



Coulter Jewell Thames, PA

MAIN OFFICE
111 WEST MAIN STREET
DURHAM, NC 27701
p 919.682.0368 f 919.688.5646

Planning for the Future

April 26, 2018

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

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 CC-C.

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 modify the Monroe Street right of way and convert it to a permanent access easement following the driveway that will be constructed. 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 46 residential units. There will be 68 parking spaces in an underground garage and some surface parking on the west side of the building, not visible from the street. Parking near the street will be located 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 multiple locations: 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 proposed mix of residential and commercial uses, we are requesting a rezoning to CC-C.

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.

A Traffic Impact Analysis has been completed for this project. The Owner has spoken with DOT and will provide turn lanes as requested by DOT during the review process.

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:

- A state determination was made that the stream is intermittent which reduced the buffer width from 150' on each side to 50' on each side.
- This project will provide stormwater management and mitigation to comply with local and state stormwater regulations in place at the time of development.
- 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 46, but the amount of retail / commercial space has been reduced from 12,000 sf to 7,150 sf.
- There have been public information meetings offered to and held with adjacent owners. 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