

021-A Sustainable Future in the Chapel Hill-Carrboro Community

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Living in Chapel Hill-Carrboro your entire life skews your view of what other communities might be like. If you must know I always thought it would be interesting to live somewhere else, but after talking with many of my widely dispersed relatives, and gleaned from them their ideas on the Iraq war, the 2008 presidential race, gay marriage, and the environment-here is just fine. After all, it is true that this town is considered to be more informed and active than most in terms of environmental stewardship, economic prosperity, and even tolerance for equity groups. Politically this community is very informed, few areas compare in education, and this is one of the few towns in the country that can claim to be the headquarters for a presidential campaign. So therefore how could there possibly be a problem for this community in the future? The answer is that since this community is so extraordinary in comparison to other communities, as a result of the programs that are currently in place, it is important for that fact not to cloud the improvements that continue to be needed. I propose a course of action and improvement in three areas; that all community administrative vehicles become powered by alternative fuels, that single African-American women with children who are economically disadvantaged be given HOPS assistance (helping one person succeed), and lastly to promote sustainable economic prosperity by instituting tax incentives to businesses that adopt environmentally conscious policies such as green building.

This community should lead all others in instituting a strategy to replace all administrative vehicles with alternatively powered vehicles or alternative fuels. Historically this community has been very proactive on the environment, in fact in 2001-2002, Orange County became the first in North Carolina to reach the 1991 goal set by the

state to reduce waste 40 per cent (Waste Matters 1). Government and public support already indicates a commitment to environmental stewardship not seen in most communities, but we need to do more and there is help out there. The U. S. Department of Energy has a program called “Clean Cities” with a goal of “assisting local decisions to adopt practices that contribute to the reduction of petroleum consumption” (Clean Cities). Coalitions that are associated with Clean Cities will consult with communities on alternative fuels and hybrid vehicles. As well, in the very next county (Chatham) there is a source for alternative fuels at Piedmont Biofuels. Community vehicles could lead the way by using a biodiesel for a clean burning alternative fuel that could be produced from vegetable oil in the local restaurants, thus providing a sustainable alternative to fossil fuel.

Economic prosperity for this community can also be enhanced in the future by providing tax incentives to businesses that adopt environmentally conscious policies. Specifically, the U.S. Green Building Council will guide communities on government initiatives and incentives surrounding green building. If Chapel Hill-Carrboro were to aggressively target the green industry, which will be the next wave of the future of business in many aspects, the incredible prosperity that will follow would greatly enhance the community’s economic basis. Green building would enhance and protect ecosystems and biodiversity, improve air and water quality, reduce solid waste, and conserve natural resources. Further economic and community sustainable benefits would be to improve asset value and profits, minimize the strain on the community infrastructure, and reduce operating costs (USGBC).

Finally, the area of social equity within our community is an area that could use much improvement. Chapel Hill-Carrboro certainly has a large number of privileged members that have impact upon equity groups of many types in our area. The homes are expensive and university growth has attracted new development patterns for an even higher priced group which will further impact ethnic diversity and affordability. Trying to achieve social equity within groups such as race, origin, age, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, veterans and disabilities can be difficult. I have personally identified one group that stands out as being particularly disadvantaged, and they are single African-American women attempting to raise children on their own. Single women without support, and already disadvantaged by race and gender equity discrimination, need more support from my viewpoint. They need money, they need food, and they need mentors for their children. In general, they need a helping hand to assist them to become successful as a parent. HOPS or Helping One Person Succeed is my idea of a program funded through private and public means, through the community, that would mentor and assist the single African-American mom. A program to be set up to give emergency food assistance, and to also guide and mentor the mom in childcare, educational guidance, and job applications.

The Chapel Hill-Carrboro community does have gaps in crucial target areas that will need to be corrected in order for the future to evolve as sustainable and accessible for all. I propose that community administrative vehicles become powered by alternative fuels, that our community promote green building economic growth, and that a HOPS program for African-American women be instituted to assist them in achieving social equity. These measures would achieve a solid foundation for a sustainable community.

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