



PLANNING
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**CONCEPT PLAN REVIEW SUMMARY MINUTES
COMMUNITY DESIGN COMMISSION
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 17, 2009, 7:00 P.M.**

Chairperson George Cianciolo called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Commission members present were Mark Broadwell, Augustus Cho, Chris Culbreth, Kathryn James, Laura Moore, Amy Ryan, Geordie Selkirk, Polly Van de Velde, and Robin Whitsell. Staff members present were Senior Planner Kay Pearlstein and Administrative Clerk Renee Moye.

PAUL J. RIZZO CONFERENCE CENTER PHASE III
File No. 9798-02-86-3677

The Town has received a Concept Plan proposal from The University of North Carolina for expansion to the Paul J. Rizzo Conference Center, located on the east side of Meadowmont Lane and north of The Cedars Retirement Community. The Concept Plan proposes to expand the boundary of the development and construct 90,000 square feet of floor area for guest rooms, a residence center, conference center and dining area. Parking for an additional 168 vehicles is also proposed. The proposed development is located on a separate parcel adjacent to the Paul J. Rizzo Conference Center on the east, and west of the Jordan Lake Containment Area. Access is proposed from a driveway from the existing conference center. The 15-acre expansion area is located in the Residential-1 (R-1) zoning district. The applicant is proposing to rezone the expansion area to Residential-5-Conditional (R-5-C). The site is identified as Durham County Parcel Identifier Number 9798-02-86-3677.

CONCEPT PLAN PRESENTATION

The design team for the University of North Carolina presented a proposal for an expansion to the Paul J. Rizzo Conference Center.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

Bill Ferrell, President of the Meadowmont Community Association expressed concern about the increase in traffic on Meadowmont Lane generated by cars and trucks going into and out of the expanded conference center.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

1. Commissioner Kathryn James asked the University if the rest of the UNC property adjacent to The Cedars was proposed to be subdivided and if the entry/exit locations proposed for the conference center were fixed. The applicant replied that the locations were fixed and no other

new access roads were proposed. Commissioner James asked how the driveway would cross the future light rail line. The applicant stated they were studying the issue and noted there was no immediate date for rail line construction.

Commissioner James suggested that lots of trails and pedestrian access be provided between the existing and proposed portions of the conference center, noting that people attending conferences oftentimes like an opportunity to walk for exercise.

2. Commissioner Augustus Cho requested that the applicant make the development as sustainable as possible and to minimize parking. He asked the applicant if there was an existing transit stop on-site. The applicant replied that the closest stop was at Meadowmont Village.
3. Commissioner Geordie Selkirk noted that the eastern view shed from the Dubose House is grand and important to maintain. He expressed concern that the expansion could obstruct or interfere with the view from the house.

Commissioner Selkirk hoped the applicant would develop a more cohesive pedestrian circulation plan. He thought the concept plan looked stiff and blocky. The applicant replied that the architecture proposed for the expansion was glass and wood blending with the natural setting. The applicant explained that the existing site has a different feel - more formal architecture and that the two sites were suppose to be different.

4. Commissioner Amy Ryan believed the biggest issue was siting the development and the biggest problem was the light rail crossing. She suggested sliding the entire development northward away from stream activity in the southern portion of the site.

The applicant stated it was generally difficult to connect the two parcels because of grade changes and locations of transit line and Resource Conservation District.

5. Commissioner Chris Culbreth asked if master water meters were proposed. He stated that he heard there was not enough water available for the Town's existing infrastructure. The applicant replied that they did not know if they would tap off the existing water line or install a separate line, but did not believe that the development proposed was an issue for OWASA.
6. Commissioner Polly Van de Velde agreed that siting was an issue. She expressed concerns about the proximity to the Jordan lake Wildlife Impoundment Area.
7. Commissioner Laura Moore suggested the parking and driveway areas be reduced to have less impervious area. She suggested the applicant look at locating the development on the northwest side of the transit corridor. She believed the east side was very difficult to work with.
8. Commissioner Robin Whitsell liked the idea of the buildings fading into the park-like surroundings with the architecture that was proposed and looked forward to seeing the building elevations. She saw the ephemeral streams and Resource Conservation District as constraints to siting the buildings. She recommended using a trail system to connect the

existing and proposed sites and suggested shuttles between the two sites to help eliminate some of the necessity for parking.

The applicant replied that there are two shuttles currently operating transportation off-site: one to downtown Franklin Street and the other to University Mall.

9. Commissioner Mark Broadwell agreed with the other Commissioners that siting was the main issue. He believed that the development should be moved west of the transit corridor using creative building design to fit into the western steep slopes.
10. Commissioner George Cianciolo wanted to see the transit corridors discussed. He recommended shuttles be used to a greater degree to eliminate parking needs on the new site suggesting residents of the conference center park their cars at the Friday Center and take shuttles to the Rizzo Center. He had concerns with the amount of impervious surface proposed. Commissioner Cianciolo was concerned that the buildings proposed on the eastern edge of the property could cause stormwater runoff to erode exposed soil on construction sites and deposit sediment in the waterfowl impoundment area. He believed well-developed plans for erosion and sediment control during construction was important. He thought the expansion project could be a beautiful addition to the conference center.

The applicant explained that their proposal was a parking hybrid; much of their parking needs are from “day packages” of local Triangle businesses that send employees for one-day workshops and conferences. These users are what place the biggest demand on their parking needs. The applicant stated that they have provided 1 ¼ parking spaces per bed.

COMMISSIONER’S SUMMARY COMMENTS

The Commission’s summary comments are listed below:

- Siting the buildings was crucial - buildings should be located in the northern part of the site away from the streams. Some Commissioners suggested the western side of the transit corridor for development;
- Vehicle and pedestrian crossing of the transit corridor was a major concern;
- Develop a pedestrian circulation plan to link the two sites and include exercise trails;
- Reduce impervious surface by minimizing parking and driveway - use shuttles and Friday Center Parking Lot to reduce parking needs;
- The view shed from the DuBose House is important to maintain. New building profiles should not protrude into the view.
- Protection of sensitive natural areas is important – Resource Conservation District and Waterfowl Impoundment Areas. Avoid erosion and sediment washing into sensitive natural areas during construction;
- Use sustainable building techniques and water-wise development. Sufficient water capacity was a concern; and
- Architecture to blend buildings into the natural site surroundings.

Prepared for: George Cianciolo, Chair
Prepared by: Kay Pearlstein, Staff