

Staff Memorandum

Business Meeting – 04/25/2018

Overview: In January 2017, Council approved the 25% plans for Elliott Road Extension. Bluerock Real Estate, LLC, owners of the Park Apartments, have requested several modifications to the roadway design to provide better overall site access functionality. Staff is seeking Council approval of the proposed modifications to the roadway, and authorization for the Town Manager to proceed with final design and construction.

Recommendation:

That the Council adopt the attached resolution approving the proposed modifications as described in the staff recommendation and authorizing the Town Manager to proceed with final design and construction of Elliott Road Extension.

Transportation Background: The [Ephesus-Fordham Small Area Plan¹](#) (2011) includes a number of transportation improvements, including the Extension of Elliott Road from Fordham Boulevard to Ephesus Church Road. Phase I of the improvements included upgrading the intersection of Ephesus Church and Fordham Blvd., which was funded primarily by NCDOT with the expectation that the other projects outlined in the Small Area Plan would also be implemented. Town staff worked diligently with NCDOT over several years to reach agreement on funding and approvals to move forward with the transportation improvements outlined in the Small Area Plan.

Phase II of the improvements includes the Elliott Road Extension, which is intended to better distribute vehicle trips and enhance mobility in the District. The phased projects were coordinated to maximize transportation benefits; without the Elliott Road Extension, the benefits of the improved Ephesus Church/Fordham intersection are significantly diminished. Elliott Road Extension is expected to carry 7,800 vehicles per day in 2030. Of the 7,800 daily trips, 3,000 will come from the Park Apartments redevelopment, meaning that the road extension will take almost 5,000 vehicles off of other roads in the District.

Town Council authorized staff to proceed with design of the Elliott Road Extension on [May 23, 2016](#), and received an update on the 25% plans at the [January 23, 2017](#) meeting. At that meeting Council members provided feedback on the 25% plans. At that point, the idea was to wait until Bluerock submitted an application for redevelopment, and then proceed to 70% plans then final design. The reason this was because this roadway requires significant right-of-way dedication from the developer, and the Regulating Plan states that the proposed dedication "shall be shown on the Form District Permit application" (Sec.3.11.2.2).

Financing: The engineer's estimate for constructing Elliott Road Extension is approximately \$4.23 million. The funding is expected to be a combination of NCDOT reimbursement from the Ephesus Church/Fordham intersection improvement project (Phase I) and Installment Financing repaid through the Blue Hill synthetic TIF. Bluerock will build the road as part of their development project and the Town will reimburse them for the work. The Town is developing a Memorandum of Understanding to outline the reimbursement terms – a 'not to exceed' amount, progress payments, and a percent holdback until the road is certified to meet Town and NCDOT standards of expectation.

Project Background: Representatives from Bluerock Real Estate, LLC have been meeting with Town staff for several years about plans to redevelop the existing Park Apartments. The redevelopment plans for the site have been on hold since early 2017 while staff and Bluerock have worked out the process for requesting modifications to the 25% roadway

¹ <http://www.townofchapelhill.org/home/showdocument?id=11695>

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design. Bluerock has developed a concept plan that they say ‘honors the vision of the Blue Hill District while providing key additional benefits for the Town of Chapel Hill.’ At build-out, the plan includes approximately 700 units of multifamily housing of varying styles and that meets affordability targets for various income levels, including a targeted 30 units at 80% AMI, 65 units at 100% AMI, and 60 units at 120% AMI. Bluerock has also stated their intention to provide a \$1.5 million payment-in-lieu for affordable housing, and is working out details with Town staff. The developers have hopes of including commercial uses in future phases if the conditions allow. The redevelopment is also expected to include new sidewalks, bike lanes, recreational/green space, and stormwater improvements. As noted above, the redevelopment will be providing the majority of the right of way required to build Elliott Road Extension, a contribution valued at approximately \$3,000,000. The developers are also proposing to pay \$50,000 to cover the engineering and construction costs resulting from the modifications requested.

Proposed Roadway Modifications: In December 2017 staff received the official request from Bluerock to revise certain aspects of the roadway design to provide better overall site access functionality. The proposed changes include:

- converting the Park Apartments access driveways from right-in/right-out to a full access intersection
- shifting the driveways 29 feet to the east (closer to Ephesus Church Road) to meet block length requirements in the Blue Hill District
- reducing the speed limit on Elliott Road Extension from 35mph to 25mph

Staff Analysis: Town staff and its consultant, Kimley-Horn, reviewed the requested modifications to the design. HNTB, the Town’s Ephesus-Fordham TIA consultant, also reviewed the proposed changes and determined that all intersections in the proximity of the development will function adequately in 2030. The consultants determined that the proposed modifications would have the following impacts:

- converting the site access driveways from right-in/right-out to full access would require constructing 100’ turn lanes, which can be accommodated without modifications to the 25% plans aside from a median break
- shifting the site driveways slightly to the east is not expected to have any impacts on the design
- reducing speed limit from 35mph to 25mph will not have any traffic-related impacts

Transportation and Connectivity Board:

- did **not** recommend converting driveways from right-in/right-out to full access due to concerns about potential vehicle conflicts with bicyclists and pedestrians if left turn movements are allowed
- recommended approval of the driveway location change
- recommended approval of the speed limit reduction

Staff: Staff supports accommodating enhanced vehicular movement but not at the expense of bicycle and pedestrian safety. More specifically, staff recommends:

- converting driveways to full access, with the following conditions:
 - that there be buffered or protected bike lanes to enhance visibility and safety of bicyclists

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- that there be adequate crossing opportunities for pedestrians at this intersection
- approving the driveway location change
- approving the speed limit reduction with roadway design changes to support the reduction, which will be determined through conversation between Town staff, applicants and design consultant

The attached resolution reflects these recommendations.

Next Steps: If Council approves the proposed design changes, Kimley-Horn will submit a 25% revision plan set, reflecting Council guidance from this meeting. Staff will review the revised 25% plans before Kimley-Horn begins work on the 70% plans. Staff will continue working with Kimley-Horn to bring the plans to 100% and bid the project. Staff will also continue to work with Bluerock Real Estate, LLC. to ensure that the Park Apartment development includes the community benefits as described in the attached resolution.