

Columbia/Rosemary Hotel

Plan Dated 2021.09.01

Plan Comments/Notes

Prepared by: Brian Peterson, AIA, Urban Designer, TOCH

From 9-2-21 meeting with applicant team, notes prepared 9-9-21

Changes made since last version of the design

The 2021.09.01 plan has a number of revisions since the last version that have improved aspects of the project's design. Overall, the architectural design has been simplified, and is generally more cohesive in this iteration:

1. **Front entrance drive:** The apparent width of the drive has been reduced by the introduction of colored pavers, stone piers, and bollard lights along the north façade of the building.
2. **Plaza:** Curved paving now extends to the NW towards the main entrance of the hotel. This helps balance the overall paving pattern and further helps to break up the entrance drive pavement area. Light bollards are proposed which enhances the pedestrian scale of the plaza. The former stone wall on the west edge of the plaza has been replaced by stone piers, which still allude to the historical use of the Chapel Hill stone, yet allow better pedestrian flow across the entry drive between the building and the park.
3. **First floor architectural character along Rosemary and the entrance drive:** A beige-colored masonry material is now indicated, which helps lighten the overall feel of this important pedestrian edge.
4. **Building Materials/Articulation:** The building brick color is darker than before which better relates to the brick color of the Old Town Hall. The top floor and the building entrance "frame" are now a dark color, which helps integrate the frame and lessens the visual impact of the top floor. This color change helps "ground" the building more than the previous design in which the top floor was a light color, which comparatively made it more conspicuous.
5. **Roofscape/Canopies:** The top floor along Rosemary, where the restaurant is planned, now has a simplified canopy, a singular cap-like structure atop the massing bump-out which reads like a tower and helps animate the corner massing as one approaches the building along Rosemary.
6. **Massing:** In the NW corner, massing has been removed to make a larger cutout in stepping down the building. At the east elevation, along the Columbia façade, the four story building now has two setbacks rather than three. The simplified stepping, along with the change to a darker brick color and a dark upper floor material, provides a better relationship to the Old Town Hall massing than the previous 3-step design.

Suggested changes/refinements for the next iteration of the design:

7. **Plaza:** Seating in the plaza has been reduced due to concerns about loitering/security. These issues are important to consider but it seems in this case that due to the expected level of activity during most of the day and evening that could be associated with the hotel use, providing additional seating would be desirable to help activate the public space.
8. **Articulation:** Ensure that the windows and multi-story window/spandrel systems that occur in the brick portions of the façade are slightly set back from the edge of the brick wall, and not flush. This will help contribute to the sense of mass and wall thickness rather than a "skin" reading.

9. **Coping at the top of brick walls:** Consider providing a masonry coping that is a bit thicker and projects out a bit more than the metal coping indicated in the current renderings. This is more in keeping with the cornice expression of the Old Town Hall Building.
10. **Railings at roof terraces:** Ensure the railings are visually transparent and not a solid parapet condition so that rooftop activity can be seen from the sidewalk level and not blocked by a wall.
11. **Columbia Façade/Artwork:** The artwork shown in the renderings is to provide an example of what could be done. There will be a public process which will lead to the eventual art piece. An important aspect of the art is that it should wrap around the corner of the building, as indicated in the rendering.
12. **Columbia Façade/Landscape:** consider adding several of the Chapel Hill Stone Piers (as featured along the building entrance drive) sequentially along the sidewalk of the Columbia frontage. Modulate the landscape plan to work with the stone placement, creating a rhythm to the streetscape, in a manner similar to what has been done to the sidewalk on the west side of the entrance drive. Lighting bollards should be considered as part of this streetscape as well.
13. **Parking garage exit area on the NE corner of building:** The opening for the door has been narrowed which helps lessen its visual impact from the street view. In the past, there has been some discussion in design reviews about providing a horizontal element (pergola, “gateway” span, etc.) over the ends of the projecting walls. This idea should still be considered to help ensure this corner of the building is attractive as one approaches along Columbia from the North. It might also be accomplished by an attractive downlight that spans across the wall ends. Alternatively, there are canvas shade structures that are utilized elsewhere on the building: one could be provided across here as well, perhaps with up-lighting.

