

**Aura Blue Hill**  
**Developer's Written Narrative and Summary of Proposed Design Alternatives**  
**August 24, 2021**

The Aura Blue Hill site is a 2.76-acre (+/-) site located within the Blue Hill Form District (formerly Ephesus/Fordham Form District). The site is currently accessed via the Bypass Lane off Fordham Boulevard to the west and Ephesus Church Road to the east. The Aura Blue Hill proposal is located south of the Millennium Chapel Hill Apartments project and just north of the Park Apartments that are currently under construction.

The site presently consists of three (3) parcels containing Chapel Hill Baptist Church, a private residence, and a commercial building containing multiple tenants. Additionally, the church and commercial building properties both include asphalt parking areas and associated improvements. The site is relatively flat sloping east to west. The existing landscaping/vegetation on the site is limited to parking lot trees, trees along a portion of the ditch channel to the north, and trees on the southeast edge of the project site. The Aura Blue Hill proposal is to demolish all existing site structures and improvements, extend Legion Road extension to connect with the existing Bypass Lane off Fordham Boulevard, and create a new development which will be known as Aura Blue Hill.

Aura Blue Hill is a six (6) story mixed-use project that consists of two (2) separate mixed-use buildings and a seven (7) tier parking garage. The parking garage is wrapped with units on the Legion Road Extension side to conceal it from public view and the other building is connected to the garage via an open-air pedestrian bridge. Both mixed-use buildings step down from six (6) to four (4) stories with rooftop terraces overlooking courtyards within each building. The proposal consists of approximately 272 total residential units and 23,195 sf of commercial space.

The building provides on-site amenities such as a clubhouse, fitness center, rooftop amenities, and retail units. To create a friendly, dynamic, and all-weather interaction, the building has several pedestrian access points to the indoor and outdoor amenities with clearly defined walkways. The primary vehicular access to the garage is provided off Legion Road Extension and a secondary access is provided from the traffic circle on Ackland Lane.

The overall design will be compatible and harmonious to the surrounding neighborhood and promote and enhance pedestrian scale, encouraging interaction between building, space, and people.

The building will be clearly articulated with proportional openings and offsets in wall planes. The articulation of building will help break up the building massing, and add visual interest, giving a sense of multiple structures vs. one large, massive structure. The building massing will simultaneously incorporate the overall scale with the human scale. The overall mass will be harmonious with the surrounding neighborhood by adding various residential architectural elements to the roofline, architectural details introduced at the base, and emphasize human scale to the building at the pedestrian level.

The architectural vernacular will introduce ground level features that are integrated with upper floor design and are compatible with the overall character. Windows at ground level with specific architectural details and adequate lighting will encourage interaction and activities, visual interest and maximize visibility and connectivity. Units at ground level will be above grade as required and w

be provided with unit dedicated stoops. All elevations will have consistent design, detailing, and materials. Trees and landscape plantings will enhance the streetscape feel of the building at the site perimeter where it steps back to create both formal pedestrian plazas and smaller pockets of greenspace in the building breaks as described above.

The site plan proposed is a product of an analysis with the Developer, Design Team, Town Staff and Town of Chapel Hill Fire Department. The site plan being presented furthers the goals and objectives of the Blue Hill Form District; however, one (1) minor Design Alternative will be required. The Design Alternative presented below provides a statement of mitigating factor(s). The Design Alternative proposed seeks to balance the highest-level goals of walkability, streetscape activity and form with site constraints and generally has a minor conflict with the Blue Hill Form Based Code requirements.

## **Design Alternatives Proposed**

### **DESIGN ALTERNATIVE-1**

#### **Landscaping Standards Along Fordham Boulevard & Ephesus Church Road Frontages**

##### **FBC Requirement:**

Sect. 3.11.4.2.D Landscaping Standards - Frontages

Frontages must be planted in accordance with the Town of Chapel Hill Design Manual

##### **Site Constraints:**

1. Utility poles with overhead lines exist along Fordham Boulevard and Ephesus Church Road frontages.
2. Utility company landscape requirements.

##### **Design Alternative-1:**

Allowance for the substitution of alternate street tree species and placement where overhead lines, sight triangles or fire access limits placement. Select/maintain trees with 15-foot maximum mature height (spacing to be approximately 40-feet on-center where provided) along Fordham Boulevard and Ephesus Church Road.

##### **Mitigating Factors:**

1. Presence of utility poles and overhead lines along the Fordham Boulevard and Ephesus Church Road frontages.

**Narrative: Along the Fordham Boulevard and Ephesus Church Road frontages, utility poles with overhead lines exist. Duke Energy landscaping standards prohibit mature tree heights more than 15-feet when the trees are located within 20-feet of overhead lines. These requirements prohibit the planting of street trees in accordance with the Town’s Design Manual. The request is also being made to allow for flexibility based upon possible minor design adjustments of site improvements and tree placement/species selection based upon site conditions encountered during the construction phase of the project.**

## **DESIGN ALTERNATIVE-2**

**Minimum front building façade setback Standards for structured parking along portions of Legion Road for Type A Frontage.**

### **FBC Requirement:**

#### Sect. 3.11.2.5 Frontages

Parking Location – Structured or covered parking: 30’ minimum behind front building façade for all floors. A smaller setback may be permitted for the second and third floors with a design alternative.

### **Site Constraints:**

1. Project property width does not permit an efficient structured parking design when there are additional wrap requirements along Legion Road extension.
2. Overall site layout design intent of locating a garage access point across from the proposed University Inn development’s garage access directly across Legion Road extension.

### **Design Alternative-1:**

A Request for a reduction of the required minimum structured parking setback from the building façade along a segment of the Type A Legion Road extension frontage.

### **Mitigating Factors:**

1. Property width limitations for adequate and efficient structured parking.

**Narrative: A request is being made for the reduction in the minimum setback of the structured parking from the building façade along the Type A Legion road extension frontage. The structured parking is currently located at the widest portion of the site and due to the parking wrap requirements along Legion Road extension and the proposed multi-use path along Legion Road extension the 30’ offset from structured parking depth to building façade cannot be maintained. The structured parking entrance along Legion Road extension has been located directly across from the proposed development site’s garage to the north. This will allow for better coordination and transition between the two sites.**

**End**