

CDC Comments on the Concept Plan for the Reserve at Blue Hill

The CDC reviewed the concept plan for The Reserve at Blue Hill at their May Meeting held June 1, 2023.

We are pleased to see care and consideration given to the following:

- Trees on site.
- Site design such that at grade parking is not obvious from Ephesus Church Road.
- The materials and design.
- Local owners and architects involved with this project.

However, the CDC has significant concern about: 1) Stormwater runoff, 2) Parking, 3) Overall design of the site in terms of housing types and density 4) Community-building common areas- and 5) Affordable Housing

1) Stormwater Runoff

Owners in the neighboring development, Hamlin Park indicate that there is already significant flooding to their property in heavy rain. With the removal of more trees and increased impervious parking, they are concerned that current flooding conditions will only be exacerbated. They do not believe that the proposed stormwater methods are enough to create a long-term remedy for their property.

We recommend that both staff and the Stormwater Advisory Board review this issue more carefully at the concept plan stage, and that the developer work with the Hamlin Park Home Owners Association to develop a solution to the flooding problems before approval of this project.

2) Parking

This project in its current design calls for both underground and paved parking totaling 329 spaces. The increase in impervious surface will contribute to possible flooding and remove valuable green space from the development. A number of projects have used pervious surfaces in parking areas and the developer, due to the serious stormwater issues, should consider that approach here.

In addition, the number of spaces while consistent with the current code, is contrary to the town's direction to reduce/discourage the number of cars. There is an opportunity here to remove parking spaces and for those that are left, to increase use of EV charging stations.

Parking should be designed to promote as much green space as possible and provide additional community play/outdoor space away from the street.

3) Overall Site Design and 4) Community-Building Common Areas

The LUMO proposes a density of 15 dwelling units per acre while the existing density is 10. The developer proposes a density of 22 dwelling units per acre. We believe that the LUMO density is more appropriate as a transition between Blue Hill densities and the surrounding neighborhood. And, while commissioners liked the building design, elevations and materials palette, there was concern that the space available could be better utilized and do even more to transition to the surrounding neighborhoods. One way to accomplish this would be to consider building townhomes and create more outdoor spaces that will help encourage a strong sense of community for residents.

Although we understand the Phillips family's desire to continue ownership of this entire parcel, we encourage the family to consider a For Sale component, perhaps in the Townhomes mentioned above as

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a separate, sub dividable parcel. This can be achieved in numerous ways but partnering with a local nonprofit would result in affordable prices for Chapel Hill residents.

We also recommend that traffic patterns and bike lanes be reviewed to ensure safe walking and biking in and around the traffic circle.

5) Affordable Housing

We appreciate that the Phillips family has owned this property for many years and will be the developer for this project and that it is being designed by a local architect. However, we are concerned that 65 units that are currently rented at a lower price point are lost and replaced by only 30 affordable units. We understand that the developer will work with staff to move residents during construction. However, we are deeply concerned that all current residents—many long-time residents, will not be able to return to this property at the same rental rates. Yet, the owner will have the advantage of building at least 215 rental units (the number of units to be built is not clear at this time given the rezoning request for up to 27 units per acre).

We ask that staff and Council work with the developer to find ways to protect all of the current residents from substantially increased housing costs.

Prepared by: John Weis, Chair
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