

The SAWMILL – Concept Plan Review
Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
Chapel Hill, NC
July 26, 2016

DEVELOPER'S PROGRAM

Introduction

This is a request from Sawmill Development Company for review by Chapel Hill of a Concept Plan called The Sawmill.

The proposed development consists of 112 new multifamily units consisting of 1 bedroom flats, 2 bedroom flats and 2 bedrooms plus study in 2 story loft units. The development comprises 4 buildings, each of which is 5 stories with covered parking below each building. The primary exterior materials will be brick and metal, with exterior, private terraces off each unit. The private residential terraces will overlook the wooded ravine behind the buildings. Each unit will have long winter views of the downtown.

The units are accessed from a covered, exterior walkway behind a brick screen wall which creates the front facade of each building. The buildings are arranged in 2, L-shaped pairs with a community plaza connecting each pair of buildings. The main entry to each building is off of the connecting plaza. Vertical circulation consists of an elevator housed in a brick tower in each building adjacent to its entry and 2 covered stair structures at either end of each building. The elevator also provides access to the covered parking below each building.

There is a parking and landscaped court within the L created by each pair. The site plan makes optimal use of the limited buildable areas on the site, preserving the natural beauty of the ravines adjoining the creek on the south side, and creating a more structured and vibrant urban landscape with plazas, access and parking courts on the north side of the buildings.

The building forms are rectangular, brick clad, 5 story structures over the basement parking levels. Each building pair is connected at the parking level by the parking access drive which also runs beneath the outdoor plaza. Utility functions will largely be tucked under the plaza as well. The top level of the building is of a lighter construction with sawtooth trussed roof forms having clerestory windows allowing natural lighting into each of the units on this level. The front facade serves as a “screen” wall with large openings overlooking the front courts.

General Site Description

The property consists of 2 parcels comprising approximately 7 acres. It is located on the east side of Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd. between the YMCA and the Cornerstone Building to the north and Chapel Hill Internal Medicine to the south. It

adjoins 23 undeveloped acres on 2 sides. There is an older one level stucco home on the property that was built about 35 years ago. The current owner and developer assembled the site from 2 adjoining parcels that had been previously connected. The north side of the site is fairly level, and it is separated into 2 buildable areas by an intermittent stream. The lower portion of the site on the south side slopes down to a more significant stream, and this portion of the site is quite wooded with tall hardwoods and some pines. There is a small frontage on Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.

The plans call for the removal of the existing single-family home which is currently rented. The land where the house is located is rather level and has no significant vegetation that warrants preserving. This area is the site for the western building pair. The eastern building pair has similar existing topography, also with largely undistinguished vegetation.

Goals and Objectives

A development application will follow this Concept Plan review process. The owner's current intent is to construct the project as rental housing, but wants to retain the potential for converting the units to condominium ownership in the future, should market conditions warrant it.

The developer's goals and objectives are closely aligned with the goals and objectives of the Chapel Hill 2020 Comprehensive Plan and the Central West Small Area Plan. The future land uses called for in the Central West Plan anticipate rezoning of the area. The developer expects that a rezoning with an accompanying Special Use Permit will be necessary. The rezoning requested will likely stay within the office/institutional category and proposed rezoning from OI-2 to OI-3. Multifamily residential development is allowed in the office/institutional category. Rezoning is also necessary because a portion of the property is located in the Resource Conservation District (RCD). The Land Use Management Ordinance reduces the overall allowable floor area of a site with RCD despite this proposal to preserve the ravines and environmentally sensitive areas of the site.

Please see the accompanying compliance documents for further descriptions.

The SAWMILL – Concept Plan Review
Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
Chapel Hill, NC
July 26, 2016

STATEMENT of COMPLIANCE WITH THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
CHAPEL HILL 2020 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN (CH2020)

The Sawmill development is proposed in accordance with the CH2020 Comprehensive Plan and the Central West Small Area Plan, an element of the Comprehensive Plan. This statement of compliance is provided with regard to general concepts in CH2020 as well as the guiding principles of the Central West Small Area Plan.

Two general concepts within CH2020 Comprehensive Plan are Community Choices and Community Connections defined in the plan as:

Choices: The community would like more choices about where and how people can live and house their families and more choices about how they travel through town. The community also would like more choices about where to shop and how to meet daily needs. Community members also would like choices about where they can work and play in Chapel Hill.

