



Chapel Hill Life Sciences Center at 306 W Franklin St - Conditional Zoning

Staff: Britany Waddell, Judy Johnson, Tas Lagoo

Town Council Meeting Date: November 29, 2023

Manager's Recommendation

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The Town Manager recommends approval of the project and approval of all requested modifications to regulations, subject to the conditions included in Revised Ordinance A.
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Updates Since October 25, 2023, Legislative Hearing

Building and Site Design:

The Council asked to see more detailed drawings of the proposed building and to have more certainty over which elements of the building's design will be included in the final version. The Council also asked to have a more clearly defined process for reviewing and approving the project's design principles.

Staff Response: The applicant will provide updated building sketches to offer an illustrative vision of the building's final design. A first round of updated sketches is included in the Applicant's Draft Presentation and additional drawings will be provided prior to the November 29 meeting. Although the sketches are not regulatory, certain aspects of the building's design are now mandated by Revised Ordinance A. These mandatory elements include:

- Publicly accessible open spaces and pedestrian connections
- Step backs in the building's façade
- Differentiation in the building's massing
- A variety of cladding materials
- Active frontages
- Minimum ground floor transparency of at least 60 percent
- Underground parking
- Screened loading docks, dumpsters, and other services.

Staff have clarified the procedures associated with review and approval of the design principles. The applicant will be required to present their draft design principles to the Community Design Commission (CDC) for discussion at no more than two meetings. The applicant will also be required to consult with Town staff before and after each of their CDC meetings.

A draft of the design principles is attached for Council's information. This draft will be further refined by the applicant based on consultation with Town staff and the CDC.

Biosafety:

The Council asked for an update on the Biosafety Committee that was discussed as part of the conditional zoning of 150 East Rosemary Street.

Staff Response: Staff will provide a full report on biosafety efforts in Council's November Informational Items Packet. Staff recommends that the Town use a web-based reporting system (like the one used by Durham County) to track hazardous materials.

For this project, the property owner will be required to regularly report all hazardous materials stored on-site through Town-approved channels.

Rosemary Street Developments:

The Council asked staff to provide an update on the properties located at 150 East Rosemary Street, 136 East Rosemary Street, and 137 East Franklin Street.

Staff Response: The properties at 136 East Rosemary Street and 137 East Franklin Street primarily consist of traditional office space. The properties include a limited amount of lab space that will be managed by the NC Life Sciences Organization (formerly "NC BIO").

Construction at 150 East Rosemary Street cannot begin until the new East Rosemary Street parking garage is completed.

Parking Access for Neighboring Property:

The Council expressed concerns about how the project will impact access to the Bicycle Chain's parking and service areas. The Bicycle Chain parking area is currently a one-way aisle with angled parking. Vehicles leaving the parking area drive through the project site. The owner of the Bicycle Chain property has an access easement through the project site.

Staff Response: Town Staff have facilitated conversations between the applicant and the owner of the Bicycle Chain property. The applicant proposes to create a new circulation pattern for the Bicycle Chain's parking and service areas. Under the proposal, the current one-way drive between the project site and the Bicycle Chain will be converted to a two-way drive and angled parking spaces will be converted to perpendicular spaces. Delivery vehicles, garbage trucks, and other large vehicles will be able to turn around using a portion of the fire lane on the project site, but they will not be allowed to drive through the entire fire lane.

Affordable Commercial Space:

The Council expressed interest in providing affordable commercial space in the project.

Staff Response: The applicant has committed to recruiting local businesses for its ground floor commercial space. Staff do not recommend any ordinance conditions requiring the applicant to provide affordable commercial space.

Transit Improvements:

The applicant will make a \$35,000 payment to the Town to support improvements to two bus stops along West Rosemary Street.

