



**NEXT Chapel Hill-Carrboro Encourages
Council Members to Support the 101 E. Rosemary St.**

Dear Mayor and Council of Chapel Hill,

We are writing as members of NEXT, a local organization that advocates for economic development, affordable housing, and transportation alternatives. To help voters better understand how local elected officials vote on issues important to NEXT and the community, NEXT will begin recommending vote positions and scoring votes by each member of the Town Council. Over time, these votes will be tracked to make clear how our elected officials vote on key priorities, and to inform future endorsements.

On the Chapel Hill Town Council agenda for this evening (May 18, 2022), you will consider an application to build a seven-story, 150-unit **car-free** apartment building in downtown Chapel Hill. We strongly support this project, which aligns with our vision for a downtown where people can work, live, and play without needing a car. This is exactly the kind of building we need downtown, and the Council should encourage developers to propose similar projects for the many vacant and underutilized lots in our central business district.

When the council last considered this project, they made a number of requests of the developers. Since these requests will be discussed again tonight, we want to emphasize two points:

- 1. Affordable housing is important, but this project is important as well.** The developer has recently indicated that they will no longer be able to provide affordable units on site due to the rising costs of the project. Ordinarily, this would be a dealbreaker given the town's insistence that every project that comes before the council include affordable units. In this case, however, we encourage the town to work with the developer because of the value this project brings to downtown. No land is being disturbed, the impact on road infrastructure is minimal, and the residents of this building will make significant contributions to downtown Chapel Hill's economy. **We recommend that the council work with the developer on this issue.**

- 2. Car-free means car-free.** If approved, this building will be the first residential building in downtown Chapel Hill that does not have on-site parking. While the Council wisely removed parking minimums downtown more than a decade ago, developers have been reluctant to build apartment buildings without parking, despite the fact that **tens of thousands of people** work or study within walking distance of downtown.

Tonight the Council will vote on “Revised Ordinance A,” which includes the following language:

Prior to issuance of a Zoning Compliance Permit, the developer shall provide a parking strategy plan to be reviewed and approved by the Town Manager. The plan shall identify in detail how the parking needs will be addressed into the future.

We are concerned that this language will allow the Town Manager to institute parking minimums for the project, akin to the “payment-in-lieu” proposal that was recently unanimously voted down by the Planning Commission. We highly recommend that the following sentence be included:

This parking strategy plan must not require that the developer pay the town for parking spaces (i.e., “payment-in-lieu”), or make any other commitments, financial or otherwise, to provide parking for residents.

If the town wants to ask for the payment-in-lieu, they should use those funds to add bus service downtown, support facilities for bicyclists, pedestrians, and wheelchair users, or something else that aligns with the town’s climate goals. Both the town of Chapel Hill and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill already allow residents and employees to pay for parking spaces in our community’s many garages and lots. Our street parking permits are underutilized and underpriced (at \$25/year). Apartment residents who wish to own cars will be able to purchase parking at the market rate.

Sincerely,

The members of NEXT