

August 30, 2007

Town of Chapel Hill Peer Review  
Downtown Economic Development Initiative: Lot 5

## Concluding Comments

Marvin J. Malecha, FAIA

The journey of this project has been fruitful. It has led to design and program transformations shaped by community expectations, diligent budget management, and a team of experienced professionals who have been able to respond to both. This process has been made worthwhile by an agile design team, Town Council and community leaders who have articulated a clear vision, a project developer committed to meeting high expectations, and a capable town planning staff. Each of the ten review sessions was conducted with a collegial spirit that was more of an intense discussion than a critique. This spirit was manifested at every stage of the project even when significant programmatic change became necessary to match economic realities. It was manifested as each scale of the project came under scrutiny from urban design questions to material and detail decisions. Attached are summaries of peer review sessions nine and ten focusing on the detailed design plans for the Lot 5 site.

Every aspect of the project was at one time or another under intense review. Discussions included topics as varied as window detailing, the location of roof top mechanical equipment, retail opportunities within the project, housing unit designs, parking garage options, the character of the surrounding neighborhoods, the pedestrian experience, and the impact of this project on the scale of the town as well as the impact on surrounding properties. The result is a mixed-use project that will bring people to the center of the town through urban space development, an unusual mix of living units and retail space.

Throughout this process I have observed the evolution of a project that I believe will be a substantial enhancement of the "town" experience. The project architecture has retained an essentially contemporary vocabulary with significant contextual influences. I believe the pedestrian experience on Church, Franklin and Rosemary streets has been greatly enhanced. The pedestrian gallery that cuts through the property is inviting, convenient to the neighbors who will move through the development, an opportunity for retail space that will enliven the project and an effective strategy for entrance into the residential units and the parking structure. The scale of the public spaces is appropriate for the project size and location within the town. This strategy insures that pedestrian activity will easily enliven the spaces and avoid the vacant space syndrome that affects so many great plazas in the wrong location. The spaces developed for this project are of a reasonable human scale.

As the project evolves toward construction, it remains important that the details be carefully developed to ensure that at the very places where users and pedestrians generally will come into the greatest contact with the building excellence is exhibited. Material and color selection, window and door detailing, and the materials selected for the ground plane of the public spaces will greatly affect the user and community perception of the project. It is in this phase of a project where the hard work of earlier decisions can be lost because of last minute compromises.

This project establishes a new development pattern for the town center. It projects a density that will bring new life to the neighborhood and contribute significantly to the vitality of Franklin Street. It is a development that will have significant influence over future projects in the vicinity.

I appreciate the opportunity to participate in the development of this project in its key moments of discovery and reflection. I look forward to its realization. I also greatly appreciate the recognition

of my efforts by the Chapel Hill Town Council in the form of a contribution to the scholarship fund of the College of Design NC State University.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Malecha", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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Marvin J. Malecha, FAIA

09.10.07

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Date

Tuesday, April 10, 2007

## Peer Review Session Nine

### Downtown Economic Development Initiative

Lot 5  
Town of Chapel Hill, North Carolina

Report Prepared By  
Marvin J. Malecha, FAIA

### Peer Reviewer

Marvin J. Malecha, FAIA

### Prologue

Peer review session nine was conducted at the office of Cline Design. The objective was to review detailed design plans formulated since the prior peer review conducted in November, 2006.

#### Attendees

Peer Reviewer:  
Marvin J. Malecha, NC State ([marvin\\_malecha@ncsu.edu](mailto:marvin_malecha@ncsu.edu))

#### Meeting Participants:

Jody Brown, Cline Design Associates ([JodyB@clinedesignassoc.com](mailto:JodyB@clinedesignassoc.com))  
John Felton, Cline Design Associates ([JohnF@clinedesignassoc.com](mailto:JohnF@clinedesignassoc.com))  
Albert McDonald, Cline Design Associates ([AlbertM@clinedesignassoc.com](mailto:AlbertM@clinedesignassoc.com))  
Janet Mountcastle, Cline Design Associates ([JanetM@clinedesignassoc.com](mailto:JanetM@clinedesignassoc.com))  
Walter Sawyer, Cline Design Associates ([walters@clinedesignassoc.com](mailto:walters@clinedesignassoc.com))  
John Florian, Ram Development Company ([jflorian@ramrealestate.com](mailto:jflorian@ramrealestate.com))  
Jon Keener, Ram Development Company ([jkeener@ramrealestate.com](mailto:jkeener@ramrealestate.com))  
Gordon Sutherland, Town of Chapel Hill ([gsutherland@townofchapelhill.org](mailto:gsutherland@townofchapelhill.org))

### Session Nine:

04.10.07 (3:15-5:15 p.m.)

### General Approach:

Cline Design staff reviewed the detailed design traveling around the building elevations using a computer model.

