

# 2021 Chapel Hill Town Council Candidate Questionnaire

We, the Southern Entryway Alliance, are dedicated to preserving the rural character of southern Chapel Hill along 15-501, Smith Level Road, and surrounding areas.

We are requesting candidates for Chapel Hill Town Council to answer the following questions. We plan to share your responses on our website (<https://southernentrywayalliance.org/>) and via our mailing list.

Please submit this form no later than Sunday, October 10, 2021, so that we can distribute your responses before early voting begins.

Thanks in advance!

Email \*

Hongbin4Mayor@gmail.com

Name \*

Hongbin Gu

As a member of the Chapel Hill Town Council, what would you do to see that Chapel Hill does not contribute to global warming and habitat loss? Please be as specific as possible.

1) We need to retrofit our town's old buildings/public housing to meet energy efficiency standards. Our significant delay/negligence in maintenance is unsafe, unsustainable, costly and causes significant GHG emission; 2) We need strong environment standards for large scale rezoning development. Granting the practices of clearcutting, excessive parking, impervious surface and stormwater runoff courses heat island, GHG emission, urban flooding, and eutrophication that affects our drinking water; 3) We need to put pressure on UNC to phase out its coal burning cogeneration plants ASAP; 4) We need to invest in viable non-auto mobility connections to reduce car-dependence, encourage healthy active transportation. We haven't moved our needle in this area for the past 20 years. It's time us us to walk the walk.

What do you know about the Morgan Creek watershed, including Fan Branch and Obey Creeks?

This area has been an environmental sensitive area. The Morgan Creek Watershed Detailed Assessment Report pointed out that urbanization is the biggest overall threat to watershed functions by increasing volume, velocity, overland flow, pollutant loading of stormwater discharge. Meeting of the Waters (MOW) Creek drains the highly urbanized main campus of UNC-Chapel Hill resulting in high overall imperviousness within the subwatershed. Southern Area Small Area Plan designated Obey Creek as an environment offset area for the Southern Village development. The mixed-use Obey Creek development project was approved in 2015 but withheld due to change in retail market. A new development proposal for senior housing was proposed at the concept level.

Do you think the Town/OWASA should use Jordan Lake as a source for safe drinking water?

I will only consider Jordan Lake as a source of emergency water supply. Jordan Lake water supply has its own challenge of pollutants and algal blooms in recent years. The watershed encompasses the largest urban area that have seen significant growth over the last 40 years and are expecting even faster growth in coming years. As climate change and various crisis situation become more frequent in the coming years, we need to prepare for backup plans to improve resilience of our key infrastructure.

The Water and Sewer boundary was put in place to protect our watersheds, drinking water supply, and our rural boundaries. What is your opinion of these boundaries?

The boundaries are based on well thought out analysis and joint planning by the neighboring towns and county. As the region undergoing intense development in the coming years, the mayor/council need to balance the needs for housing & economic development with the long term environment impacts on flooding and safe drinking water, especially as we face climate crisis. We need to engage in the comprehensive planning with mobility and transportation, and short and long term infrastructure cost.

How do you feel about the growth in Chapel Hill over the last 10 years? Please give examples of any developments that you see as assets to the town both financially and aesthetically, and examples of those that you feel do not enhance the town.

The CH housing Report gave a harsh review of the Town's development in the past decade, and I mostly agree with its conclusions. 1)We need good data and analysis of CH's housing situation. We have been "flying blind" in the past decade; 2)We need housing diversity, especially the middle/moderate housing. The new developments in the past decade are dominantly large apartments. We are losing vibrancy and resilience as a community with the middle hollowing out. 3)We need COMPREHENSIVE planning. Housing goes hand in hand with mobility, economic development AND climate action/environment protection. There needs to be a good balance of residential and commercial development. Higher density needs to be supported by transit and bike/walk connections to reduce auto-dependence and excessive need for parking. High density community needs green infrastructure (TREES, greenways, parks...) and social infrastructure ( public meeting/gathering places, playgrounds, amphitheater, farmer's market, museums, arts center, arts/culture programming) to meet the complete humanity needs of residents. We need a good urban planner who sees the big picture with the focus on creating "good places" and good community not just houses/buildings. Our current "splitting-baby" approach of reacting to "project to project" is the worst way of managing our growth. My campaign policy platform "Chapel Hill Green Recovery" represents an alternative vision for a more green, inclusive and resilient future for Chapel Hill.

What should the southern entryway to Chapel Hill look and feel like in the future?

I would like our southern entryway to remain green and be an exemplar of what Chapel Hill stands for with diverse housing for people of all income backgrounds, a vibrant economy that supports small businesses, especially the young, women and minority entrepreneurs, a community with multi-modal connection well integrated in all development with easy access to school, transit, grocery store, pharmacy, parks and greenways and children's playground.

