

MEMORANDUM

To: City of Durham

From: HR&A Advisors, Inc.

Date: September 19, 2017

Re: **Findings from Policy Review and Site Visit**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Durham engaged HR&A Advisors, Inc. (HR&A) and Duda | Paine to assist in developing a vision and disposition strategy for its property located at 505 West Chapel Hill St. This four-acre site is currently home to the Durham Police Department (DPD) Headquarters, and is part of a Design District – Support 1 zoning district. The City is preparing for potential site disposition and future development when DPD will vacate the property and move into a new facility, slated to occur in summer 2018.

Following a project kick-off meeting with City of Durham staff, including representatives from General Services, Planning, and Economic & Workforce Development on August 9th, the HR&A team undertook a review of existing policy guidance and planning studies concerning land use and development in Downtown Durham. This review served to build our understanding of City and community goals for the use of land downtown, and determine ways for development of the DPD HQ site to help achieve these goals. As part of this initial phase of work, the HR&A team also participated in a City-led tour of the building on August 23rd. This provided an opportunity to assess existing physical conditions and understand the existing development context along the Chapel Hill Street and Duke Street corridors, in order to enhance our perspective for conceptualizing future development scenarios. This reconnaissance work will inform our next phase of work, as we develop site programs and produce initial site massings for potential future development scenarios at the site.

As a result of these efforts, we present this memo which summarizes: (1) the primary policy goals and priorities for the use of land in Downtown Durham, as communicated by plans and policy documents; (2) specific recommendations for the DPD HQ site identified in City documents; and (3) our initial impressions from the team site visit.

I. Established Policy Goals and Priorities for Downtown

The following four policy goals were identified through a review of existing plans and documents provided by the City related to Downtown development. These policy goals will be useful in moving forward with public engagement to solicit community vision for the site, and for assessing to what extent potential development scenarios and site designs accomplish City objectives.

GOAL 1: SUPPORT A BUSINESS-FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT

- Increase availability of office space downtown (DDI Downtown Master Plan, Joint Economic Development Strategic Plan)
- Invest in infrastructure elements that will be attractive to new businesses locating in the area, while also encouraging vibrant mixed-use developments in Downtown’s design districts (Joint Economic Development Strategic Plan Focus Area 3)
- Retain existing businesses and recruit and attract new businesses (Joint Economic Development Strategic Plan Strategic Focus Area 1)
- Support locally-owned businesses, particularly as the cost of doing business Downtown increases (DDI Downtown Master Plan)
- Support minority and women-owned businesses (Joint Economic Development Strategic Plan)
- Offer programs through the City/County Workforce Development Board to provide job skill training opportunities (Joint Economic Development Strategic Plan Focus Area 4)

GOAL 2: USE DESIGN IN SUPPORT OF DOWNTOWN’S CHARACTER

- Ensure that developments at key entrances to Downtown serve as informal gateways by using distinct building features to help mark the transition into Downtown (DDI Downtown Master Plan, Central Durham Gateways Plan)
- Ensure all street-level facades provide transparency to make Downtown streets more engaging (DDI Downtown Master Plan)
- Create favorable “view from the road” for developments located along gateways into Downtown (Central Durham Gateways Plan)
- Create cohesive and consistent signage and wayfinding to highlight access points to Downtown and promote easy travel between neighborhoods (Central Durham Gateways Plan)
- Use streetscaping elements such as trees, public art, benches, and lighting to enhance the pedestrian experience in Downtown (Downtown Open Space Plan: Policy Recommendations)

GOAL 3: EXPAND AND PRESERVE AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- Use City-owned land (particularly parcels east of Roxboro) for a large-scale redevelopment project that includes a range of housing options, along with office and retail space (Enterprise City of Durham Housing Goals)
- Work with developers to build green, affordable rental housing on City-owned land, particularly on locations proximate to transit (Enterprise City of Durham Housing Goals, Goal 1.1(c))
- Grow retail and residential offerings that are accessible to Durham residents across a range of incomes (DDI Downtown Master Plan)
- Focus on assisting Durham residents, particularly those with household income below 50% AMI, through the preservation and expansion of affordable rental units and the availability of housing vouchers (Enterprise City of Durham Housing Goals, Goal 1)
- Maintain housing affordability for low-income Durham residents in neighborhoods where home prices are increasing rapidly, particularly in the Southside and northeast central Durham neighborhoods (Enterprise City of Durham Housing Goals, Goal 2)
- Create or preserve 1,000 affordable units over the next five years (Enterprise City of Durham Housing Goals, Goal 2)

- Ensure that the City and Durham Housing Authority (DHA) develop a coordinated strategy to address common housing goals and explore potential for developing DHA's downtown properties into high quality affordable housing (Enterprise City of Durham Housing Goals, Goal 1.1(a))

