

August 25, 2020

Town of Chapel Planning Staff

RE: Statement of Compliance with Design Guidelines

Town of Chapel Hill Municipal Services Center

This document supports the concept plan development for a new Town of Chapel Hill facility planned for the intersection of Weaver Dairy Road Extension and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard. The new Town facility combines a Fire Station with Orange County EMS and new office space for administrative staff for Police, Parks & Recreation, and Fire. The project team wants to support the Town's efforts by providing a contextual site and building design for the corner of this important intersection. The guidelines in *Italics* are paraphrased from the draft version of the Town of Chapel Hill's "*Public Works Engineering Design Manual and Standards Details*," followed by the design team's response. We look forward to this collaborative effort with the Town and the Town's Staff.

General Guidelines:

1. *Livability: Buildings and outdoor spaces should be designed to fit human scale, harmonize with design of streets, and accommodate pedestrian traffic.*
2. *Visual Impact: New public and private projects should be visually appealing, and compatible with other development in the surrounding area.*
3. *Vegetation: Landscape design concepts should preserve existing trees and incorporate native new trees and shrubbery.*
4. *Views: Streets, buildings, and parking lots should enhance the urban environment by providing pleasant vistas and geographic orientations.*

By locating the building at the street frontage, and using the Town's streetscape standards, the building will facilitate a pedestrian friendly, walkable, human scale environment. The Municipal Services Center will respond to the design and scale of nearby buildings. The corner location of the site will minimize any site clearing and preserve the existing trees as much as possible. All new plantings and landscaping will incorporate native species, contributing to the wildlife habitat of the area. Parking will be minimized, and the existing grades allow us to provide tabletop parking which reduces the space devoted to parking, resulting in the preservation of vegetation and the creation of more pleasant vistas.

Preservation of Natural Drainage Patterns:

1. *Capitalize on natural drainage ways through innovative building and site design that transforms steep slopes and edges into major site amenities.*
2. *Preserve natural drainage patterns where practical.*
3. *Design so as to prevent stormwater from flowing over sidewalks and paths.*

As a pre-developed site, the existing topography will be utilized to preserve the existing drainage patterns and reduce the limits of the disturbed area. By keeping the new project compact, and by working primarily within the already-disturbed areas, we will preserve the existing natural site drainage patterns. We will be working closely with the Town to manage stormwater with bio-retention and rain gardens which can also increase biodiversity.

Site Design:

1. *Isolated pockets of existing trees should be protected and used to enhance the site's visual impact.*

Our compact site design helps preserve some of the existing trees and the natural buffer between the site and neighboring properties. The existing tree buffer at the back of the site will be preserved as much as possible to enhance the visual impact of the site.

Grading:

1. *Buildings should be designed to harmonize with existing topography, thereby minimizing land disruption.*
2. *Grading should be held to a minimum and should complement natural landforms.*
3. *Stepping-back"-terracing of buildings on hillsides-should follow the slope in order to complement natural contours.*

It's the design team's intent to work with the Town to set this new facility into the previously developed area and to work with the natural grades of the site. This concept does not require major grading to the site. By stepping the building in response to the use of the space within it, the building will be used to transition the site grading resulting in a more compact building footprint. By keeping the site design as compact as possible, we are looking to reduce the impact of the project on the natural terrain.

Siting of Buildings:

1. *Buildings should harmonize with neighboring areas; this is achieved through careful attention to elements such as size, style, form, color, and materials.*

As mentioned before, the design of the facility will draw cues from the existing architectural context. Inspiration for the exterior design will draw from the regional design in the style, scale, color and form of the materials selected for the building. Durable, sensible materials will be chosen that complement the existing built environment adjacent to the site.

Streets, Parking and Circulation:

1. *Safety and convenience of automobile, bicycle and pedestrian movements are critical considerations.*
2. *Automobiles should be able to enter a site safely and then move to parking areas. Particular attention should be paid to the location of dumpsters for trash collection. Dumpsters should be completely screened, located behind buildings, and accessible to Town service vehicles.*
3. *Roads and other internal driveways should be designed to accommodate a variety of vehicles in addition to passenger cars, including delivery trucks, sanitation trucks, and emergency vehicles.*

As the building will house first responders, vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian circulation will be carefully considered. Wherever possible, each of these key circulation components will be separated. The roadway infrastructure will also consider multiple uses and how they work together on the site. As the design progresses, the design team will work with the Town to locate the dumpsters and other functional elements in discrete locations.