Sustainability:

Revised Ordinance A has been updated to include additional sustainability-related commitments, including:

- Achieving, at minimum, LEED Silver certification

- Using WaterSense certified fixtures
- Planting only native and/or non-invasive species
- Designing exterior lighting to meet International Dark-Sky Association design principles

Project Overview

- McAdams Co., on behalf of Chapel Hill Franklin Street Labs 1, LLC, requests a Town Center-3-Conditional Zoning District (TC-3-CZD) to construct up to approximately 380,000 square feet of research lab, office, and retail space in downtown Chapel Hill.
- The applicant requests a maximum building height of 165 feet.
- The project is expected to include a public plaza on West Franklin Street and provide improved pedestrian connectivity between West Franklin Street and West Rosemary Street.
- The project will include approximately 100-120 underground parking spaces on-site and will rely primarily on off-site parking.

Summary of Comprehensive Plan Consistency

Viewed through the holistic lens of the [Complete Community Strategy](#), this project meets the Town's strategy for growth. No single issue raised below should be considered in isolation.



Consistent



Somewhat Consistent



Not Consistent

N/A

Not Applicable



	Chapel Hill will direct growth to <u>greenways</u>, <u>transit corridors</u>, <u>large infill sites with existing infrastructure</u>, and <u>smaller infill sites</u>.	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The project involves the redevelopment of multiple underutilized parcels in downtown Chapel Hill with easy access to transit and multimodal transportation.	
	Goal 1: Plan for the Future Strategically	Associated Comp. Plan Elements: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Future Land Use Map¹ (FLUM)• Shaping Our Future²
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Located in the Downtown Focus Area.• Provides commercial/office space as called for in the FLUM.• The proposed building heights exceed the typical building height guidance (approximately 96 feet) in the FLUM. The impact of the project's height will be somewhat mitigated because it sits in a low point along West Franklin Street.• The project has the potential to bring a significant number of year-round jobs to downtown Chapel Hill.	
	Goal 2: Expand and Deliver New Greenways for Everyday Life	Associated Comp. Plan Elements: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mobility & Connectivity Plan³• Connected Roads Plan⁴
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The project is in the core of Chapel Hill's walkable downtown and will be well-served by transit.	

¹ <https://online.flippingbook.com/view/26191/>

² <https://www.townofchapelhill.org/government/departments-services/planning/plans-and-ordinances/current-initiatives/shaping-our-future>

