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Planning for the Future

April 28, 2014

Ms Kay Pearlstein
Town of Chapel Hill Planning Department
405 Martin Luther King Jr Blvd
Chapel Hill, NC 27514

RE: SPECIAL USE PERMIT APPLICATION – PROJECT NARRATIVE
COLUMBIA STREET ANNEX, 1150 South Columbia Street

Kay:

Enclosed is the Special Use Permit application for the Columbia Street Annex multi-use project.

The project site is located at the northwest corner of South Columbia Street and the NC 54 westbound on-ramp at the south end of Chapel Hill. The site is currently wooded / vacant with a jurisdictional stream buffer running north to south approximately 200-300 feet west of the street right of way.

The proposed development will include 6 and 7 story buildings set into the steep drop between the Columbia Street roadway and the much lower stream area to the west, and connected by a pedestrian plaza at street level. The lowest two levels will be underground parking and entries to three residential units facing the stream area. The next floor will be residential and retail/office space. This level will sit above and overlook the stream area to the west, but will be at street level with street pedestrian access on the Columbia Street side. The top four levels will be 1 and 2 story residential units.

Total square footage for the building is 56,870 square feet broken down as 7,150 sf of retail/office, and 49,720 sf for 39 residential units. There will be 43 parking spaces in the underground garage and 20 surface spaces on the west side of the building, not visible from the street. An additional 5 spaces will be located near but 16' below Columbia Street and separated from the street view by a retaining wall and plant screening. Service and trash will be located under the northernmost building and not visible from the road. The vehicular layout allows service and emergency vehicle access. Bicycle parking will be accommodated in the residential units, in the underground garage, and a few spaces located in the street level plaza accessible from Columbia Street.

Site vehicular access would be located at the northernmost part of the site, across from Purefoy Road to remove it as much as possible from the 15/501/53 / Columbia Street intersection. A new sidewalk would be built in the right of way to connect to sidewalk currently being installed by DOT. There is a requirement for 40% tree coverage on site. That requirement will be satisfied entirely with existing trees on the west side of the stream buffer. This project will not include any land disturbance in that area. Landscape buffers will be planted in disturbed areas on the northern, northwestern and eastern property lines.

The applicant is requesting a landscape buffer modification on South Columbia Street. The required buffer would be a 30' wide buffer planted to 'D' level opacity. But we are requesting a buffer ranging in width from 0 to 30' and with 30% of the total required plantings on the project property. The required building setback for the proposed zoning is only 10', and this frontage will be opening to a pedestrian plaza to allow this awkward site to be accessible from South Columbia Street. If possible the Owner would like to also plant some street trees in the DOT right of way. Those would be additional to the 30% plantings. The reduction will provide some buffering between the street and the building and shade for pedestrians along that sidewalk, while still providing view of the building and extensive access to the plaza area.

Stormwater management will be handled through a BMP located under the surface parking west of the building. Stormwater management will meet State regulations. Trash will be handled in a compactor located under the northernmost building. Both garbage truck and fire truck access will meet Town standards.

The Owner has commissioned a short memo from a transportation engineer to estimate traffic produced by the new project. As the projected traffic is less than would automatically require a TIA, and the building is slightly smaller now than was planned with the memo was commissioned, the Owner is requesting a TIA exemption. The project is fronts two NC DOT streets and no Town streets. The Owner has spoken with Chuck Edwards at DOT and will work with DOT to provide the turn lanes and safety measures required by DOT.

The project has gone through the Town's Concept review process. It was presented to the Community Design Commission in October 2007 and there is a separate document responding to the board members' comments. The project also was reviewed by Town Council in February 2008, and a separate document addresses and responds to their concerns.

Sincerely,
Coulter Jewell Thames, PA
Wendi Ramsden RLA



cc. Phil Szostak – Architect, Szostak Design
Roland Gammon – Owner, CH Properties



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RE: ZONING ATLAS AMENDMENT APPLICATION – PROJECT NARRATIVE
COLUMBIA STREET ANNEX, 1150 South Columbia Street

Kay:

Enclosed is the revised Zoning Atlas Amendment application for the Columbia Street Annex project. The application is for a rezoning of the project properties from R-2 to MU-V arterial. Though the project does not need the FAR of this zone, the site is has two arterial frontages.

