

TO: Chatham County Commissioners  
FROM: Paul Konove  
REGARDING: LEED Certification Policy review  
Feb 21, 2011 Work Session – 2:30 PM

My name is Paul Konove. I am a resident of Chatham County since 1977 and am also chair of the Green Building and Sustainable Energy Advisory Board. What I will say today are my own comments.

My business Carolina Country Builders began in 1985 in Chatham County. Since that time we only build new homes and renovations/additions using passive solar and what is known as green strategies.

One of the reasons the advisory board decided not to vote simply for or against supporting the present policy at our last meeting is because we believed providing you - the commissioners with accurate – fact based information concerning LEED certification experiences from North Carolina real projects would be more valuable to your decision making process. Initially, we planned to provide this information with more people via the public input session. As it turned out the Feb. 7<sup>th</sup> public input was scheduled very late and we were advised against attending, and when we planned to do this at this evenings meeting, we were informed about needing to participate in this afternoon's venue. I hope you allow the people who follow me time to provide their very capable perspectives. I do have a number of letters from advisory board members who to quote one of the letters I have said  
“it was my understanding that the professional opinions provided by the members of the GBASE group would be construed to be in direct support of LEED certification for county buildings”.

To clearly connect today's discussion of the counties role in leading its citizens, businesses, and its infrastructure to the economic benefits of green and high performance buildings, I believe it appropriate to provide a short historical perspective of Chatham County's participation over the years in energy efficiency, solar energy and green building.

At the beginning of the 1980's green building was primarily related to passive solar homes, solar greenhouses, solar hot water and air collectors. The majority of work at that time within the county was a project that provided low interest financing, training, and solar based construction work that included participation by a wide variety of Chatham citizens and organizations including, the council on aging, many churches, both high/middle schools, CCCC, and other citizen groups from all corners of the county.

Because of this program and because there was a concentration of passive solar homes in the county, we were seen as a model community for solar energy activity around NC and the southeastern US. To recognize this work the county commissioners at that time proclaimed Chatham County as the solar capital of NC.

These Chatham County activities directly impacted the need for, the concept of, and the early work of the NC Solar Center which began in the late 80's which I co-founded.

In the 1990's Chatham residents participated in numerous solar and green home tours which resulted in visitors and good press for our county. One home (my own) participated in the Exemplary Home Program of the NREL and its energy performance was monitored and

showed our house using 2/3 the energy of a comparable (at that time) 1994 building code house was on multiple tours and helped to contribute to visitors and publicity for Chatham.

Now since 2000, much has changed in our county green building activities. Yes there are still green home tours which sometimes occur twice a year and now have more homes participating, but there is much more.

We have the RAFI office building which is the first Energy Star certified commercial building in NC demonstrating energy savings now for 10 years.. The first gold certified green home in NC was built here. There now are an increasing number of home builders earning a portion of their profits from green home construction. We have developers in Chatham County – one Briar Chapel (Newland Communities) broadcasting nationally, that their main building and all their homes are/will be green certified, we have Bingham Ridge, the first subdivision in the state building certified green homes with solar electricity and solar hot water as part of the new home package, we have small businesses that assist in the certification process and those that work on improving the energy efficiency of existing homes. We also have a community college program for green technology based here in Pittsboro that is top notch and brings people in from surrounding counties. Plus of course the recent county green buildings.

As a Chatham resident, I personally am proud to have participated in some of this activity. I hope you all might feel the same way. The trajectory of this work is clearly going up at an increasing rate. As I am sure you are aware, the stamp of approval (or the lack there of) by local government can influence local economic development prospects.

It has been shown – although partially anecdotal - that businesses and homeowners around the country are looking for areas and/or buildings that are committing to green building certification or have them available for rent.

Recently the NC Botanical Garden Visitor Center was awarded LEED Platinum. It is now becoming – unplanned by the staff – a place for green weddings, a preferred meeting location for both for profit and non-profit organizations which will enable them to rely less on state funding in the future.

Now before others speak I wanted to read the original resolution of the Green Building Task Force that was presented to previous commissioners.

1. All new or remodeled county owned and publicly financed buildings of 20,000 or more square feet, comply with the appropriate
  - USGBC-LEED certification, at a minimum level of Silver;
  - the GBI-GreenGlobes or
  - similar third party certification and verification beginning immediately
2. These buildings shall also be designed to comply with the EPA national Energy Star performance rating system.
3. Information relative to green buildings shall be posted on the county website.

As I mentioned earlier, to provide you with knowledge and experience of LEED and green building as it relates to obtaining high performance buildings Alicia Ravetto and Tom Foster have I believe have valuable information for you to hear.

Thank you.