

# MMC Meeting regarding Greene Tract

April 12, 2024 / 11:30 am – 1 pm / Orange County Solid Waste Administration Building

## Purpose

For Orange County, Carrboro and Chapel Hill to continue to collaborate around the future of the Greene Tract.

## Participants

### Carrboro

Barbara Foushee, Mayor

Marie Parker, Assistant Town Manager

Trish McGuire, Planning Director

Marty Roupe, Development Review Administrator

### Chapel Hill

Jess Anderson, Mayor

Chris Blue, Town Manager

Britany Waddell, Planning Director

Judy Johnson, Assistant Planning Director

Jacob Hunt, Planning Department

### Orange County

Jamezetta Bedford, Chair

Bonnie Hammersley, County Manager

Travis Myren, Deputy County Manager

Cy Stober, Planning Director

Perdita Holtz, Deputy Director – Long-Range Planning & Administration

### DSC Facilitation Team

Maggie Chotas & Laura Swartz

## Meeting Goals

1. Continue effective collaboration
2. Develop a shared understanding for where the work is currently
3. Clarify the role of the MMC and decision-making process moving forward
4. Meet the Community Engagement consultants
5. Learn about the upcoming Design Workshop on April 14, 2 – 5 pm
6. Establish future meeting dates

## Meeting Summary

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### **This meeting addressed the following topics:**

1. Project updates from Gensler, Community Engagement Consultant.
2. Project updates from Thomas & Hutton, Master Plan Consultant.
3. Learn about the upcoming Design Workshop, April 14, 2024 from 2 – 5 pm at Morris Grove Elementary School.
4. The Role of the MMC and decision-making moving forward.

### **Next steps coming out of this meeting:**

- The group decided to meet again on Friday, May 3 noon-1:30 pm at the Orange County Solid Waste Administration building on Eubanks. The purpose of that meeting will be to consider questions raised at the April meeting and next steps.
- Everyone is encouraged to send questions to Facilitator Maggie Chotas before the next meeting. Those questions will help shape the agenda.
- Staff, along with the DSC Facilitation team, will collect final summary notes from previous years for posting on the [Greene Tract website](#)<sup>1</sup>.
- Cy Stober will follow up with Thomas & Hutton to check in about the timeline for sharing the master planning process with the MMC and Boards.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.orangecountync.gov/3070/Greene-Tract>

## Details per Topic Area

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### Welcome and Introductions

Participants were invited to introduce themselves and share a response to the following prompt: “When I think of the Greene Tract, I think \_\_\_\_\_.”

Comments included the following ideas:

- We are closer than we’ve ever been to moving something positive forward.
- This is an opportunity to put all the best planning practices to work.
- We are focusing on both preservation and housing.
- The Greene Tract is a beautiful location in a central spot.
- There are amazing collaborative opportunities on different levels.
- There is a rich history of the people who call the neighborhood home.
- So many possibilities for positive community building.
- There was a vision established a very long time ago and there are expectations now.

Participant comments echoed themes of positivity, partnership, forward-motion and the beauty of the location.

### Reaffirming Working Together & Agenda Overview

Given the new makeup of this group, Facilitator Maggie Chotas reviewed the MMC ground rules, which the group created during a meeting on December 18, 2019.

#### Ground rules:

1. Identify when we are talking personally or from the majority of our Boards.
2. Encourage staff to participate and share, given that they have valuable context and insight.
3. Clarify facts along the way, and do not get offended if someone tries to correct misstatements.
4. Do not take things personally.
5. Share notes back with our Boards.
6. Post final notes summary on the County’s Greene Tract Information page (*decided 6/27/23*). However, the underlying document(s) are public records and must be provided to a member of the public if requested within a reasonable time allowing for any necessary redaction. (*email from Jamezetta 9/18/23*)
7. Public meetings will be noticed on all three jurisdictions’ calendars/ webpages.

