

UN VERANO DIVERTIDO Fotos por JOHN SHILITO * SUMMER FUN PHOTOS by JOHN SHILITO



Izquierdo y arriba: personas en un paseo de barco delante de ruta 64 donde se crusa con el lago de Jordan. Izquierdo y abajo, personas nadando en la playa de Ebenezer parque de recreo de lago de Jordan. Derecho y arriba: una vista selvatica en For Garden's Sake, una tienda de Jardin que es un poco arriba de le la frontera de Contado de Chatham en Contado de Durham. Abajo y derecha, llamas en For Gardens Sake. ■ Top left: kayakers on Jordan Lake, alongside the embankment of Route 64, where it crosses the lake. Bottom left: Swimmers at one of the beaches on the Jordan lakeshore; this one at Ebenezer Recreation Park. Top right: Sylvan scene at the garden supply center For Gardens Sake property on Route 751, just north of Chatham, in Durham County. Lower right: Llamas at For Gardens Sake.

15-501 NORTH

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Commissioners agreed to a modified proposal on October 16, 2006, 10 months after the **WILLIAMS CORNER** approval of a very similar development — right across the highway.

Continuing, we cross Vickers Road where on the left we get a good view of Briar Chapel and its well-mannered entry into Chatham's biggest residential development. Approved by the Board of Commissioners in 2005 with a long series of public hearings during 2006 before both the State Division of Environmental Protection and the US Army Engineering Corp, **BRIAR CHAPEL** is now in operation. It has an inviting entry, a tangle of good roads spotted with a boulder and tree filled landscape. The developers have made good on a variety of local obligations. Slated for the construction of over 2,000 houses, its current effort has yielded about 85 water users according to the Chatham Water Department. It's a slow start but something seems to be working.



5 Our next visit comes abreast of 15-501 and its intersection with Mann's Chapel Road. On the left hand side just before the traffic-lighted intersection we note another signboard — *ground lease available* — or — *build to suit*.

This exciting sign advertises Baycorp's effort to develop 4.6 acres of nearly invisible land: a testament to developmental perseverance. The first proposal was dated October 4, 2005, alluding to a possible

Bank location. Approvals and re-approvals have been given over four year with no action except the current signage framed against a background of green trees which may be the best — perhaps the only — developmental choice available.

Taking the green light, we note **COLE PARK SHOPPING CENTER** on the right, hard hit by the loss of the school, two restaurants and a long-time dental office, and a host of *for lease* signs. Thank the shopping center Gods for Pope's Hardware, the Thrift Shop, the Light Store and the last existing full scale mexically dinning place in the area!

Passing the UNC parking lot on the right, constructed during a late summer rush in 2005, there's a large mound of construction dirt, covered with weeds, wild flowers and a plethora of stunted evergreens. In 2005 it was expected that the County Line shopping center proposal would include a couple of big-box stores, needing more parking area, including said mound. But in development, as in life, the well-laid plans of mice and men often miss the mark altogether.

6 Which brings us to our last stop at the Chatham County border — **COUNTY LINE PLAZA**.

The County Line Plaza began in 2006 when Lee Moore Capital Company aka Lee-Moore Oil Company, filed for a zoning permit covering a 60-acre plus shopping center. Included in its application was a vibrant economic impact analysis showing a large home improvement center with seven other commercial units, filling over 200,000 square feet, valued at nearly \$42 million and payrolls topping \$8 million annually. The Planning Department reviewed the application and, with a number of caveats, recommended



approval to a glad-eyed Board of Commissioners who gave their imprimatur on November 20, 2006.

However, the project fell into a large legal tangle and as it dragged on, the owners applied for and received a Land Disturbing permit in 2007 to prepare the land for development.

In December 2008, Lee Moore Capital Company, swallowing the effusion of their 2006 proposal, asked for preliminary approval of a much smaller plan, reducing their commercial enterprise to three lots which would support a drug store, a bank and an undisclosed retail store. The "big three" will cover about 7 acres, leaving the bulk of the property — nearly 60 acres — without designation, being zoned part B-1 and R-4, reserved perhaps for further expansion. The Board of Commissioners approved the preliminary plan on March 16, 2009.

Who knows what will happen next? For starters, we know that our NC solons just passed a bill, signed by the Governor, to extend all local and state real estate development permits to January 1, 2011, instructing everyone that "this act shall be liberally construed." Thus the road side signs and lumps of dirt — herein examined — will no doubt remain in status quo for a long time. Would that our noble legislators had accorded this same kind of extension to citizens suffering home foreclosures!

We turn left into the gas station, fill the tank and head south on 15-501. Yet I keep hearing that wonderful Scottish brogue of Robert Burns, repeating over and over:

**O wad some Pow'r the giftie gie us
To see oursels as others see us
It wad frae mony a blunder free us
An foolish notion**

Don't you hear it too?

Bill Sommers maintains an interest in Chatham County local government, and in its development, with particular focus on the Chatham Water Division. He was the Commissioner of Inspections for the City of Boston and the Public Works Commissioner for Cambridge, Massachusetts.