

Chuck Edwards
District Engineer, Orange - Alamance Counties
North Carolina Department of Transportation
115 East Crescent Square Dr.
Graham, 27253

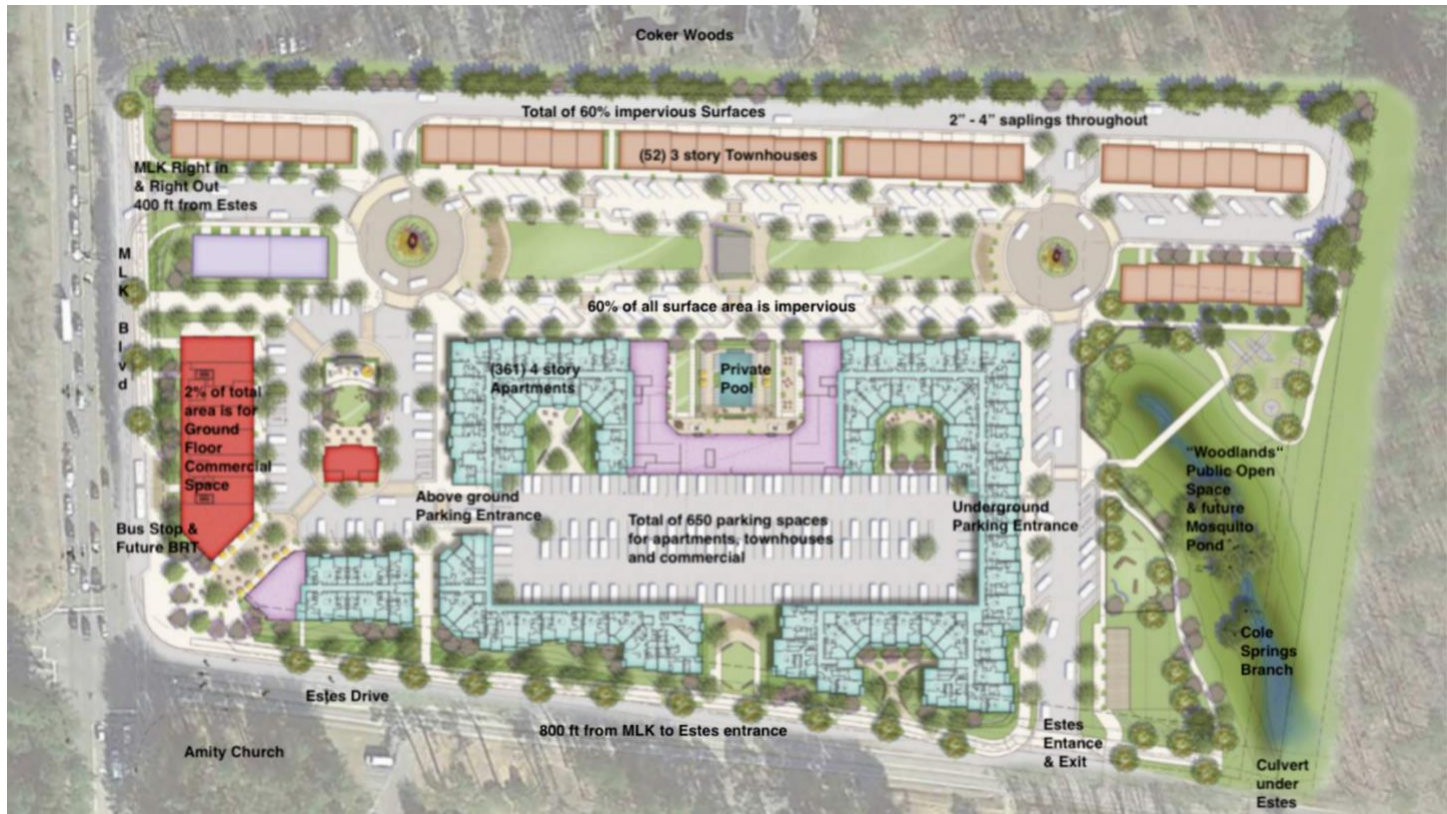
Hello Mr. Edwards,

I hope that you are doing well.

The last time we communicated was about traffic planning for the Chapel Hill High School expansion a few years back. Since the school renovations are nearly complete and students may be going back to school soon, we will soon have the opportunity to see how well the school traffic plan works.

I am writing today representing an organization called "Estes Neighbors" consisting of neighborhoods located near Estes Drive — a state owned and maintained major east west corridor for Chapel Hill and Carrboro. You are familiar I am sure with the fact that Phillips Middle and Estes Elementary schools, 13 + immediate area neighborhoods, the Town public library users and all the commuters going to the east and west rely on this artery remaining mobile. The particular area of concern is the section of Estes Drive between MLK Jr and Franklin Street shown on this page. www.estesneighbors.org. Adding additional traffic and turning movements to this section of Estes Drive to the existing intensity of uses raises very serious public safety concerns for students walking to school, commuters, and residents driving the many connecting neighborhood streets feeding Estes Drive.

As you likely know, Aura is a major housing development proposed by Trinsic Residential Group, a Texas based developer, for the clear-cut land (15 acres) on the northeast corner of the Estes Drive and MLK Jr. Blvd. intersection.



Trinsic's [permit application](#) describes a 3-4 story multi-building complex that is 98% residential composed of: 423 residential units (90% rental apartments), 10% for-sale townhouses, a small amount of commercial space and office space totaling 12,000 sq ft, and 658 additional parking spaces.

We have three specific transportation concerns for your consideration:

1. The Central West Small Area Plan (part of the Chapel Hill Comprehensive Plan) laid out densities and parking spaces for area properties near the busy MLK/Estes intersection. The Aura proposal triples the density allocated for that parcel. If this permit is approved with the proposed density, there will not be any Estes road capacity remaining for developments in the remaining properties. See map below. The undeveloped parcels, including Aura, are in red. The YMCA in green has expansion plans. Azalea Gardens is in blue and is already built.



2. According to the latest proposed plan for Aura, the Estes entrance is located only 800 feet from the MLK/Estes Intersection. The updated TIA says that vehicles leaving this Aura exit onto Estes Drive will deal with a failing intersection at peak afternoon hours, with the worst possible traffic rating of “F”, even after suggested improvements. In addition, we are concerned about the sight distances from this entrance and would like to know if DOT has conducted an on-site visit to ascertain how many feet away a car is visible from the proposed Estes Aura entrance and exit.

3. Finally we are interested in your views on improving access to Estes Drive for the newly built Azalea Estates Senior Residences and the long time residents of the Somerset/Huntington neighborhood to improve their very difficult wait time to access Estes Drive. Have you given any more thought to the efficacy of a traffic circle at the Somerset corner of Estes Drive to help these neighbors in the Somerset- Huntington neighborhood access Estes Drive? A traffic light would be another option.

We expect many more immediate area developments in the near future. We understand the YMCA is looking at a large redevelopment via their existing easement which might be extended to line up with Somerset. The AURA entrance does not line up with this likely future YMCA entrance. Given these facts and that other area property owners are planning to develop in the next 5 years (indicated on the map above), we will be calling on the town to work with DOT to develop a well thought out comprehensive transportation plan for Estes Drive before permits are

approved. Simply approving plans for Aura will greatly limit future options for Estes Drive causing future headaches for DOT and all Estes Drive users.

Thanks for considering these issues. If you wish, we can arrange a conference call to discuss them.

Julie McClintock
Estes Neighbors
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