How do we balance affordable housing with green infrastructure?

In established community, we can balance affordable housing with green infrastructure by encouraging gentle density, so that duplexes, triplexes and fourplexes can be built through retrofitting. This will gradually increase density overtime while maintaining the community characters without causing drastic changes to the green environment. Higher density can/should be considered along transit corridor, but must provide opportunities for affordable workforce housing and property ownership. These OTD should aim for limited parking to have more spaces for trees, parks, and other public amenities.

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Thanks in advance!

Email \*

stegman4chapelhill@gmail.com

Name \*

Karen Stegman

As a member of the Chapel Hill Town Council, what would you do to see that Chapel Hill does not contribute to global warming and habitat loss? Please be as specific as possible.

As a member of the Town Council, I have been a vocal and consistent advocate on climate issues, in particular for changes in how the Town thinks about transportation and land use. Reducing vehicle miles travelled (VMT) is a key strategy of our new Climate Action and Response Plan and critical to meeting our ambitious GHG reduction commitment by 2030. Per a recent NCDOT report on VMT reduction, on a per household basis, urban households produce much lower average daily VMT and much fewer trips than both suburban and rural households. In 2009, the average urban household in North Carolina drove 32.7 miles per day while rural North Carolina households drove 74 percent more miles, or 56.8 miles per day. Similarly, urban North Carolina households averaged 4.4 automobile trips per day while rural North Carolina households averaged 23 percent more, or 5.4 trips per day. Smart growth approaches that combine dense infill development with access to multi-modal transit options will get people out of cars and offer significant environmental and health benefits for the community. I have worked hard to help raise the visibility of these important policy shifts by leveraging my role on Council to advocate at meetings, publish thought pieces on social media and in local media outlets, and have worked to model this shift as a community member and family. As a Council Member, I have been a strong advocate for transit friendly projects; advocated for land use approaches in the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) that concentrate development along central transit corridors; supported the development and funding of the Town's first Climate Action and Response Plan. Effectiveness requires being able to collaborate, listen, understand a variety of perspectives, and work toward agreement, which can require compromise for the greater good. I have demonstrated these qualities in my time on Council.

Moving forward, we must continue to invest in planning for the BRT, transitioning the Town's fleet to electric, including the addition of electric buses, as funding allows. Given the serious limitations of what we can do at the local level, we must also prioritize collaboration with neighboring jurisdictions and aggressive advocacy to get help at the State level. Additionally, as stated above, transportation is now the leading source of GHGs in the US. As such, careful thought about land use and transportation planning is key to reducing our climate footprint. Investment in public transit, including the Bus Rapid Transit currently under development, will ensure that our community continues to grow in a dense, compact, and sustainable way that will minimize emissions from automobile travel.

What do you know about the Morgan Creek watershed, including Fan Branch and Obey Creeks?

The Morgan Creek watershed is vital to Chapel Hill. It includes one of our key drinking water sources - University Lake - along with many of our green and recreational spaces, such as Merritt's Pasture, Southern Community Park, the Botanical Gardens, Morgan Creek Trail and Fan Brach trail. However, there is no Obey Creek. It's actually Wilson's Creek. Protection of this watershed must continue to be a high priority for our community.

Do you think the Town/OWASA should use Jordan Lake as a source for safe drinking water?

Our community's drinking water currently comes from Cane Creek Reservoir, University Lake, and the Quarry Reservoir. We only access water from Jordan Lake in times of emergency, such as a prolonged drought. OWASA is in the process of updating its long-range water supply plan, and identification of water sources is a critical component of this, especially given the rapidly changing impact of the climate emergency on weather patterns and increasingly prolonged periods of high temperatures. Concerns about the impact of climate change on sufficient access to quality drinking water are paramount. As one of the Council liaisons to the OWASA board, I have been engaged in these discussions and take these concerns very seriously. In the past, the Town Council has been opposed to changing our water access plans to include a greater reliance on Jordan Lake for drinking water supply. Any change to this policy would need to be carefully considered and stronger safeguards would need to be put in place than currently exist. It has been shown that Jordan Lake has unacceptably high levels of contaminants, specifically PFAS, that pose dangers to human health. Because there are so many municipalities making use of Jordan Lake, it would be much harder to control and ensure the safety of the drinking water from this source. For these reasons, I would like to see OWASA prioritize the other options under consideration for the long-term plan, including expansion of the Quarry Reservoir and re-negotiation of the existing Jordan Lake mutual aid agreement to draw on Jordan Lake only in times of crisis.

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The Water and Sewer boundary was put in place to protect our watersheds, drinking water supply, and our rural boundaries. What is your opinion of these boundaries?

