

Planning Commission Petition to Council re Site Plan Review
Approved 3.19.19
Presented to Council 4.17.19

Over the past two years, the Planning Commission has identified two issues with the town's current site plan review process:

1. While to many in the community the process appears to be a discretionary review, it is in fact only an administrative "check the box" approval. It is confusing and frustrating to community members who come to the commission expecting their concerns to be weighed in the approval process, only to find that the commission has very little, if any, discretion in their decision.
2. Given the changing nature of development in the Town of Chapel Hill, with smaller parcels and infill lots being built more densely or used more intensively than in the past, and more compromised lots being developed, projects under the current 20,000/40,000 SF limits for site plan review now have the potential to have large impacts on the community.

We hereby petition the Council to explore improvements to the site plan review process, including:

1. Improving communication around administrative site plan approvals, so that the community understands the limits of the commission's discretion and has reasonable expectations of the process.
2. Considering creating a new level of development review in which the commission would have some level of discretion in the review of certain projects that, because of their size or other factors, have the potential for significant impacts on the community.

The scope of such discretionary review could include:

- a. Health, safety, and welfare issues (such as a safe and adequate site circulation plan)
- b. Local project impacts, such as on traffic congestion or localized stormwater or parking conditions
- c. Areas where LUMO is silent (such as having no preschool parking minimums or maximums in residential zones)

In asking for this action, the commission acknowledges the town's interest in securing predictable, efficient development review and creating a process that is as streamlined as possible while still maintaining community standards. We look forward to working with Council and town staff to explore these ideas and make improvements to the town's site plan review process.

The Town of Chapel Hill Planning Commission