

Flintrock Knoll

Urban Designer Comments 12-31-24

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

The following comments are in reference to site plan drawing C2.0, from the applicant's most recent submittal, dated 12/03/24.

1. The topography of the site is challenging in that there is considerable slope across the project site. The use of townhouses is a good choice of housing type, compared to larger multifamily buildings, as the townhouse rows can be terraced and more readily adapted to fit the slopes.
2. A notable aspect of the site design is that many townhouses are served by rear-loaded garages, rather than the garages being on the fronts of the units. This can help in providing a more pleasant streetscape and pedestrian experience.
3. Another notable feature is the "mews" arrangement of the townhouses, where the fronts of the units face a linear green space. However, some of these mews seem quite narrow. As the site plan is refined and detailed, consider if the unit layouts can be adjusted to provide some widening to the mews. Another factor that will help with this, is if the townhouse units can be staggered a bit, so they are not one unbroken line of buildings along the mews.
4. If possible, consider switching places for the six townhouses at the end of the front entry drive and the nearby green space next to the stormwater pond. Doing so would place the green space where the six townhouses are now proposed and create a "town green" that acts as the terminal view as one enters, while locating the green space in a more central location, closer to the homes.
5. Similarly, if possible, consider if some of the other green spaces (and the play area) that are currently located more to the edge of the site, along the access roadways, could be in more central locations within the townhouse clusters.
6. The site plan indicates that sidewalks are being provided in most locations, along with a greenway trail, which will help enhance pedestrian connectivity within the neighborhood.
7. On the project site, consider adding other trails along the stream and RCD areas, where possible, that could provide additional pedestrian access to the natural areas. These trails could be designed with the capability to be extended to adjacent properties along natural corridors if future redevelopment occurs. Connected trails and greenways, a foundational aspect of the Town's Complete Communities initiative, could incrementally become a defining and connective feature of the WASMPBA planning area as redevelopment occurs.
8. The area at the entrance to the site, off 15/501, is limited in developable area. The small commercial building, as proposed, could be designed to create a gateway character to the neighborhood entrance. Locating the parking on the western side of the building, away from the entrance drive is a good first step. The northeastern edge of the building, along the entrance drive, could feature an architectural element, such as a small tower, porch, or patio, and landscaping that could enhance this effect. A thoughtful design approach of the 15/501 frontage on this site can help set a commercial precedent for other properties along 15/501, in the WASMPBA planning area.