



Chapel Hill Life Sciences Center at 306 W. Franklin St. - Conditional Zoning

Staff: Britany Waddell, Judy Johnson, Tas Lagoo

Town Council Meeting Date: October 25, 2023

Project Overview

- McAdams Co., on behalf of Chapel Hill Franklin Street Labs 1, LLC, requests a Town Center-3-Conditional Zoning District (TC-3-CZD) to construct up to 381,424 square feet of research lab, office, and commercial space in downtown Chapel Hill. All permitted and accessory uses allowed in the TC-3 zoning district will be allowed on the site.
- The applicant requests a maximum building height of 165 feet.
- A public plaza on West Franklin Street is proposed as well as improved pedestrian connectivity between West Franklin Street and West Rosemary Street.
- Approximately 100 underground parking spaces on-site are proposed and the project will rely primarily on off-site parking.

Staff Recommendation & Analysis



Staff recommend that Council consider approval of the project.

1. Current Tenants: Staff do not recommend including any ordinance conditions regarding the displacement of current tenants.

Members of the public have raised significant concerns about the displacement of businesses currently leasing space at the project site. The applicant is working with current tenants to assist with relocation. The Town also created a grant program to assist downtown businesses with relocation costs. In light of these efforts, staff do not recommend further action from Council on this issue.

2. Parking: The applicant will be required to submit a parking management plan before receiving a Zoning Compliance Permit.

In response to concerns heard during Concept Plan Review, the applicant has significantly reduced the amount of on-site parking and moved all on-site parking spaces underground. Due in part to these changes, the completed project will rely heavily on off-site parking. Because the project is in a Town Center zoning district, it is not subject to any Town-mandated parking minimums.

The applicant has agreed to provide a parking management plan prior to receiving a Zoning Compliance Permit to demonstrate that the completed project will be adequately parked.

3. Building and Site Design: The applicant will be required to coordinate with the Community Design Commission and the Town Urban Designer to create design principles for the site.

As is appropriate for an application for a Conditional Zoning, the applicant has not provided detailed architectural drawings or plans for its proposed building or public elements of the project site. However, because of the project's prominent downtown location, there is a strong Town interest in well-designed, public-facing elements. The applicant has agreed to collaborate with the Town's Urban Designer and the Community Design Commission (CDC) to develop design principles for the site prior to issuance of a

Zoning Compliance Permit. We have included a condition in Ordinance A for CDC review and Town Manager approval of the design principles.




4. Modifications to Regulations: Staff recommend that Council approve all requested modifications to regulations.

Staff have reviewed all requested modifications to regulations and find that the public purpose is served to an equivalent or greater degree by the requested modifications. Modifications are shown in Ordinance A and the applicant materials.

Summary of Comprehensive Plan Consistency

Viewed through the holistic lens of the [Complete Community Strategy¹](#), this project meets the Town's strategy for growth. No single issue raised below should be considered in isolation.

 Consistent  Somewhat Consistent  Not Consistent **N/A** Not Applicable

	Chapel Hill will direct growth to <u>greenways, transit corridors, large infill sites with existing infrastructure, and smaller infill sites.</u>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The project redevelops multiple underutilized parcels in downtown Chapel Hill with easy access to transit and multimodal transportation.	
	Goal 1: Plan for the Future Strategically	Associated Comp. Plan Elements: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Future Land Use Map² (FLUM)Shaping Our Future³
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Located in the Downtown Focus Area.Provides commercial/office space as called for in the FLUM.The proposed building heights exceed the typical building height guidance (approximately 96 feet) in the FLUM. The impact of the project's height will be somewhat mitigated because it sits in a low point along West Franklin Street.The project has the potential to bring a significant number of year-round jobs to downtown Chapel Hill.	
	Goal 2: Expand and Deliver New Greenways for Everyday Life	Associated Comp. Plan Elements: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Mobility & Connectivity Plan⁴Connected Roads Plan⁵
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The project is in the core of Chapel Hill's walkable downtown and is well-served by transit.	



¹ <https://www.townofchapelhill.org/home/showpublisheddocument/53972/638222644055270000>

² <https://online.flippingbook.com/view/26191/>

³ <https://www.townofchapelhill.org/government/departments-services/planning/plans-and-ordinances/current-initiatives/shaping-our-future>

⁴ <https://www.townofchapelhill.org/residents/transportation/bicycle-and-pedestrian/chapel-hill-mobility-and-connectivity-plan>

⁵ <https://www.townofchapelhill.org/government/departments-services/planning/transportation-planning/connected-roads-plan>

	Goal 3: Be Green and Provide Housing	Associated Comp. Plan Elements: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Climate Action & Response Plan⁶
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The project will contribute to the Climate Action and Response Plan strategy for walkable, bikeable, and transit-served development patterns.• The project will be designed to accommodate the 100-year storm event.• Because the project will result in a net decrease of impervious surface, there is no requirement for treatment of runoff. However, the applicant has agreed to treat 10 percent of the site's existing impervious surface.	
	Goal 4: Plan for Excellence in the Public Realm and Placemaking	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The applicant has consulted with the Town Urban Designer and will improve the public realm by providing a public plaza along West Franklin Street and a greenspace along West Rosemary Street. A pedestrian pathway through the site, will significantly improve pedestrian connectivity between West Franklin Street and West Rosemary Street.• The project will not include any garage entrances, loading docks, or parking garages directly off either of its street frontages. Instead, all services and parking will be accessed by an internal alley.	

⁶ <https://online.flippingbook.com/view/857144275/>

The map displays the City of Raleigh with various focus areas highlighted in color: North MLK (blue), South MLK (yellow), 15-501 North (green), Downtown (red), and NC-54 (purple). A callout box labeled "306 W. Franklin Street" points to a specific location in the Downtown area. An inset map provides a detailed view of the Downtown area, showing the intersection of W. Franklin St. and W. Rosemary St., with 306 W. Franklin St. highlighted in red. The map also shows major roads like I-40 and I-85, and various neighborhood names. A legend titled "Focus Areas" defines the color-coded regions and other map features like Corporate Limits, Urban Service Area, and Jurisdictional Limits. A scale bar and north arrow are located at the bottom right.

306 W. Franklin Street

Focus Areas

- North MLK
- South MLK
- 15-501 North
- Downtown
- NC-54
- South Columbia Gateway
- Corporate Limits
- Urban Service Area
- Jurisdictional Limits

0 0.75 1.5 Miles

Attachments

Applicant Materials

1. Site Plan
2. Draft Applicant Presentation
3. Applicant's Requested Modifications to Regulations
4. Applicant's Statements of Justification & Developer's Program

Staff and Advisory Board Materials

5. Urban Design Assessment
6. Planning Commission Recommendation

Draft Ordinance and Resolutions

7. Resolution A – Consistency and Reasonableness
8. Ordinance A – Approving the Application
9. Resolution B – Denying the Application