In the late '80s, Chapel Hill, Carrboro, and Orange County created a rural buffer. This established a circle around the edge of town beyond which we agreed not to develop or if developed, with very low density and impact. The intent was to preserve the rural nature of Orange County while also preventing urban sprawl. The tradeoff inherent in the creation of the rural buffer, one which is now becoming more apparent as developable land becomes truly scarce, is that we need to use the land we have strategically. Chapel Hill continues to grow, with a demand for approximately 400 new dwelling units per year to accommodate this growth. Our housing supply has not grown sufficiently, and this inadequate supply leads to housing scarcity and increases housing prices. Because our supply has not kept up with demand, pressure on housing prices is intense. It is vital to the long-term health of the community that we reflect the implications of the rural buffer in our land use policies so that we can preserve the buffer and continue to reap all the benefits of that buffer, while not pricing out the diverse population that we want and need.

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How do you feel about the growth in Chapel Hill over the last 10 years? Please give examples of any developments that you see as assets to the town both financially and aesthetically, and examples of those that you feel do not enhance the town.

Transit and land use policy are at the core of providing truly environmentally responsible development. One of the most important roles of the Council is guiding the decision-making around how Chapel Hill develops – and redevelops - the limited land it has. These decision-making processes should be guided by the following principles:

- Emphasize smart growth principles that strive to minimize human impact on the environment; in particular, encourage density according to the recently approved Future Land Use Map (FLUM)
- As the Town's density increases, it will be critical to incorporate thoughtful, publicly accessible green spaces, preserving old growth trees and as much tree canopy as possible to minimize heat island effects and allow for shaded recreation and exercise
- Prioritize development outside of our flood zones and ensure responsible storm water planning and sufficient infrastructure as the Town continues to grow
- Increase bike and pedestrian connectivity and align these routes with implementation of the Town's comprehensive transportation plan, including continued support of our fare-free bus service and the addition of Bus Rapid Transit
- Align development with current and future transit routes (transit-oriented development)

With appropriate investments and policies, the growth that is expected in Chapel Hill can be directed towards more walkable and transit-adjacent communities. This approach could leverage sustainable development patterns to attract jobs, expand the local tax base, and enhance existing neighborhoods. The Rosemary redevelopment project is a good example of this, especially as we work to increase housing downtown for year-round residents.

What should the southern entryway to Chapel Hill look and feel like in the future?

Please refer to question number 4 re. the rural buffer and WASMPBA. The southern entryway is a transition area into town and should reflect the balance we seek as a community that loves its forests and green spaces while embracing climate-responsive land use and transit policies that create a connected, sustainable, and equitable community. A new concept for Obey Creek will be coming forward for consideration and Council is advocating for a smaller scale, missing middle type of development that will help us to reach our housing goals while having less impact on the Southern entryway and preserving significant trees and green space.

## How do we balance affordable housing with green infrastructure?

Because of the rural buffer, as discussed above, we need to use the land inside the buffer strategically. If we try to prevent new housing (re-)development in town to preserve trees, we are undermining the premise of the rural buffer that denser development in town will prevent sprawl and preserve nature within the buffer. We focus on preserving trees while forgetting that on any given night there are no fewer than 40 unsheltered people living among those trees. Those 40 represent only 20% of our county's homeless, the rest have temporary housing only due to our incredible local shelter and housing providers. It's also important to note that since the start of the pandemic, homelessness in the county has increased by 35%. We have allowed ourselves to fall into the trap of a false dichotomy. It should not be trees vs. people. It should be trees and people. With thoughtful planning and open conversations with our community, we can preserve most of our trees, create new and appealing green spaces, and create the housing we need for all who wish to live here while not pricing out marginalized and lower-income households.

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Thanks in advance!

Email \*

adam@adam4chapelhill.com

Name \*

Adam Searing

As a member of the Chapel Hill Town Council, what would you do to see that Chapel Hill does not contribute to global warming and habitat loss? Please be as specific as possible.

Climate change response urgently requires systematic action on the state, federal, and international level but, as a town, Chapel Hill can do its part as well. And our Climate Action Plan, while a good start, needs to go farther. Here's where we need to act:

1. Chapel Hill's budget reflects its priorities, and with 23% of the budget devoted to public transit, our free bus and related transit system is the single largest line item we spend money on as a community. Continuing this investment to make sure our bus system is efficient, comfortable (including decent shelters) and highly used is critical to our climate efforts to reduce automobile use. In addition, moving along construction of our North/South corridor bus rapid transit route is critical during the next Council term to improve our system even more.

2. We also need to complete more of the planned greenways and other connectors in the town's bicycle and mobility plan in order to provide multiple, safer ways for residents and families to use bicycles and other alternative forms of transportation to get to grocery stores, school and work. We have a long priority list of projects for connectivity in that plan and we should continue to implement these improvements as funding allows and as we begin work on priorities like the Estes side path. My travels around the country to many towns and small cities that do a better job than Chapel Hill with trail systems have given me additional ideas how to do this at a lower cost as well.

