

PLANNING COMMISSION

The charge of the Planning Commission is to assist the Council in achieving the Town's Comprehensive Plan for orderly growth and development by analyzing, evaluating, and recommending responsible town policies, ordinances, and planning standards that manage land use and involving the community in long-range planning.

RECOMMENDATION FOR CHAPEL HILL LIFE SCIENCES CENTER AS A CONDITIONAL ZONING DISTRICT APPLICATION

October 3, 2023

Recommendation: Approval Approval with Comments Denial

Motion: Strother Murry-Ndinga moved, and Erik Valera seconded, a recommendation that the Council adopt the Chapel Hill Life Sciences Center Conditional Zoning District Application as an amendment to the Zoning Atlas with the attached comments as a supplement to their recommendation.

Vote: 7 – 0

Yeas: Wesley McMahon (Co-Chair), Strother Murry-Ndinga, Geoff Green, Chuck Mills, Jonathan Mitchell, Louie Rivers, and Erik Valera

Nays:

Recommendation: Approval Approval with Comments Denial

Motion: Geoff Green moved, and Strother Murry-Ndinga seconded, a recommendation that the Council find that the proposed Chapel Hill Life Sciences Center Conditional Zoning District Application is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan

Vote: 7 – 0

Yeas: Wesley McMahon (Co-Chair), Strother Murry-Ndinga, Geoff Green, Chuck Mills, Jonathan Mitchell, Louie Rivers, and Erik Valera

Nays:

Prepared by: Jacob Hunt, Planner II

Planning Commission Comments:

- We support planning staff and their concerns and conditions reflected in the staff memo and the ordinance. We hope these issues are considered and resolved.
- We appreciate and noted the applicant's community engagement with Empowerment, Inc. and plans to reach out to Northside neighbors and other communities in the area.
- The commission supports the trade off of height in order to realize more green space, and hope that there is a plan to ensure it becomes and stays activated. We also appreciate the attention to creating a pedestrian alleyway that is in line with the character of downtown and creates a connection between Rosemary and Franklin Streets.
- There were no negative public comments at our meeting, the only public comment came from Aaron Nelson, chair of the Chamber, who expressed support for this project.
- The commission would like to have seen more detailed design plans, but felt encouraged that the process requires the applicant to work with the Town's urban designer. More assurance and evidence that this is happening will only help the commission and members of the public earn trust in this process.
- There was some concern for how the town will help current tenants at this location, and potentially other locations in the future, continue operating downtown, with a clear understanding that this is outside the zoning process. The planning commission does not feel that displacement should delay this project. Commission members were excited at the opportunities this project will bring to downtown and Chapel Hill as a whole.

Prepared by: Wesley McMahon (Co-Chair)