

## **Urban Design Assessment: Park Apartments Phase 2**

Applicant drawings dated 01-24-23

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02-22-23

The Urban Design Assessment is a required component of the application process, providing a preliminary review of how elements of the proposed development meet the urban design intent of the Blue Hill District. This assessment will be based around several categories referred to in the Blue Hill Design Guidelines. Given the interconnectedness of many of these issues some comments may overlap with similar points made in other sections.

### **Summary of Applicant Meetings and the Review Process**

- An initial meeting was held with the applicant in late summer/early fall of 2022 in which preliminary plan diagrams were presented along with general project goals and intentions.
- A second design review meeting was held with the applicant on Friday February 20, 2023. In advance of that meeting, I reviewed a preliminary set of design drawings (noted as draft below) and make mark-up comments (see attached diagrams 1-4). At the meeting the applicant presented updated drawings dated 02-24-23 (indicated as current below) which have been submitted for CDC review. During the meeting I observed that some of my suggestions had already been incorporated into the current set.

Outlined below are my original comments regarding the draft drawing set (indicated below in non-italic text). Also noted are meeting responses to the comments from the applicant along with my observations on how original comments on the draft have been incorporated into the current set (*indicated below in italic text*).

### **Building Placement and Orientation (how well building relates to the street and public realm)**

1. The building mostly has a continuous built edge along the perimeter of the property lines which enfronts and well defines street edges along Bennet Way and Elliott Road.

### **Connectivity (internal and external, relationships to existing or planned networks and surrounding features, de-emphasize vehicular travel)**

2. Sidewalks are provided on the two street sides of the building. Consider making a direct pedestrian connection to the plaza space associated with the Aura Blue Hill development. (*Applicant will explore this connection.*)

### **Outdoor Amenity Spaces (location, size, character) See attached diagram 1**

3. An outdoor amenity space is proposed along the western side of the property in the form of two dog parks, some green space, and a pedestrian connection. Consider moving the dog parks to the south to not have the dog park directly across from the ground floor apartments in the neighboring Aura Blue Hill building. (*Applicant will consider the possibility for this: the location of the existing storm water outlet and its need for access complicates matters.*)
4. Provide a public pedestrian connection along the entire easement. Move the sidewalk closer to the building in the area where the neighboring apartments are located. Provide landscape plantings in the zone between this sidewalk and the property line to help screen views of the adjacent ground floor apartments in Aura. (*Applicant will investigate the possibility for incorporating this.*)

5. Provide a landscape hedge or other screening in the area at the end of the entrance drive to the parking structure, to help keep headlights from shining in the adjacent apartments in Aura. *(Applicant will consider options for landscape screening.)*

#### **Streetscape Activation (character and coordination/relationship to surrounding areas)**

6. Provide shade trees along all street frontages. *(Applicant pointed out that there are existing street trees and sidewalks along Elliott and Bennet that were installed in the first phase. Some trees will need to be relocated, as well as sidewalks, as part of the phase two work. Additional plantings will be provided between the sidewalk and the edge of the building).*
7. Apartment units on the ground floor have entrances directly from the sidewalk, with stoops to provide grade and privacy transitions, providing some activation to the street frontages.

#### **Parking (location, screening, and architectural treatment)**

8. The parking structure has two entrances/exits on either end of the building which should help distribute traffic to the street network and provide alternative routes to access major arterial roads in the vicinity.
9. Ensure that the parking garage screening elements at the third level on the primary street frontages, match the character of other building materials and of the typical windows and frames used elsewhere in the building. *(Applicant is looking into various options with the intent of ensuring integration with other façade materials.)*
10. On the west elevation, where the parking levels are exposed, suggest using architectural screening rather than louvers. Consider an “art mural” (like what is being proposed on the Aura parking structure) or other enhancements especially along the ground floor level, which could provide a more interesting backdrop to the dog park spaces (see attached diagram 2). *(Applicant will consider these ideas.)*