3. Deforestation should be at the top of our list of concerns. As development pressures result in more and more building on privately-owned land in town, our town must better prioritize preservation of our forests and trees, with a special duty to property that the town owns already. With more and more research showing the beneficial effects of forests and tree cover for the mental and physical health of residents we should also strive so that all our residents, regardless of income, have access to our cooling forests and beautiful streams and trails. Especially after the pandemic, itself arguably another manifestation of climate failures, we need to better conserve the public natural resources we have left here in Chapel Hill.

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What do you know about the Morgan Creek watershed, including Fan Branch and Obey Creeks?

I grew up in Chapel Hill, and have been hiking, biking, walking my dog and building trails among our public lands, streams and forests for decades. Morgan Creek and its watershed contain some of our more spectacular natural areas, including north facing slopes of mountain laurel, rhododendron, beautiful rapids, dense surrounding woodlands, and, of course, University Lake. Fan Branch and Obey Creek bracket Southern Village before they run into Morgan Creek – I have spent time there too, mostly on Fan Branch. Obey Creek continues into the wooded valley that has been contemplated for development for years. My understanding is current development ideas center around a senior living complex with minimal retail – but whatever goes there we need to take the effect on the watershed into account. After passing through Chapel Hill's Morgan Creek preserve and by Merritt's pasture, Morgan Creek eventually meanders through UNC land, splits around our town's sewage treatment plant (where our treated wastewater is emptied into it), and eventually continues to Jordan Lake. As the creek enters the northern wetlands of Jordan, it also passes a UNC site where severely contaminated groundwater has been in the process of being remediated for decades.

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Do you think the Town/OWASA should use Jordan Lake as a source for safe drinking water?

Not at this time. I am no expert on this issue and happy to learn more about it -- I would like to meet with folks from OWASA and find out their perspective. I am aware that OWASA is contemplating adding Jordan to our potential sources of water in their long-range plans and is collaborating with other municipalities on this issue, but I feel that our Cane Creek/University Lake/Quarry system is adequate and we should explore more long-term conservation measures before we decide about Jordan Lake. I watched Jordan being built and have been on Jordan for years -- it's not the cleanest body of water and the area of the lake closest to Chapel Hill has a tendency to dry out during prolonged drought. And while Morgan creek's watershed is relatively clean, Jordan's broader watersheds in surrounding counties have long-term issues with protection and pollution we need to solve.

The Water and Sewer boundary was put in place to protect our watersheds, drinking water supply, and our rural boundaries. What is your opinion of these boundaries?

The rural buffer/boundary is one part of our long-term land use plan adopted by Orange County, Chapel Hill and Carrboro back in the 1980s. It has been a successful tool to prevent the sprawl that surrounds some of our neighbors like Cary and North Raleigh by delineating where we should extend water and sewer services.

Unfortunately, some folks use the rural buffer to argue that we in Chapel Hill must approve all new development proposals that come before the town -- no matter if that means town residents must give up our goals of great parks and any preservation of our remaining public forests and open spaces. Indeed, in recent years, some Council members seem to vote "yes" on every single development proposal. However, so many people I've talked to during this campaign have told me the importance of our woodland trails, our public spaces and our parks as critical to their desire to live in Chapel Hill. They want our town to have successful businesses, a great library, a solid police and fire department, and yes, more development. But they want that development to include more housing like townhomes, duplexes and housing for residents of all incomes, all built in a manner where people are eager to buy and live in these neighborhoods. And our woods and trails are a critical part of this vision. Everyone in our town, regardless of their income, deserves to be able to enjoy a walk on our public land, in our public's forest, by our public greenways and creeks -- this is the very essence of what it means to live in Chapel Hill and exactly why people want to live here.

Finally, folks outside of town in Orange County have the same concerns as Chapel Hill residents. Orange County residents recently organized to successfully defeat a proposed 100 pump gas station that would have been built in rural Orange County. The project was defeated because of community concerns about traffic, environmental damage, stormwater, and other impacts -- similar issues that Chapel Hill residents raise about development. In a time of worsening heat, drenching storms and after an awful pandemic we should all have a better appreciation of the importance of our public forests, trees and other green spaces -- these are important whether you live outside or inside of Chapel Hill's town limits.

The rural buffer is a critical land use tool that works in concert with our other land use policies. It should be used to improve our community and not as a political cudgel to force bad policies -- whether within or outside our town limits.

How do you feel about the growth in Chapel Hill over the last 10 years? Please give examples of any developments that you see as assets to the town both financially and aesthetically, and examples of those that you feel do not enhance the town.

In recent years our growth has accelerated with projects that are out of place and character for our town. Especially in the Ephesus-Fordham district, we are in the process (or have already built) large apartment developments that lack character, connectivity or affordability – and replace what were once smaller affordable apartment complexes. Not only do these developments not meet our vision for how our town should look but they also unforgivably are exempt from affordable housing requirements. The town ordinances that have facilitated these mistakes should be changed.

