

CONSIDER AN APPLICATION FOR CONDITIONAL ZONING – ASPEN CHAPEL HILL – STUDENT HOUSING (PROJECT #21-060)

SUMMARY REPORT

TOWN OF CHAPEL HILL PLANNING DEPARTMENT Colleen Willger, Director Judy Johnson, Assistant Director Corey Liles, Planning Manager

PROPERTY ADDRESS

MEETING DATE(S)

701 and 707 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd and 201-205 E. Longview St. August 23, 2022 Community Design Commission
August 23, 2022 Transportation and Connectivity Advisory
Board

September 13, 2022 Housing Advisory Board

September 13, 2022 Environmental Stewardship Advisory Board

September 20, 2022 Planning Commission

APPLICANT

Derick Blankenship, McAdams

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

That the Environmental Stewardship Advisory Board, Housing Advisory Board, Community Design Commission, Transportation and Connectivity Advisory Board, and Planning Commission review and make comments and recommendations on the application to the Town Council.

ZONING

Existing: Neighborhood Commercial (NC) and Residential-3 (R-3)

Proposed: Residential-6-Conditional Zoning District (R-6-CZD)

PROCESS

Conditional Zoning is a legislative process that allows Town Council to review the rezoning application for consistency with the Land Use Plan in the Comprehensive Plan and establish standards that address any impacts on surrounding properties.

DECISION POINTS

The applicant is requesting a Modification to Regulations for the following:

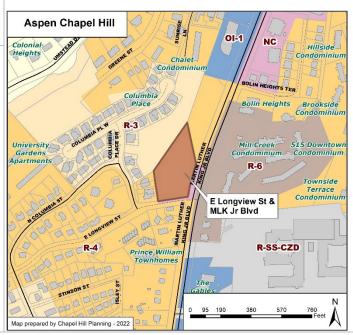
- Increase Maximum Residential Density
- Increase Maximum Height (setback and core)
- Reduce Minimum Street Setback along MLK Jr Blvd
- Increase Maximum Floor Area
- Reduce Minimum Vehicular Parking
- Allow Uses and additional Land Disturbance in the Resource Conservation District
- Increase Maximum Land Disturbance of Steep Slopes

PROJECT OVERVIEW

This project proposes to demolish the existing auto repair shop and residences to construct a multifamily student housing with approximately 112 units. The building will also include resident amenities and structured, wrapped parking.

A Transportation Impact Analysis was completed for the project and did not recommend any constructed improvements.

PROJECT LOCATION



ATTACHMENTS

- 1. Technical Report
- 2. Project Fact Sheet
- 3. Modifications to Regulations (Applicant Request)
- 4. Draft Resolution A, Resolution of Consistency and Reasonableness
- 5. Draft Ordinance A (Approving the Application)
- 6. Applicant Materials



PROJECT OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND

The application proposes applying a Residential-6-Conditional Zoning District (R-6-CZD) district to the site in order to accommodate a multifamily student housing development with approximately 112 units.

May 12, 2021 Town Council reviewed the preliminary development proposal

as part of a Concept Plan Review.

August 26, 2021 Applicant submitted a Conditional Zoning application for the

development.

SITE CONTEXT

Staff has identified the following physical and regulatory characteristics of the land which are relevant to consideration of a Zoning Atlas Amendment:

- The site consists of a 1.85 acres with an existing auto repair shop and two single-family residences.
- The subject site fronts on Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., an NCDOT-maintained arterial street, and E. Longview St., a Town-maintained local street.
- The properties to the south, west, and northeast are zoned Residential-4 (R-4).
- The Columbia Place development to the northwest is zoned Residential-3 (R-3).
- The Mill Creek Condominium development to the east, across Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., is zoned Residential-6 (R-6).
- There is an intermittent stream on the site, partially piped, which is subject to a Resource Conservation District (RCD). The stream is not subject to a Jordan Buffer, and there is no associated floodplain or wetlands impacting the site.
- The site slopes downward from southwest to northeast and contains existing vegetation. A considerable portion of the site features steep slopes.

