

To: Members of the Aura Blue Hill Development Team  
From: John Weis, Chair and Susan Lyons Vice Chair Of the Community Design Commission

This communication is a follow-up to our discussion regarding proposed changes to your Project located in the Blue Hill District at our meeting of February 27th, 2024.

As we indicated at the meeting we applaud your success in negotiating with Duke Energy allowing you to provide shade trees along Ephesus Church and Fordham Roads. We can only hope that this example can translate to other projects in Chapel Hill. We also believe that your revised articulation of windows is an improvement over previous submittals.

However, the renderings presented are not successful in addressing the issue of Parking, Materials and Color, and the Pedestrian Experience, and are not consistent with the Design Guidelines established for the Blue Hill District as set forth in the Chapel Hill Blue Hill District Design Guidelines dated May 2018.

In particular we believe that issues of the exposed parking elevation and inappropriate materials and colors needs to be addressed. In addition, it is not clear from your drawings if the pedestrian experience is enhanced at the first level designated for Live Work, Office or Retail uses.

## PARKING

Section 3.36 of the Guidelines states that wrapping a building with active uses is preferred and Section 3.36.(a) says further that when an active use is not feasible an architectural screen should be provided,

Further, Section 3.37 states that Architectural Screens are to be an integral part of the building design. (Subsections a,b,c,d of 3.37) give details about how this acceptable integration can be achieved.

Your presentation of February 27<sup>th</sup> shows an open parking garage with no screening which is inconsistent with the Guidelines for Parking Garages for the Blue Hill District. Your approved elevations (7/25/22) show mural work and landscape materials and we are unsure why, at the very least, this approach was not included in your February 27<sup>th</sup> presentation.

## MATERIALS/ COLOR/ PEDESTRIAN EXPERIENCE

Section 4.40 of the Guidelines states that the development should incorporate building materials that contribute to the Continuity of the District and that the project develop simple combinations to retain the overall composition of the building; and 4.41.(a) further states that a building should avoid mixing materials in a way that would result in an overly busy design. The approved elevations dated 7/25/22 show three (3) color tones Dark, Beige and a Blue Accent. The most recent elevations dated 1/23/24 are much busier, are not supported by the Design Guidelines and are unacceptable. Instead of three (3), there are now six (6) tones: Dark, Light, Midtone, Warmtone, Accent green and Accent pixelated green. In particular we note the inappropriateness of the elements that appear to be "White Paste Ons" that do not relate to any other color or element. Page 94 of the Guidelines, under Diagram 4-6 "Color Change" states that color change may occur as significant horizontal or vertical design where it maintains an overall cohesiveness and to "avoid abrupt and inconsistent color changes".

Section 4.16 states the project should use materials to convey a sense of human scale and interest to pedestrians. Those elements that enhance the pedestrian experience and relate to a human scale include the use of awnings, arcades and pergolas as well as plantings; none of which are present in your updated drawings.

Section 4.17 states that balconies should be incorporated to create depth and interest and that they should be integrated into the design of the building facade to express different modules. Your proposal "hangs" balconies instead of integrating them and is contrary to the Guidelines.

Finally, Page 96 of the Guidelines "Combining Building Articulation Methods" is a good example of what we want to see; showing how brick, glass, metal and concrete can be used in a complementary palette.