

Responses to Council, CDC and Citizen's Comments - Concept Plan Review

August 21, 2009

The following text includes point-by-point responses to comments and concerns raised by the Chapel Hill Town Comments and the Community Design Commission and Town Council. The minutes below have been provided by the Town of Chapel Hill Staff and are included herein for clarity and convenience.

4-2 CDC CONCEPT PLAN REVIEW SUMMARY MINUTES 1-28-09 ATTACHMENT 2

CONCEPT PLAN REVIEW SUMMARY MINUTES

COMMUNITY DESIGN COMMISSION

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 28 2009, 7:00 P.M.

Chairperson George Cianciolo called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Commission members present were Mary Margaret Carroll, Augustus Cho, George Cianciolo (Chair), Kathryn James, Laura Moore, Scott Nilsen, Amy Ryan, Hank Rodenburg, Polly Van de Velde, and Robin Whitsell. Staff members present were Senior Planner Kay Pearlstein, and Renee Moye, Administrative Clerk.

MURRAY HILL, 201 MEADOWMONT LANE, File No. 9798-75-3407

The Town has received a Concept Plan proposal from Scott Murray for Murray Hill, located at 201 Meadowmont Lane. The Concept Plan proposes to construct 16 multi-family dwelling units for 50,866 square feet of floor area. Parking for approximately 32 vehicles is proposed. The proposed development is located at the northwest corner at the intersection of Meadowmont Lane and Sprunt Street, adjacent to the UNC Wellness Center along the light rail line in the Meadowmont development. Access is proposed from Meadowmont Lane and Sprunt Street. The 1.17-acre site is located in the Residential-5-Conditional (R-5-C) zoning district. The site is identified as Orange County Parcel Identifier Number 9798-75-3407.

CONCEPT PLAN PRESENTATION

Scott Murray and East West Partners presented a concept plan for Parcel 20 in Meadowmont.

CITIZEN COMMENT

Christina Jaromin lives at Rosemary Townhouses and does not think that the proposed access to the site from Sprunt Street is a good idea. She stated that the traffic at Sprunt Street and Meadowmont Lane is hectic at 5:00 and busy throughout the day.

Response: Traffic precipitated by the addition of the 15 homes is estimated to be a maximum of 13 trips during peak p.m. times (12 during peak a.m.) with a total of 135 daily trips. A summary of this projection is included in this submittal. A median turn-lane is proposed for Meadowmont Lane to facilitate better traffic movements for north bound travelers. Residents who live in the southern two buildings and who desire to travel north will be able to turn right on Sprunt Street during times of heavier traffic. The interconnectivity which is currently provided within Meadowmont provides for easy circulation from this point to the northern destinations. The redesign also eliminates the direct connection to Sprunt Street that was of concern due to the close proximity to the TTA corridor crossing. A reduction in the total amount of impervious surface also resulted from this design change.

COMMISSION COMMENTS

Commissioner Mary Margaret Carroll supported the neighborhood meeting organized by the applicant, however, she does not support the proposal. She asked the approximate square footage of the proposed units. The applicant stated that they would be 2 and 3 bedroom units with approximately 2,000 to 2,200 square feet of floor area and typically 2 ½ stories tall. Commissioner Carroll believes that 16 townhouses will overburden the site and add further compaction to existing compaction. She stated that Meadowmont Lane is heavily traveled and is a dangerous mix of children, school traffic, and pedestrians from The Cedars.

Commissioner Carroll stated that just because there is vacant land, it does not have to be built on. She stated that the positives of the proposal were hard to see.

Response: Meadowmont Lane is currently well under its design capacity. Parcel 20 (proposed Murray Hill) was planned as a development parcel when the Special Use permit was approved by the Town Council. At this time a balance of developable land area (parcels) and open space areas within Meadowmont was agreed to by the Town and the Developers. All proposed open space areas were delineated on the master plan at that time.

Commissioner Amy Ryan believed there is too much development for the small site and to keep it as it is – undeveloped or to scale the development way back. She stated that the applicant’s idea for a pocket park at ends of the site is unrealistic. She asked about sidewalks along Meadowmont Lane and Sprunt Street and was confused about the traffic movements in/out of the site. She believed traffic movements accessing the site will be a problem.

