

PARK PLACE PHASE 3
COMMUNITY DESIGN COMMISSION COMMENTS: March 28, 2023

Commission members were appreciative of the detailed responses that the Developer has made both on the written presentation and verbally. The Commission made the following comments on the presentation and for future consideration:

FAÇADE/ELEVATIONS

Using vertical elements at the corners and in the middle of the façade facing Elliott Street was applauded as it reduces the horizontality of the previous elevation of February 28 and shows depth in its step backs. Emphasis was placed on this elevation. When the project returns all three elevations need to be presented.

The “Character of Chapel Hill” is a document that the Commission adopted in August of last year and is referenced by members as we review projects. (It has been sent in tandem in the covering email with these Comments). In particular the document was used in this review to request a softening of the textures by using wood, perhaps at the lowest level where residents and visitors can appreciate the material. It may also be a good contrast to the black /gray elements used to emphasize the building’s verticality. In addition, Blue Hill Design Guideline 4.1 asks for “Innovative new designs that draw upon local and regional design traditions”. Including design elements such as sloping roofs and broad overhanging eaves would go a long way toward creating an architectural character that alludes to both the historical sense of place in Chapel Hill and the micro climate of this part of North Carolina.

The Commission appreciates the new scale of the parking garage openings but believes that garage elevations still need resolution.

Members agree with the comments of the Town Urban Designer that louvers are not an acceptable design treatment and that care must be taken to insure that headlights from garaged cars are not visible from adjacent properties.

LANDSCAPING/OPEN SPACES

The quantity and quality of gathering spaces on the site is considerably improved; as is the quantity and spacing of street trees. Reducing the size of the dog park is a positive. Moving forward, the Developer needs to present more details regarding their request for Design Alternative #5 by showing how that increased elevation will be adequately screened. The Developer is encouraged to pursue discussions with the Town regarding the possible incorporation and design of passive open space for the rectangular parcel along Elliott Road.

CONNECTIVITY

The Blue Hill District encourages connections within and between projects, discouraging the creation of Islands. Design Guideline 2.1 asks that each project “Enhance walkability in the Public Realm”. Although some progress has been made, creating greater connectivity to Park Place Phase I and a direct connection to the Plaza space at Aura Blue Hill remains an issue and needs to be addressed in the next submittal.