Stormwater Management:

1. *Detention ponds for run-off and sedimentation should be located where a natural holding pond already exists.*

The design of the stormwater management facilities will help reduce our impact on the local biome. As the site is restricted by a stream to the west and limited site area is available for a detention pond, the design team is proposing bio-retention measures in the outer managed buffers. As we know, that this could impact the stream buffers, so the design team will be working closely with the Town to reduce the impact by increasing the biodiversity of the new plantings and incorporating native species that contribute to the wildlife habitat of the area.

Utilities:

1. *Underground installation of all lines is encouraged.*
2. *Landscaping in the vicinity of surface mounted transformers and switching boxes should allow for sufficient distance to perform routine maintenance of these facilities.*
3. *Combining Utilities Easements with Site Access Drives.*

The design team will work with the Town to reduce the impact of utilities on the site while also looking to discretely plan for concealing the site utilities. Where possible visual screening will be employed to conceal the utilities from view. Careful consideration will be given to the routing of any utilities to minimize site easement and access requirements.

Architectural Character:

1. *Buildings should be designed and located so that they provide visual interest and create enjoyable, human-scale spaces.*
2. *Building design should blend with the natural terrain by means such as terracing or other techniques that minimize grading.*
3. *Designs should be compatible, in form and proportion, with the neighboring area. Designers should strive for creativity in form and space wherever contrast and variety are appropriate to the larger environment.*

The architectural character will be developed through careful consideration of adjacent context and in the placement of the building on the site. The design anticipates stepping the building to minimize grading while helping to form human-scale spaces. The exterior will draw from the neighboring building and area to influence the scale, proportion, and height. The building design will use visual cues to create an enjoyable pedestrian experience.

Architectural Details:

1. *Entrances should clearly identify important access points.*
2. *Entrances should provide an introductory statement for a building and should be landscaped with plants complementary to the building's architecture and style.*
3. *All elevations of a building's exterior design should be coordinated with regard to color, materials, architectural form and detailing.*

4. *The number of different materials on exterior facades should be limited.*
5. *Roof shape, color, and texture should be coordinated with treatment of the building's perimeter walls.*
6. *Roof design should minimize the negative impact of roof protrusions by grouping plumbing vents, ducts and other utility structures together.*

As a public building, all entry points will be clearly marked, and the building design will guide pedestrians to entrances. Building materials will be chosen to complement the regional character of the town and will be used accentuate the proposed uses of the building. For example, canopies above entrance provide shelter and also help make entrances easy to find. The roof form will consider not only the programmatic needs of the facility but will also help conceal or minimize the impact of building systems.

Lighting:

1. *Exterior lighting and site furniture should be architecturally integrated with the building's style, material, and color.*

Exterior site lighting will be designed as a component of the building. The design approach will provide safe lighting at night, and enhance the architectural character of the building facade. Site furnishing will be integrated in the site to help create the public spaces important to all buildings, especially ones that welcome the public.

Landscape Character:

1. *A landscape theme should foster unity of design and reinforce existing vegetation with compatible plantings. (For example, new seedling plantings could expand an existing tree canopy.)*
2. *Landscaping should be massed or clustered-not spread out in thin, linear patterns.*
3. *Developers are encouraged to provide street tree plantings that establish an attractive and consistent streetscape and scale.*
4. *Indigenous and/or regionally grown plants are preferred.*
5. *Tree and shrub plantings should be grouped together to create strong accent points.*
6. *Landscaping should be of sufficient size so that mature appearance will be achieved within three to five years of planting.*
7. *Deciduous trees should be provided along a building's southern exposure, and conifers and broad evergreen trees along east and west exposures. Such plantings help to lower a building's energy requirements.*

We will be working closely with the Town to develop the plant palette for this site. Landscape plans will reflect the ecological communities in which we are designing. This includes using a blend of native plant material and regionally adapted plants. Much like Piet Oudolf, Noel Kingsbury, and Rick Darke, we enjoy pulling together planting plans that have a large amount of biodiversity, that are adaptable in our ever-changing climate, and that provide restored habitat for our world. We also like to reference the landscape architects before us such as Beatrix Farrand and Gertrude Jekyll, who were early pioneers for the perennial movement. We are looking forward to working with the Town on this important project.

Sincerely,



Raymond B. Ruggles, RLA, ALSA, CLARB

CC: Eric Schoenagel, AIA, LEEP AP (Little Architects)
William Stewart, AIA, NCARB (Little Architects)
Matthew West, PE, LEEP AP (Dewberry)
Mary Jane Nirdlinger, AICP (Town of Chapel Hill)