Connections: The community also desires more connections and improved opportunities to meet others and to embrace the diversity of those who live, work, and play in the community. Community members want more connections in how they can get around and a real commitment to safe pedestrian and bicycle transportation. They want real connections between the decisions town leaders make and the ideals that the community has expressed in the Chapel Hill 2020 comprehensive plan. Chapel Hill wants a sense of connectedness from many perspectives.

SAWMILL Compliance:

*The Sawmill development will contribute to **choices** regarding where to live, work, and play in Chapel Hill. This will be achieved by offering a variety of dwelling units, as well as options to live/work – all in close proximity to town, school, and university services and amenities. The development will provide important **connections** for those who live and work in the new community in the form of physical connections for pedestrians and bicyclists and with access to public transit. Also, opportunities for social connections will be provided with expanded housing choices provided close to a variety of commercial, institutional, and employment opportunities.*

Guiding principles were developed by the community to guide future development in the Central West Area. These principles were adopted by the Town Council. The Sawmill development demonstrates compliance with each of the following principles:

⌘ **Principle 1: Create a Strong Sense of Place**

The Central West Focus Area plan will promote the creation of a vibrant sense of place, respecting its character as a comfortable, tree-lined residential community, home to important Chapel Hill institutions, and a major gateway to Carolina North.

⌘ **Principle 2: Ensure Community Compatibility**

Development will provide a graceful transition between the existing residential and institutional uses and the new uses evolving around the Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard/Estes Drive intersection near the Carolina North campus.

⌘ **Principle 3: Create Social Connections**

Development should create places that foster a strong sense of community and allow people to meet, both formally and informally.

⌘ **Principle 4: Improve Physical Connections**

Multiple means of moving within and through the *Evaluation for Form and Use Area* should be incorporated into new development; explore improving physical connections between the Impact Area and the town as whole.

⌘ **Principle 5: Minimize Vehicular Traffic Impacts**

Recognize the limited capacity of the existing road network and favor developments that minimize negative impacts on vehicular traffic and quality of life in the area.

⌘ **Principle 6: Enhance the Pedestrian/Bicycle Experience**

Build a high quality bicycle, pedestrian, and greenway system that ensures safe, comfortable, and convenient access to school, residences, and other destinations for those of all ages and abilities.

⌘ **Principle 7: Improve the Transit System**

Encourage uses and densities that will support improvements in transit service such as increased frequency, duration, and access.

⌘ **Principle 8: Encourage a Diverse Mix of Uses**

Create a new mix of land uses that encourages walkable destinations.

⌘ **Principle 9: A Diverse Population**

The area shall serve a broad socio-demographic range of Chapel Hill residents, students, workers, and visitors.

⌘ **Principle 10: Respect Existing Neighborhoods**

Development patterns will respect the integrity of the well-established neighborhoods and enhance their character and quality of life.

⌘ **Principle 11: Employ Environmentally Sound Practices**

Development will emphasize environmentally conscious design, maintenance, and operation of buildings and sites.

⌘ **Principle 12: Feature, Repair, and Enhance Natural Resources**

Development will protect and relate to the area's significant and character-contributing natural features.

⌘ **Principle 13: Consider Economic Impacts in Development Decisions**

As part of the planning process, consider the fiscal impact and economic viability of proposed development in the area.

SAWMILL Compliance:

The Sawmill will be a vibrant development that will provide a unique sense of place within the Central West area for people to live, work, and play. The Sawmill community will include residential uses with opportunity to live/work in both apartments and loft-style accommodations, nestled in the trees.

The proposed development, by its very nature, will be compatible with the surrounding areas, respecting existing development. The proposal works with the natural environment and places development on the identified buildable areas while protecting the environmentally sensitive portions of the property. Parking will be tucked under the buildings to assist with minimizing the development's footprint.

Vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian connections are provided as envisioned by the Central West Plan. Vehicular access is provided from Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd. as an east-west connection. This primary access point will accommodate motorized and non-motorized vehicles as well as pedestrians through the site.

Traffic impacts on the surrounding areas will be minimized as opportunities to work within each unit will be provided via home occupations. In addition, the ease of access to public transportation and frequency of service will make owning a car optional. This overall transportation approach promotes better air quality and sustainability as well as energy conservation. Vehicular parking can be minimized with this holistic system and bicycle parking maximized.

The development will also provide the recreational trail envisioned with the Central West Plan, connecting Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard with future trail identified to the east, along the stream corridor.

As part of the development, each entry plaza will be a place that fosters a sense of community for the Sawmill development and will allow the residents to meet, both formally and informally. Diversity of residents will be promoted with a variety of floor plans offering a range of rental pricing. Local art will be incorporated into the design of the buildings themselves with the sawmill theme.