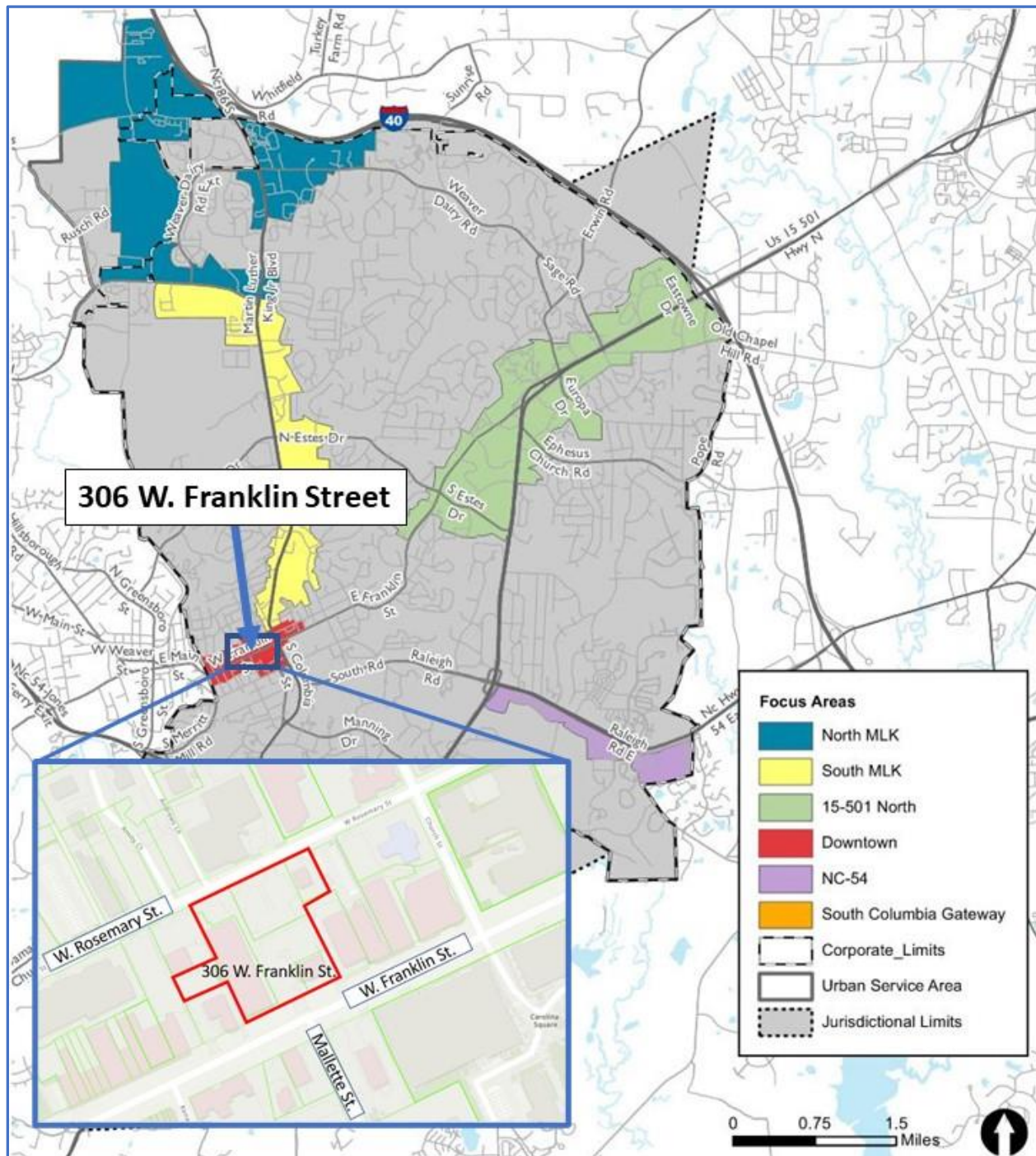
³ <https://www.townofchapelhill.org/residents/transportation/bicycle-and-pedestrian/chapel-hill-mobility-and-connectivity-plan>

⁴ <https://www.townofchapelhill.org/government/departments-services/planning/transportation-planning/connected-roads-plan>

	Goal 3: Be Green and Provide Housing	Associated Comp. Plan Elements: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Climate Action & Response Plan⁵
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The project will contribute to the Climate Action and Response Plan strategy for walkable, bikeable, transit-served development patterns.• The project is expected to achieve at least LEED Silver certification and will target LEED Gold certification.• Because the project will result in a net decrease of impervious surface, there is no requirement for stormwater treatment. However, the applicant has agreed to treat 10 percent of the site's existing impervious surface.	
	Goal 4: Plan for Excellence in the Public Realm and Placemaking	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The applicant has consulted with the Town Urban Designer and will improve the public realm by providing a public plaza along West Franklin Street and significantly improving pedestrian connectivity between West Franklin Street and West Rosemary Street.• The project will not include any garage entrances, loading docks, or parking garages directly off either of its street frontages. Instead, all services and parking will be accessed via an internal service drive.	

⁵ <https://online.flippingbook.com/view/857144275/>

Project Location



Attachments

Draft Ordinance and Resolutions

1. Resolution A – Consistency and Reasonableness
2. Revised Ordinance A – Approving the Application
3. Resolution B – Denying the Application

Applicant Materials

4. Draft Presentation
5. Draft Design Principles

Other Applicant Materials (not included in packet; please follow links below from the October 25, 2023, Legislative Hearing agenda)

6. [Site Plan](#)
7. [Requested Modifications to Regulations](#)
8. [Statements of Justification and Developer's Program](#)