On the other (very far) end of the spectrum of development are projects like Homestead Road's Advocate Church's small-scale effort to rezone and redevelop land adjacent to the church into several tiny homes to serve our lowest-income residents. This is community-driven development, serving a community need and a great example of community members putting their desire for service into concrete action.

I would like to see more development that reflects the Advocate's example. Not necessarily in size, but in the desire to build in keeping with what the community wants and what we see as our needs. To me, this means more townhomes, duplexes and triplexes that are more affordable for families. It also means projects that don't follow the inexpensive, repetitive four stories over one formula that so much building seems to be these days, apparently in an attempt to maximize profits rather than community.

What should the southern entryway to Chapel Hill look and feel like in the future?

First, let's do no harm. We don't want to repeat the mistakes of the Ephesus-Fordham district and we don't want to replicate the development decisions of some of our neighboring communities. I would first like to sit down with folks in the area and find out their needs and concerns. We have been talking about expanding development there for a long time, especially as we built Southern Village. This is an important area in Chapel Hill with a large piece of undeveloped property and we need to figure out how we integrate this development into a longer-range plan for development overall in town.

## How do we balance affordable housing with green infrastructure?

This question goes to the heart of my campaign. I have written much more about these issues, but in short, I feel that Chapel Hill has not been putting enough emphasis on saving our most beautiful public lands, streams and trails. Instead, we have focused on mostly building and are moving to sell some of our most amazing public lands for private, market rate housing, commercial development, and affordable housing.

While I support our current efforts to use some town property to help us reach our affordable housing goals, we shouldn't be selling our best public lands to private developers and we don't need to pit the need for affordable housing against our need for trails, streams and forests. In fact, we should be considering that people who live in more affordable housing in our town are often not located near our most protected forest parks and public lands! And currently, the areas where we are contemplating sale of our parkland and public forest are only the areas close to our more affordable neighborhoods.

And while we are having this "housing v. green" debate we are not even working on getting our current approved or proposed affordable housing projects that are near town and major roads/transport moving forward. If we stop delaying and start building, we can quickly create at least 210 units of affordable housing with projects already in process. For example, our failure to move for years on rebuilding the closed town-owned affordable Trinity Park apartments is outrageous. This is town land right next to downtown and a great park and we need to start this project. Second, we need to move on the Jay Street project, which is again close to downtown and can provide even more homes. We also have failed to require private developers to include enough (or in the case of some zoned districts – any) affordable housing as a part of their projects. This needs to change. Finally, we have delays in our 2200 project on town land on Homestead Road we need to overcome. Let's focus on actually building housing instead of selling off our most beautiful public forests and open spaces. In addition, we need to build on our great history of collaborating with UNC, our town's largest employer, to create more housing for UNC staff in areas like housekeeping, food service, and facility services along with young faculty members. I think we have a real opportunity to create significantly more housing in town by expanding our work together.

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Thanks in advance!

Email \*

electvimala@gmail.com

Name \*

Vimala Rajendran

As a member of the Chapel Hill Town Council, what would you do to see that Chapel Hill does not contribute to global warming and habitat loss? Please be as specific as possible.

I would oppose clear cutting of trees, to put on concrete or asphalt cover, and build apartments. I would participate in the re-writing of the LUMO (Land Use Management Ordinance) so that environmental stewardship is at the center of all future development. I would also ask that an environmental impact study is submitted at the time of presenting a development for approval by the Town Council.

What do you know about the Morgan Creek watershed, including Fan Branch and Obey Creeks?

Morgan Creek watershed feeds into Chapel Hill's water supply in Cane Creek Reservoir and is part of the Cape Fear basin,

Fan Branch and Obey Creeks are all part of the same watershed, in the southern part of Chapel Hill. Those areas were left to be natural, and undeveloped after Southern Village was built, to preserve the area's environmental character, and to preserve the watershed, and to prevent pollution of our drinking water system. Fan Branch Trails run through the edge of Southern Village Community Park, the Hyatt Hotel area and surrounding area.

Do you think the Town/OWASA should use Jordan Lake as a source for safe drinking water?

From my understanding of OWASA's management of University Lake and Cane Creek Reservoir the quality of water and the water level is good for Chapel Hill. At this time, there is no need to use Jordan Lake or combine the water supply with Durham and Chatham Counties.

The Water and Sewer boundary was put in place to protect our watersheds, drinking water supply, and our rural boundaries. What is your opinion of these boundaries?

I am in favor of maintaining the existing Water and Sewer boundary and protecting our watersheds and drinking water supply and our rural boundaries. It concerns me that Bolin Creek waterways are below standard due to pollution from residential construction runoffs, and erosion.

