

1609 E. Franklin St – Howard Perry & Walston Office Building Rezoning Statement of Justification

This project complies with the Development Ordinance and Design Guidelines. This area of Chapel Hill was studied in a Small Area Planning session on May 14, 1991. The design session included property owners, neighbors, and the Design Review Board. The results were produced as the East Franklin Street Corridor Study and were adopted into the Town's Comprehensive Plan and are thus included in the Chapel Hill Development Ordinance.

Finding #1: To correct a manifest error in the appendix.

Not Applicable.

Finding #2: Because of changed or changing conditions in a particular area or in the jurisdiction generally.

Not Applicable.

Finding #3: To achieve the purposes of the Comprehensive Plan.

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The guidelines stated in the Corridor Study related to this site have been followed. They state:

1. *Encourage property owners to consolidate individual areas into a masterplan.*

This site is the recombination of two individual parcels allowing for masterplanning of the larger tract with provision to provide pedestrian and auto access to adjacent properties.

2. *Protect landmark trees.*

The position of the building footprint and plaza protects the two large oak trees along Franklin Street integrating them into the overall building and streetscape massing.

3. *Prohibit access to Velma Road*

No access to Velma Road is provided, the R-1 zoning strip remains, and a large planted buffer exists at this side of the property.

4. *Limit points of access along Franklin Street by achieving an internal circulation system among the properties.*

This project combines two properties, which currently have three points of access to Franklin Street, and creates one access point.

5. *Place the building near the road and restrict visibility of parking areas.*

The layout of this site clearly keeps the parking in the rear and the building as the predominant mass along Franklin Street. The building is set back further than either the Franklin Park office buildings or Barbara Hershey's building. The building location and scale is similar to the Howell building in that it has a "setting" between the sidewalk and the building face.

6. *Design buildings to blend with the natural terrain*

The building sits at an average natural grade as the site rises from Franklin Street to Velma Road. The parking area behind the building is sloped to maintain adequate parking grades.

7. *Develop a village look and feel to the design of the site.*

The building sets the character for the site. Maintaining the mature trees as a front for the building gives the appearance that the building has been there as long as the trees. The design of the building allows for a pedestrian experience throughout the site. Beginning at Franklin Street a footpath connects the street to an internal courtyard, followed by the building lobby, and finally a well landscaped patio adjacent the parking area. The articulation and massing of the building into two wings further blends the building with its site.

8. *Take advantage of changes in natural topography and existing vegetation to buffer the adjoining residential neighborhood.*

The R-1 zoning strip remains at the small frontage on Velma. The site plan enhances the vertical drop currently existing at the rear of the site by use of a retaining wall to create a lowered, less visible parking lot from Velma. This change in topography, along with maintaining existing vegetation along the eastern boundary serves to buffer the neighbors.

9. *Provide pedestrian connection to the surrounding residential areas.*

The main entry along Franklin Street is the start of a meandering footpath linking the internal courtyard to the Franklin Street sidewalks. It is planned that a stairway be provided to the Dance School site.

The East Franklin Street Corridor Study also discusses uses appropriate for this site. The study states:

Buildings along Franklin Street would be suitable for a mix of uses – office, commercial and residential.

Although the intent of the Small Area Plan was to encourage more pedestrian activity, the uses constructed since adoption of that plan have been anti-pedestrian. Thus far, with the development along Franklin Street of the Dance School, Barbara Hershey's building and Franklin Park, no commercial or retail activity has been generated. And all those projects were built after this study. There are both office and residential occupants creating auto trips along Franklin Street because there are few pedestrian destinations in close proximity other than Appleby's or Il Palio. It is the intent of this project to create additional office square footage to blend with the surrounding office and residential neighborhood in a harmonious and inviting manner.

We continually believe that this building furthers the goals of the Comprehensive Plan, the Design Guidelines, and the Franklin Street Corridor Study.