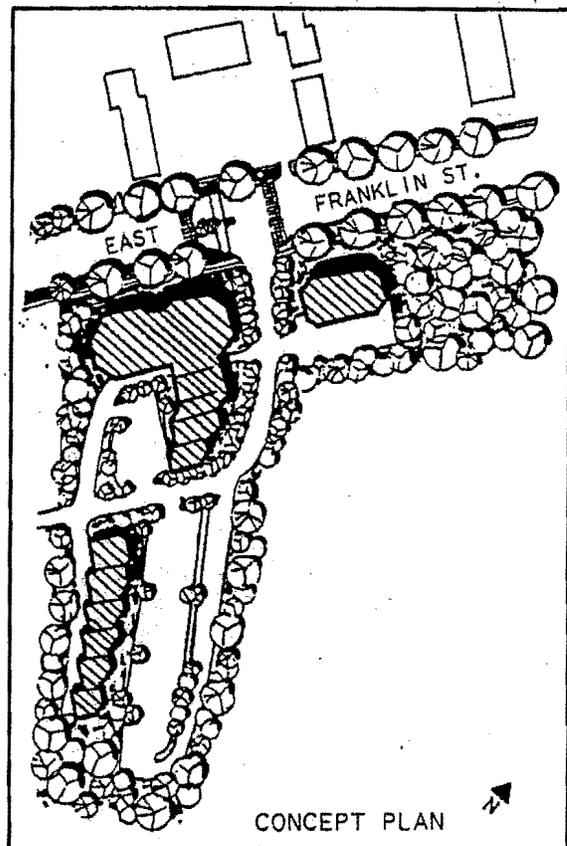
- \*Protect area of significant, landmark trees near Franklin Street; do not put curb cuts in this area.
- \*Protect areas of Resource Conservation District and drainageways.
- \*Connect property access to the Chapel Hill Center.
- \*Place buildings near road; restrict visibility of parking areas.
- \*Design buildings to blend with the natural terrain.
- \*Develop a village look and feel to the design of the site.
- \*Provide pedestrian connections to adjoining areas, including Couch Lane.

#### Illustrative Plan

The accompanying map shows a concept of how the area could develop based on the above criteria. Buildings fronting Franklin Street could be multi-use office, commercial, residential. Adjacent parking lots are located under the buildings due to topographical conditions and the limited dimensions of the lot. Smaller buildings step down the site to accommodate existing topography to the rear. Uses appropriate to this area are office and perhaps commercial.

The site has one access to Franklin Street, with a secondary access through the property to the west as a possible connection with Chapel Hill Center, and a possible connection to Willow Drive through the Old Durham Road right-of-way.

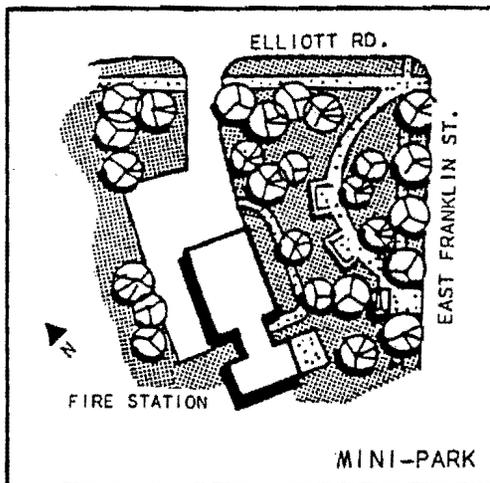
This plan would preserve a significant wooded and natural drainage area at the northeast corner of the site with landmark trees.



## Fire Station Area

### Guidelines

- \*Encourage property owners to consolidate individual areas into one master plan.
- \*Protect landmark trees. Allow flexibility in setback requirements to help preserve trees.
- \*Prohibit access to Velma Road.
- \*Limit points of access to Franklin Street by achieving an internal circulation system among the properties.
- \*Place buildings near road, and restrict visibility of parking areas.
- \*Design buildings to blend with the natural terrain.
- \*Develop a village look and feel to the design of the site.
- \*Preserve natural topography and existing vegetation to buffer the adjoining residential neighborhood.
- \*Consider developing a mini-park on the Fire Station property to enhance a pedestrian/village atmosphere and use.