## Topic #1

### **Project Updates from Gensler, Community Engagement Consultant**

#### **Key points**

- Jessica Pearson of Gensler and Jordan Powell of VHB, a subconsultant to Gensler, shared updates including:
  - Engagement timeline, with work wrapping up in September of 2024
  - This work is grounded in the goals of the project including goals for development, environmental preservation, and a public school recreation site.
  - Engagement team, which includes a mix of government staff and community partners, has met with Gensler monthly to co-create materials, co-design approach to meet the goals of the group
  - Gensler acknowledges we are not the first people to occupy this space. Gensler has mapped the Rogers-Eubanks Community History of the people back to the 1700s, and of the planning process which has occurred over the past 40 years.
  - All of the community work is rooted in the 5 goals for engagement.
  - The group is working to conduct stakeholder interviews and synthesizing those interviews.
- Jessica Pearson, Gensler Consultant, shared these updates:
  - Gensler first researched all potential stakeholders and created a stakeholder map which was presented to the engagement team.
    - Important to understand who we are engaging with and why?
    - We have completed 5 of 8 interviews and are in the process of scheduling the remaining 3 interviews.
  - Gensler presented a set of 6 questions presented to every stakeholder, and then go through the answers in a structured in-person interview.
  - First workshop is this upcoming Sunday, April 14, 2024, from 2 – 5 pm at Morris Grove Elementary School.
    - To advertise the workshop, Gensler made flyers and translated them into multiple languages, went door-knocking, and sent around post-cards.
    - Shuttles will go from RENA to the School Site for the workshop.
  - The second workshop will be June 9, 2024, at 2 pm also at Morris Grove Elementary School.

#### **MMC Questions for Gensler:**

- *Chair Jamezetta Bedford asked about how the interview synthesis will be shared?*

- Draft report will be shared with the engagement team.
- *Mayor Jess Anderson asked how to be productive and continue to receive feedback that can be used on this project?*
  - Gensler is constantly focusing the parameters of what can be discussed here. We regularly remind ourselves of that and what we are trying to get out of this process.
- *Mayor Foushee asked what kinds of other things are out there? What are we trying to contain?*
  - Jessica Pearson answered that there is always a degree of level-setting because there are people who are coming to the process new and not familiar with the process, as well as others have a lot of experience with this process.
  - Gensler’s job is to remind everyone of the long history of planning and use facilitation techniques of “appreciative-inquiry,” whereby the facilitators appreciate responses and ask clarifying questions. We are synthesizing it into a “collective vision.”
    - Having clear goals and referring to the concept plan makes this easier.
- Part of what MMC needs to discuss is how to share information from the MMC to Gensler.
- *Mayor Jess Anderson asked if there is a way to see the mapping of the questions to the outcomes so we can know what is informing things?*
  - Gensler will produce an insight summary report and include this information.
  - Also, Gensler could share this information to the MMC at a future meeting.

## Topic #2

### **Project Updates from Thomas & Hutton, Master Plan Consultant**

#### **Key Points**

- Cy Stober introduced Thomas & Hutton (T & H) as the Consultant for Master Planning.
- T & H representatives Dan Jewell, Jeremy Anderson and Wendi Ramsden, presented:
  - T & H has deep roots in this community. This location is “near and dear to our hearts.”
  - Dan Jewell introduced his team for the Greene Tract project.
- T & H’s role is to “draw the plans” so they reflect the goals and vision of the project. They will create a master plan and also develop a connectivity framework.
- We are creating places that become part of the greater community.

- T & H is participating in bi-weekly meetings and has a long history of collaboration with VHB and Gensler. T & H is coordinating with the Gensler Community Engagement Team, and T & H will be a part of the kick-off workshop this Sunday.
- Behind the scenes work include:
  - T & H is collecting data on slopes, flood plains, utilities and soil, and ownership.
  - “The site will tell us what can be on it.” We don’t try to force stuff onto the site. We look at the site and say here is where you can develop, and here is where you shouldn’t develop.
- T & H will conduct stakeholder check-ins and then develop a connectivity plan. How do you get to the school? How do you get to the park? We consider traffic impacts.
- T & H showed a detailed project timeline.
  - One goal is to finalize the master plan by September 2024.
  - Expect to present findings and recommendations to the community and elected officials by mid to late Fall 2024.

