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ATTACHMENT 5

CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED – DEVELOPMENT OF LOTS 2 AND 5

32
MEMO

Date: June 2, 2004

To: Chapel Hill Town Council

From: Chapel Hill Transportation Board

Subject: Comments to Council Regarding Council Committee Plans for Lots 2 and 5

At its regularly-scheduled June 1st meeting the Chapel Hill Transportation Board voted 6-0 to voice to Council its endorsement of the Council Committee's proposal that an underground transit transfer station be part of the development plan for lot #2. The Transportation Board would like to express its appreciation to the Council Committee members that have received and considered our input, both as a board and as individuals, over the last few months.

In addition, if the Council approves the proposal of its Committee we would like to request that it ask the designers to pursue designs which might incorporate additional town services into the transit transfer station, such as a small CHT office or perhaps a small police substation. We would also request that the designs maximize as many as possible of new technologies for bringing natural light into underground spaces. Lastly, we would request that the designers work with Town transportation planners and CHT staff to identify what other cities/towns have done and what we can learn from both their successes and failures.

Members in Attendance: Cianciolo, Dobbins, Eldridge, Hintz, Howe, Koontz



George Cianciolo
Chair

From: Sally Greene [sally@ibiblio.org]
Sent: Thursday, May 27, 2004 10:15 AM
To: Phil Hervey
Cc: Bill Strom; Cal Horton; Chris Berndt; Dorothy Verkerk; jcarnahan@mindspring.com; ed.harrison@mindspring.com; Jim Ward; Jim Ward (w); Mark Kleinschmidt; hillcc@nc.rr.com; Roger Waldon; ggangi@email.unc.edu; Robert Porter
Subject: Lots 2 & 5 (esp. 5)

To the committee:

I conveyed to James Carnahan (who is out of town this week) the results of our meeting on Wed. He wrote this response and encouraged me to share it with you.

Sally

...
If there were an opportunity for me to speak directly to the Committee for about 15 minutes, and show a few photos, I would do everything in my power to at least get folks to fully understand the choices you have before you. What follows is a brief outline of what I would say.

1) The Ironic blunder. In essence what the committee appears poised to do is trade some of the most important real estate in downtown Chapel Hill for a parking lot.

How did RBC become such a big player in this business? How did the parking become so important that the Committee is willing to sacrifice the full potential of this site? The corner you are being asked to give to RBC, in order to have their current property to build a parking deck on, is a key piece of the site. RBC wants it to further their business.

Nothing wrong with that, but how does it further the town's business?

Is it really the highest and best use of this valuable strategic asset, from the towns point of view?

2) The misconception about Franklin St. There seems to me to be far more traffic on Weaver St, all day long, than I witness on Franklin at lot #5. The only margin separating WSM's green from the street is a narrow sidewalk and a little row of hedges. On Franklin St you have several possible layers of separation. One, you can restore on street parking. I don't think you need 2 travel lanes there (why encourage cars that way?) Two, you have plenty of room for both a wide planting strip and a wide sidewalk, matching the rest of your downtown streetscape (I think that width is about 20 feet). Three, with a concept such as I drew most of the area where seating & conversation would take place would be under and just in front of the arcade, as much as 50 - 70 feet back from the sidewalk. Only during large formal gatherings would people spill out to the sidewalk, and they would still have the planting strip margin and the on-street parking to shield them. I think the argument about the noise and fumes of buses and cars is completely bogus, and I think WSM proves it. We put up with it there because we want this kind of gathering opportunity so badly - and when we are engaged the way we get at WSM, we don't even notice the vehicles...

3) "Big open circular arcade plazas." I would reiterate to the Committee some of what I told you about the piazzas I showed you - about the huge role they played in the conduct of public affairs before printing & mass media. While I think it will be a challenge to endow a new space in downtown Chapel Hill with this kind of significance, I think it can be done, both thru the architecture and thru the programming - having an important memorial there, and having a few important annual town ceremonies take place there, something that can grow over time.