PROPOSED ZONING

The applicant has submitted a Conditional Zoning application, which allows review of the development proposal in conjunction with the rezoning, and which allows site-specific standards to be formulated and applied as conditions through a legislative process. Conditions may address conformance of the development with Town regulations and adopted plans. Conditions may modify use, intensity, and development standards to be more restrictive when addressing impacts reasonably expected to be generated by development. Finally, conditions may modify intensity and development standards to be less restrictive when accommodating the applicant's proposed site plan (as summarized in the next section).

A –CZD suffix would be added to the zoning district designation to incorporate the approved conditions. The applicant has proposed a Residential-6-Conditional Zoning District (R-6-CZD) district for the site.

The intent of the Residential- (R-) zoning districts is "to provide for residential development of appropriate intensities consonant with the suitability of land, availability of public services, accessibility to major activity centers and transportation systems, and compatibility with surrounding development."

PROPOSED MODIFICATIONS TO REGULATIONS

- 1) Section 3.8.2: Dimensional Regulations
 - **a) Maximum Residential Density:** 15 units per acre allowed in the Residential-6 (R-6) zoning district. The proposed modification request is to increase the maximum density to 61 units per acre.
 - **b) Maximum Setback (secondary) Height:** 39 ft. allowed in the Residential-6 (R-6) zoning district. The proposed modification request is to increase the maximum setback height to 81 ft.
 - **c) Maximum Core (primary) Height:** 60 ft. allowed in the Residential-6 (R-6) zoning district. The proposed modification request is to increase the maximum core height to 81 ft.
 - **d) Minimum Street Setback:** 20 ft. in the Residential-6 (R-6) zoning district. The proposed modification request is to reduce the minimum street setback along E. Longview St. to 15 ft.
 - **e) Maximum Floor Area**: 88,416 sq. ft. allowed based on the Gross Land Area, the maximum floor area ratio of .303 in the Residential-6 (R-6) district, and the Floor Area Bonus of 4,400 sq. ft. per affordable dwelling unit provided. The proposed modification request is to allow up to 168,152 sq. ft. of floor area.

Staff Comment: The zoning districts available in the Land Use Management Ordinance (LUMO) do not necessarily implement the guidance of the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) in all situations, given dimensional limitations. Staff has advised applicants to propose zoning districts based on compatibility between the district intent statements in LUMO and the proposed development. Further justification is provided in the applicant's statement on Modifications to Regulations.

With regard to the Setback Height in particular, guidance in the FLUM encourages stepping down in height closer to the street, with 4 stories at the street setback line and up to 8 stories interior to the site. Council should consider whether the applicant's proposal of a larger street setback is an appropriate substitution for FLUM guidance.

2) Section 5.9.7: Vehicular Parking. A minimum of 178 spaces is required based on the proposed number of dwelling units and bedroom counts. The proposed modification request is to reduce the required parking to a minimum of 70 spaces. The minimum amount of required handicapped parking is requested to be reduced from 6 spaces to 3 spaces.

Staff Comment: Guidance provided in LUMO 5.9 indicates that the Council may reduce minimum vehicular parking requirements upon finding that multimodal facilities are adequate to serve transportation needs, the particular use would generate lower-than-average trips, and/or arrangements for off-site shared parking have been made. The

_

¹ LUMO Section 3.3.9

applicant proposes reduced parking based on proximity to campus, planned Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service, and other factors. Further justification is provided in the applicant's statement on Modifications to Regulations.

3) Section 3.6.3: Resource Conservation District (RCD)

- a) Permitted Uses within RCD: In the Stream Side zone, various activities and development types are prohibited including built floor area (buildings), retaining walls, stormwater control measures(s), and new vegetation. The proposed modification request is to allow these uses.
- **b) Land Disturbance:** No more than 20% of the land area within the Stream Side zone shall be disturbed without a modification or variance. The proposed modification request is to allow up to 7,716 sq. ft. to be disturbed, equal to 28.2% of the Stream Side zone area.