Cline Design described how the first floor was proposed to meet the street and bring down the scale of the building at the street, using masonry and techniques to articulate identities and the personality of each elevation.

Dean Malecha advised that the masonry detail is important, and the detailing around the windows. Consider a soldier course at the head; the type of opening should be related to the space. Openings should be recessed, such as half inch recessed brick. The design begs this detail. The detail does not need to be the same on all the elevations.

Cline Design advised the design concept was to be more conservative on Franklin Street and more contemporary on Rosemary Street. The recessed central connecting sections could be of a different material.

Dean Malecha recalled the prior discussion about the connecting sections being a different material, possibly metal. He advised the scoring of the EIFS (Exterior Insulation and Finishing Systems—i.e. a synthetic stucco) proposed needs to be pronounced to break up the appearance of the elevations and provide scale.

Cline Design advised that a base material will run the length of the arcade from Franklin Street to Rosemary Street and that there was a potential art location at the end of the arcade on Rosemary Street

Dean Malecha stressed the importance of the pedestrian experience on the street and at the parking deck. He recommended switching the position of the stairs to the street with the location for the transformers to create a through way.

Cline Design described the eastern elevation as a masonry box, the top 3 floors could be another material. During the discussion Cline Design inserted an expression line on the eastern elevation creating a notch. It was agreed the return would help to break up the mass of the elevation and could be reinforced with balconies; the notch could also be treated with a different material if desired. On the eastern elevation the material could either be masonry or EIFS.

The group discussed the use of trees in relation to the streets and the plaza space. Cline Design advised that the point of the grade change on Church Street was a logical point to change the treatment with the use of trees, color and texture to help define the space.

The group had an extended discussion about windows concerning material and style. Dean Malecha advised there should be some change in the pattern between low and high rise; plans would need to show more definition than shown in the model. The proportion, window size and detail of the windows are important; look and think about the pattern of window lights. Look at the work of Edward Larabee Barnes for inspiration.

Dean Malecha advised the column and base spacing needs to be more logical-- "compose the base to be the base" with masonry legs at the corners and concrete columns in between.

The balconies on Franklin Street can be prominent; the Town wants to see activity on the streets.

Dean Malecha advised the project should identify how it addresses sustainability. The group discussed the potential and different design techniques to provide shading on the south elevation.

Wednesday, July 25, 2007

## Peer Review Session Ten

### Downtown Economic Development Initiative

Lot 5  
Town of Chapel Hill, North Carolina

Report Prepared By  
Marvin J. Malecha, FAIA

Peer Reviewer  
Marvin J. Malecha, FAIA

## Prologue

Peer review session ten was conducted at the office of Cline Design. The objective was to review detailed design plans formulated since the prior peer review conducted on April 10, 2007.

### Attendees

Peer Reviewer:

Marvin J. Malecha, NC State ([marvin\\_malecha@ncsu.edu](mailto:marvin_malecha@ncsu.edu))

### Meeting Participants:

Jody Brown, Cline Design Associates ([JodyB@clinedesignassoc.com](mailto:JodyB@clinedesignassoc.com))

John Felton, Cline Design Associates ([JohnF@clinedesignassoc.com](mailto:JohnF@clinedesignassoc.com))

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John Florian, Ram Development Company ([jflorian@ramrealestate.com](mailto:jflorian@ramrealestate.com))

Chris Berndt, Town of Chapel Hill ([cberndt@townofchapelhill.org](mailto:cberndt@townofchapelhill.org))

Gordon Sutherland, Town of Chapel Hill ([gsutherland@townofchapelhill.org](mailto:gsutherland@townofchapelhill.org))

### Session Ten:

07.25.07 (2:00-5:00 p.m.)

### General Approach:

Walter Sawyer briefly described the detailed plans and elevations. In the review of design facades, the peer review team used a computer model of the design to "walk through" the sides of the project with the Dean. He noted that on the lower 4 floors the project would employ three shades of brick and some Arriscraft (a simulated stone product) on the main faces of buildings, and have precast detailing. EIFS is proposed to be used for the central tower, but not on the ground level.

Walter described the different approaches for the three street elevations:

- Franklin Street: This elevation will have a more traditional appearance. It will use precast banding, a precast cornice and red brick, there will be more detail in the elevation.
- Church Street: This elevation will have larger openings, tan and red brick.
- Rosemary Street: This elevation will have fields of brick, metal siding, corner glass and tan brick.

Dean Malecha commented that the detailing of the banding is different on the Franklin Street and Church Street faces. He felt a larger profile change of brick banding is more proportionally desirable to create contrast and shadow. Doors and windows should be recessed with 6- 8 inch profile changes. He noted the opportunities for variation and articulation on the Franklin Street façade; on the Church Street façade, it may be best to consider articulation on the precast sections. He suggested the team take advantage of the opportunities for articulation with brick.