And I would talk about how important, and powerful is the "emptiness" of such a space. The only thing I put in my plaza sketch was the steps, which can serve as seating risers, the performance platform, and the memorial wall (and how I laid them out might not necessarily be the best configuration). I think most of the space should be open

because that insures flexibility and the potential for the greatest variety of activities to take place.

I would make the analogy with the theater. A theater is an empty space to start. The seating isn't even necessarily fixed. It is what the director & actors & technicians endow it with that makes a theater so effective. A civic plaza serves a similar role in the "theater" of our real lives. It is the venue that facilitates our coming together face to face to carry on important community activities. The fact that mass media has come to replace the face to face function that civic space once held is, I think, responsible for our fragmentation from each other, our alienation from nature and the urgent consumerism that never replaces those basic human needs but just keeps on devouring the resources of the planet.

I was more actively involved in the local Sierra Group when Greg Gangi first proposed that OCG take on the open space project. I didn't get it at first - what did this have to do with environment? Greg spoke of it (as I vaguely recall) in terms of the informal gathering that happens at sidewalk cafes. But he spoke of the need underlying that kind of activity, and it got me thinking...

John Muir was inspired by the stunning natural amphitheater of Yosemite Valley to establish an organization to appreciate the natural world.

What Greg did, in fact, was push the definition of environmentalism, re-focus it back on what I think of as "humanity's nest." How can the natural world remain healthy when human beings haven't figured out nesting habits that aren't so disruptive? Greg makes the point that outdoor civic space is a critical element of urban fabric, the space that supports the spectrum of formal and informal activities whose performance fulfills fundamental human personal and social needs.

Rampant consumerism is the behavior that tries to mitigate the absence of spaces that support those needs. But it never can fulfill them, the way a daily diet high in carbohydrates never fills a body's needs...

I think the space needs to be big, open, and mostly empty. I think it should be as wide as the site would permit, and as deep as the economics of the project will permit. More specific design elements should come from a facilitated community process - and maybe in such a process the townspeople would decide they did want that structure at the southwest corner that Mr Stainback is so keen on, and that it was ok to have a bank there. The location and architecture of the structures around the space are what define it - determine where light comes in, the character of the light reflected onto the space and the activities in it, determine whether it feels welcoming or hostile, important or mediocre.

The way you are reaching this plan seems backwards to me. You might get a good courtyard space out of this process and it might fulfill some of the town's needs, but what it looks like to me is trading away the most precious thing you own for parking, and compromising the incredible potential of this site in the process. So you can have a parking deck on the current RCB site.

Is that really what the Committee wants?

James

(4)

From: Thatcher Freund [mailto:thatcherfreund@hotmail.com]

Sent: Tuesday, May 25, 2004 10:10 AM

To: billstrom@nc.rr.com; Cal Horton; Chris Berndt; dverkerk@nc.rr.com; ed.harrison@mindspring.com; cianc002@mc.duke.edu; wardjl@email.unc.edu; windsorcircle@mindspring.com; Kevin Foy; mark@cdpl.org; mail@zimarketing.com; Roger Waldon; sally@metalab.unc.edu; sally@ibiblio.org

Subject:

If the purpose for developing town-owned parking lots is to enhance downtown Chapel Hill, it seems to me that three co-equal priorities exist.

1. To create public space that will entice people downtown and keep them happy once they're there.
2. To create high-density residential development that will bring people downtown to live.
3. To create a pedestrian-oriented urban space that will connect the 100 block of East Franklin Street to the 500 block of West Franklin Street.

In my mind, the most recent HKS plans more or less admirably achieve all three of these goals. The idea of public space fronting along a large portion of Franklin Street at lot 5, while perhaps intuitively attractive, fails for two reasons.

First, it is not compatible with goal number three, of creating a section of Franklin Street that helps pull pedestrians along it. Large open spaces, such as you will find, say, on New York's 6th Avenue, create a sense of vast distances for the pedestrian, and make the street unattractive as a place to stroll.

Second, a defined public space, closed on three sides as in HKS option 5C, are much more attractive than that is one open to busy streets on two sides. People will find their way into the more secluded space, and, once there, enjoy themselves a whole lot more.

