

10. Public Input

Chatham County has a stated goal to be proactive when it comes to changes in land use. The reason for this is that a change in use affects many people in as many ways. It is the experience of M. Travis Blake, President of North Chatham Investments that a community involved in a private commercial venture, increases the success of that venture.

During the creation and design of the Williams Corner project the developer has sought out public review of and input to the project. The result has been that the project has made some changes to accommodate the concerns of the citizen groups.

One change in particular is the request and change in the traffic plan to have full movement behind the drugstore placement. The President of the CCEC, Loyse Hurley, made the point that this exit would create an unsafe traffic flow if it were only right-in and right-out. After being alerted to this problem, traffic engineers for the project agreed that changing this flow was indeed a necessity for people to safely leave the development and return east on Lystra Road.

Representatives from the Haw River Assembly expressed concern over the preliminary plan, which showed storm ponds as the major stormwater control device. The final stormwater plan will detail a number of low-impact development devices including bioretention filters, permeable parking areas, ponding areas, and grass buffer strips.

At the last meeting of interested groups, we discussed the problem of signage and tree buffers, which are generally incompatible with a retail environment. The consensus seemed to be that the tree buffer was paramount to the project; the group assembled consequently suggested that we examine different types of low-impact signage that could be placed in front of the tree buffer.

In general, the involvement in advance of interested community groups and neighboring landowners has created an atmosphere of trust and involvement in the project. If the project is approved by Chatham County, the developer plans to continue to involve these groups in the construction phase of the development to further enhance its desirability.

Finally, as with all projects, it is the developer's responsibility to execute the vision. Changes always occur in a project this size and the continued involvement of interested groups will help insure that Williams Corner becomes what everyone desires.