

TECHNICAL REPORT



LAND USE PLAN AMENDMENT ANALYSIS: COLUMBIA STREET ANNEX

The following Technical Report provides a staff analysis of the Land Use Plan Amendment application based on long-range planning considerations, identifying arguments in favor and arguments opposed. The application would effect a change to anticipated types and intensities of land uses, without identifying specific features of future development.

PROPERTY ADDRESS 1150 S Columbia St	APPLICANT Wendi Ramsden, Coulter Jewell Thames PA
2020 LAND USE PLAN DESIGNATION Low Residential, 1-4 units/acre	PROPOSED LAND USE PLAN DESIGNATION High Residential, 8-15 units/acre
2020 FUTURE FOCUS AREA None	OTHER APPLICABLE ADOPTED PLANS None
SUMMARY OF ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed land use designation (High Residential) may be considered an appropriate transition to designations found on surrounding properties. • The existing stream and ravine are physical features that would improve the transition between the site and adjacent Low Residential uses. • Recent transportation improvements on S Columbia St support access to the site. The site's location at an interchange increases the efficiency of automobile access. The upcoming North-South BRT project will increase the efficiency of transit access. • Higher-density uses, proximity to destinations such as UNC, and existing bike/ped/transit facilities combine to support choices for mobility. • Multifamily housing may support affordability by dispersing the cost of site services over a greater number of units. • The lack of recent development along S Columbia St may be due in part to land use designations, such as Low Residential, not aligning with development potential. • The character of adjacent roads would make this a challenging site for single-family homes. • Additional conditions supporting multifamily housing include the gateway location of the site, a surrounding mix of uses, and the submittal of an associated development application. In addition, no special protection districts are applicable to the site. 	
SUMMARY OF ARGUMENTS OPPOSED <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New development, particularly of a more intense nature, could have negative impacts on the stream corridor running through the site. Mitigation of impacts could be addressed through consideration of the applicant's RCD encroachment/exemption request. 	

A Land Use Plan Amendment represents a change to the land use component of the Town's Comprehensive Plan. It concerns specific properties, however it is different than a rezoning. The Land Use Plan designation indicates a policy for future use of land and intensity of activity that fits with the Town's overall vision. A Zoning Atlas Amendment (rezoning) may subsequently apply a set of development regulations to the property that is appropriate under the land use designation.

If a property owner proposes a Land Use Plan Amendment and rezoning which are mutually supportive, they may be reviewed concurrently and considered at the same Public Hearing. In the

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case of the Columbia Street Annex application, the proposed Land Use Plan Amendment would support an associated Zoning Atlas Amendment application to rezone the property to Mixed Use – Village (MU-V).

The Land Use Management Ordinance lists four (4) criteria for review of a Land Use Plan Amendment proposal. Staff provides the following evaluation of how these criteria are met:

(1) The proposed amendment is consistent with the goals and policies of Chapel Hill 2020, including Plans adopted as additions

- Staff finds that the applicant's Statement of Justification reasonably demonstrates ways that the proposed amendment can be considered consistent with Chapel Hill 2020.
- The applicant notes in the Statement of Justification that a higher-density use would contribute to the Chapel Hill 2020 'big idea' of a bikeable, walkable, green community. Greater activity supports alternate forms of transportation by adding users for the existing transit service, bike lanes, and sidewalks along Columbia St. This works towards creating a balanced transportation system which staff believes can be linked to the Getting Around theme of Chapel Hill 2020.
- The applicant notes that multifamily housing creates greater opportunity for affordability which supports the 'big idea' of more workforce and student housing. The costs of servicing the property could be spread among more residents, compared to single-family or other lower-density residential.
- The applicant notes that dense development on an arterial street provides a use transition between the busy street and the quieter residential area to the west. Staff believes this can be linked to the Good Places, New Spaces theme of Chapel Hill 2020.
- The applicant asserts that the 2020 Plan considers identifying areas of development opportunity. Staff believes this can be linked to the A Place For Everyone theme and the discussion of development opportunities under various Future Focus Areas.