I urge the committee, in its deliberations on lot 5, to recommend option 5C, which, to my mind, manages superbly to achieve all three of the community's goals.

Thanks.

Thatcher Freund

(42)

From: PszostakPSA@aol.com [mailto:PszostakPSA@aol.com]
Sent: Tuesday, May 25, 2004 12:24 PM
To: Phil Hervey
Cc: chorton@townofchapelhill.com
Subject: Re: Revised Concepts for Lots 2 and 5 Project available

Hi Phil. I think its very important to make sure that these master plans at least meet code. Presently they are all indicating buildings on the common interior property line and they are illustrated with windows. This would not meet the code without buying additional property from the neighbor or buying an easement. If residential is allocated to these areas (which they are) you a required to have operable windows in all bedrooms. This would limit the residential in these area. Without this being taken into account at this time you cannot predict a building footprint or gross building area.

One reasons that most master plans are considered invalid at the time of final design is that there is never enough detail taken into account in the masterplan. Now is the time.

Another issues: Underground parking decks generally require tie backs and soil nailing into adjacent properties and roadways. This require easements from DOT and adjacent properties because it would limit future adjacent uses. One could cantilever retaining walls without these ties but in this case, it would probably be considered as not feasible due to the subsurface water that is said to exist.

I really do care that these master plans are useful in the future. It will save a lot of headaches in the future if they are at least accurate.

Philip Szostak Associates
310 1/2 West Franklin Street
Chapel Hill, NC 27516

919-929-5244 Office
919-960-7967 Fax.
919-302-0034 Cell

(43)

Phil Hervey

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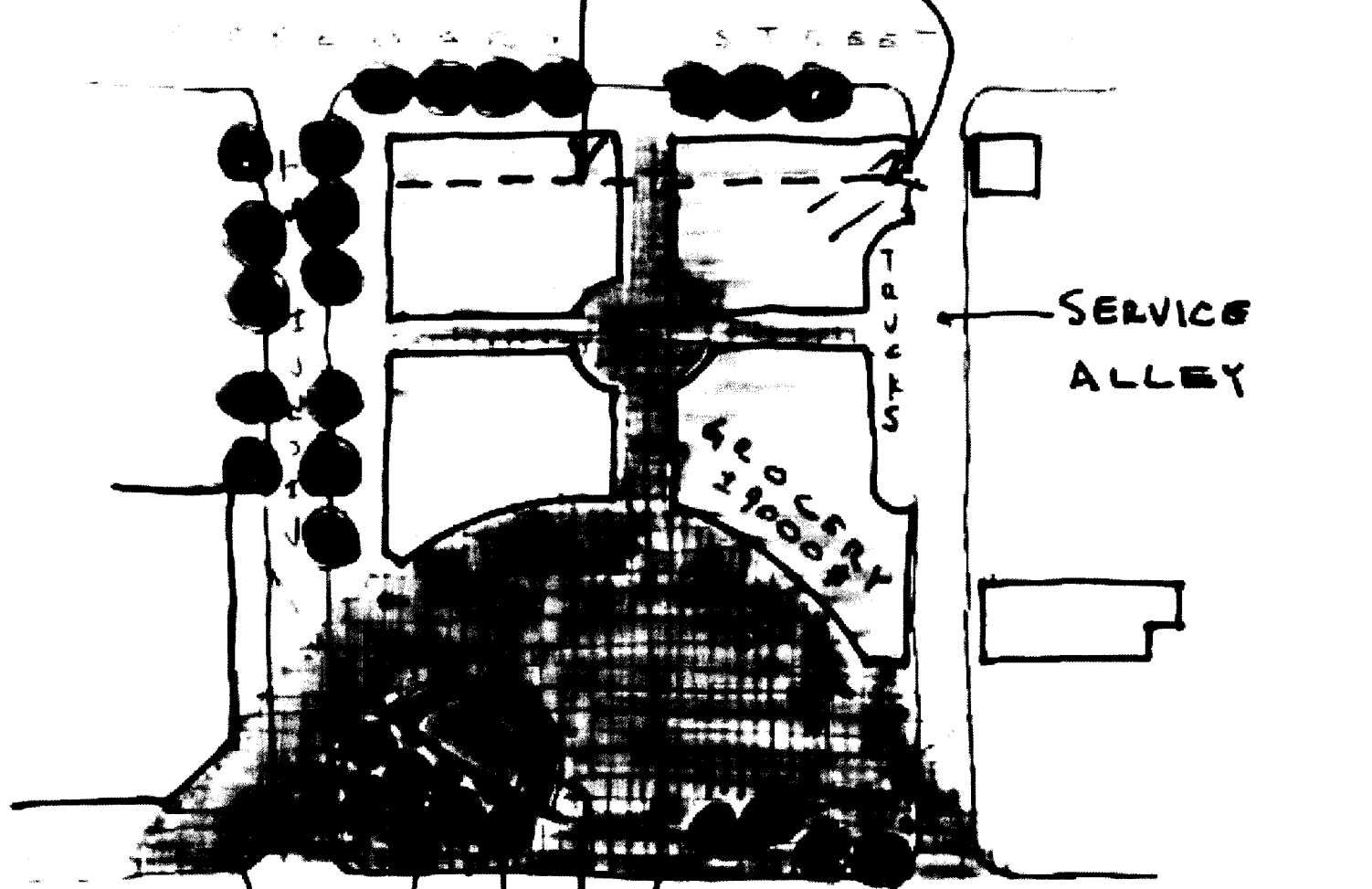
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STEP BACK
THIRD FLOOR