Response: The proposed development has been scaled back to 15 units. A careful look at the traffic movements precipitated a left-in and left-out median break to simplify the traffic flow. The Town staff has agreed that the minimal number of northbound trips that will now exit the southern entrance will not pose a problem. Residents who live in the southern two buildings and who desire to travel north will be able to turn right on Sprunt Street during times of heavier traffic. The interconnectivity which is currently provided within Meadowmont provides for easy circulation from this point to the northern destinations.

Commissioner Scott Nilsen stated that the undeveloped site works well now. If the site is developed, Commissioner Nilsen recommended that cottage homes might be appropriated. He liked the affordable aspects of the proposal but not supportive of the townhouse look.

Response: Parcel 20 (proposed Murray Hill) was planned as a development parcel when the Special Use permit was approved by the Town Council. At this time a balance of developable land and open space areas within Meadowmont was agreed to by the Town Council and the Developers.

Given the character of the adjacent land uses (townhomes, UNC Wellness Center, Cedars CCRC and large homes to the north we believe that the proposed condominiums will harmonize better and offer significant advantages with regard parking.

Commissioner Polly van de Velde thought the development was too choppy and combine the buildings for more open space. She wanted to see the trees preserved.

Response: The overall density has been reduced from 16 units to 15 to better consolidate the building masses and now includes below grade parking for all residences. This configuration eliminates the alley system previously proposed to the rear of the units. It enables the structures to transition the grade eliminating a single massive monolithic retaining wall that was previously proposed adjacent to the TTA corridor. A reduction in the total amount of impervious surface resulted from this design change.

The building massing, entrances and façades have been carefully designed to avoid a fragmented look and to strengthen the overall architectural unity. The revised massing and below grade parking provides for a larger contiguous park area to the west of the buildings with a more significant area of tree preservation. The park now encompasses approximately 20% (10,000 sf) of the total site area. Easy access will be made available to all residents of Meadowmont via a quiet stroll down the two entrance lanes. Entrances to two of the adjacent units will address these lanes in order to enhance the public appeal of these spaces. Special pavement, landscaping and public artwork displayed at the visual terminus will be provided to help create a more intimate atmosphere that will characterize Murray Hill.

Commissioner August Cho thought the development created a claustrophobic feeling and wanted to see the trees preserved. He stated that cutting down the trees was contrary to the Comprehensive Plan and recommended keeping the trees for relaxation and green area.

Parcel 20 (proposed Murray Hill) was planned as a development parcel when the Special Use permit was approved by the Town Council. At this time a balance of developable land and open space areas within Meadowmont was agreed to by the Town Council and the Developers.

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Commissioner Hank Rodenburg stated that the 2003 Meadowmont plan showed the site as green space and was concerned about the net loss of trees. He asked the applicant what their affordable housing plan was. The applicant replied that they did not know if they would be offering a payment-in-lieu or units but will comply with the regulations.

Parcel 20 (proposed Murray Hill) was planned as a development parcel when the Special Use permit was approved by the Town Council. At this time a balance of developable land areas (parcels) and open space areas within Meadowmont was agreed to by the Town Council and the Developers.

The plan to comply with the requirements for Affordable Housing includes a payment in-lieu. Details of this calculation are illustrated within the Development Program included with this submittal. Additionally a 1% transfer fee is proposed by the Developer to supplement the operations of Orange Community Housing.

Commissioner Kathryn James asked if the units will use Energy Star rating like the other Meadowmont units. The applicant replied that they are very interested in saving energy costs and will be doing what they can.

Response: All units proposed will meet the Energy Star Ratings and will achieve a Silver Rating as established by the USGBC LEED-H (Homes). A detailed summary of this program is included in the Development Program.

Small entrance lanes will also be designed to capture stormwater runoff in below grade cisterns for reuse in irrigation helping to reduce the overall impact of additional impervious surfaces.

Commissioner James stated that Meadowmont is transit oriented and that a pocket park could work if they reduced the number of units.

Response: Murray Hill is uniquely located to maximize ridership of existing transit and to encourage the use of other non-vehicular modes of transportation. Sidewalks, bike lanes and greenway trails surround the property providing important access to essential services and destinations. The future advent of the TTA Transit and its location of a transit station immediately south of the site make Murray Hill among the most favorable locations for residential development. This is evidenced by the documented support of the TTA for additional residential development on this site.