How do you feel about the growth in Chapel Hill over the last 10 years? Please give examples of any developments that you see as assets to the town both financially and aesthetically, and examples of those that you feel do not enhance the town.

I am unable to come up with too many examples of recent developments that are aesthetically pleasing or financially beneficial to the town. To a small extent, the Glen Lennox re-development has built some walkways, green areas (pervious surfaces) and the renewal of that area, with affordable units has been a good thing.

Berkshire on Elliott Road has been a disappointment in its failure to enhance the town.

What should the southern entryway to Chapel Hill look and feel like in the future?

The Southern entryway should be welcoming, with community parks, tall canopy trees (native plantings), and bike and walking trails like the Fan Branch Trails.

How do we balance affordable housing with green infrastructure?

Affordable housing must be matched with green infrastructure by having open green spaces in new developments, more pervious surfaces, solar panels, and flood control. Communities of color and marginalized people are most affected by the neglect of green infrastructure, and are therefore affected by heatwaves, flooding and ill health as a result. Affordable must not mean poor quality or damaging to the environment.

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Thanks in advance!

Email \*

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Name \*

Pam Hemminger

As a member of the Chapel Hill Town Council, what would you do to see that Chapel Hill does not contribute to global warming and habitat loss? Please be as specific as possible.

Cities and towns need to do everything they can to engage their entire community in reducing our carbon footprint, to build resilience and to be good stewards of the environment – especially sensitive areas along our creeks and streams.

The Town of Chapel Hill accounts for a small percent of the energy usage and greenhouse emissions in our community so, to truly achieve our climate goals, we need everyone to participate.

As mayor, I am committed to:

- Taking action where we have authority to do so including making changes to town operations and updating town policies
- Focusing efforts on high impact areas and actions to make progress as quickly as possible and get the most bang-for-our-buck
- Motivating the community to take action and make changes now
- Advocating at the state and federal level for policies and funding that support our goals
- Committing necessary funds and applying a climate lens to everything we do
- Keeping track of progress

The Chapel Hill Climate Action Plan identifies five “Top Action Categories”. Within these, focusing on buildings and transportation have been identified as areas where we can have the most impact and get the greatest “bang for the buck” so I am currently focused on efforts to:

- Plan for and create an EV charging network
- Add solar to the roofs of town facilities like Public Works and Transit
- Create a community solar farm
- Complete bikeways and greenways to support multi-modal transportation
- Green our fleet (including our buses)

Specific to preventing habitat loss and protecting environmentally sensitive areas we have recently changed our land use ordinance to include the Stormwater Advisory Board in review of Concept Plans and applications for projects on properties that have a Resource Conservation District (RCD). Having their guidance early on in the design process will allow us to do the best job possible of protecting habitat and water quality.

We will, also, be updating our stormwater management ordinance this year to require new development to handle bigger storms which will help prevent flooding and impacts – like bank erosion and sedimentation – in our creeks and streams.

Other areas of interest for me include:

- Continuing my work with JLOW to improve water quality in the Jordan Lake watershed
- Partnering with the University around their plans for growth, student housing and climate action
- Working with our staff and environmental groups to plan for how we can preserve green space, tree canopy, and wildlife corridors most effectively
- Working with local restaurants to reduce waste by opting into the county composting program.

Given the crisis we face, I am hopeful that our residents and local businesses will follow our lead - switching to LEDs in buildings and parking lots, putting solar on roofs, moving toward electric vehicles and e-bikes, walking, biking or taking the bus to work, composting, planting trees and more.

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What do you know about the Morgan Creek watershed, including Fan Branch and Obey Creeks?

Upper Morgan Creek is in the University Lake Watershed area and a large part of lower Morgan Creek is protected by the North Carolina Botanical Garden (NCBG). The watershed drains to Jordan Lake.

Our community enjoys the greenway trails along the Fan Branch and Morgan Creeks which run from the Southern Community Park, through Southern Village and then on to Merritt's Pasture (if you go east) or towards Carrboro (if you go west).

Over the years, through the dedicated work of Johnny Randall and the NCBG, the Stillhouse Bottom and the Parker Preserve properties have been permanently preserved and there have been special projects done at Mason Farm to improve water quality.

At the time I took office, the previous Town Council had approved a development agreement for "Obey Creek" a significant, mixed use development across from the Southern Community Park. Wilson and Obey Creeks are the waterways along that property. An important provision in the agreement was for permanent preservation and conservation of the lands to the east side of Wilson Creek – which was to be donated to the Town.

Ownership for that property has since changed and new plans for a less dense development are expected to come forward to Council in the next few months. Preservation of 80 acres on the east side of the property is an expectation for this project as well.

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Do you think the Town/OWASA should use Jordan Lake as a source for safe drinking water?

