

Aura Blue Hill
Developer's Written Narrative and Summary of Proposed Design Alternatives

August 24, 2021

Revised October 15, 2021

Revised December 08, 2021

Revised January 17, 2022

Revised July 25, 2022

Revised January 23, 2024

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, as well as Park Apartments Phase II, which is currently finalizing its FDP.

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 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 and Fordham Boulevard sides, and will be screened by Park Apartments Phase II, a 7-story project to the south, further concealing it from the public realm. 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. The proposal consists of approximately 331 total residential units and 37,819 sf of non-residential space.

The building provides on-site amenities such as a clubhouse, fitness center, pool courtyard and outgoing recreation area, and commercial spaces. 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 garage will have egress and ingress access from Fordham Blvd, Legion Rd. and from the roundabout on "Proposed Road" (AKA Ackland Ln.).

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 that front the streets will be above grade as required and will 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. Three (3) minor Design Alternatives have been previously approved with the Certificate of Appropriateness dated January 25, 2022, and amended October 25, 2022. Two (2) previously approved design alternative are being requested to be modified. The Design Alternatives below provide a balance with the highest-level goals of walkability, streetscape activity and form with site constraints and generally have a minor conflict with the Blue Hill Form Based Code requirements.

Design Alternatives Proposed

DESIGN ALTERNATIVE-1 (CDC APPROVAL DATE 1/25/2022)

Average street tree spacing, and canopy size standards have been modified to allow substitution of alternate tree species and placement along Legion Road Extension, and the Proposed Street (Ackland Avenue), where overhead lines, sight triangles, and/or fire access are in conflict with street tree planting.

DESIGN ALTERNATIVE-2 (CDC APPROVAL DATE 1/25/2022)

Maximum and average upper floor plate area standards have been modified to allow the 4th story floor plate area to exceed 100% of the ground story floor plate area - up to 100% of the 3rd story floor plate area, and to allow an average floor plate area for floors above the 4th story up to 82% of the ground story floor plate area.

The requested Certificate of Appropriateness Modification includes a third Design Alternative that is being requested through the application that has been submitted.

DESIGN ALTERNATIVE-3 (CDC APPROVAL DATE 10/25/2022)

Allowance for the increase in maximum Block Length along Legion Road frontage from 450' to a maximum of 540' . Increase in accordance with Section 3.11.2.7.C.b.iv.

Description and Analysis of Adjacent Land Uses, Road, Topography, Soils, Drainage Patterns, Environmental Constraints, Environmental Features and Existing Vegetation –

The adjacent use to the east of the site (along Ephesus Church Road) includes apartments (Hamlin Park). The adjacent use to the north and of the site consist of the Millennium Chapel Hill Apartments project which anticipated breaking ground in Spring 2022 and Fordham Apartments to the west across Fordham Boulevard. To the south, the adjacent uses consist of single family along the Bypass Land and the Park Apartments project which is under construction along Ephesus Church Road and Ackland Lane.

Portions of this site along the westerly property line are located within floodplain as shown on FIRM Panel Map Number 3710979900L (last revised 10/19/18). A Booker Creek Floodplain Study has been prepared for the site to demonstrate the proposed fills within the floodplain will result in a “no rise” of the base flood elevation.

Within the developed area, the site is relatively flat and drains to the northerly and westerly property lines. The area which drains to the north is to a perennial stream (which was classified by the Town of Chapel Hill on 3/17/20); this stream drains from a Ephesus Church Road pipe crossing to the west towards Fordham Boulevard. Most of this stream is not an USACE Jurisdictional stream (see Preliminary JD dated 10/20/21). The remaining portions of the site drain to the west towards a perennial stream (classified by the Town of Chapel Hill on 3/17/20) located along the Fordham Boulevard/NCDOT ROW. This stream is was determined to be jurisdictional by the USACE (see Preliminary JD dated 10/20/21). Portions of the project site along the northerly and westerly property lines exhibit steep slopes from the delineated top of bank to the channel invert. Soils within this site have been developed and have been classified as Urban Land.

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 southwest edge of the project site.

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