#### **MMC Questions for Thomas & Hutton:**

- *Chair Jamezetta Bedford expressed concern that September would be ambitious for a Master Plan because her Board goes away during July & August.*
  - T & H responded that the charge they have been given by staff is to develop a master plan by September, but they will work with staff to make any necessary adjustments.
  - Cy Stober will follow up with T & H to problem-solve this issue.
- *Mayor Jess Anderson clarified that September would be ambitious because the Boards and owners may need more time to review master plan drafts, and the summer break could slow this process.*

### Topic #3

#### **Role of MMC & Decision-making moving forward**

Next, the group discussed the role of the MMC and how the group will make decisions moving forward. The group also discussed their upcoming meeting schedule.

#### **Summary of key points**

##### **Role of MMC re: Greene Tract**

- What is the role of this group vis a vis the Greene Tract?
  - Bonnie Hammersley: MMC is a planning body, not decisionmaking body. The decisions the MMC make are should this go to the Boards

- MMC is needed to offer guidance and guardrails to staff
  - For example: Affordability - What is the definition of the affordability goal?

### What communication channels does the MMC need?

- Regular meetings? How frequent?
- Other communication channels than meetings?
- Work through Managers?

### Communication to boards

- Information items monthly to boards?
- No scheduled joint boards meetings for now; have up to 3 in the contracts, if needed later on

### Timeline

- What is the real timeline?
- Where is funding coming from?
  - Assumption: Developers fund
  - Is that viable/ realistic?
- Scenarios with numbers
- What are the upcoming decision points? Scope and sequencing
  - How do these fit with the work of the consultants?
- What do we do to ensure honest and transparent communication around what is feasible?

## More detailed discussion points

- Judy Johnson asked whether the group wanted to meet monthly, possibly for an hour each month. She emphasized that the staff needs a lot of direction and guidance from the elected officials. She stated the MMC also needs to discuss how we share information back with the Boards.
- Perdita Holtz explained that one of the original contracts imagined three joint meetings of the three Boards, and staff has not be able to get those scheduled for various reasons. If we want to have joint Board meetings, we need to get those scheduled ASAP.
- As we move into this intense period of community engagement, the MMC needs more regular meetings. Facilitator Maggie Chotas asked if the group could meet monthly for an hour?
- Mayor Jess Anderson expressed several concerns:
  - She doesn't understand exactly what the MMC is being asked to do;
  - She would not feel comfortable making decisions without involving her Board.

- She doesn't understand how the owners are paying for this project. There is no money, so what is we're being asked to do?
- This land is in Chapel Hill's planning jurisdiction but that doesn't mean that it will be zoned. Whether we are putting money in or not drives decisions. We haven't been budgeting money.
- If we are doing great planning, but can't execute it for a couple of years, and then the planning gets out of date, that's a problem.
- She expressed the need for more grounding in what is possible and what we are really planning.
- Mayor Foushee followed up and asked: *What kinds of decision points would we address in monthly meeting? Does it have to be every month? What are the decision-points coming up?*
  - Mayor Jess Anderson expressed that we have made promises. This is not an avoidance thing. I would put in the time for what needs to happen, but I don't know what that is yet.
- Facilitator Maggie Chotas reflected the needs expressed by Mayor Anderson and Mayor Foushee for more clarity around what the role is of the MMC especially in terms of decisionmaking. Questions emerging include:
  - What is the role?
  - How do the Boards fit?
  - Joint Board meetings?
  - Where the funding comes from?
- Brittany Waddell mentioned that staff needs answers to certain questions in order to keep this process moving. "Is a meeting the most effective way to do that? I'm not saying it's not. Is there a more effective way where we route those questions to our managers and get answers."
- Bonnie Hammersley noted that from her perspective there should not be any decisions that need to be made that cannot be handled by the managers, and then the managers meet with the Mayors or Chairs.
- Ms. Hammersley continued that her understanding from the past 10 years she's been involved with the project was that once there was a plan, developers would be solicited and there would not be public funds in this. The County never decided to put money into the Greene Tract. We would provide the land, but we do not put the money in.
  - Mayor Anderson added that the development community has expressed concern.
  - Cy Stober added – do we have an affordability goal in this project? What about an additional right-of-way?