The Town should have the ability to interconnect to the Jordan Lake for water. We have plenty of expansion possibilities with Cane Creek Reservoir but during the water crisis we needed that interconnectivity. We have since partnered with Durham and Hillsborough to exchange water during maintenance issues or crisis situations. Having the ability to draw is important for future water needs, but may not be necessary. I do worry about all the growth in Chatham County and southern Durham & Wake counties are going to put too much pressure on Jordan Lake. I am a founding member of the JLOW (Jordan Lake One Water) and we are working with UNC and TJCOG to understand better how to clean the lake and to preserve future drinking water needs. We know how to clean water, but it comes at a cost and produces bad by-products. We are working within the JLOW watershed to clean the water coming into the lake and the inherent turbidity within the lake itself.

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The Water and Sewer boundary was put in place to protect our watersheds, drinking water supply, and our rural boundaries. What is your opinion of these boundaries?

The boundaries were put into help preserve the quality of the lake and the watershed itself. We cannot overdevelop without damaging the watershed. We have to set boundaries and retain buffers. Sewer systems can actually be more environmental than septic tanks. With all the Chatham Park development around the lake we need to make sure that land is preserved and that any building respects the environmental concerns. The boundaries were set mostly by a map and there needs to be a validation with how water flows, how jurisdictions adjoin and a real look at the watershed going to Jordan Lake.

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How do you feel about the growth in Chapel Hill over the last 10 years? Please give examples of any developments that you see as assets to the town both financially and aesthetically, and examples of those that you feel do not enhance the town.

We learned last week from the census data that Chapel Hill grew slower the last 10 years than it did in the 20 years before now. It may not feel that way to many in our community who are concerned about the massive apartment buildings that have gone up recently, especially in Blue Hill.

About a decade ago, the town wanted to spur redevelopment in an aging commercial area near Fordham Boulevard and East Franklin. This was something I supported. Unfortunately, the zoning and development rules that were approved in 2014 didn't match the character or scale of the town and failed to secure promised commercial opportunities and community benefits. Since property rights had already been granted, the new Town Council has had very little recourse under North Carolina law to course correct.

Within months of taking office, I pulled together a Blue Hill Working Group and, over the past six years to identify opportunities for upgrading the form-based code in that district. Building on that work, over the past six years, the Council and I have worked with our planners and town attorney to pass a series of code updates that have brought beneficial changes to the areas that have not yet redeveloped in Blue Hill – such as requiring publicly accessible green space, reducing building size, requiring more commercial development, incentivizing better stormwater management and making it more desirable to develop middle housing such as townhomes and stacked condos. This year, the Town completed Phase 1 of a Land Use Management Ordinance (LUMO) rewrite by adopting an updated Future Land Use Map (FLUM) which focuses on our transit corridors as the place for denser growth so that people will use multimodal ways and other places instead of relying on cars.

In Phase 2 we will dive into the more detailed work of how new development will support our town goals and values – including the need to create welcoming and walkable transit-oriented places, protect the tree canopy, create green buildings, incorporate green infrastructure and support climate resilience by handling rainfall from larger storms. In the coming year, the Chapel Hill Town Council will be updating our Green Building Policy, taking a comprehensive look at our stormwater ordinance and starting a long-range planning effort to address housing needs in our community – which will allow us to improve the long-term environmental outcomes for our community.

One example of development that I feel is an asset to Chapel Hill is Southern Village which:

- Offers a wide mix of housing types – apartments, condos, townhomes and single family on small lots
- Promotes biking, walking and transit use by making it convenient and enjoyable for people to walk and bike places
- Fosters community with a mix of amenities (schools, retail, public green space and recreation)
- Is well-designed and human scale

The redevelopment of Glen Lennox is another great model for our town of a transit-oriented, walkable mixed use community.

What should the southern entryway to Chapel Hill look and feel like in the future?

For years we have talked about the importance of Chapel Hill having “green gateways” that signals to people that they are entering Chapel Hill, showcases the beauty of our trees and green and welcomes them into our community. We need to think carefully about how this area will grow in the future and how it will be impacted by growth in Chatham County in the future. For the sake of our environment, we've begun having conversations with Chatham and Orange County about the future of transportation along the South Colombia/South 15 -501 corridor. Long-term I envision expanded BRT service with multi-use paths for bicyclists and pedestrians as well.

It makes sense, too, for us to think about whether this area is the right place for middle housing (townhomes, duplexes...) and affordable housing so that more people who work in Chapel Hill can live here too.

## How do we balance affordable housing with green infrastructure?

We can have both and we need to have both so that we stay a diverse, inclusive, healthy and green community.

Over 30 years ago, Chapel Hill, Carrboro and Orange County set us on a path toward environmentally-responsible development by creating the rural buffer and the urban services boundary as a way to prevent sprawl.

As a result, we need to build more densely in town and buildings need to go up to allow us to retain more green and to reduce impervious surface. We want to do so in a thoughtful way.