Staff Comment: RCD regulations are intended to preserve the water quality of the town's actual or potential water supply sources, minimize danger to lives and properties from flooding in and near the watercourses, preserve the water-carrying capacity of the watercourses, protect them from erosion and sedimentation, retain open spaces and greenways and protect their environmentally-sensitive character, preserve urban wildlife and plant life habitats from the intrusions of urbanization, provide air and noise buffers to ameliorate the effects of development, and preserve and maintain the aesthetic qualities and appearance of the town.

The applicant notes that the RCD on this site separates the buildable area from Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., creating a conflict with measures to activate the street. Staff acknowledges that a stream feature located along a street frontage creates competing priorities, but has concerns with creating precedent for RCD encroachments, particular for built floor area. Further justification is provided in the applicant's statement on Modifications to Regulations.

4) Section 5.3.2 Critical Areas: Steep Slopes Land Disturbance. No more than 25% of the total combined area of 4:1 (25%) or steeper slopes shall be disturbed without a modification or variance. The proposed modification request is to allow up to 15,943 sq. ft. of steep slopes land disturbance, which would be 60% of the 4:1 or steeper areas.

Staff Comment: Roughly one-third of the site's net land area contains steep slopes 4:1 or greater. Steep slope regulations are intended to protect streams, lakes, and wetlands from the effects of erosion on water quality and water body integrity; to protect the plant and animal habitat of steep slopes from the effects of land disturbance; and to preserve the natural beauty and economic value of the town's wooded hillsides.

The applicant states that additional steep slopes disturbance is needed to make development feasible, given the small size of the lot and the extent of steep slopes. Staff has concern with potentially significant alteration of landform, considering 60% of the steep slope area equals roughly 18% of the total site area. Further justification is provided in the applicant's statement on Modifications to Regulations.

Council Findings and Public Purpose: The Council has the ability to modify the regulations according to Section 4.4.5 of the Land Use Management Ordinance. Staff believes that the Council could modify the regulations if it makes a finding in this particular case that public purposes are satisfied to an equivalent or greater degree. If the Council chooses to deny a request for modifications to regulations, the developer's alternative is to revise the proposal to comply with the regulations.

CONSISTENCY WITH THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AND OTHER DOCUMENTS

Town staff has reviewed this application for compliance with the <u>Chapel Hill 2020</u> <u>Comprehensive Plan</u>², the standards of the <u>Land Use Management Ordinance</u>³, and the <u>Town of Chapel Hill, NC: Design Manual and Standard Details</u>⁴ and believes the Aspen Chapel Hill proposal complies with the following aspects of the 2020 Comprehensive Plan:

Comprehensive Plan Themes: The following are themes from the 2020 Comprehensive Plan, adopted June 25, 2012:

\boxtimes		Create a Place for Everyone	\boxtimes		Develop Good Places, New Spaces
	9	Support Community Prosperity		No.	Nurture Our Community
\boxtimes	2	Facilitate Getting Around	\boxtimes	P	Grow Town and Gown Collaboration

Future Land Use Map: The Future Land Use Map (FLUM) envisions the South MLK Jr Blvd Focus Area as an extension of downtown north to Hillsborough St., with a mix of uses, walkable urban design, diversity of housing types, and emphasis on offices – factors that together will make best use of future BRT service and expand the customer base for Downtown Chapel Hill. The proposed rezoning offers the opportunity to align the site with the character envisioned by the FLUM.

The FLUM indicates a range of appropriate Primary and Secondary uses for the Sub-Area where this site is located. Multifamily is one of the appropriate Primary uses. The FLUM also calls for:

- BUILDING HEIGHT. 4 stories at the street setback line and up to 8 stories allowed interior to the site. (The FLUM suggest a story height of approximately 12 ft.)
- ACTIVATED STREET FRONTAGE. Indicated along Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. to create active visual engagement between the street and ground floor uses, with an environment between streets and buildings that provides pedestrian connections and excludes off-street parking.
- PROPOSED CONNECTION. Indicated along E. Longview St., suggesting potential to provide improved connectivity function.

