

PLANNING COMMISSION

The charge of the Planning Commission is to assist the Council in achieving the Town's Comprehensive Plan for orderly growth and development by analyzing, evaluating, and recommending responsible town policies, ordinances, and planning standards that manage land use and involving the community in long-range planning.

RECOMMENDATION FOR HILLMONT AS A CONDITIONAL ZONING DISTRICT APPLICATION

September 19, 2023

Recommendation: Approval ☐ Approval with Comments ☒ Denial ☐

Motion: Theodore Nollert moved, and Louie Rivers seconded, a recommendation that the Council adopt the Hillmont Conditional Zoning District Application as an amendment to the Zoning Atlas with the attached matrix as a supplement to their recommendation.

Vote: 9 – 0

Yeas: Elizabeth Losos (Chair), Wesley McMahon (Co-Chair), Strother Murry-Ndinga, Geoff Green, Chuck Mills, Jonathan Mitchell, Louie Rivers, and Erik Valera

Nays:

Recommendation: Approval ☒ Approval with Comments ☐ Denial ☐

Motion: Theodore Nollert moved, and Louie Rivers seconded, a recommendation that the Council find that the proposed Hillmont Conditional Zoning District Application is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan

Vote: 9 – 0

Yeas: Elizabeth Losos (Chair), Wesley McMahon (Co-Chair), Strother Murry-Ndinga, Geoff Green, Chuck Mills, Jonathan Mitchell, Louie Rivers, and Erik Valera

Nays:

Prepared by: Jacob Hunt, Planner II

The Planning Commission supports development of these sites to the extent consistent with the Town’s “complete community” strategy, including increased density, but with attention to the attributes discussed in the matrix below.

Complete Community Criteria (mostly based on 12/7/22 Keesmaat presentation to Council)	Facts	Analysis	Summary of Concerns
Mix of housing unit sizes/configurations that address affordability goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 390-500 units, depending on how future “blocks” are developed • All rentals; no for-sale units • 7-10% “affordable” units, depending on composition of 60-80% AMI. • May have studios as small as 500 sq ft, though most units will be between 1000-2000 sq ft (studio, 1 bedroom, 2 bedroom, 3 bedroom) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatively diverse mix of units, including some small units but no very small or “micro” units, which would allow for a lower price point. • While developer is not currently planning micro units because they said the Chapel Hill market has not yet embraced them, they seemed open to considering some smaller units. • Price of market-rate units will be competitive with other apartment complexes, perhaps lower than those closer to commercial center, but not inexpensive (due to high construction costs as well as inflationary pressure on rents) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We strongly recommend that the Council consider asking the developer to increase the percentage of affordable units to at least 15% at 65% AMI. • We suggest that Council pursue the inclusion of some smaller units.
Walkable proximity to several daily needs, such as housing, jobs, schools, recreation. Mixed use buildings encouraged	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No commercial space within the apartment complex. • Through connected streets, a tunnel under 54, and walkways, the apartment complex is approx. three quarters of a mile from commercial center in Meadowmont. • A new cross-walk across 54 is planned. • Stancell Dr is a small street that is not conducive to walking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The walkability could be improved if Stancell were converted to no-cars and shade trees added. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Given the growing number of residential units in the area, the Town should consider improving the ease and attractiveness of crossing 54 by foot or bike to decrease short car trips.
Abundant greenway and transit connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On bus route (on 54) • Also near bus hub at Friday Center 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See previous comment.

Planning Commission Complete Community Matrix for Hillmont
September 19, 2023

Complete Community Criteria (mostly based on 12/7/22 Keesmaat presentation to Council)	Facts	Analysis	Summary of Concerns
Place-making and prioritization of the pedestrian realm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Block D is will be left largely forested and will serve as a recreation space for residents of Hillmont and potentially Barbee Chapel Apartments Planning for the other parcels (representing 3 acres) has not yet occurred, so it is unclear how they will fit into the larger “placemaking.” Parking ratio is higher than recommended by PC’s parking policy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Block D is potentially the greatest amenity of this apartment complex, though the developer hasn’t committed to “program” it in any particular way. Through a grid of streets/walkways that connect to the adjacent apartment complex and Finley, it also has the potential to attract use by residents throughout the area. Given that this is on a major bus route, the amount of impervious parking surface lot seems to be more than is needed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parking ratios should be at or close to the Town’s minimums. The cost of parking should be unbundled from the rent to the extent possible. CDC should provide guidance on Blocks A, B, and C,. The developer should also provide greater clarity on how they will “program” Block D, for example whether there will be paths or other amenities.
Land use efficiency (measured as housing density per acre)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Without the RCD and Block D, the developers indicate that main parcel will be approx. 17 units/acre, which is reasonable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposed density represents a reasonably efficient use of main parcel. 	None
Respect for topography and natural landscapes, including protected natural areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the main parcel, the project would remove existing structures that were built within the RCD and restore the stream. In Block D, the trees would be left largely undisturbed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is unclear what will happen to Blocks A, B, and C, both of which are currently largely forested. Careful design of building placement in Blocks A, B, and C, could result in retaining many of the existing trees and connecting the RCD and Block D with adjacent tree cover. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request tree cover connection between Blocks A,B,C with Block D.
Stormwater considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The application says that they will commit to the LUMO, though did not commit in writing to the 100-year storm event. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The restoration of the stream could be a good opportunity to use nature-based solutions to address storm water management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Town Council should push for a commitment to design the stormwater management to the 100-year storm event.