The project site is located at the northwest corner of South Columbia Street and the westbound on-ramp of NC 54. The site is currently wooded / vacant. It sits well below street level on both the street frontages due to changes in road elevation when the 15/501/Columbia overpass was constructed. There is a jurisdictional intermittent stream running north to south parallel to and approximately 200-300 feet west of Columbia Street. Prior to the overpass construction, the site was in residential use but there are no structures left on the site. The project covers three parcels, the southern two separated from the northern parcel by an unimproved right of way, Monroe Street. There is a curb cut into this right of way but the ground drops away steeply and the site is not accessible at this location in its current topography. There is a culvert in place over the stream at the Monroe Street location but no paved or gravel road in place there. As well as recombining the three parcels, the owner will be asking to close the Monroe Street right of way. Application for rezoning applies to the entire site.

The proposed development would include a 7 story building set into the steep drop between the Columbia Street roadway and the much lower stream area to the west. The southernmost building is 7 stories with the lowest two levels below street grade. Underground parking and entries to three

residential units will face the stream area. The next floor, street level, will be residential and retail/office space. This level will sit above and overlook the stream area, but would be at street level with street pedestrian access on the Columbia Street side. The top four levels will be 1 and 2 story residential units. The other buildings on site will be 6 stories, with the lowest level below street grade and used for underground parking and service. The street level will be commercial space and the upper 4 levels will be residential units.

Total square footage for the building is 56,870 square feet broken down as 7,150 sf of retail/office, and 49,720 sf for 39 residential units. There will be 43 parking spaces in the underground garage and 20 surface spaces on the west side of the building, not visible from the street. An additional 5 spaces will be located near but 16' below Columbia Street and separated from the street view by a retaining wall and plant screening. Service and trash will be located under the building and not visible from the road. The vehicular layout allows service and emergency vehicle access. Bicycle parking will be accommodated in the residential units, in the underground garage, and a few spaces located in the street level plaza accessible from Columbia Street.

The building's total 56,870 square feet is larger than allowed in the current R-2 zone. But given the location of the site near two arterial roads and the difficult and expensive access into the site, it is unlikely this site will ever be developed again in single family residential use. The density of the building works on this site to bridge the elevation difference between the street level and the stream 30 feet below. The design of the building also allows a tall high-density building to appear smaller on the site as two levels are not visible at all from the street. And the higher density in the small building envelope with street access means that more than half the site can be left undisturbed in existing forest.

Because the building has a higher FAR than allowed, and because of its gateway location on two busy streets, we are requesting a rezoning to MU-V.

Site vehicular access would be moved further north from the Monroe Street ROW to a spot almost across from Purefoy Road. There is newly constructed sidewalk ending at the north property line of the project. Sidewalk will be added to the South Columbia Street frontage and will connect to the pedestrian plaza and main building entries. There is a requirement for 40% tree coverage on site. That requirement will be satisfied with retained existing woods. Stormwater management will be handled through a BMP on site and will meet State requirements. Trash will be handled in a compactor located under the most northern building. Both garbage truck and fire truck access will meet Town standards.

The site is located on frontage currently part of a larger street improvement project being constructed by DOT. The Owner has commissioned a small traffic study that was completed by a traffic engineer. That report shows lower daily trips than the Town's guidelines for requiring a full TIA. The Owner has spoken with DOT and will provide turn lanes as requested by DOT during the review process. The transportation memo is included with this submittal package.

The building will be accessible to the public on the main floor and there will be some accommodation for public art, though undefined at this point. The Owner will work with the Town to develop a program as the building design progresses to incorporate art into the new facility.

The project went through the Town's Concept review process in 2007. It was presented to the Community Design Commission in October 2007 and was presented to Council in February 2008. There are separate documents responding to the CDC board members' and Council members' comments. In general, the changes to the plan based on the comments include:

- An official determination was made that the stream is intermittent which reduced the buffer width from 150' on each side to 50' on each side.
- Stormwater regulations are more stringent now than they were in 2007, and this project will provide stormwater management and mitigation to comply with local and state stormwater regulations.
- The size of the building has been reduced 87,000 sf to 56,870 sf, or a 35% reduction.
- The number of residential units has increased from 32 to 39, but the amount of retail / commercial space has been reduced from 12,000 sf to 7,150 sf.
- Communication with adjacent neighbors is anticipated to be ongoing.

Sincerely,

Coulter Jewell Thames, PA

Wendi Ramsden RLA



cc. Phil Szostak – Architect, Szostak Design
Roland Gammon – Owner, White Oak Properties LLC