Mobility Plan: The Mobility and Connectivity Plan shows a multi-use path for the site's frontage along Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., and a crosswalk improvement at the Longview Street/ Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. intersection. There are existing sidewalks on both sides of Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. and the north side of E. Longview St. A future BRT station is located within ½ mile of the site.

Climate: The Climate Action and Response Plan identifies Sustainable Development as a top strategy to reduce our community carbon footprint and build resiliency. The Transportation and Land Use chapter calls for creating walkable, bikeable, transit-served neighborhoods

² http://www.townofchapelhill.org/home/showdocument?id=15001

https://www.municode.com/library/#!/nc/chapel hill/codes/code of ordinances?nodeId=CO_APXALAUSMA

⁴ http://www.townofchapelhill.org/town-hall/departments-services/public-works/engineering/design-manual-and-standard-details

through strategies such as supportive zoning and integrated land use – transportation planning.

Staff Evaluation: North Carolina General Statute 160D-605(a) requires the Council to approve a statement describing whether its action is consistent with an adopted comprehensive plan and any other applicable officially adopted plan when adopting or rejecting any zoning amendment.

Staff provides the following evaluation of this application's consistency with the 2020 Comprehensive Plan and other adopted plans:

- A larger street setback is proposed in lieu of stepping up in height interior to the site.
 Council should consider whether the larger setback is an appropriate substitution for
 stepped height under the guidance of the Future Land Use Map. Current proposal
 indicates a building 7 stories in height at the street-facing façade and varying
 setback of approx. 37-96 ft. from Martin Luther King, Jr Blvd.
- The proposed rezoning aligns with the character envisioned by the FLUM. The Residential-6-Conditional Zoning District (R-6-CZD) district would allow the residential uses that the FLUM indicates are appropriate. The Conditional Zoning application proposes a use that falls within the 'Multifamily' category.
- The presence of Activated Street Frontages suggests urban design that is compatible with more intense, pedestrian-oriented development. Zoning conditions would be useful to ensure that street activation is achieved.

REASONABLENESS OF THE ZONING ATLAS AMENDMENT

Reasonableness is determined by comparing the scale of permissible development under the proposed zoning district to the scale permitted under existing zoning, and by considering characteristics of the site and its surroundings. North Carolina General Statute 160D-605 requires the Town Council to consider a statement of reasonableness when reviewing any Zoning Atlas Amendment.

The factors listed below considers the applicant's proposed zoning district and overall proposed use program. Specific characteristics of the development proposal, compliance with regulations, and appropriate conditions to address potential impacts of the development are evaluated elsewhere.

Supporting Factors

- The proposed zoning matches the zoning of adjacent sites (R-6) and provides opportunity for a transition to medium-density residential zoning in adjacent existing neighborhoods.
- There are a variety of housing types in the surrounding area, including other multifamily residential development.
- The site is located along a major arterial corridor. The surrounding road network, pedestrian and bicycle facilities (existing and planned) and transit service (existing and planned) indicate a transportation network that supports higher-density residential development.
- The proposed zoning is consistent with the Future Land Use Map character for the Focus Area, and with the list of appropriate uses.
- Zoning conditions provide an opportunity to limit intensity and to establish standards that address any impacts on surrounding properties.

Other Considerations

- The proposed change in zoning district, including floor area proposed in the application, would allow roughly 9 times the amount of currently permissible development.
- Zoning conditions would be useful to address provision of Comprehensive Plan elements that support higher density such as bike/ped facilities, proposed connectivity, and design measures to activate the street frontage.
- Existing regulations include measures for protecting environmental features such as steep slopes and the stream corridor. Zoning conditions may be useful for enhanced protection, if warranted by further analysis and/or given proposed slope impacts.

FINDINGS OF FACT

In order to establish and maintain sound, stable, and desirable development within the planning jurisdiction of the Town, it is intended that the Land Use Management Ordinance (as stated in Section 4.4) shall not be amended except:

- 1) To correct a manifest error in the chapter; or
- 2) Because of changed or changing conditions in a particular area or in the jurisdiction generally; or
- 3) To achieve the purposes of the Comprehensive Plan.