Stormwater run-off from the minimized footprint of the development will be managed on-site with stormwater retention and water quality treatment to be sized to meet all requirements. The proposed stormwater facilities will constitute Best Management Practices to ensure that stormwater runoff does not impact neighboring properties.

The developer has a proven track record of building high-quality, successful developments. The Sawmill development will contribute to the strength and the economic prosperity of the Central West area.

The SAWMILL – Concept Plan Review
Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
Chapel Hill, NC
July 26, 2016

STATEMENT of COMPLIANCE WITH DESIGN GUIDELINES

CHAPEL HILL DESIGN GUIDELINES

Chapel Hill’s Design Guidelines provide design guidance. The purpose of the Design Guidelines “is to assure that new designs remain in continuity with the town's existing design ‘successes,’ and at the same time inspire exciting and creative additions to the community's blend of distinctive buildings from many eras” (p. 1).

The Chapel Hill Design Guidelines provide five categories of town-wide criteria for design. The Sawmill development demonstrates compliance with each of the following design criteria as identified below:

Chapel Hill General Design Criteria

Design Criteria: Livability

Buildings and outdoor spaces should be designed to fit human scale, harmonize with design of streets, and accommodate pedestrian traffic.

SAWMILL Compliance:

Sawmill will provide human scale architecture and outdoor spaces with building entrances and window treatment that harmonizes with the wooded area, tree lined drive, and sidewalks. Benches and other pedestrian and bicycle amenities will be provided to maximize enjoyment of the outdoor space. The design of the new access drive with a pedestrian focus will slow vehicle speeds and minimize the width of the drive. The proposed design solution promotes pedestrian and bicycle activity and safety and encourages easy access to the convenient public transportation located on Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard.

Design Criteria: Visual Impact

New public and private projects should be visually appealing, and compatible with other development in the surrounding area.

SAWMILL Compliance: *Sawmill's visual impact will be compatible with its location and in accordance with the height guidance of the Central West Small Area Plan. High quality architecture with appropriate transparency will define the character of the development. The proposal will provide landscape buffering to the immediately adjacent land uses to the north, south, and east. Because the Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd. frontage for the proposed development is located predominately in the Resource Conservation District, visibility from the major roadway to the west will be limited by the vegetative buffer.*

Design Criteria: Vegetation

Landscape design concepts should preserve existing trees and incorporate native new trees and shrubbery. The landscape theme should be aesthetically compatible with that of the surrounding neighborhood.

SAWMILL Compliance:

Sawmill's landscape theme will be aesthetically compatible with the surrounding wooded area. Special attention will be provided to the Resource Conservation District and other adjacent development. Compatible tree plantings are proposed along the new, main access drive envisioned by the Central West Plan. Compliance with the Town's tree canopy coverage requirements and parking lot landscaping requirements will ensure a compatible landscape theme for the development.

Design Criteria: Mobility

Land design concepts should provide a network of roads, bicycle paths and lanes, and sidewalks that give strong consideration to the safety of motorists, cyclists, joggers, and walkers.

SAWMILL Compliance: *The main vehicular drive through the Sawmill project is an important element of the Central West Plan. It will be designed to slow vehicular movement. It is intended to enhance pedestrian movement and promote access by bicyclists. Multiple pedestrian and bicycle connections will encourage safe movement throughout the site. This will include a pedestrian trail within the Resource Conservation District, as called for in the Central West Plan. Connection to the public transportation network will be an important element. This development will be a destination for residents choosing alternative modes of transportation.*

Design Criteria: Activity Centers

Structures and complexes should enhance community life by use of "destination points" such as arcades, lobbies, and ground-level retail stores, while at the same time providing for safe movement of vehicles and pedestrians.

SAWMILL Compliance: *Sawmill will be an important addition to the activity centers envisioned with the Central West Plan ensuring a mix of land uses in the area. Within the development, each entry plaza will be a destination point that fosters a sense of community for the Sawmill development and will allow the residents to meet, both formally and informally.*

Design Criteria: Views

Streets, buildings, and parking lots should enhance the urban environment by providing pleasant vistas and geographic orientations.

SAWMILL Compliance: *Sawmill is designed to provide enhanced views from both within the new buildings as well as from the surrounding areas. Setbacks, building facades and roof lines will be carefully designed for compatibility. New street tree planting, parking lot landscaping, and the perimeter landscape buffer areas will*

promote views that are aesthetically pleasing and honor the environment with pleasant vistas.