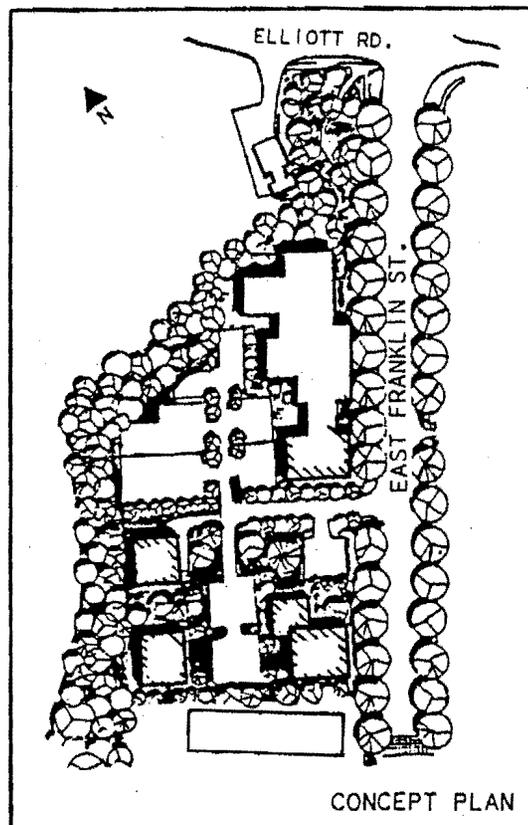


### Illustrative Plan

The accompanying map shows a concept of how the area could develop if property owners worked cooperatively and consolidated the many individual properties. This plan considers the individual lots as a single site while allowing for sequential development of buildings and parking lots with appropriate incentives.

Buildings along Franklin would be suitable for a mix of uses -- office, commercial, residential. This plan incorporates parking behind the buildings. A single access to Franklin Street is proposed. The suggested building and parking lot layout is based on protecting landmark trees.

This plan incorporates an approved site plan for the Ballet School.



## V. IMPLEMENTATION

These design concepts are offered as a guideline to development of the East Franklin Street Corridor. Bringing the concepts to reality will require a cooperative effort between property owners, developers, and the Town.

### Comprehensive Plan

The first step is to consider adoption of these design guidelines as a component of Chapel Hill's Comprehensive Plan. This would represent a part of Chapel Hill's continuing effort to update its plan and provide fine levels of detailed land use guidance for small areas.

### Development Requests

Once adopted as a component of the Comprehensive Plan, these guidelines could become the basis and justification for requests for Conditional Use Zoning and Special Use Permits for properties in this corridor. Development would be encouraged to be designed in a manner that is consistent with these guidelines.

These properties carry high-density residential zoning at present. If one or more of the tracts becomes the subject of a development proposal, and site designs and uses are drawn along the lines suggested here, the property owner can request that the property be rezoned to a Conditional Use Zoning district that allows office or commercial use.

Simultaneous with the rezoning application would be submittal of a Special Use Permit application that shows exactly how the site would be designed. If it can be demonstrated

that the proposal meets the objectives set forth in the Comprehensive Plan for this corridor, the Town Council would then be in a position to consider approving the rezoning and the Special Use Permit.

At that point, development could proceed, with assurances that it would enhance the Chapel Hill village character of Franklin Street while protecting surrounding residential neighborhoods, significant trees, the natural topography, and flow of traffic.

### Incentives

In order for this concept to become reality, there must be incentives for property owners and the Town to cooperate along these lines.

For property owners, incentives include the possibility of having property rezoned from the existing residential category to a Conditional Use Office or Commercial category, and a wider range of potential use for their properties (office, institutional, and commercial in addition to residential).

A cohesive, good design for the area which leaves trees intact, provides for well-spaced parking areas, and allows good internal pedestrian and vehicular circulation, should enhance property values.

For the Town, incentives include the possibility of enhanced design along a major entranceway corridor, protection of existing residential neighborhoods, protection of the traffic-carrying capacity of Franklin Street, and better opportunities for pedestrian movement.