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Planning for the Future

SECU FAMILY HOUSE EXPANSION

123 Old Mason Farm Road

SPECIAL USE PERMIT APPLICATION - **STATEMENT OF JUSTIFICATION** - REVISED

30 August 2017

The project site is located on the north side of Old Mason Farm Road across from the Botanic Garden and adjacent to Ronald McDonald House and the Highland Woods neighborhood. The project scope includes a complementary expansion to the existing facility including one additional building containing guest rooms, additional parking, additional stormwater mitigation facilities, and additional landscaping. We believe the project satisfies all the required findings as stated in section 4.5.2 of the Town's Land Use Management Ordinance. These findings and our responses to how we address each finding are submitted as follows:

- 1. The use is located, designed, and proposed to be operated so as to maintain or promote the public health, safety, and general welfare.***

The project will represent an expansion of an existing use, which is similar to the use of the adjacent property to the west. The site will be designed to support public health, safety and general welfare with proper vehicular and pedestrian access, railings at retaining walls, and outdoor spaces.

The new building will comply with all current building and safety codes. There is existing street sidewalk in front of the existing building, and the public sidewalk will be extended to the east end of the leased parcel. There are existing pedestrian walkways between the street sidewalk and the building entry which will remain. The project has a formal trash collection area accessed off a service drive. One additional dumpster area will be added in the new parking lot for the convenience of the resident guests.

The site is already serviced with water, sanitary sewer, power, and natural gas. There will be additional services to the proposed building but no need for public upgrade of utilities to service this site. The project has a fire hydrant on site, and one additional hydrant will be added near the new building.

- 2. The use complies with all required regulations and standards of the LUMO including all applicable provisions of articles 3 and 5, the applicable specific standards contained in the supplemental use regulations (article 6) and with all other applicable regulations.***

We are requesting reduction of bicycle parking facilities, a reduction of vehicular parking facilities, and modifications to the landscape buffers. All other dimensional, design, and development standards are in conformance with applicable LUMO standards for the existing zone and use.

- 3. The use is located, designed and proposed to be operated so as to maintain or enhance the value of contiguous property, or the use is a public necessity.***

It is expected that the new project will maintain the value of contiguous property. The use is a continuation of the existing use. The new facility will be constructed into the hillside to reduce its visual presence to the neighborhood to the north. And denser evergreen landscape buffers will be added to the existing mature forest. Stormwater will meet current Town and State requirements.

- 4. The use conforms with the general plans for the physical development of the town as embodied in the appendix and in the comprehensive plan.***

The project is allowed within the existing zoning designation.

2020 Comprehensive Plan

The proposed project complies with all of the goals as specified in the 2020 Plan.

Theme 1: A Place For Everyone - The proposed development will provide welcome and friendly community support to the outpatients at UNC Hospitals. Many local residents volunteer their time and efforts at this facility proving that the Family House facility promotes a community of high civic engagement and participation.

Theme 2: Community Prosperity and Engagement - The project site is located on Old Mason Farm Road on UNC owned land. The project expands its support for the UNC Hospital system and the proposed development represents an increased intensity of use in an area that is already fully serviced with infrastructure.

Theme 3: Getting Around - The project site has frontage on one public street and is already connected to the rest of the community by sidewalks, bike lanes, and local bus service. There is an existing trail through the site which will remain open for public use, and there is a Chapel Hill Transit stop just west of the project. The project is located close to UNC Hospital and shuttles and public buses serve it. Bicycle racks exist at the facility and more will be added for employees and volunteers.

Theme 4: Good Places, New Spaces - The project site will expand to include additional acreage to the east which will include the addition of walking trails and add to the availability of usable open space for the guests. The project also includes improvements to the existing paved trail through the site, and that trail access will remain open for Town resident and visitor use.

Theme 5: Nurturing Our Community - The proposed development will provide tree coverage and stormwater management on site to exceed the Town's standard requirements. The building has been purposefully placed so that the lower level of the new building can be benched into the existing hill and reduce the visual size from the neighborhood perspective.

Theme 6: Town and Gown Collaboration - The project expansion will represent an additional way for the community to help with outpatient care for the UNC Healthcare system. The project is being built on land owned by the University of North Carolina and will provide direct benefit to UNC Hospital patients and their families.

Requested Modifications

1. **Reduction of Bicycle Parking Spaces** - The required bicycle parking is a minimum of 16 spaces. There are currently 6 covered bicycle parking spaces on site, meeting the requirements of the original SUP in 2007. The owner is proposing 6 new bicycle parking spaces for a total of 12 spaces. The applicant is requesting a 25% reduction in the bicycle parking requirement, or a shortage of 4 spaces. Historically, guests to the house typically do not bring bicycles, and the outdoor racks have not been used. If guests brought bicycles they are able to park them either in the covered rack area or bring the bikes inside to their individual rooms/suites. There are sometimes one or two volunteers who ride bikes and bring them inside the facility while they are at work. The owner will be filing annual transportation management plans and would like to provide the 6 new outdoor spaces to start with, and will install additional bicycle parking facilities if they become an element that is used.
2. **Reduction of Vehicular Parking Spaces** – The required parking is 1 space per 500 sf of building. The parking that would be required for the final 62,336 square foot building size is 125 spaces. We are proposing offering parking at a rate equivalent to 1 space per 562 sf, or a reduction of 11% from the ordinance requirement.
The Family House has been operating for almost 10 years in this location and feel they would consistently need 95-100 spaces and final built out. The total number of rooms will be 75 and most room guests have 1 car. Occasionally families are dropped off without a vehicle and occasionally a family may have a second car parked at the House. There are generally 10-12 employees and 6-8 volunteers at peak time. We are adding spaces to a total of 111 to satisfy the expected operational needs, and also to accommodate extra handicap parking which is generally needed in larger than code quantities for the guest population.

3. Modification to the South Landscape Buffer - The applicant is requesting a modification of the landscape buffer along the Old Mason Farm Road frontage. The required buffer would be 20' wide and planted to 'C' level opacity. There are no improvements being made between the street and the existing building except for the addition of a community garden and increased parking perimeter plantings, and existing forest will remain in place. The applicant requests the addition of 10 street trees but no additional understory and shrub plantings.

4. Modification to the East Landscape Buffer - The applicant is requesting a modification of the landscape buffer along the eastern property / lease line. There will be no trees removed in this area and the addition of a mulch trail will have minimal impact. The existing mature forest will remain in place and the university owned parcel to the east is vacant. The applicant requests no additional plant material to be required.

5. Modification to the Northern Landscape Buffer - The applicant is requesting a modification of the landscape buffer along the northern property line. This is the area adjacent to the residential community of Highland Woods. There is existing high canopy in this buffer, which is 35' at its narrowest point, almost double the required 20' width. The neighbors have expressed no desire for additional canopy trees and feel that small shrubs will do nothing to provide a visual buffer or increase their sense of privacy. As an alternative, the applicant requests that plantings in this buffer consist of double the amount of understory, and will add evergreen understory plant material which will mature at 10-25' height. This plant material will be installed at a 6' height and will be field located with input from the adjacent neighbors to provide them with the maximum visual buffer and also eliminate any need to reduce existing canopy trees in order to plant the new material.

6. Modification to the West Landscape Buffer - The applicant is requesting a modification of the landscape buffer along the western property line. This property line is shared with Ronald McDonald House, a similar use. There are some natural and recently installed plantings in place, and the request is to provide buffer plantings only at the northern 25% of the property where it will increase the visual buffer between the northern residential owners and the existing facility.