

03-08-2023 Town Council Meeting

Responses to Council Questions

ITEM #10: Reopen the Legislative Hearing for a Conditional Zoning Application - 101 E. Rosemary Street from Town Center-2 (TC-2) to Town Center-3-Conditional Zoning District (TC-3-CZD)

Council Question:

Will the applicant be presenting material not included in our packet? If so, can we receive it in advance?

Applicant Response:

The applicant will not be presenting material not included in the packet.

Council Question:

What criteria will be used to define tenant eligibility for the proposed affordable retail spaces?

Applicant Response:

Grubb's primary concern is avoiding vacant spaces on our ground floor. We propose developing a rubric with the Launch executive board and economic development staff with a preference for minority- and women-owned businesses. We would ask the Launch team to help manage turnover to minimize vacancy exposure. In the event that the retail space remains vacant for 6 or more months due to a shortage of qualified retail businesses, Grubb requests that the space could be made available to non-qualified retailers at market rents.

Council Question:

For what time period will the retail spaces be reserved as "affordable"?

Applicant Response:

The applicant will provide affordable retail for a period of 10 years.

Council Question:

How will "market rent" be established?

Applicant Response:

During the affordable retail period, at the time of tenant lease negotiations, the applicant will work with local economic development and Launch staff to define the appropriate market rent based on recent lease activity as demonstrated in a rent comp analysis provided by a local broker.

03-08-2023 Town Council Meeting

Responses to Council Questions

Council Question (originally submitted prior to the 01/11/2023 Council Meeting):

I was wondering if the Town's Urban Designer could give us an overall evaluation of where we are in terms of the public realm, place making, etc. Are we where we need to be with what they are currently proposing? Are there other modifications we should be considering or at least aware of? They still seem to have very internally facing amenities, which seems a bit anathema to what we want for downtown, but generally I just would like to have Brian share what we should be aiming for in terms of urban design on this important corner downtown.

Staff Response:

Urban Designer Brian Peterson noted no major differences from the drawings presented to the Council last summer, for which he prepared comments. These comments are still valid, and we have attached a reissue of them.

There is one significant change reflected in the presentation drawings and that is the inclusion of a new retail-flex space along the Columbia frontage at the northwest corner of the building, which should improve pedestrian activation at this visually prominent corner.

101 E. Rosemary

Design Discussion: 5-26-22 *(meeting with development team)*

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

The main purpose of the meeting was to review updated drawings indicating changes made to the ground floor uses at the corner of the building and along the E. Rosemary Street frontage. Discussion also focused on the dimensions and character of the façade along E. Rosemary at the pedestrian level.

1. The design team looked at rotating the entire building plan and mass so that the courtyard faced out onto Columbia Street. This was problematic for a number of reasons. This arrangement placed a good many residential units to the back, facing the parking garage across the service drive. Because of the building layout and the sloping condition of the site, the floor of the courtyard would be elevated above the sidewalk, presenting a wall condition, and not be accessible from the walk. In addition, the U-shaped building mass, due to its centralizing and axial focus, makes it difficult to accentuate the corner-focused massing concept, which has served as an organizing principal throughout the design process of the building thus far.
2. The level 1 floor plan features some reorganization of spaces at the corner and along E. Rosemary. The cycle center has been moved away from the exterior corner and is now located facing the rear courtyard. The coffee lounge/commercial space is now located at the building corner, and the leasing/amenity space is relocated to the east, along the E. Rosemary St. frontage. These changes should improve potential street activation by placing the most active uses at the corner.
3. Discussed the coffee lounge/commercial space. The space is about 1800 square feet. A restaurant or food service use would likely require a kitchen or some food prep area, which might be a challenge to accommodate in the size of the space. Food service of a simpler nature, where items could be brought in, might be a consideration. Discussed precedents from other locations in which a vendor creates an active environment featuring beer, coffee, and light snacks in a space that although technically an amenity space for the building, is fully open and welcoming to the public. The applicant will continue to look at various possibilities regarding the use and activation of this space.
4. Leasing/Amenity space: This space is envisioned as the front door for the building. Residents will be coming and going through this area on a daily basis, providing some foot traffic which could contribute to the activation along E. Rosemary Street. Designing the leasing/amenity space more like a "living room" type space as well as an office could help contribute to a welcoming image along E. Rosemary.
5. Building Frontage: The structural columns have been moved back several feet from their former locations next to the sidewalk. This allows more pedestrian space along the frontage than previously (9' from the curbside sidewalk edge to the building edge; 7'-9" from the curbside sidewalk edge to the column edge; and a total width from back of curb to the building edge of 14') which is a welcome improvement from the previous design. Alcoves between the columns provide additional space and potential locations for sidewalk tables and chairs. In addition a notch is taken out of the building mass at the corner allowing additional space for pedestrian amenities and circulation. Sidewalk level perspective views have been prepared which show an appropriate urban character for this frontage. Suggested the applicant consider providing the most transparent facades possible along this frontage: consider, if feasible, roll up glass doors, swinging doors or other means to open the lounge space to the sidewalk, further increasing the sense of expansion at the pedestrian frontage.