

Chatham County Historical Association, Inc.

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www.chathamhistory.org

13 June 2006

Mr. Jim Anderson, Vice President - Land
Crosland
4000 Westchase Blvd., Suite 390
Raleigh, NC 27607

Dear Mr. Anderson:

Thank you for talking with me last week after my having left my telephone tirade for you earlier. Your original message, with no identification of your development proposal and no real message about historical structures, came after a series of similar communications, and I lost what little cool I might have had otherwise. Also, the message came just before the planning board meeting at which your sketch design was submitted, if I understand correctly, and it seemed to be intended to meet the letter of the planning ordinance requiring consultation with the Chatham County Historical Association about historical structures, although it could not be thought to meet the spirit of that provision.

As I tried to convey in our conversation, we are very much interested in preserving the cultural heritage of Chatham County, especially historical structures that may be lost because of development, abandoned cemeteries of any kind, and the history associated with these structures or cemeteries. Much of this heritage falls "below the radar," as it were, of the State Historic Preservation Office but is nevertheless of keen interest at a more local level.

The reports that I have seen that were made by professional environmental consultants were based on brief reconnaissance and review of materials in the state historical preservation office and seemed extremely superficial. The State Archaeologist has identified sites identified with Native Americans, as well as some sites of abandoned cemeteries. The historical association has received reports of many cemeteries not listed in the office of the State Archaeologist. As I noted above, the NCSHPO is too coarse a screen to catch local history.

Developers are in a unique position to identify traces on the land of former use and occupancy. Air photos, old maps and deeds, surveys and field reconnaissance:

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all of these could provide clues to a sensitive observer. If requested at a much earlier stage and given information already in the hands of the developer, the Chatham County Historical Association can provide some assistance in researching local history. Our interest is not in inhibiting the development but in documenting the history before it is obliterated.

We would gratefully receive any information you have or will acquire in the future that could lead us to record sites, artifacts, or traces of things historical in Chatham County. Your proposal for a site visit by interested local people is an interesting one and potentially could be valuable. As I mentioned on the phone, I would be pleased to participate in such a field visit.

I look forward to working with you on behalf of the Chatham County Historical Association.

Cordially,

Jane Pyle

copy:
Chatham County Planning Department