

**CONCEPT PLAN REVIEW SUMMARY MINUTES
COMMUNITY DESIGN COMMISSION
TUESDAY, JANUARY 24, 2006, 7:30 P.M.**

Vice-Chairperson Jonathan Whitney called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. Commission members present were Mark Broadwell, George Cianciolo, Eleanor Howe, Laura King Moore, and Charlotte Newby. Staff members present were Development Coordinator Gene Poveromo, Senior Planner Kay Pearlstein, and Planning Technician Kay Tapp.

GREENBRIDGE DEVELOPMENT Wile 7.92.C.2, 2A, 2C, 2D, 2E, 14, & 15)

A request for a Concept Plan Review has been submitted to construct an office/residential/retail development proposed to be located on the south side of West Rosemary Street, with frontage on North Merritt Mill Road and North Graham Street (see area map on back). The development proposal includes the demolition of several commercial and residential structures and the construction of 184,000 square feet of mixed use floor area. The proposed project includes a 9-story building and a 2-level underground parking area with 195 spaces. The 1.32- acre site is located in the Town Center-2 (TC-2) zoning district. The site is identified as Chapel Hill Township, Tax Map 92, Block C, Lots 2, 2A, 2C, 2D, 2E, 14, and 15.

CONCEPT PLAN PRESENTATION

The 4-member design team presented a concept plan for 184,000 square feet of mixed use floor area including 40,000 square feet of retail space. The height and floor area are proposed to exceed the dimensional requirements permitted for the Town Center-2 zoning district. The applicant is proposing that the building be Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certified employing solar energy, green roofs, and rainwater recycling. A letter from the Chapel Hill Downtown Partnership was also presented to the Commission (attached).

CITIZEN COMMENTS

1. The UNC Director of Carolina Environmental Programs endorsed the project for the proposed carbon reduction. He is enthusiastic about the educational opportunities for students proposed with the Educational Center, especially demonstration of sustainable environments.
2. A neighborhood building owner supported the inclusiveness for the minority business owners and community.
3. A professor in the department of City and Regional Planning believes this project is the most exciting and best project he has seen for Chapel Hill.
4. A neighborhood business owner stated that the business community is excited about the project's plan to provide downtown residential opportunities and create a 24 hour

community. She also likes the public spaces proposed in close proximity to the business community.

5. The Executive Director of Empowerment, believes that the project will enhance the Northside Community however, she expressed concern with the size of the building. She wants the developer to better blend the building into the surrounding community.
6. A member of Chapel Hill Solar Roofs endorses the project. He believes it is time to mainstream solar energy technology and reduce carbon emissions.
7. A Graham Street neighbor believes that project too big for the area and not in keeping with the small mill-type houses surrounding it.
8. A 25-year resident of the community thinks the proposal is exciting, especially the inclusion of an education center depicting the history of the surrounding black business community.

COMMUNITY DESIGN COMMISSION QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

1. Commissioner Eleanor Howe supports the developer's involvement with the community, underground parking, and accommodations for pedestrian and bus access.
2. Commissioner Howe believes the project has great aspects but is concerned about the creation of a tall, deep canyon formed by the two main buildings and the potential for unappealing outdoor space created by building shadows. She requested additional information on how the proposed height compares with the requirements in the Land Use Management Ordinance.
3. Commissioner Laura King Moore believes that project is well-timed with the interest in redevelopment of the west end of Rosemary Street and the interface with Carrboro.
4. Commissioner Moore requested additional information on the scale, massing, maintenance of rooftop gardens, and neighborhood context and suggested the applicant prepare cross-sections through the site to include the adjacent neighborhoods.
5. Commissioner Charlotte Newby believes this initial LEEDS-certified building in downtown should be perfect for 25 years into the future.
6. Commissioner Newby wanted to know what other buildings are as tall or taller and the building schedule proposed for construction – will it coincide with the construction of Lots 2 and 5?
7. Commissioner Newby requested additional information on the:
 - landscape buffer proposed adjacent to Knott's Funeral Home;
 - maintenance required for the rooftop vegetation; and
 - kinds of activities anticipated for the Education Center.

8. Commissioner Newby endorsed the Education Center concept looking backward in time to history of the neighborhood and a looking forward in time as a LEEDS-certified building.
9. Commissioner George Cianciolo does not believe the building height is an issue. He stated that the pedestrian scale of 3 stories currently exists several places on W. Rosemary Street.
10. Commissioner Cianciolo requested additional information on how the building would look at night suggesting that a 100-foot building can appear as a nighttime beacon.
11. Commissioner Cianciolo was concerned about the site lighting both above and below the tree canopies, especially in the well-traveled pedestrian areas. He notes that shadows and shade at nighttime are frequently caused when the lights are above or within the tree canopies.
12. Commissioner Cianciolo supported the underground parking and wide sidewalks encouraging pedestrian use.
13. Commissioner Mark Broadwell endorses the infill proposal of a landmark building, however he emphasized that the architecture must be outstanding. A tall, glassy building can produce an unwanted appearance. The applicant responded saying that most of the glass would be at the top of the building and the ratio of glass to building would be mostly 50/50.
14. Commissioner Broadwell asked for additional information demonstrating how the proposal relates to the surrounding area.
15. Commission Amy Ryan's comments are attached (attached).
16. Commissioner Jonathan Whitney praised the citizen participation at the meeting.
17. Commissioner Whitney believes that the building is too large for the area. He requested additional information to be provided by cross-section views showing adjacent neighborhoods, heights of surrounding buildings, and parking lots.
18. Commissioner Whitney expressed more sensitivity is needed to shadows cast by the proposed buildings.

