

DRAFT

# Chapel Hill Life Science Center Design Principles

17 November 2023

## General:

This project represents a significant transformation for the West Franklin Street district of downtown. The intent of the design principles is to guide a final design that creates positive change for the downtown environment and helps to fulfill the stated goals of the community.

## Referenced community standards:

The design shall reference Chapel Hill's Complete Community Framework and embody the key objectives articulated in the Chapel Hill 2020 Comp Plan:

1. A Place for Everyone – creating a welcoming community
2. Community Prosperity and Engagement – economic development, quality jobs for residents
3. Getting Around – walkable, bikeable communities, reduced auto dependency
4. Good Places, New Spaces – creation of quality open spaces
5. Nurturing our Community – environmental stewardship and sustainable design
6. Town and Gown Collaboration – leveraging UNC intellectual capital and innovation

The project team has also referenced the 2017 West Rosemary Street Development Guide and the 2020 Mobility Plan in the development of these guidelines to seek alignment with their overall vision and objectives.

## Site Design:

With frontages on the two most important streets in downtown, Franklin Street and Rosemary Street, the development will treat both streets as fronts to the site. Landscaped open spaces will be provided fronting each street.

All open spaces shall be designed to prioritize pedestrians and bicycle riders over cars. Open spaces shall be designed for multiple activities, including space for gatherings, seating and green space. Open spaces shall be designed for four-season comfort, with a balance of sun and shade to suit the needs of people year-round.

A landscaped pedestrian passage shall be provided connecting the two streets with a HC accessible and bike-friendly path. The pedestrian passage will create an attractive, safe and well-lit connection between Franklin and Rosemary Streets. Exterior lighting levels shall conform with Town standards.

**Landscaping:** Outdoor spaces not needed for fire equipment access, vehicular access or pedestrian paths shall be landscaped with the intent to create permeable surfaces where possible. Hardscape areas, including vehicular drives, shall be paved with materials that encourage pedestrian foot traffic and slow and control vehicular movement. Landscaped areas shall be planted with drought-resistant, native or non-invasive adaptive species that require minimal irrigation.

**Street trees:** New street canopy trees shall conform to Town of Chapel Hill standards, where not conflicting with fire equipment access requirements or underground or above ground utilities and easements. Street trees shall be planted using best-practices for maintaining healthy root systems and long term viability of the trees, utilizing Silva Cells, structural slabs or similar systems.

**Architectural character and scale:**

The eight-story mass of the building will be articulated into discrete elements that create scale transitions to development on Rosemary Street, Franklin Street and adjoining properties.

Materials such as masonry, metal and glass will be used to relate to the nearby context and help to articulate and differentiate the building masses. Horizontal and vertical articulation of the massing, wall planes and materials will be incorporated to relate to the scale of the existing context.

Particular emphasis will be given to the first floor, which shall be designed to address the pedestrian experience with transparency, active uses, and covered sidewalks in selected areas. The first floor will extend the retail frontages on Franklin Street and bring active uses into the site along the new plaza. The top of the building shall be differentiated from the middle mass of the building through materials, detailing or other forms of articulation. The mechanical equipment penthouse shall be treated in a manner that is architecturally consistent with the primary mass of the building.

**Frontages:**

The design shall create active frontages on all public streets and open spaces with significant degrees of transparency. Glass used for the transparent sections of frontages shall have a minimum visible light transmittance (VLT) value of 60%. Specific exceptions to transparent frontages shall apply to kitchens and back-of-house spaces, medical uses and other uses where visibility of the interior is not appropriate. Other architectural articulation shall be provided to emphasize pedestrian scale and create visual interest where transparency is not practical.

**Franklin Street:** Continuous retail/food and beverage uses on the first floor. The first floor façade shall have a minimum transparency of 60%. All retail/food and beverage uses shall have entrances from the street or plaza and shall feature attractive signage and lighting.

**Plaza frontages:** Continuous retail/food and beverage, building entrance lobby or employee amenity uses on the first floor. The first floor façade shall have a minimum transparency of 60%.

**Pedestrian passage frontage:** The first floor façade will have a minimum transparency of 60% to interior spaces but the floor level is not required to be aligned with grade nor will building

entrances be required.

Rosemary Street frontage: The first floor façade will have a minimum transparency of 60% transparent to interior spaces or to artwork or cultural displays but floor level is not required to be aligned with grade nor will building entrances be required. The streetscape between the curb and building edge shall include features to support pedestrian activity, such as seating, canopies, or other elements.

Parking: Structured parking for the development will be located below grade beneath the building and will not be visible from street level.

Loading dock and trash: The loading dock, dumpsters and recycling containers and other service elements will be located in the center of the site in a service yard. It will be surrounded by a wall or fence that screens it from view from the surrounding streets and neighboring properties. The service yard will be accessed by a single driveway which is shared with the parking garage.

Arts and culture: Opportunities to incorporate public art and displays that reflect local history and culture will be pursued through a process that includes outreach and engagement with the community. The history and culture of the Northside community will be a particular theme to be reflected in the artwork on the site.