RAMP TO PRK4.
BELOW



SERVICE
ALLEY

GROCERY
29000 FT

FRANKLIN STREET

SPECIAL
PAVING
EXTENDS

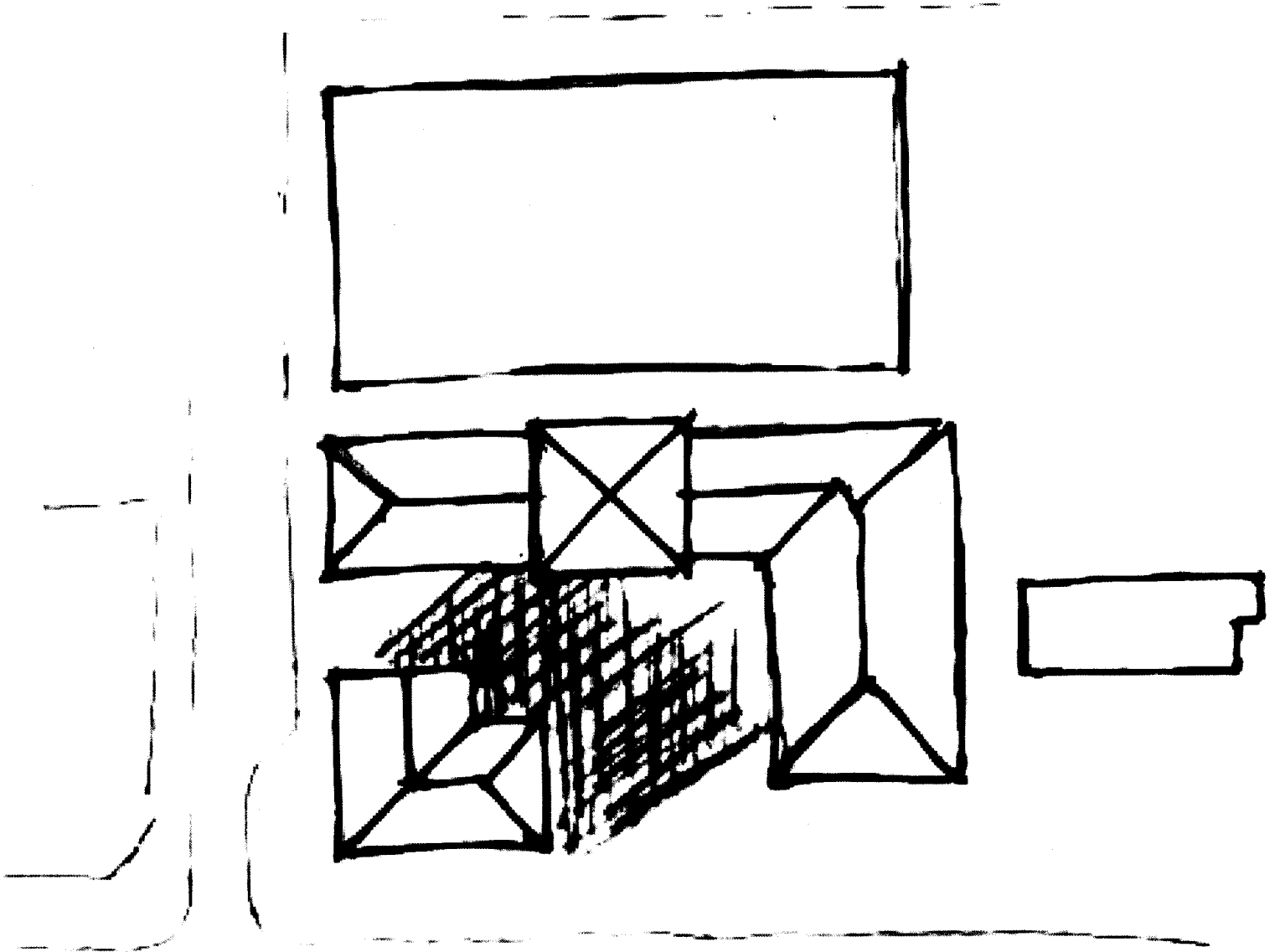
DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.
PLAZA ± 25,000 sq
w/ARCADE

