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Planning for the Future

April 29, 2021

Judy Johnson
Town of Chapel Hill Planning & Sustainability
405 Martin Luther King Jr Blvd.
Chapel Hill, NC 27514

RE: Project 2200 Homestead Rd
Conditional Zoning – Response to Council and Public Comments and Questions

Dear Judy,

The 2200 Homestead Road (now known as “Homestead Gardens”) project was presented to Council at the virtual Public Hearing on April 21st. Our design and development team members were able to address many of the questions raised by Council members during the hearing. However, there were several comments and questions provided by Council and the public during and after the hearing to which our team did not have an opportunity to respond. We are writing to address these additional questions and comments before Council votes at their May 19 meeting.

Several issues were raised by more than one Council member and member of the public, so we have tried to group together and summarize these questions here for ease of reading. Please let us know if you, your colleagues on staff, or members of Council have any further questions you would like us to address on May 19th or prior.

Are there additional suggestions from the Urban Designer which are still to be incorporated into the plans?

The design team met with Brian Peterson twice to review the design and explore improvements. His thoughtful suggestions around circulation and common space elements, and general placement of building and recreation facilities, were incorporated in the design as presented. Most of Brian’s architectural suggestions have also been incorporated, such as increased articulation and the relationship of the buildings to the site. The only significant idea Brian offered for consideration that has not been included is the possibility of rotating some of the end townhome units 90 degrees to face the side yards. Our design team worked with Self-Help and with the Community Home Trust (the townhome development partner) to consider this design option, and we collectively agreed not to pursue it further. The downsides of the idea—e.g., fewer private backyards and long side facades facing the street that would be difficult to make attractive—outweighed the upsides for this project.

Can parking be removed from the entry drive to make it a public street?

The entry drive is a private street and will be re-graded to be a 5% slope, so it is not a steep entry. Parking shown on the site is all required for the community, so it is not an option to remove these 15 spaces, which are located at least 150’ from the entry point. In addition to adding needed parking, we expect these spaces to serve the purpose of signaling to drivers to go slowly and avoid using the neighborhood as a cut-through, which will help the pedestrian-first focus of the site.

Can we consider pervious surfaces for the greenway trail, and for street/parking pavement in the RCD?

Town staff let us know that pervious surfaces are not appropriate for the public greenway trail due to maintenance and other concerns. The design and development team also investigated the financial and practical feasibility of pervious pavement on sections of the street/parking that sit within the RCD. We do not plan to pursue this design option further. The upfront expense, as well as ongoing maintenance cost, of pervious pavement is significant with mixed predicted effectiveness over the long run, and we believe scarce public funds are better used elsewhere. The project meets all stormwater treatment and retention standards as designed.

Is the basketball court necessary? If so, can it be moved further from the Vineyard Square properties? Is there a way to reduce the noise that might be generated from the court?

The basketball court is an integral part of the Town's required provision of active recreation space on the site, without which we would fall thousands of square feet below the requirement. Additionally, the nonprofit development partners agree with the feedback we've consistently received from Council that this facility will provide needed recreation opportunities for adults and youth residents who have outgrown the playground. It is also a facility which encourages community interaction, one of the project's many goals. The court is intentionally located near the greenway trail to make it accessible for residents of the community while maximizing the tree buffer between the court and Vineyard Square.

Relocating the court to a more southerly portion of site would cause a significant loss of housing units at 2200 Homestead. Also, we cannot rotate the court 90 degrees without affecting the stormwater pond layout, and even if it were to be rotated and the pond reconfigured, the amount of retained forest would not be increased in this area. Instead, our team is working with Town staff to investigate options for noise reduction design treatments. Finally, keep in mind that the court will only be open during daylight hours and will have no lighting, while being open only to residents of 2200 Homestead and their guests.

Can there be more retained forest, especially near the basketball court and Hope Gardens?

