

June 8, 2023

Town of Chapel Hill
Community Design Commission
405 Martin Luther King Jr Blvd.
Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27514

**RE: Chapel Hill Life Sciences Center
Response to Concept Plan Review Comments
LFR22002**

The following are the response comments for the above-mentioned project. Our response comments are in **bold**.

COMMUNITY DESIGN COMMISSION

John Weis

1. The project's Rosemary Street frontage should not be treated as secondary to the Franklin Street frontage. The primary building should include a second "front door" along Rosemary Street.

Response: The revised design includes active frontages on both streets in the initial phase, with enhanced emphasis on Rosemary Street and creating a 'front door' on both street frontages. Both Franklin and Rosemary will have activated frontages and be connected with a mid-block pedestrian passage. Public art opportunities are also being explored on the Rosemary frontage that can express the themes of life science research as well as the history and culture of the Northside community.

2. The proposed parking garage along Rosemary Street will detract from the vitality of the street. The applicant should consider incorporating the parking garage into the primary building or other treatments that reduce the visual impact of the garage and enable an activated street frontage along Rosemary Street.

Response: The revised design no longer has any above grade parking; all parking is now located under the buildings and will not be visible from either street. The vehicular entrance will be less visible as it not accessed directly from Rosemary.

3. One such alternative is to include The Bicycle Chain property in the project which, according to the applicant, would enable a different approach. If this property is pursued, as we encourage, it may allow for a centrally located building with parking below and may enable the retention of all or part of the brick building housing the Chimney and Purple Bowl.

Response: The Bicycle Chain property and bank property are now included in the project and have opened up a great opportunity to change the layout, increase outdoor public space, and place parking below the building.

4. Whichever design is pursued we encourage the Town to discuss having the Applicant fund the relocation costs for any tenant being displaced.

McAdams Response: Longfellow is engaged with the current tenants to explore their near-term and long-term space needs, along with what our team can do to help support their success. Longfellow will consider assisting the existing tenants financially with their relocation costs.

5. Also, we encourage the following:

- a. Urban designed gathering spaces are important to the vitality of both Franklin and Rosemary Streets.

Response: We agree. With the revised layout we have put an emphasis on creating a large public plaza on Franklin St that connects to another plaza on Rosemary St.

Response: All walkways and sidewalks will be ADA accessible.

- b. Building overhangs as shown in the presentation are encouraged as are the building step backs from Franklin and Rosemary.

Response: Thank you for this feedback. We continue to utilize overhangs and step backs to articulate the scale and massing of the architecture. We have also reduced the building height from nine stories to six and seven stories to be more compatible with the surrounding buildings.

- c. Trash and delivery areas, as discussed, need to be separate and hidden.

Response: Trash and loading area is planned to be located in a service yard removed from the street and hidden from view from both Franklin and Rosemary Streets.

6. Commissioners agreed with and endorsed the design review conducted by the Town Urban Designer.

Response: The team has continued conversations with Brian Peterson and will continue to engage him throughout the CZP process as staff provides feedback and the design continues to evolve.

7. The scale along the tall, windowless western edge should be reduced.

Response: It was never the design intent to have a windowless west facing façade. Nevertheless, additional articulation has been considered along the western edge and the height of the building has been reduced from nine to six stories.

COUNCIL COMMENTS SUMMARIZED

While Council does not provide written comments, the following is our summary of the key points we heard at the public hearing:

- Supportive of year-round business downtown / supportive of use
- Concern with size of building (massing and height)
- Concern with freestanding parking deck
- Concern with parking deck on Rosemary facing the Northside neighborhood

- Preference for modern building mixed with brick architecture
- Desire for applicant to create a sense of place and focus on community spaces
- Consider parking agreement with the town to reduce parking and/or size of buildings
- Engage all current tenants equally
- Focus on community engagement, and more specifically be sure to engage the Northside community

Response: Many of the Council comments are consistent with comments received from the CDC. Acquiring additional parcels for the development opened up opportunities for improved design that addresses many of the concerns from CDC and Council. Overall building height has been reduced significantly to be more consistent with the surrounding buildings, and the massing is being addressed from each side of the buildings to ensure articulation and visual interest from every angle. Acquiring additional parcels has also opened the door to create a more meaningful public courtyard that fronts directly on Franklin Street and is connected by a mid-block pedestrian passage to a secondary public plaza on Rosemary Street. The team intends to provide activated frontages along both streets. The parking count has been reduced and all parking is located under the buildings, and will not be visible from outside. The remainder of the parking demand will be met by town parking decks through agreements with the Town of Chapel Hill's parking services. As we begin the CZP process we are preparing for our first public meeting and also plan to engage with the Northside community to understand ways we can be reflective of their neighborhood history and character, specifically on the Rosemary Street frontage. The project has evolved in a very positive way and the project team looks forward to continuing to work with staff and Council throughout the CZP process.

Consideration of this response is greatly appreciated. If you should have any questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at 919. 361. 5000.

Sincerely,

MCADAMS



Jessie Hardesty,
Planner III

JH/bc