REFLECTING POOL

STAGE

REMEMBERANCE WALL
(BACKS STAGE)

ARCADE IS 2 FLOORS HIGH, WITH
ANOTHER FLOOR OR TWO ON TOP.



CONCEPT 5A

SHOWING AFTERNOON
SHADOW IN WINTER

(48)

-----Original Message-----

From: James Carnahan [mailto:jcarnahan@mindspring.com]

Sent: Thursday, May 13, 2004 9:45 PM

To: Town Council

Subject: Lots #2 & 5, Council Committee mtg. 5/12

Mr Manager: I have attached .jpg scans. If you cannot open them or are unable to forward them to individual council members please let me know and I will supply prints.

Mayor Foy and Members of the Council:

I have attached two small sketches to illustrate some ideas about the civic plaza on lot #5.

Let me say first that generally I am very impressed with the work of HKS and Mr Stainback - I am very excited about the direction the project is taking and think your consultants are doing a great job!

How the civic space is planned is really critical and, not meaning any disrespect for the good work you have been shown, I think it is appropriate to scrutinize the ideas for the plaza with the greatest care.

My drawing LOT5A shows winter afternoon shadow cast by the building at the southwest corner of the plaza. I believe I heard Mr Stainback say over the phone that he really liked this building where it is. I think it compresses the space and as my sketch shows it produces a lot of shadow on those winter afternoons. I think the Plaza opens up much better to the afternoon sun without this building. If the square footage is important, it would be better to make the plaza more shallow. I think it works best if it spans most of the Franklin Street face.

In the sketch titled LOT5JaC I have presented several ideas for your consideration. This is a ground level plan; enclosed heated building areas are shaded yellow. What looks like four buildings is one structure with wide passageways cutting through.

The overall space may be more square footage than you can dedicate for this use, in which case is it fairly easy to reduce it by making the Arcade more shallow and bringing it further south.

Some key features of this plan are:

- 1) I let the "Michael Jordan" building frame the space on the west, so that the plaza can be wider on the east-west axis and be open to the full arc of the winter sun.
- 2) The Arcade, which could be 15 to 25 feet deep, serves to create sheltered gathering space for rainy days and hot sunny days, and more intimate kinds of space for sitting with friends. The area I have labeled "arcade" is underneath the upper floors.
- 3) The Arcade could be two floors high in places. I imagine two floors above that and then perhaps stepping back to one or two more. The arcade comes out to the sidewalk on the east side, to provide closure for the east side of the Plaza and buffering from the gas station.