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Design Discussion: 5/10/22

Submitted by Brian Peterson, Urban Designer, Town of Chapel Hill

Note: Some of the comments below may not be manifested in current development drawings and may appear in subsequent design iterations.

Site Plan (drawings dated 04-28-21)

1. Suggested extending brick pavers across the service drive to create a more defined crosswalk along Columbia. This also allows the new paving to extend to the existing brick paving along the east side of the Old Town Hall. Similarly, suggest doing the same to create a crosswalk across the parking access drive on the north side of the hotel.
2. Consider widening the brick sidewalk along Columbia on the east side of the hotel and look at what the best balance is between landscaping and paving in this location. Brick paving and landscape improvements could potentially extend north from here as part of future streetscape enhancements.
3. Revise the diagonal pathway across the hotel fire lane to be more implied, consider providing a brick sidewalk behind the Old Town Hall to complete a brick sidewalk network around the building.
4. In consultation with fire and traffic personnel, investigate if the designated fire lane asphalt drive can be narrowed somewhat provided the paved sidewalk can be considered part of the fire apparatus access area.
5. Benches originally proposed along the sidewalk on the east façade to be replaced by stone or brick walls to create a more integrated landscape.

Building Design (drawings dated 05-07-21)

6. East Elevation along Columbia sidewalk: Continued discussions on how to activate this façade for pedestrians and passersby. Per previous discussions a lower zone has been established that blends the building wall with landscape features to help break down the scale of the façade at the pedestrian level. The lower portion now incorporates Chapel Hill stone (continues the theme of the stone walls utilized in the small park space) and the upper portion to serve as a “canvas” for art. The current images depict a large singular wall surface: The upper wall should be further broken down and articulated in a manner that integrates the eventual art piece(s). Options for the art are under discussion, including a potential “kinetic” theme. The artwork should wrap around the NE corner to extend over the wall surface above the parking garage exit, as that corner of the building is a critical design element, and is highly visible as one approaches from the north by foot or car.
7. This corner of the building could further be enhanced by a special architectural feature. Discussed adding a pergola structure to sit across the brick columns above the garage exit. Also discussed changing the brick columns on the corner of the building to stone, to add more visual interest.
8. Trees are being considered along the east façade, they will need to be carefully integrated with the artwork so as not to block views.
9. As an additional means to increase activation, suggested providing a small space at the SE corner of the garage that could be a place for an activity that would be noticeable and interesting to view driving or walking by along the Columbia frontage. For example, suggested a kind of “pop up” or maker space for artists, perhaps on a rotating basis. As in examples elsewhere, the artist/craftsperson may have regular hours working there where people can stop in and see what’s going on and talk to the artist, while at other times, the work in the space is visually interesting on its own. This space could be expressed as a glass area on the SE corner of the building, including a portion of the east façade, with a door into the space from the courtyard side.

10. Building design along Rosemary: Vertical bays have been incorporated at widow openings, as suggested before, to add a sense of verticality. Generally, the building articulation should stress verticality over horizontality, with horizontal expression utilized as a balance to the vertical.
11. Discussed increasing the amount of glass at the first floor along the Rosemary frontage and around the corner along the entrance drive, to help activate the pedestrian experience.
12. Consider reinstating “pergola” like overhangs for roof terraces and at other canopy locations.
13. The “frame” massing element that extends to the top of the building and denotes the main building entrance from the courtyard seems a bit out of scale with the rest of the building. Consider breaking it down with more articulation (joint lines, smaller panel sizes, projecting cornice/”cap” feature, etc.). The same concern for scale could be said for the expanse of glass in the middle. It is a rather large area of glass compared to the articulation of the rest of the building.