



## STAFF MEMO

### Establishing a Design Review Team and Exempting Eligible Projects from Advisory Board Review

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### I. Overview

The Community Priority Process for Affordable Housing Development Review (CPP-AHDR) is intended to support and encourage the production of affordable housing in Chapel Hill by relieving some of the substantial time, effort, and cost associated with the Town's conditional zoning process. This document establishes a **Design Review Team (DRT)** that will play an important advisory role in the CPP-AHDR and explains how undergoing DRT review will enable applicants to forego review by most advisory boards.

As detailed below, the DRT will have several touchpoints with applicants throughout the development review process, both before and after a formal application submission. Critically, the CPP-AHDR will not create substantively new roles or responsibilities for the staff involved in the DRT. Rather, it will formalize functions that Town staff have already successfully carried out for multiple projects and reorganize functions that are currently included within the scope of the Technical Review Team.

### II. Precedent for the CPP-AHDR

The CPP-AHDR builds on the precedent of the Light Industrial Conditional Zoning District (LI-CZD) review process, which was designed to promote community priorities such as entrepreneurship and small business development and to provide the Town with a nimble regulatory process that can better reflect the changing landscape of commercial development. Likewise, the CPP-AHDR will promote the community priorities of inclusivity and housing affordability and provide the Town with a more a nimble regulatory process that can better reflect the evolving landscape of affordable housing development.

### III. Composition of the DRT

Like the Technical Review Team, the DRT will be coordinated by the Planning Department. Planning Department staff will also participate in the substantive review conducted by the DRT. Other key members of the DRT will likely include the Town Urban Designer, Sustainability Officer, Affordable Housing Development Officer, and Town staff with expertise in stormwater management, transportation planning, and fire and safety codes.

### IV. Voluntary DRT Review as a Substitute for Advisory Board Review

Applicants seeking review and entitlement through the CPP-AHDR will be strongly encouraged, but not required, to participate in DRT review. Because the DRT will be composed of staff members with a high level of expertise and familiarity with the relevant advisory boards, applications that undergo DRT review will be exempt from review by all advisory boards except for the Planning Commission.

## V. Elements of DRT Review

Each element of the DRT's role in the CPP-AHDR is outlined below:

### 1. Pre-Application Meeting:

The DRT's first touchpoint with a prospective applicant will be a design-focused pre-application meeting. The meeting will be an opportunity for the DRT to offer early impressions of an applicant's proposed design and to explain the level of detail that will be expected in further stages of the review process.

At this stage, prospective applicants should also be prepared to provide and discuss preliminary materials supporting their eligibility for rezoning to a Residential-Community Priority-Conditional Zoning District (R-CP-CZD). DRT staff may also use this meeting to discuss any procedural or substantive issues related to the CPP-AHDR.

**Applicants will be expected to provide** preliminary massing diagrams, site plan sketches, and materials demonstrating likely eligibility for the R-CP-CZD in preparation for this meeting.

**The expected output of this meeting** will be high-level feedback on the applicant's preliminary designs, likely eligibility, and a clear set of expectations regarding the level of detail required in the formal application submittal.

### 2. Design Consultation:

The DRT's second touchpoint with a prospective applicant will be a formal design consultation. The meeting will be an opportunity for the DRT to comment on and – if necessary – propose alterations to an applicant's proposed design.

**Applicants will be expected to provide** a variety of slightly refined – albeit still preliminary – materials prior to the design consultation. These materials may include:

- 3D massing models,
- Plans,
- Site plan sketches, and
- Conceptual elevations.

The specific materials requested from an applicant will be determined on a case-by-case basis following their pre-application meeting.

**The expected output of this meeting** will be detailed comments on and – if necessary – revisions to the submitted materials.

### 3. Formal CZD application review:

The DRT's next touchpoints with an applicant will come after a formal application (e.g., a Conditional Zoning application) is submitted. The DRT will review the application in parallel to the Technical Review Team (TRT) and provide comments, as necessary. It is anticipated that the DRT will have only minor comments at this stage of review.

The DRT will also memorialize key aspects of an applicant's proposed site design in preparation for Council action. These key aspects will be documented in a manner that provides applicants a certain

level of flexibility at the final plan stage while still providing the Town a level of assurance that important features of the proposed design will not be abandoned after an entitlement is secured.

**Applicants will be expected to provide** schematic site plans, conceptual elevations, and other materials required by the TRT.

**The expected output of this review** will be a Conditional Zoning approval from Council and related materials that define, in general terms, the form and location of buildings and other improvements on a subject property.

4. Following Council Review and Action:

The DRT's final touchpoints with an applicant will come during final plans review. During final plans, the DRT will work in concert with the TRT to ensure that applicants' construction drawings are consistent with their entitlements.

**Applicants will be expected to provide** detailed construction drawings and other materials typically required by the TRT.

**The expected output of this review** will be a Zoning Compliance Permit.