

Amy Harvey

From: Jeanette Coffin
Sent: Wednesday, March 04, 2020 1:12 PM
To: stephen whitlow
Cc: Judy Johnson; Becky McDonnell; Allen Buansi; Amy Ryan; Hongbin Gu; Jeanne Brown; Jess Anderson; Karen Stegman; Michael Parker; Pam Hemminger; Tai Huynh; Amy Harvey; Carolyn Worsley; Catherine Lazorko; Flo Miller; Laura Selmer; Mary Jane Nirdlinger; Maurice Jones; Rae Buckley; Ralph Karpinos; Ross Tompkins; Sabrina Oliver
Subject: RE: Input on East Rosemary redevelopment

Thank you for your correspondence with the Town of Chapel Hill. The Mayor and Town Council are interested in what you have to say. By way of this email, I am forwarding your message to the Mayor and each of the Council Members, as well as to the appropriate staff person who may be able to assist in providing additional information or otherwise addressing your concerns.

If your email is related to a development application or a particular issue being addressed by the Council, your comments will be made part of the record. If applicable, we encourage you to attend any public meetings related to the items addressed in your email.

Again, thank you for your message.

Sincerely,

Jeanette Coffin



Jeanette Coffin
Office Assistant
[Town of Chapel Hill Manager's Office](#)
[405 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.](#)
[Chapel Hill, NC 27514](#)
(o) 919-968-2743 | (f) 919-969-2063

From: stephen whitlow [mailto:sbwhitlow@gmail.com]
Sent: Wednesday, March 4, 2020 1:08 PM
To: Town Council <mayorandcouncil@townofchapelhill.org>
Subject: Input on East Rosemary redevelopment

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Dear Mayor Hemminger and Council Members,

I was able to attend an open house last week on the proposed East Rosemary redevelopment and have also reviewed the MOU between the town and Grubb Properties. I realize the current MOU is a draft and that Grubb's designs are preliminary and subject to change as plans are finalized.

That said, given the quick timeframe for approval and construction of the project, feedback at this early stage seems warranted. My overarching views are that this redevelopment has the potential to transform East Rosemary Street in a positive way, but it also comes with design challenges (and opportunities) and potential risks and costs to taxpayers. I believe Grubb is an excellent partner to help the town mitigate these challenges.

Given the scale of and timeline for this redevelopment, we have one chance to get this right and enhance rather than detract from the vitality of East Rosemary. In that spirit, I offer a number of comments, questions, and recommendations. Apologies in advance for the lengthy email.

First, design recommendations I hope you will consider as the project moves forward:

1. At the open house, Grubb noted that the existing pedestrian bridge to the CVS deck will not be replaced. I support this choice as it promotes activity at the street level.
2. Separate the proposed 200,000 square foot office building into two office buildings with a pedestrian walkway between that continues Amber Alley (but at-grade) to Rosemary Street.
3. Redesign the existing alley surrounding Wallace Deck to be an attractive shared-use alley and public space. A well-designed alley can safely support delivery trucks while also providing space for walking, biking, outdoor dining, street musicians, etc. The current alley is unwelcoming at best. Transform it into a unique destination that draws workers out of their cubicles during lunch and after work, attracts residents to downtown at night, and supports downtown businesses. Grubb's design partner's work on the Atlanta Beltline may prove especially helpful in tackling this urban design challenge.
4. The Pop-Up Porch has great potential to create a lively public space on Rosemary Street. If it is not well designed, though, it could reproduce the same problem we have now with the Wallace Deck: a blank hulking mass that creates a dead zone that repels pedestrians. It's easy to envision the Porch as a hub of activity when food trucks or street vendors are there. We should design it, though, so that people will want to linger here even when they are not there.
5. Future-proof the deck and Porch. Design these spaces to allow their uses to shift over time. The deck should be designed to reflect that over time we will use single-occupancy vehicles less and allow reconfiguration without substantial demolition to commercial or residential uses. The Porch should be designed to allow easy redevelopment to permanent, enclosed spaces as trends and market conditions change.
6. The MOU notes that Grubb's office building may include two levels of parking at street grade. If this were to occur, we would have something very similar to what we have today with the Wallace Deck - a large span of Rosemary that does not have activated frontage and deters pedestrian activity. I recommend that this parking be required to be below grade.

Additional questions and comments about the MOU and its implications for the town and taxpayers:

7. Recommend that plans for the design/construction/ownership/public use of the alley around Wallace Deck be specified in the MOU (I can't tell from land record who owns it now). I don't believe the alley is referenced at all in the current draft. I believe improvements to the alley are a critical component of creating an innovation district.
8. Who will design/construct/own/maintain the pedestrian connections and green spaces? If Grubb maintains ownership, will easements for public use and access be established?
9. The new deck is to be funded in part by UNC, which is not a party to the MOU. Will they be added to the

MOU? If not, can this MOU specify UNC's role and implications for the project if UNC were to decide to change its plans to help fund the deck?

10. If town rather than Grubb is to purchase the surface lot beside the CVS deck, will that purchase be contingent upon completion of the EDA or some other milestone? What happens if the town purchases the surface lot but the overall project does not move forward?

11. The MOU references a "second outlet for traffic in addition to Rosemary Street" for the new deck. It doesn't appear to me that there is town-owned land that would allow such an outlet to Columbia or North St. Which party is responsible for the purchase of land for the outlet and what are the implications for the deck if land for the outlet is not secured?

12. How is the town protected in the following scenarios?

- The town and Grubb swap properties but the deal falls through and the new deck is not constructed (Wallace becomes a private deck and town could lease spaces within?)
- The town begins construction on the new deck but demolition and redevelopment of the Wallace deck does not move forward (Wallace becomes a private deck that competes with the town's deck?)

13. Recommend that the MOU specify deck design features and amenities that could significantly alter its cost, and how their cost will be shared among the town, UNC, and Grubb, such as:

- How the deck will be screened
- Whether public restrooms will be included
- Whether solar panels will be installed (rather than just designed for their eventual installation)
- Whether and how much office space will be included for town parking services
- Maximum height of the deck and if and how levels above a certain height will step back

Thanks,
Stephen Whitlow