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- 4) Think about naming the Plaza for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
- 5) The Plaza paving material extends into Church Street and the sidewalk in front of Jordan's, projecting the arc of the arcade to meet Franklin St.
- 6) I've shown a stage in the SW corner of the Plaza, with a moat of water. When the stage is not being used for events, it could be a "sparyground" in summer. I think it is important for the Plaza to have some kind of raised area for performance, oratory, etc.
- 7) There is a wall, perhaps of some kind of masonry material, behind the stage. The wall follows another arc which I think helps to emphasize a relationship to nature, the solar system, the seasons. On the street side the wall is for remembrance - it could be about Dr King, or it could be a memorial for Chapel Hillians who have died in war.
- 8) I've shown a grocery in the southeast quadrant of the building, about 8,000 to 10,000 square feet. Unless you are dead set against Weaver Street Market operating a store here, I strongly recommend you consult with Weaver St about whether they'd be interested in doing a store there. I'm not trying to sell WSM, but I think a grocery store is one of the strategic elements for reinvigorating the downtown and enticing people to live there. I don't think a 3000 sq ft specialty food store will do the job.
- 9) I've shown a service alley for truck delivery, solid waste pick-up, etc, on the east side of the structure.
- 10) Where the service alley meets Rosemary could be the entrance to the underground parking. This scheme does not call for any parking at grade or above on this site.
- 11) Creative use of awnings may be one way to create shade over parts of the plaza in summer. Of course, you could use trees but if this is to be a more formal kind of space that can accommodate large gatherings it is important to have what theater folks call "good sight-lines," or unobstructed views.

A couple more notes from the Committee's Wednesday meeting:

- a) I agree entirely about your desire for having authentic contemporary architecture rather than trying to reproduce the past. This architecture can and should respond to historic elements in the downtown that are key to its identity.
- b) I am a fan of the Transfer Center as proposed on Lot #2. I think the concerns about ambience and providing a sense of safety can be addressed by having higher ceilings and by having many more light wells. I think light wells could be spaced along the edge of both Rosemary and Columbia streets, and could be sized to accommodate plants.

James Carnahan
Carrboro, NC

(48)

Phil Hervey

From: Barbara and Paul Nettesheim [nettesheim@mindspring.com]
Sent: Tuesday, May 11, 2004 8:26 PM
To: Phil Hervey
Subject: RE: concepts on the web

Dear Mr. Hervey:

I came to the original planning sessions and had no opportunity to come to the recent meetings. I like the transit plan underground at the Parking lot 2 the best, but wonder at the plaza idea. There was in the original ideas a covered plaza of smaller size, which would make much more sense in that location

But I am not seeing the best plan for lot 5, which had an underground parking garage (a much better idea than the 400 places parking garage on the lot of the former Orange Savings and Loan Corner of Columbia and Rosemary Sts.) and buildings around a larger plaza suitable for outdoor performances and festivities so lacking in Chapel Hill right now.

We need to avoid planning puny plazas in little pockets (like inside the parking lot 2 plans) and instead allow more room – space on parking lot 5 by putting the garage underground there.

This scenario would give the transit station its proper place underground smack in the middle of town (parking lot 2), with the Rosemary parking deck in very easy walking distance, and another parking garage downtown, but a little more to the west, still in very easy waling distance to downtown and also to places on west Franklin St., with a plaza – business – open space combination large enough to be really useful and easily accessible to pedestrians from three sides, W. Franklin, Church and Rosemary Sts.