Staff provides below an evaluation of this application based on the three findings. Further information may be presented for the Council's consideration as part of the public hearing process. All information submitted at the public hearing will be included in the record.

FINDING #1:	The proposed zoning amendment is necessary to correct a manifest error.
Arguments	To date, no arguments in support or in opposition have been submitted or identified by staff.
Staff Evaluation	There appears to be no manifest error in the Town's Zoning Atlas.

FINDING #2:	The proposed zoning amendment is necessary because of changed or changing conditions in a particular area or in the jurisdiction generally.
Arguments	Staff notes that there has been recent multifamily development activity in proximity to this site, such as the Union Chapel Hill and Lark Chapel Hill projects, which represent changing conditions.
	Staff notes that the BRT service planned for the Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. corridor represents changing conditions that could support more intense use.
	To date, no arguments in opposition have been submitted or identified by staff.

Staf	f		
Eval	lua	tic	on

The Council could make the finding that the proposed zoning amendment is necessary because of changing conditions along the Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. corridor.

FINDING #3: The proposed zoning amendment is necessary to achieve the purposes of the comprehensive plan.

Arguments

Staff notes that the Conditional Zoning application could contribute to the purposes of the Comprehensive Plan through the following:

- Promoting the Focus Area Character for the South MLK Jr Blvd Focus Area as described in the Future Land Use Map.
- Facilitating development that implements FLUM guidance for Character Types in the Focus Area.
- Facilitating development that implements the principles and recommendations of the Central West Small Area Plan.
- Contributing to a range of housing options for current and future residents aligns with the theme of *A Place for Everyone*.
- Locating housing within walking distance of public transit routes, multiuse paths, and schools. The location offers multimodal access to employment, education, services, and shopping, and aligns with the theme of *Getting Around*.
- Opportunities for new housing that expand the range of neighborhood types, evolve Chapel Hill's character for residents, and shapes land use in a way that strengthens community and protects the natural environment. These elements align with the theme of *Good Places New* Spaces.

To date, no arguments in opposition have been submitted or identified by staff.

Staff Evaluation

The Council could make the finding that the proposed zoning amendment is necessary to achieve the purposes of the Comprehensive Plan.



Project Details

Site Description				
Project Name	Aspen Chapel Hill – Student Housing			
Address	Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. and E. Longview St.			
Property Size (NLA)	80,455 sq. ft. (1.85 acres)			
Gross Land Area (GLA)	88,501 sq. ft. (2.03 acres)			
Orange County Parcel Identifier Numbers	9789-30-2139 and 9789-30-2349			
Existing Zoning	Neighborhood Commercial (NC) and Residential-3 (R-3)			
Proposed Zoning	Residential-6-Conditional Zoning District (R-6-CZD)			

Site Development Standards

Торіс		Comment			
Development Intensity					
Use (Sec. 3.7)	Proposed Use: Multifamily student housing, 112 units (Multifamily dwellings, over 7 units)		\odot		
Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance (Sec. 3.10)	Voluntary – Rental housing proposed <i>Proposed:</i> 14 affordable units		NA		
Density (Sec. 3.8)	Residential density: 15 units per acre maximum Proposed: 61 units per acre (modification requested)			М	
Dimensional Standards (Sec. 3.8)	Setback (secondary) height: 39 ft. maximum Proposed: Modification requested for 81 ft. Core (primary) height: 60 ft. maximum Proposed: Modification requested for 81 ft. Setbacks: 20 ft. street, 6 ft. interior, 8 ft. solar – all minimums Proposed: Modification for 15 ft. street setback along E. Longview St.; other setbacks comply			М	
Floor area (Sec. 3.8)	Maximum allowed: 88,416 sq. ft. (reflects Floor Area Bonus of 4,400 sq. ft. per affordable unit) Proposed: 168,152 sq. ft. (modification requested)			М	
Landscape					
Buffers - East (Sec. 5.6.2)	North: South: East: West:	Required 10 ft. Type B 15 ft. Type B 20 ft. Type C along arterial street (reduce between building and 10 ft. Type B	Proposed 10 ft. Type B 15 ft. Type B 20 ft. Type C ed one grade for no parking d street) 10 ft. Type B	⊘	
Tree Canopy (Sec. 5.7)		required: 24,237 sq. 1: 24,237 sq. ft. (30%	ft. (30% of NLA)	②	