Prepared for: Jonathan Whitney, Vice-Chair *KP for JW*
Prepared by: Kay Pearlstein, Staff

January 24, 2006

Scott:

I apologize for not being at tonight's meeting, but I wanted to forward my comments on two projects to you:

1. Merritt Mill/Graham St. Mixed-Use

This project bothers me on a number of levels

- a. It continues the trend of very tall building along the Rosemary Street corridor. The proposed elevations are of an ENORMOUS building that will tower over smaller and beloved properties (Crooks' Corner) next door.
- b. The proposed building's Hanging Gardens of Babylon style makes no effort whatsoever to blend in with the current streetscape and will provide a jarring contrast to the dominant aesthetic of this area.
- c. Documents presented by the applicant make noises about community connection, maintaining cultural heritage, etc. No specific plans are put forward for accomplishing these goals, and I fear that the long-term result of projects such as this will be to fragment the area's African-American community and drive important small businesses away from this neighborhood. It would be a strong blow for gentrification of this area – is that what we want? Would that be what neighborhood residents want?
- d. Talk about sustainability and urban gardens is fine, but I'm a bit skeptical about how it will work in practice. While some apartment residents might be thrilled to have space to grow tomatoes on the roof, I imagine that there are others with no interest in urban farming. Who would then be responsible for the upkeep of such spaces in the long run?
- e. While the building does have a plaza area, it is in the core of the building and thus will only be of real use to users of the building. Wouldn't it be better to move this space to the street side, where it could become a community amenity as well (perhaps with space for outside dining)?

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CHAPEL HILL DOWNTOWN PARTNERSHIP

Driving Downtown's Destiny

308 West Rosemary Street Suite 202 Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27516
919-967-9440

January 24, 2006

Mayor Kevin Foy
Mr. Cal Horton
Town of Chapel Hill
405 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
Chapel Hill, NC 27514

Dear Mayor Foy and Mr. Horton:

On behalf of the Chapel Hill Downtown Partnership Board of Directors, I am writing in support of the proposed *Greenbridge Development* project. The Board of Directors reviewed this project at their January 11, 2006 board of directors meeting and voted to send a letter to the Town of Chapel Hill.

The Downtown Partnership is very pleased that the developers have an interest in planning a project for downtown Chapel Hill that fits so nicely with the Land Use Management Ordinance. As a mixed-use center located on the corner of Rosemary Street and Merritt Mill, and Rosemary and Graham, we see this project as having tremendous impact as a gateway into Chapel Hill from the western corridors; and will serve as a model project for future growth along Rosemary Street. There are several key elements to this project that our organization is very excited and pleased to see incorporated into the plans.

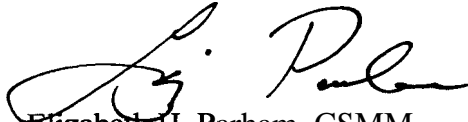
1. It is an environmentally friendly project that is striving for LEED gold status certification. As a community that is certainly environmentally conscious, this project will serve as a role model and leader for future downtown development initiatives not only in Chapel Hill, but throughout the state. Green buildings soften the built environment and support the kind of lifestyle that Chapel Hill appreciates.
2. The developers have hosted a number of design charrettes with community groups and they are interested and willing to incorporate those ideas to the benefit of their project and to the surrounding neighbors. 40,000 square feet of retail space can support a number of new retail and service related businesses that will be vital to the planned 140,000 square feet of residential space, but also dramatically improve the lifestyle of the surrounding neighborhoods in regards to convenience.

3. In addition, the Partnership is pleased to see an interest in providing a documentary in the corner building that will feature a retrospective of the importance of the Midway central business district in relation to Chapel Hill's history and heritage, and a perspective of the future of this quadrant of downtown Chapel Hill.
4. The proposed project offers a more contemporary feel to downtown. Whereas it is vitally important to retain the historic character of Franklin Street, Rosemary Street is ideal for larger structures that support more of an urban feel to downtown. Chapel Hill's eclectic-mix of residents are looking for both options in downtown today.
5. And finally, the Downtown Partnership is encouraged, that in combination with the Wallace Deck project, Lot 5, Rosemary Village, and the Shortbread Lofts, that this project may spur even more interest in developing mixed-use projects for Rosemary Street.

The Downtown Partnership envisions a well developed district full of retail and office establishments throughout, residential apartments and condos with service businesses that support their needs, and cultural and educational venues that attract a larger geographic population. Our goal is to retain and strengthen downtown as the center of activity for Chapel Hill. Development projects like the proposed *Greenbridge Development* will help us move one step closer to achieving that vision.

The Chapel Hill Downtown Partnership offers our support for the Shortbread Lofts and our assistance in bringing this project to fruition.

Sincerely yours,



Elizabeth H. Parham, CSMM
Executive Director

Cc: Tim Tobin
Josh Gurlitz