#### **Massing (providing a sense of human scale)**

11. The building has a consistent even mass expression on the two street elevations, with recessed balconies providing a balance of solid and void in the facades. The West elevation has two notches in the form of upper courtyard spaces which help break down the scale of the building and provides some sense of transition from the other “urban” edges.
12. Consider further massing definition of the corners along Elliott Road, especially at Bennet and Elliott, (see attached diagram 3) by slightly projecting out the corner mass, utilizing reveals, and other means to express verticality. *(The current design has emphasized the corner definition by utilizing a backdrop of vertical bands of dark colored materials that cut through the “plinth” and reach to the ground. A similar approach is being applied to the southwest corner of the building).*
13. Consider a similar strategy to reinforce the portion of the façade that forms the semi-circle at the “front” of the building (see attached diagram 4). Consider adding piers or pilasters to provide more of a “colonnade” character to this important part of the building, which helps define the urban space, and establish the front door to the building. *(The current plan has utilized dark brick to define a semi-circular base element which helps define the urban space, achieving a similar effect.)*

#### **Articulation and Materials (architectural expression and character)**

14. Generally, there is a good sense of layering and depth to the facades. The fact that the windows are slightly set back to give depth is an important detail.

15. The major articulation strategies clearly define a base, middle and top to the building. The base of the building is well defined but perhaps a bit too strongly. In portions of the building there could be more interplay between horizontal and vertical elements creating a more "basket weave" relationship and more verticality, which could help balance the horizontal base. *(In portions of the façade above the base a window/spandrel condition has been added which groups these elements into vertical expressions providing some balance to the horizontal lines.)*
16. At the base of the building, especially at the Elliott/Bennet corner, where the grade falls away from the first-floor level, there are some areas of blank wall which could be uninviting in terms of pedestrian scale. Consider articulation methods to help enliven these surfaces. *(First floor windows have been lowered in places, to help cut down on the blank brick surfaces. In addition, a projecting brick band ties together the sills of the first floor windows and helps create a continuous grounding base where the building meets the grade.)*
17. Similarly, along the ground floor, the walls that act as handrails along the stairs leading up to the stoops are visually heavy. Suggest providing a lower wall element, with a capping rail of steel: this detail could provide some relation to the steel canopy components being utilized above the stoop entrances. *(Applicant will consider providing this detail.)*
18. Consider providing the wood siding material on the underside of the overhang at the top of the building. This could help unify the soffit with the materiality of the upper "capping floor and enhance the view of the top of the building from the pedestrian perspective. *(Applicant will consider this possibility.)*
19. Consider further articulation of the overhang or providing a more ornamental canopy on the southwest corner of the building at the Skydeck level. This will be a highly visible portion of the building when viewed driving up Elliott Road from the 15/501 intersection. *(Applicant will consider this, also discussed a similar special articulation for the third floor "portal" on the Bennett façade, see #20 below.)*
20. Consider providing enhanced lighting or artwork in the alcove that connects the pool area to the Bennet Way Street façade. This would not only make the space livelier for residents but would also provide an interesting view up into the building from the street level. *(Applicant will consider this.)*
21. Suggest incorporating lighting in the architectural screening element that conceals the transformers. The screening could be an art installation. *(Applicant will consider, any design elements will need to meet the approval of the utility companies.)*



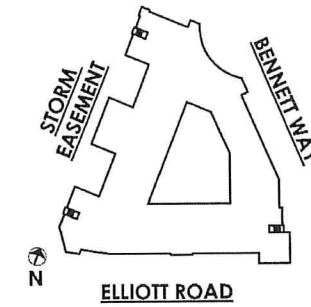




# Diagram 2



Aura elevation



MATERIAL COLOR CHART	
	TYPE 1: ONYX ANTIQUE BRASS/BLACK METAL
	TYPE 2: WHITE ANTIQUE BRASS/BLACK METAL
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① CONCEPTUAL STORM EASEMENT ELEVATION  
1/16" = 1'-0"

screening other than louvers -  
art on ground floor - see Aura



THE PARK - PHASE II  
CHAPEL HILL, NC  
1st COMMUNITY DESIGN COMMITTEE REVIEW / 1.24.2023  
A3.04 - STORM EASEMENT ELEVATION-RENDERED  
SCALE: 1/16" = 1'-0"



# Diagram 3



PERSPECTIVE VIEW AT CORNER OF ELLIOTT ROAD AND BENNETT WAY

opportunities for porches?

emphasize corner element in massing & articulation



# Diagram 4



PERSPECTIVE VIEW AT ROUNDABOUT AT BENNETT WAY AND ACKLAND LANE

Integrate lighting into screening

columns/pilaster - vertical expression