Our town ordinances include provisions for tree canopy, impervious surface, stormwater management and stream protection.

In Phase 2 of our Land Use Management Ordinance (LUMO) rewrite, which is slated to start near-term, we will dive into the more detailed work of how new development will support our town goals and values – including the need to create welcoming and walkable transit-oriented places, protect the tree canopy, create green buildings, incorporate green infrastructure and support climate resilience by handling rainfall from larger storms.

For more information please go to [PamHemming.org](http://PamHemming.org)

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# 2021 Chapel Hill Town Council Candidate Questionnaire

We, the Southern Entryway Alliance, are dedicated to preserving the rural character of southern Chapel Hill along 15-501, Smith Level Road, and surrounding areas.

We are requesting candidates for Chapel Hill Town Council to answer the following questions. We plan to share your responses on our website (<https://southernentrywayalliance.org/>) and via our mailing list.

Please submit this form no later than Sunday, October 10, 2021, so that we can distribute your responses before early voting begins.

Thanks in advance!

Email \*

elect.robert.beasley@gmail.com

Name \*

Robert Beasley

As a member of the Chapel Hill Town Council, what would you do to see that Chapel Hill does not contribute to global warming and habitat loss? Please be as specific as possible.

I think habitat loss is something the Town Government does not take into enough consideration in many of the projects they have evaluated and moved forward. The mode of operation with the large apartment complexes of late seems to be focused on clear cutting large parcels of land to make it easier for building, and then do some minor landscaping after the fact. This appears to me to not only unnecessarily wipe out natural habitat, but it is also taking down mature, leafy green spaces around these developments which contributes to global warming – and increased temperatures in those immediate areas. We need stronger ordinances and development guidelines that preserve as much of these habitats and green spaces as possible during the construction process; and we need to be more mindful of the designs we approve to drive more green space preservation in our developments – commercial and residential.

What do you know about the Morgan Creek watershed, including Fan Branch and Obey Creeks?

My knowledge of the Morgan Creek watershed is limited. I am more familiar with the Booker Creek Water Basin, having engaged with the Booker Creek Neighborhoods Preservation Alliance, toured the Booker Creek Watershed, and signed the petition to 'Save Booker Creek'.

Do you think the Town/OWASA should use Jordan Lake as a source for safe drinking water?

This is not a topic I have researched, and I do not have an opinion at this time.

The Water and Sewer boundary was put in place to protect our watersheds, drinking water supply, and our rural boundaries. What is your opinion of these boundaries?

If you are referring to the 'Rural Buffer', from what I understand it has been effective both in protecting delicate environmental areas, protecting our water supply, and providing clear vision for land use management as it relates to the Rural Buffer and the areas along its borders. If the Water and Sewer boundary you are asking about is something else, I am afraid I am unfamiliar with that boundary and topic.

How do you feel about the growth in Chapel Hill over the last 10 years? Please give examples of any developments that you see as assets to the town both financially and aesthetically, and examples of those that you feel do not enhance the town.

I moved back to Chapel Hill in 2017, after moving to Durham in the mid '90s, so I cannot fairly comment on the last 10 years. That said, when I was living in Chapel Hill originally it was in Hamlin Park, which is close to Eastgate and part of the now named 'Blue Hill District.' I am very disappointed in the changes that have recently happened and are taking place in that area. The gigantic, monolithic apartment complexes are not only an eyesore for me, but they do not seem to foster a sense of community due to their lack of green spaces and the poor walkability of that area. I used to walk to stores in Ramsgate and Eastgate back when I lived in Hamlin Park, but the area seems quite unwalkable now. The few times I have driven there, I have found navigating through them in a car to be very challenging, and walking from a parking space to be a harrowing experience in several cases. I am also concerned that the overwhelming majority of developments Chapel Hill appears to be approving is for luxury apartments, and this is greatly contributing to Chapel Hill's Identity and Values being diminished. There are serious implications for the future of our Town if these patterns are allowed to continue.

What should the southern entryway to Chapel Hill look and feel like in the future?

I do not have a personal vision for the southern entryway to put forward. However, if one has not already been developed with the residents and local business owners that are there today, we need to define that vision and plan. The mode of operation in Chapel Hill of late appears to be a collection of one off development proposals, driven by out of town investors and developers who are looking to maximize their profits, with little concern for what the Town and our residents need or want. This has to change, and we need leadership and backbone in the Town Government, along with true data and fact based decision making to bring those changes.

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How do we balance affordable housing with green infrastructure?

Your question seems to imply there is a trade off between the two, and I do not see it that way. We should have affordable housing that uses and promotes green infrastructure. And we should have green infrastructure that is integrated within our affordable housing solutions (and that is affordable housing across the spectrum of rent and own, and multi-family residence and single family residence).

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