- Mayor Anderson expressed that there was great work done at the Jackson Center, and at the same time it might not be based in the financial realities of 2024. We need to be clear about why we aren't doing what we asked people for.
- Mayor Foushee asked if this is the first public meeting? Information has been very slow to come out from these meetings in the past. Are we taking minutes?
  - Facilitator Chotas added there are minutes going back several years. She noted the ground rule that names the expectation that electeds will share the final meeting notes with their boards.
- Chair Bedford asked if the three boards could all have "information items" about the Greene Tract in their own agendas. We can move to an agenda item if we need to.
  - Bonnie said the information items could all be identical.
  - Chair Bedford noted that we have learned that it is too expensive now to do pure 30% all affordable housing. Habitat is doing that by East Chapel Hill High School – they have some market rate housing and some affordable. That might be a question so that we can take this situation to our Boards? We are working towards scenarios and options that might be more affordable.
- Chair Bedford expressed a concern that some members of the public are expecting that the park will come online the same as the housing, but the reality is the park could be well 15 years out. She noted the need to set expectations so that the public doesn't think it's coming right away.
  - Cy Stober added that this is the type of information that is helpful for staff to know, so they can share that with T & H. T & H can put on the master plan, "to be developed at a different point."

### **Clarifying questions and issues to address at future MMC meetings**

- What are the decision points for the MMC? What are the guardrails for staff?
- What does staff need guidance on?
  - Guardrails for specific topics – eg. % of affordable housing
    - Staff needs guidance from the MMC on specific topics
    - The fact that the meetings became public → that was a decision for the MMC
  - This is the reality- check for the elected.
  - What is realistic? Mayor Anderson expressed a desire to have professionals give information about what is feasible, and the councils and commissioners can talk about that.

- The decision that needs to be made is → what is the definition of affordability? What will the mix of housing be?
  - Mayor Anderson added that no one could think this would be 100% affordable housing without any subsidies from jurisdictions.
  - Judy Johnson added that that is the sort of thing the staff needs guidance on – whether there is the expectation or not that the housing is planned to be 100% affordable housing? That is a decision that would need to be taken to the Boards.
    - Bonnie Hammersley asked about the sequencing of this decision. When is that decision needed?
  - Trish McGuire noted that the Council members and Commissioners need what the elected officials can communicate to them. The MMC is the spearhead for their respective Boards. The issue of the Boards coming together comes from this notion that this property is jointly owned. Is the project viable at all?
    - Going back to the question of affordability – this process is about taking the visioning project and putting some guardrails around it. What is the definition of affordability? This was a big debate about 5 years ago. People in the community had a big debate. Sorting this out is one of the most important things.
    - How does the development in this project live into the vision in a realistic way?
  - Mayor Anderson emphasized that when the work is done in the community with the engagement consultants, we don't want to get in the cycle of getting people's hopes up to discuss the plans in ways that are not rooted in reality.
  - Bonnie Hammersley noted that she is hearing from Board members now: "what is your definition of affordability?" Everyone has a different definition of that. I strongly believe that we need to bring options to the Boards but I don't know that one group meeting is the best format for that. As important as this is, there are so many other competing priorities, like the \$400 bond for the schools. The best thing we can do is continue to work on this. That is why we have the MMC.
    - Part of the challenges of this project is the dual ownership. We need to let the consultants do their work.
- How does the engagement process play out? At what point is guidance needed from MMC? And at what point do we need decisions from the Boards?
  - The Consultants need to emphasize what is feasible.
- Cy Stober added that they hired T & H because they are experts on affordable housing and planning. If we get feedback from Workshop #1 that everyone wants single family housing, T & H will come back at Workshop #2 and tell everyone that that is not feasible based on the goals for the Greene Tract. We will identify the affordability based on

feedback we get from the community. Bonnie is correct we need to let the process play out, and we need to go back through our foundational documents.

- Travis Myren noted that one of the project's goals is to maximize affordability.
- Trish McGuire noted that if feasibility is part of the assumption, then that needs to be explicitly stated as part of the workshop.
- Mayor Anderson emphasized that if we aren't grounded in reality, people will be disappointed.

**The meeting adjourned at 1:00 pm.**