Sincerely,

Barbara Nettesheim

-----Original Message-----

From: Phil Hervey [mailto:phervey@townofchapelhill.org]

Sent: Tuesday, May 11, 2004 1:16 PM

To: Bill Strom; Cal Horton; Chris Berndt; Dorothy Verkerk; Ed Harrison; Jim Ward; Jim Ward (w); John Stainback; Mark Kleinschmidt; Roger Waldon; Sally Greene

Cc: Aaron Nelson; alr36770@glaxowellcome.com; alteich@email.unc.edu; amr@email.unc.edu; Andrea Rohrbacher; annaw@fac.unc.edu; arndt@email.unc.edu; Betty Maultsby; bill.harrington@rbc.com; billycorriher@hotmail.com; Bob Barrett; brasmuss@email.unc.edu; Bruce Heflin; bruce_runberg@unc.edu; bstone1@nc.rr.com; carolib@intrex.net; catblade13@hotmail.com; cblee@email.unc.edu; charliefitzgerald@yahoo.com; dail@dixonweinstein.com; dan-coleman@nc.rr.com; danrod@email.unc.edu; davidbleicher@hotmail.com; dbachman@fac.unc.edu; dgod@email.unc.edu; dianabet@bellsouth.net; Dianne Reid; drbryan@mindspring.com; ejhowe@mindspring.com; evaandbob@hotmail.com; eveazey@email.unc.edu; Flo Miller; gary@i-gga.com; gay.eddy@mail.house.gov; George J Cianciolo; ggangi@email.unc.edu; ggangi@mindspring.com; Goldstein@biac.duke.edu; ha@i-gga.com; humphreysrobert@msn.com; huttonsusan@yahoo.com.; james_moeser@unc.edu; Janet Kagan; Jason Jolley; jbhawkins@mindspring.com; jcarnahan@mindspring.com; jdn@email.unc.edu; jmann@email.unc.edu; jonathan_howes@unc.edu; josh@i-gga.com; joycebrown@mindspring.com; jrblau@email.unc.edu; julians@aol.com; julie@uniquities.com; kanthony@email.unc.edu; kerteszs@email.unc.edu; krainh2o@email.unc.edu; larakent@email.unc.edu; larez2@juno.com; Linda Convissor ; Lynne Kane; mailserv@earthlink.net; malizia@email.unc.edu; Margaret Skinner; Mark Crowell; mbboening@ewp-nc.com; mpons@bellsouth.net; nancygabriel@mindspring.com; nettesheim@mindspring.com; ngrueff@email.unc.edu; onelove37@aol.com; Pat Evans; pberke@email.unc.edu; pszostakPSA@aol.com; Ralph Beisner; rdowling@ochlt.org; riddlecommercial@aol.com; Robert Porter; rreda@att.com; rs@buildwithresolute.com; ruby@lotusmedia.org; sarahbei@yahoo.com; scondrin@fac.unc.edu; sdobbins@unc.edu; Steve Allred; susansmith_mla@bellsouth.net; tbe105@aol.com; Thatcher Freund; tkiernan@email.unc.edu; urol@mindspring.com; vknapp@carolinachamber.org; Warren Mitchell;

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ys@email.unc.edu; Anne Blythe; Anton Puech; Beverly Scarlett *; Chandler Burns; Charles House; Chris Moran *; Daily Tar Heel; Dean Linke *; Jonathan Howes *; Julie Jennings; Ken Broun *; Lee Pavao; Linda Convissor; Margaret Skinner; Margaret Skinner; Mark Zimmerman; Matt Dees; Michelle Lewis *; Mike McFarland; Nancy Suttentfield; Pete Dowd; Rob Shapard; Roger Perry *; Scott Maitland; Terry Tyson; Tom Tucker *; Vivian Olkin *

Subject: FW: concepts on the web

The following link will take you to the draft master plan concepts developed by HKS Inc. for review at yesterday's meeting of the Council Committee on Lots 2 and 5.

<http://townhall.townofchapelhill.org/planning/downtown/Lots2and5/MasterPlans/May10/concepts-summary.htm>

The Committee recessed the meeting to reconvene tomorrow, Wednesday, May 12th at 5:30 p.m. Note that the meeting will be in the **Human Resources training room** on the second floor at Town Hall (not the First Floor Conference Room as stated in an earlier e-mail).

Please let me know if you have questions or comments.

