

To: Mayor Kevin Foy and Town Council
Chapel Hill, NC

From: Concerned Chapel Hill Citizens

Re: Proposed Homeless Shelter at MLK and Homestead

Date: 9 October 2009

To the Mayor and Town Council of Chapel Hill:

We, the undersigned, respectfully register our opposition to the relocation of the Inter-Faith Council's "Community House" men's shelter to the proposed site at the corner of Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. and Homestead Road. While we recognize the need to relocate and expand Community House, building a men's shelter in this location is ill conceived for many reasons, beginning with those listed below:

1) Building a Men's shelter near schools, parks and housing developments raises serious safety concerns and affects our quality of life.

• *Proximity to Homestead Park*

Homestead Park, one of the busiest and largest parks in the Chapel Hill system, is used daily by hundreds of residents for Rainbow and YMCA Soccer, school, church and adult baseball leagues, swim teams, families, dog park users, joggers, skateboarders and playground kids. The Orange County Ten Year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness states 30% of homeless individuals in North Carolina had been released from the criminal justice system, 23% of the homeless population in Orange County were found to be severely mentally ill and close to 40% had chronic substance abuse issues. Relocating the Community House men's shelter adjacent to the park would put families and children in potentially dangerous situations.

• *Proximity to Preschools and Daycare*

Lack of adequate housing for convicted sex offenders has caused a steady increase in the number of homeless sex offenders. At this time two convicted sex offenders are registered at the current men's shelter according to the Orange County Sheriff's registry. The proposed shelter location is less than 1,000 feet of two pre-schools and two after school programs. Additionally, the proposed site is within 1,000 feet of Homestead Park where hundreds of children play daily. It is unwise and irresponsible to locate a shelter that houses convicted sex offenders next to schools and parks. It is also illegal for registered sex offenders to knowingly be within 1,000 feet of such areas.

• *Inadequate Capacity and Non-Compliant Homeless Residents*

The developer's plan for the new shelter states it will sleep a minimum of 50 men per night. If the facility is over capacity and men are turned away they may take shelter in Homestead Park and or nearby housing developments. Additionally, residents of the shelter who do not work or are non-compliant with the IFC's rules may live in the park and housing developments during the day.

• *Proximity to Developments*

The proximity of the proposed shelter to developments such as Parkside, Vineyard Square, Rainbow Heights, North Forest Hills, Windsor Park, and the Chapel View/Chapel Ridge apartment complexes violates the tenets of Chapel Hill's Comprehensive Plan for neighborhood protection. The Plan states "The Chapel Hill residents believe that protecting the physical and social fabric of neighborhoods is key to maintaining the Town's community character". Loitering, camping and panhandling in nearby developments and Homestead Park threatens the safety of the residents and consequently negatively impacts the social fabric and quality of life of these neighborhoods.

2) North Chapel Hill already has a high concentration of Human Services.

Today, this area is home to two significant Human Services facilities: "Freedom House", a substance abuse and mental health facility that provides out-patient services with two half way houses for recovery and "HomeStart", a shelter that provides emergency services for women and children. Moving Community House men's shelter would concentrate most of Human Services in one neighborhood. This creates an inequitable distribution of services

