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# McDonald: Too many holes in Heart of Triad Plan

By Joe McDonald

## ADVERTISEMENT

The Heart of the Triad (HOT) Plan is a commercial development plan that is being promoted by the Piedmont Authority for Regional Transportation (PART) and several of the Chamber of Commerce organizations in the Triad. HDR Engineering was hired by PART to develop the plan for a fee of \$400,000.

The HOT Plan purports to be a strategy that will control growth in a healthy, orderly manner. To accomplish that worthy goal, the plan endeavors to proactively promote the commercial development of thousands of acres in the center of the Triad. Proponents of the plan say it will result in a new Triad "center city." So, the question arises: Where in the plan are we to find the tools that would effectively control the growth outside of the specific area that the plan will target for intensive development? Where are the protections to guard against the sprawl that would inevitably issue from the "employment centers" and the "international intellectual asset center" the plan envisions?

The plan dutifully says that some areas should be maintained as open space, but it does not provide a means to accomplish this. If the HOT Steering Committee was really serious about controlling haphazard growth, shouldn't the plan have outlined some specific measures for doing so?

But there are no provisions for the promotion of conservation easements on family farms and no procedures for creating more conservation-oriented subdivision ordinances. We see no descriptions of any wildlife habitats that should be protected. We see no acknowledgment of Gov. Jim Hunt's "Million Acre" goal, which is still being pursued by state officials.

We find no mention of the Land For Tomorrow initiative, which is currently gaining strong support in the General Assembly. We find no proposal to coordinate with the Guilford County Open Space Committee. Given all of these omissions, the insightful observer might be tempted to conclude that the whole thing is simply a plan by some narrow business interests to create new investment opportunities, drive up land prices, and put themselves in positions to profit from it all.

A puzzling question: Why is PART, a regional transportation authority, in the middle of all this? What authority does PART have to engage in land-use planning of this nature? What right does PART have to call for the diminishment of the last few remaining green areas on the HOT map?

Triad citizens should be outraged. Elected officials must recognize that this plan, if actually implemented, would suck the vitality from the existing metropolitan areas and would eventually mean higher taxes for all. They should kill the HOT Plan and start all over with a new approach that

would call for enhanced economic development in the inner-city areas of the Triad while preserving as much woodland and farmland as possible in the Heart.

That is the plan that will provide the greatest economic benefits for the entire region in the long term.

*Joe McDonald is president of the N.C. Alliance for Transportation Reform. He lives in Hoffman.*

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