The design team has been conscious of retaining as much forest as possible, including the addition of retaining walls to reduce limits of grading that would otherwise require more tree removal. Retaining additional forest area would decrease the number of residential units that could be provided on this site, eliminate required active and passive recreational amenities, or otherwise prevent necessary site features. Also, we expect the gardens, while requiring some tree removal, will provide a similarly quiet, green, and natural area for peaceful enjoyment by neighbors.

Can we add universal design to the units? How will residents with physical disabilities be accommodated?

All residential units have been designed with the consideration of universal design principles. Furthermore, individual vertical building developers (CASA, Community Home Trust, and Habitat for Humanity) will work with their tenants/homebuyers to facilitate any additional accommodations necessary for safe and comfortable residency.

The apartment buildings have been designed to comply with the International Code Council's ANSI 11.7.1 (accessible and useable buildings and facilities), ADA, as well as the requirements of the Fair Housing Act. A percentage of the apartment units will be designed as Type A Adaptable units under this code, ANSI 11.7.1. The townhome and duplex units have been designed to a greater level of accessibility than that required under the NC Residential Building Code. Finally, the site itself features accessible routes to promote mobility and connectivity for all residents.

Why are there not more market rate units planned at 2200 Homestead?

The development team responded to a [Town RFQ](#) that described the Council's and community's vision and goals for the project; affordable housing that serves a variety of income levels was a key project

goal given how little such housing exists, especially in this part of Chapel Hill. Our team has worked to faithfully fulfill the project vision, while making efficient use of public subsidy. Homestead Gardens will include a wide range of incomes, from less than 30% AMI to 115% AMI, and will include a mix of homeownership and rental housing to create a diverse, thriving community that fits well with adjacent primarily market rate developments.

Can we provide garbage and recycling pickup to individual homes?

The applicant has worked with the Town and Orange County Solid Waste and they are not able to mix multi-family collection routes required for apartment buildings with individual curbside residential pickup. Additionally, there are no garages and yards are small at the townhomes, so storage of individual trash and recycling carts at each residence would be cumbersome. Similarly, the curbs in front of the homes are needed for car parking so do not leave room for curbside containers.

Many townhome communities have dumpster facilities, including the Vineyard Square development adjacent to this one. Property/HOA management will work to support any residents who have physical barriers to getting trash and recycling to the four well-located community waste stations.

How has the applicant addressed TCAB's recommendation of providing access to the community garden?

The TCAB recommended a condition as follows: "Developer ensure retention of connectivity between 2200 Homestead and the newly relocated Hope Gardens." Our design and development team is in full agreement with the goal of ensuring physical connectivity between the gardens and the rest of the site, and our plans show these pedestrian connections. Although Hope Gardens will operate separately from the residential neighborhood, the development team will gladly continue to cooperate and coordinate with Town staff and Hope Gardens leadership, in order to support desired connections to the rest of the Homestead Gardens neighborhood as best we can.

What is the status of funding for the project's housing and the community garden? How can we be sure all elements of the project will get finished?

The project is thus far proceeding according to plan, with initial funding commitments—including a \$3M private philanthropic contribution, Town funds, and Orange County funds—in hand. Development partners are in the process of pursuing additional subsidy from local, state and other sources, per our overall financing plan. Similarly, Hope Gardens, which has successfully operated a community garden on site for the past decade, is working with Town and development staff to finalize their garden relocation budget and funding plan. The development team will continue to work with the Town to progress toward full project funding for housing and the gardens, and to stay on schedule to meet the development timeline.

Thank you and your colleagues for your ongoing work on this project, and please do let us know if you have received any additional questions, or whether more information from our team would be helpful prior to the upcoming Council vote.

Sincerely,



Wendi Ramsden
Project Manager

CC: Jared Martinson, MHA Works
Emily Holt, Town of Chapel Hill Project Manager
Dan Levine, Aspen Romeyn, Self-Help Real Estate