Commissioner Robin Whitsell thought the development was too dense for a tiny park. The site is a last remnant of the original wooded site prior to Meadowmont. The applicant replied that there is 70 acres of parkland with the Master Plan. Meadowmont was planned for development by when TTA was re-aligned; the site became less than what was originally proposed.

Response: Parcel 20 (proposed Murray Hill) was planned as a development parcel when the Special Use permit was approved by the Town Council. At this time a balance of developable land and open space areas within Meadowmont was agreed to by the Town Council and the Developers.

Commissioner George Cianciolo thought the development was reasonable for a transit corridor. He believed that “empty nesters” will buy into the development. He suggested that the buildings be squeezed to the middle of the site and use the north and south ends for green space to soften the buildings.

Commissioner Cianciolo did not believe 16 townhouses will generate a lot of

traffic. He is not opposed to development on the site but recommended that the applicant reduce the square footage, squeeze the buildings together, and preserve the ends of the site as green space

Response: A closer study of the building massing and parking has yielded a concept that preserves a larger stand of trees to the west that serve as a backdrop to the proposed homes. This open space is larger and more accessible and offers opportunities for intimate lanes leading to focal points where public art will be featured.

The site plan proposes a driveway section of 20' b/b for the two small entrance lanes. This section will help to create a landscaped setting that will be more intimate helping to calm the motorists accessing the underground parking. It is anticipated that the limited number of vehicles accessing the garages and the lack of a need for fire access justifies this request. These entrance lanes will also be designed to capture stormwater runoff in below grade cisterns for reuse in irrigation helping to reduce the overall impact of additional impervious surfaces.

SUMMARY

The Commission's comments are summarized below:

The site is too small for the amount of square footage proposed; reduce the number of units;

Response: The number of units has been reduced to 15 from 16.

Retain trees;

Response: A closer study of the building massing and parking has yielded a concept that preserves a larger stand of trees to the west that serve as a backdrop to the proposed homes.

Create more green space, especially at the north and south ends of the site;

Response: A reconfiguration of the site has yielded a larger and more accessible open space accessible through small lanes leading to focal points where public art will be featured.

Traffic generated with the development will make a dangerous intersection on

Sprunt Street and Meadowmont Lane;

Response: Traffic precipitated by the addition of the 15 homes is estimated to be a maximum of 13 trips during peak p.m. times (12 during peak a.m.) with a total of 135 daily trips. A summary

of this projection is included in this submittal. A median turn-lane is proposed for Meadowmont Lane to facilitate better traffic movements for north bound travelers.

Pocket park is not feasible with current design;

Response: A reconfiguration of the site has yielded a larger and more accessible open space accessible through intimate lanes leading to focal points where public art will be featured.

Supported affordable housing here;

Response: The plan to comply with the requirements for Affordable Housing includes a payment in-lieu. Details of this calculation are illustrated within the Development Program included with this submittal. Additionally a 1% transfer fee is proposed by the Developer to supplement the operations of Orange Community Housing.

Design too choppy, compress development;

Response: A closer study of the building massing and parking has yielded a concept that preserves a larger open space and stand of trees that serve as a backdrop. This open space is more accessible and offers opportunities for intimate lanes leading to focal points where public art will be featured.

Meadowmont has green space already provided with the Master Plan;

Response: Meadowmont Lane is currently well under its design capacity. Parcel 20 (proposed Murray Hill) was planned as a development parcel when the Special Use permit was approved by the Town Council. At this time a balance of developable land area (parcels) and open space areas within Meadowmont was agreed to by the Town and the Developers. All proposed open space areas were delineated on the master plan at that time. The requirement for open space related to the development of Parcel 20 is 39,682 sf (.91 ac). Meadowmont has a surplus of 766,356 sf (17.5 ac) of opens pace above and beyond that required by the Town's LUMO.

Traffic movements are difficult and dangerous.

Response: The proposed development has been scaled back slightly to 15 units. A careful look at the traffic movements precipitated a left-in and left-out median break to simplify traffic flow. The Town staff has agreed that the minimal number of northbound trips that exit the southern entrance will not pose a problem.