The team noted that they are waiting on the artist to work with them on the detailed design of the public plaza.

### Design Comments:

#### West Rosemary Street

- The pocket square on West Rosemary is in keeping with the neighborhood feeling; it makes the project look more porous and open, it provides lots of retail opportunity and is reinforced by the arcade. The Cline Design team relocated the stairs to the street as requested in the previous peer review.
- The screen wall and gates around the transformers will be 6 feet tall. Views into it will need to be screened from the plaza which is 2-3 feet above street level. The enclosure could be a major opportunity for the artist. The wood wall proposed may be out of character, also the material should be something which is easily cleaned of graffiti; suggest a more urban solution perhaps a translucent panel. Design the enclosure to enhance the pedestrian experience. One idea discussed is lighting behind a translucent material.

- Suggest softening the edge of the enclosure. John Felton suggested skewing the angle of the wall, or a masonry wall with flowering plants. Janet Mountcastle suggested an ornamental enclosure. This will all need to be discussed with the artist
- The enclosure gate needs to be decorative (Albert advised they may be roll gates).
- The team advised material for the loading bay entrance door could be stainless steel, mesh grill, or translucent. They suggested the materials for the enclosure and the door could relate to both. The Dean suggested the project spend some money on the door treatments to enhance the pedestrian experience and the street scene, not just hide something

### East Elevation

- This building elevation facing east has a nice continuity.
- Buildings on the adjoining property will partially screen views of the elevation, but the elevation was good and complementary to the other parts of the building.

### Franklin Street

- Pay attention to the design detail where the building storefronts meet the ground; consider a projecting base.
- Tenants will want to personalize and changes their frontages. The masonry spacer beneath the store windows may not be the best solution if storefronts are changed over time.
- Do the smaller awnings above the entrance doors work?
- Benched windows may not be appropriate in an urban setting.
- Consider developing a "kit of parts" to allow retail businesses to customize their storefronts.
- Signage should be for both the pedestrian level and the automobile level.
- Suggest give freedom within the frame, and provide more detailing of the frame.
- Ensure that the projecting canopy to the main arcade is appropriate.

### Building at Rosemary and Church Street

- This building is brick material with concrete balconies, with EIFS underneath the suspended ceiling, and Arriscraft on the pedestrian level. Suggest spending time on the scale of the volumes. The large glass expanses at the corner are not typical in residential applications, so more detailing of the windows would be appropriate to get a sense of the depth of the windows and break the glazing in scale. Achieve more of a residential scale than a commercial application look. Break the glazing with mullions and transoms so that it relates to a residential use. Look at the scale for this residential use and the quality of windows used.
- Take cues from the more residential scale and materials proposed on the easternmost building on Rosemary Street. There is an opportunity to use wood on the Rosemary Street facades to make them more residential in scale.
- Consider the idea of traditional Chapel Hill stone walls for the planter walls on the West Rosemary Street elevation.

### Church Street

- Pay attention to what happens as you turn the corner where the arcade façade ends; something seems missing at the top. Add detail to enable the eye to transition to the building at the corner of Rosemary and Church Street, such as a canopy over the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor balcony.
- Although Duke Power requires the transformer on this side of the project to remain, it makes it harder to achieve a quality of urban design for the project. The Arriscraft wall behind it lacks interest as well.

## **Conclusions for Sessions Nine and Ten**

There is an interesting mix of housing units with a great deal of variety. The project is now one building, but it transforms itself as you walk around it. I urge the design team to think hard about the transformations of each elevation, and relate each to its own context. For example, the building on the corner of Church and Rosemary needs to speak to Rosemary Street and the history of the surrounding Northside neighborhood. You could get intensely residential by how you choose and manipulate materials.

Each elevation gives scale to the larger traditional central tower and allows for the evolution of the architectural story, relating the past and the future. For Chapel Hill, quality of materials and emphasis on detailing are the keys to successful design. Emphasize the quality of the first floor level for the pedestrian and the civic public. Achieve a sense of pedestrian scale with opportunities for lots of activity. The quality of what people touch is important, and how it feels to them. Town goals for the project include that it is pedestrian friendly, contemporary and inclusionary.

For the detail of the public spaces to be designed, I suggest treating the horizontal spaces like a carpet; like a Frank Lloyd Wright carpet, for example. I suggest the design team and artist work on a drawing of just the plaza, with shading, and active spaces noted, almost like a motion diagram. Continue to pay attention as to how the architecture anchors to the horizontal spaces.

The design team noted it wanted to discuss the use of stormwater with the artist. I suggest the team take the plaza grid and see what happens when it touches the water. Look at the work of Roberto Burle Marx (Brazilian landscape architect) at Copacabana.

Respectfully Submitted,



Marvin J. Malecha, FAIA

09.10.07

Date