-Phil

Philip Hervey, AICP
Senior Long Range Planner
Town of Chapel Hill Planning Department
Phone: (919) 968-2728, Ext. 362
Fax: (919) 969-2014

(50)

Phil Hervey

From: Maja544@aol.com
Sent: Tuesday, May 11, 2004 8:22 PM
To: Phil Hervey
Subject: Re: FW: concepts on the web

This is not essential for your review, but while I thank you for the meetg reminder, I'm sendg this copy of my email to mayor, council, Stainback:

Comments re: Council Committee 5/10/04 on Lots #2 & #5 (from Lynne Kane)

We must maintain balance within the Downtown area as well as balance overall in Chapel Hill. We can do this by remembering "**there is a point of diminishing returns for just about everything.**"

We can have an overload of green space, bicycle paths, gated single-family estates, tall office bldgs, factories, farms, whatever.

With this need for balance in mind, I suggest the following (not in order of priority):

1. **Maximize retail & residential** because Chapel Hill needs an expanded tax base to support town services, because ChH has extensive green space & bicycle/pedestrian paths, because ChH has many parks. Downtown Chapel Hill lacks goods and services.
2. Include a modest-size grocery store like Whole Foods. Residents & students want to be able to walk to buy fresh dairy, fruits & vegetables plus freshly-prepared meal-foods. Weaver St. Mkt. is relatively close in Carrboro for heavy grocery shopping & a village green.
3. Concentrate on the **Columbia/Franklin Sts intersection**, as consultants suggest.
4. Attract some businesses/services to Rosemary St. at least in the area already developing & nearest the key intersection w. Columbia St. Rosemary St. should not look like the poor sibling to Franklin St. because this **detracts from a feeling of comfort & security in the area.**
5. Consider bus routes that are more circular, is something I hear. (I'm not sure just what this implies.) Bus routes should not require crossing the street, if possible. This seems to require instead some kind of bus transit center.
6. If the Town can maintain its Right of Way as a Public Way, work on closing Church St. between Franklin & Columbia Sts. to make traffic thru the gas station less disruptive by being on a corner, therefore possibly with ingress on 1 street & egress on the other, both as right turns. The increased value of that parcel may cause the owner to improve its appearance even if the owner does not decide to sell for a profit.
7. **Include some courtyard/café areas** w movable furniture, some under bldg canopies/overhangs. But remember that UNC will have the Hanes Arts Common off the south side of Franklin St near Columbia. The ChH Arts Council project/display of self-portraits around Town are interesting & worthwhile. Similar projects will also be interesting & worthwhile & can be shown as they are currently. However, residents do not go to Downtown streets simply to look at art there. Recall also that an art gallery on Franklin St. around the corner from Whole Foods on Elliott Rd. closed after about 1 yr. Art is not a frequent purchase for most folks, & **sales are needed** to sustain the Downtown. Galleries will be a nice mix, but they must be carefully located near appropriate eating & entertainment spaces.
8. Do not over-focus on design/style. **Good construction is most important.** As consultants suggest, interior space must please investor/buyer & be multi-usable, and exteriors can vary easily for visual separateness. Uses & styles change: **Chapel Hill is nice, but it is not the only acceptable look.**

6/2/2004

(5)

9. Good lighting everywhere, energy-efficient, is essential - and plenty of convenient parking.

Phil Hervey

From: ngrueff@email.unc.edu
Sent: Tuesday, May 11, 2004 7:29 PM
To: Phil Hervey
Subject: comments on lot 5 desings

Some comments on Lot 5 designs:

Phil,

The Franklin Street orientation is by far the best design because people like being in open environments that are open to where the action is- Franklin Street. Also, the council should not completely shun all dining establishments since downtown has a scarcity of establishments where one can enjoy a meal outside.

Finally and most importantly, Chapel Hill needs to put a lot of effort, thought and money in lot 5 since it is such a incredibly important location. It is the ideal place to put thoughtful, innovative architecture that can become a landmark for Chapel Hill and have a lasting and beneficial impact on downtown.

Thanks for your time.

Nicholas Grueff

Quoting Phil Hervey <phervey@townofchapelhill.org>:

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> -Phil
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> Town of Chapel Hill Planning Department
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> Fax: (919) 969-2014
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