(2) The proposed amendment addresses significantly changed conditions since the last time the Land Use Plan was adopted and/or amended.

Significantly changed conditions may refer to revisions to an adopted policy, unanticipated consequences of an adopted policy, site conditions, and/or development patterns.

- The applicant notes the change in traffic patterns and nearby uses in the Statement of Justification. NCDOT has made improvements to Columbia St which include road widening, bike lanes, crosswalks, and curb installation. This portion of Columbia St currently supports 14,000 daily trips, and in addition is served by four bus routes which stop at the subject site.
- Staff notes that the upcoming North-South Bus Rapid Transit project, currently in design, envisions a bus station adjacent to the site. This would provide future uses with access to frequent transit service.
- There has been no development proposed along this stretch of Columbia St in recent years (following NCDOT road improvements, the only development proposal within ½ mile of the interchange has been Chapel Hill Coop Preschool). Despite a prominent location, the subject site has remained undeveloped. While this finding could reflect the stability and built-out nature of an area, it may also signify a disparity between land use/zoning policy and development potential, particularly in the context of infrastructure improvements which add capacity. The Low Residential land use designation may be contributing to lack of development activity

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(3) The subject property is suitable for development in general conformance with adjacent land use and the existing surrounding development pattern or patterns as envisioned in adopted plans

- The site is adjacent to property designated on the Land Use Plan as Commercial. It is located across the street from property designated as Medium Residential.
- Other property west of the site is designated for, and developed as, Low Residential. In the Statement of Justification, the applicant notes that a stream and ravine on the subject site are physical characteristics that can provide buffering between High Residential development and adjacent single-family uses. In addition, access to the existing homes is not provided through the subject site.
- Staff finds that while other uses (eg Medium Residential) could serve as a transition between existing Low Residential and proposed High Residential, it is not uniformly the case in Chapel Hill that such transitions occur. Many areas designated as High Residential on the Land use Plan are adjacent to areas designated Low Residential. Development regulations and conditions of development approval can mitigate the potential off-site impacts of multifamily residential (eg noise, light, and odor).
- The applicant asserts that high-density residential would contribute to and expand upon a mixture of uses in the surrounding area.
- The applicant asserts that the site is not conducive to single-family residential due to the highway frontage on NC 54. Staff believes that the adjacent road classifications (highway and arterial) support access for a higher-intensity use. Staff also agrees that the character of adjacent roads would negatively impact any single-family residences on this site.
- The associated development proposal (SUP application) suggests that the size and characteristics of the site support a high-density residential project, even considering any site constraints.
- The applicant notes that the site is not in a special protection district.
- The applicant notes that the site is not in a targeted redevelopment area.

(4) The proposed amendment enhances the public health, safety, and welfare of the town

- The applicant asserts in the Statement of Justification that the site's location on the NC 54 Bypass makes it part of a gateway into town. This gateway area is currently not well-defined – composed of vacant property or views into the rear yards of homes.
- The applicant notes that the site is within walking distance to UNC campus. Residents on the site would have opportunity to travel to UNC via active transportation, and could be part of a greater integration of the university campus with the town.
- Staff believes that locating higher-intensity uses near a major intersection has the opportunity to reduce trip lengths and reduce traffic impacts on the local road network.
- Staff notes that with no impervious currently on site, any new development/construction activity could have impacts on drainage patterns and water quality for the stream on the property. Proper stormwater controls can address these issues, but there could still be changes in environmental performance.
 - The applicant is requesting an encroachment or exemption for the Resource Conservation District in conjunction with the development proposal. While this would permit buildings closer to the stream than typically allowed, there may be opportunities to improve the stream corridor.
 - The stream flows south from the site to connect with Morgan Creek on the other side of NC 54. Flood hazards exist along this portion of Morgan Creek.