How could we describe, in design terms, the character of Chapel Hill as we would like to see it?
Chapel Hill Community Design Commission – 3 August 2022

There is no definitive answer to this question. Everyone has their own thoughts, and answers will certainly be influenced by one's values, background, experiences of living in other places, and their amount of time living in Chapel Hill. However, trying to pin down some broad guiding principles is a worthwhile effort. It can be a valuable first "lens" to look through in order to have a common framework against which to evaluate development proposals – a framework of shared values and vision for what Chapel Hill should be like. Chapel Hill is a diverse community with neighborhoods which have their own distinct personalities, but which can share commonalities that unite them as a place. While not all of the following guidelines can apply to every new development, the Commission believes that the Guiding Principles should be used to the greatest extent possible.

Guiding Principles:

A. Places in Chapel Hill are engaging, inclusive and prioritize people over cars:
   1) Places enhance the public realm, especially at the pedestrian level, and are completely accessible to all.
   2) The visual and functional impact of vehicles and parking is minimized.
   3) Pedestrian pathways are engaging and spacious and include wide sidewalks for easier people-friendly walking and accessibility.
   4) There is pedestrian and vehicular connectivity between adjoining properties.
   5) There is a mix of active and passive uses that enlivens day and evening vitality.
   6) There are outdoor active and passive amenity spaces open to the public.

B. Development in Chapel Hill respects the natural environment and is organic with its site.
   1) Developments preserve and maintain mature trees and provide significant vegetation.
      - The site design includes lush vegetation and canopy trees that shade all public and private areas such as parking, sidewalks, and other amenity spaces (and do not interfere with powerlines or fire equipment).
   2) Landscaping surrounding buildings is designed to create interest and eye appeal especially at the pedestrian level.
   3) The building and site design are integrated with the existing topography – and recognize the importance of the flow of water and the potential adverse effects of uncontrolled stormwater. Resource Conservation Districts are respected.
   4) The design responds to the local climate, for example:
      - For less tall buildings, the roof form…
        - …may have low sloping roofs (to shed rainwater, but with no need to deal with snow load).
        - …may have broad overhangs (to protect from rain and sun).
      - Taller buildings, rather than solely relying on dark tinted glass as a means of solar control, use strategies to help shade windows from excessive solar gain – strategies that are appropriate for the façade's orientation, including overhangs, pergolas, brise soleil, recesses such as balconies or alcoves, and projecting vertical or horizontal fins.
   4) When possible and practical, the predominate fenestration is on north and south walls.
   5) The material palette is based on regionally native materials, such as stone, brick and wood.

6) The design is sustainable in the sense that it can thrive into the future without impinging on its neighbor's ability to do the same. For example:
    a) Buildings are located, oriented, and landscaped to take advantage of sunlight and shade to heat and cool naturally.
    b) Impervious surface is minimized; in its place is the use of more green space and/or pervious surface materials.
    c) Building and site designs conserve, efficiently use and protect the Town's water supply – and manage stormwater so that other parts of the community (such as downstream) are not negatively impacted.
    d) The use of fossil fuels is minimized – and designs feature alternate energy use, such as daylighting, solar power, all electric energy sources, and electric vehicle charging stations.
    e) Projects promote alternative forms of transportation such as walking, biking and busing instead of driving.
    f) Materials used for buildings and landscaping are durable, environment-friendly, locally sourced from sustainably managed renewable resources, and can be composted or recycled when their usefulness is exhausted.

C. Development in Chapel Hill is <u>human scaled and compatible with the existing or planned context</u>.
1. Buildings and landscaping are compatible with the existing or planned context in terms of scale, massing, setbacks and density.
2. The form of buildings that are larger in height, mass, or scale than the existing or planned context make a discernable transition where they adjoin the context.
3. The design of large buildings…
    - …provides depth and layering in facades to minimize flatness in material expression.
    - … incorporates horizontal and vertical articulation (such as emphasized cornice lines, water tables, and plinths) to establish a human scale – especially at the pedestrian level.

D. In Chapel Hill, the building and site <u>designs are legible, innovative and diverse</u> while contributing to the neighborhoods within which they are located.
1. Designs near the old campus and valuable established neighborhoods respect the traditional development of those areas – whether by using traditional style and materials, or a more contemporary architectural expression and material selection.
2. Chapel Hill is a welcoming place for iconic 'foreground' designs, which reflect the Town's identity and values.
3. The placement of buildings defines the streetscape and shapes outdoor spaces.
4. Physical development is legible so that a coherent mental image of its layout and function can be understood. New development contributes to the legibility of the town by preserving existing features such as paths, edges, districts, nodes and landmarks – or by creating new ones.
5. The building elements and features organically express the building's function. For example:
    a) The main building entrance is clearly identifiable.
    b) There is visual interest on all sides of buildings.
    c) Façades use fenestration and design features to appear largely open and transparent.
    d) Balconies, porches, or similar outdoor spaces characterize residential developments.
    e) Exterior lighting highlights distinctive features of the design and minimizes adverse impacts on neighboring properties.
6. Negative impacts of development (such as traffic, noise, runoff) are minimized, especially where they would disproportionately affect already burdened or marginalized communities.