Parking Landscape Standards (Sec. 5.9.6)	Final Plans application must comply	FP				
Environment						
Resource Conservation District (RCD) Uses (Sec. 3.6.3)	Modification requested to permit a portion of the building, retaining walls, stormwater control measures(s), and new vegetation in the RCD Stream side zone.	М				
RCD Dimensional Standards (Sec. 3.6.3)	Impervious surfaces: 10% of area within Stream side zone, maximum (Managed use zone and Upland zone not applicable to intermittent stream) Proposed: 2,483 sq. ft. (9.1%) Land disturbance: 20% of area within Stream side zone, maximum Proposed: 7,716 sq. ft. (28.2%) (modification requested)	М				
Erosion Control (Sec. 5.3.1)	Orange County Erosion Control permit required	\odot				
Steep Slopes Land Disturbance (Sec. 5.3.2)	Maximum Disturbance allowed: 25% of areas with existing 4:1 slopes or greater Proposed: Disturb up to 15,943 sq. ft. (60%) of steep slope areas (modification requested)	М				
Stormwater Management (Sec. 5.4)	Meet or exceed LUMO standards	\odot				
Land Disturbance	<i>Proposed:</i> 87,555 sq. ft.	⊗				
Impervious Surface	Existing: 0.42 acres (20.4%) Maximum allowed: 44,251 sq. ft. (50.0%) Proposed: 42,253 sq. ft. (47.8%)	\odot				
Solid Waste & Recycling (Sec. 5.13)	Application must comply	FP				
Jordan Riparian Buffer (Sec. 5.18)	Not applicable	NA				
Access & Circulation						
Traffic Impact Analysis (Sec. 5.8)	TIA completed	\odot				
Road Improvements (Sec. 5.8)	No capacity improvements recommended in TIA findings (no study area intersections expected to be Level-of-Service E or F in 2025 peak hour). Committed improvements to the North St/ Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. intersection, south of the subject site, are part of the E. Rosemary St. Parking Deck project.	Ø				
Vehicular Access (Sec. 5.8)	Full access driveway entrance on E. Longview St	\odot				
Bicycle Improvements (Sec. 5.8)	Construction of 12 ft. multiuse path along Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., consistent with planned streetscape for BRT corridor	Ø				
Pedestrian Improvements (Sec. 5.8)	Pedestrian access routes for the site connect to proposed multiuse path along Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. and existing sidewalk along E. Longview St.	\odot				

Transit Improvements (Sec. 5.8)	Staff recommends \$100,000 payment-in-lieu for improvements to nearby proposed BRT station(s)	С		
Vehicular Parking (Sec. 5.9)	Minimum parking required: 178 spaces with 6 handicapped spaces Maximum parking allowed: 225 spaces Proposed: 70 spaces with 3 handicapped spaces (modification requested)	М		
Bicycle Parking (Sec. 5.9)	Minimum required: 28 spaces Proposed: 38 spaces	\odot		
Electric Vehicle Parking	None indicated	8		
Parking Design Standards (Sec. 5.9)	Application must comply	②		
Loading (Sec 5.9)	Application must comply	FP		
Technical				
Fire	Built to Town Standards	\odot		
Recreation Area (Sec. 5.5)	Minimum required: 4,425 sq. ft. Proposed: 8,000 sq. ft.	②		
Lighting Plan (Sec. 5.11)	Built to Town Standards; not to exceed 0.3 footcandles at property line	FP		
Signage (Sec. 5.14)	Built to Town Standards	FP		
Schools Adequate Public Facilities (Sec. 5.16)	Application must comply	FP		
Homeowners Association (Sec. 4.6)	Not applicable	NA		

Project Summary Legend

Symbol	Meaning
\odot	Meets Requirements
М	Seeking Modification
С	Requires Council Endorsement
FP	Required at Final Plans
NA	Not Applicable