Prepared for: George Cianciolo, Chair

Prepared by: Kay Pearlstein, Staff

CONCEPT PLAN REVIEW SUMMARY MINUTES

CHAPEL HILL TOWN COUNCIL

Monday, February 16, 2009 7:00 p.m.

Mayor Pro-Tem Jim Ward called the meeting to order at 7:00

Murray Hill Concept Plan Overview by Gene Poveromo

Murray Hill Concept Plan Presentation by Roger Perry

CITIZEN COMMENTS

Donald Rourk – Not an objection per se but is concerned that with the pressures of overbuilding Meadowmont will lose its appeal. We should preserve all remaining open space.

Response: The Murray Hill site, identified as Parcel 20 on the approved Meadowmont infrastructure S.U.P. was created as a result of the shift in the alignment of Meadowmont Lane towards the east at the time of approval (July 3, 1997). This shift in alignment encroached into the parcel to the east designated for residential development on the Master Land Use Plan, reducing the developable area of that site by a like amount (1.17 ac). This action was a result of a request by TTA that came late in the approval process (June 17, 1997) and as such the final S.U.P. documents designated the 1.17 ac site for development.

Unlike the open space areas proposed within Meadowmont which were designated and agreed to by the Chapel Hill Town Council at the time of approval Parcel 20 was not designated nor intended to serve as open space in addition to that already provided.

Bill Ferrell (Meadowmont Community Association) – Concerns over the number of units on 1.17 acres; concerns over the traffic accessing Sprunt St. so close to intersection; concern over loss of trees.

Response: The revised submittal eliminates the direct connection to Sprunt Street that was of concern due to the close proximity to the TTA corridor crossing. A reduction in the total amount of impervious surface also resulted from this design change along with a consolidation of a larger opens space/tree preservation area along the western boundary.

COUNCIL QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

Councilman Bill Strom – Concerned that the transit corridor needs to be clearly marked and disclosed to adjacent residents.

Response: The developer will place signs on the property identifying the existence and location of the TTA transit corridor and verbally inform all prospective buyers of the corridor. Additionally, we will include an addendum to every purchase agreement that must be signed by the buyer that brings the transit corridor to their attention.

Mayor Kevin Foy – Concerned about the future angry people that will complain if there is not adequate notification where TTA corridor has been reserved all over town and at Murray Hill; noted the generally negative comments from CDC and wanted the applicant to take them into advisement; noted positive comment from Commissioner Stanziale pushing for compactness and more consolidation of open space; concerned that 32 surface parking spaces were taking up valuable land area on a site so near to a TTA station.

Response: The developer will place signs on the property identifying the existence and location of the TTA transit corridor and verbally inform all prospective buyers of the corridor. Additionally, we will include an addendum to every purchase agreement that must be signed by the buyer that brings the transit corridor to their attention.

The CDC Comments and suggestions have been taken into advisement and incorporated into the Special Use Permit submittal plan. This redesign of the site plan has placed all resident parking underground. This change enables a larger open space and tree preservation area to be consolidated along the western boundary protecting much of the tree backdrop adjacent to the UNC Wellness Center.

Councilman Ed Harrison – Agreed with others comments; noted that the TTA station was now expected to be 15 years out; stressed the importance of notifying and disclosing to residents the presence of the TTA corridor; and encouraged the applicant to take the CDC comments under advisement.

Response: The developer will place signs on the property identifying the existence and location of the TTA transit corridor and verbally inform all prospective buyers of the corridor. Additionally, we will include an addendum to every purchase agreement that must be signed by the buyer that brings the transit corridor to their attention.

Councilman Jim Ward – agreed with concerns over notification of residents about presence of TTA corridor; was concerned about noise attenuation to mitigate impact from corridor.

Response: The preservation and replanting of evergreens in open space adjacent to the corridor will serve to help mitigate any noise impact that will likely arise from the TTA corridor. Insulation designed for noise mitigation in multi-family structures will be employed to the fullest extent during design and construction. We anticipate that with the technological advancements of guided rail systems the future noise levels will not exceed those that are typical of current bus transit that utilizes the adjacent roadways.