GOAL 4: ENHANCE THE VIBRANCY OF DOWNTOWN

- Encourage infill development in underutilized and vacant properties to increase cohesiveness and walkability Downtown, with a particular emphasis on pedestrian-scale amenities to fill gaps between existing development (DDI Downtown Master Plan)
- Increase the presence of street-level retail along high visibility corridors (DDI Downtown Master Plan)
- Promote ease of movement between neighborhoods adjacent to Downtown (DDI Downtown Master Plan)
- Provide a diversity of public open spaces, particularly active and engaging spaces that offer recreation and entertainment options, as opposed to passive parks (DDI Downtown Master Plan)
- Offer a diversity of programming and events at a variety of price points to support a Downtown that is welcoming and enjoyable to residents across a spectrum of incomes (DDI Downtown Master Plan)
- Encourage residential and everyday service offerings Downtown, so that Downtown grows as a neighborhood and is not dominated solely by traditional office and institutional uses (DDI Downtown Master Plan)
- Create new retail clusters Downtown, particularly along key corridors (DDI Downtown Master Plan)
- Promote shared parking and work to ensure that parking is provided in strategic locations conducive to creating a thriving Downtown, such as emphasizing parking garages on the edge of Downtown (DDI Downtown Master Plan)
- Promote Downtown as a true neighborhood, and not just a Central Business District (DDI Downtown Master Plan)
- Design bicycle corridors that support safe biking routes into Downtown. Chapel Hill Street between Swift Avenue and Ramseur Street (a 1.07 mile stretch) is identified as a priority corridor for bicycle-focused projects, including recommendations for new proposed bike lanes and intersection re-design (Durham Bike + Walk Implementation Plan: Project Recommendations)

Policy Documents Reviewed:

- *Central Durham Gateways Plan*, adopted August 2009.
- *City and County of Durham Joint Economic Development Strategic Plan*, completed November 2014.
- *DDI Downtown Master Plan 2016*, currently under review.
- *Downtown Open Space Plan*, adopted October 2014.
- *Durham Bike + Walk Implementation Plan 2016*, completed May 2017.
- *Durham: What's Next? Strategic Plan Update, FY 2016-2018*, adopted June 2015.
- *Enterprise City of Durham Affordable Housing Goals 2016-2021*, drafted March 2016.
- *Ordinance to Amend the Unified Development Ordinance Regarding Design Districts*, effective September 1, 2017.

II. Specific Recommendations and City Guidance Regarding Site

In addition to the review of City plans, the HR&A team reviewed documents focused specifically on the Durham Police Department Headquarters site and its likely future disposition. We identified the following recommendations, which will be useful in guiding the HR&A team's design of site development scenarios.

Significance of the 505 W. Chapel Hill Street Site

- Identified as a “Potential Catalyst Site” well-suited for redevelopment and instrumental in promoting connectivity between Downtown and western Durham neighborhoods. Redevelopment of the DPD site will impact future development along this important gateway street (DDI Downtown Master Plan)
- Intersection of Chapel Hill Street and Duke Street identified as a “Critical Intersection” within Durham’s West Zone in need of activation. There is a need to highlight proximity to Downtown and help enhance the location as a gateway to Downtown. Development at this intersection should emphasize street-level activity and development of a mix of uses (DDI Downtown Master Plan)
- 505 W. Chapel Hill Street is currently located more than 800 feet from a public open space, and a radius of 800 feet is identified as a reasonable walking area within a downtown district (Downtown Open Space Plan)
- Chapel Hill Street identified as a primary walking route into Downtown, though the area west of Ramseur Street has deteriorating sidewalks and a lack of pedestrian-friendly amenities, such as benches, lighting, and brick pavers that can be found on improved streetscapes within the Downtown Loop (Downtown Open Space Plan)

Design Considerations for 505 W. Chapel Hill Street

- If the existing building is retained, redevelopment should focus on design modifications to activate the ground floor and enhance the pedestrian experience along W. Chapel Hill Street (505 West Chapel Hill Street Preferred Design Considerations)
- If redevelopment occurs, it should include ground floor retail to activate the site’s frontage along W. Chapel Hill Street (505 West Chapel Hill Street Preferred Design Considerations)
- Consider a pedestrian mall or other design elements to make the large site feel accessible to pedestrians and to break up the large block (505 West Chapel Hill Street Preferred Design Considerations)
- Under current City ordinance, the redevelopment of the entire block will require 2% of the total site area to be reserved for public open space. Including more open space on site would create an amenity that this area of Downtown currently lacks, and could serve as a draw for attracting retail and office tenants (505 West Chapel Hill Street Preferred Design Considerations)
- This site is a good opportunity to include desired design features like public art, green roofs, and shared parking (505 West Chapel Hill Street Preferred Design Considerations)
- Encourage new and unique construction techniques to contrast any possible new building(s) with the neighboring NC Mutual Building, which was constructed in 1964. (505 West Chapel Hill Street Preferred Design Considerations)
- The site is located in a Downtown Design District, and these design districts were created by the City to “encourage innovative projects that are integrated and compatible with nearby development” (UDO Design District Updates, 16.1.1)
- Within a Design District, the UDO update includes the following guidance:
 - Encourage pedestrian activity by setting minimum requirements for pedestrian passage inclusion—one passage per every 250 feet of aggregate building façade along street frontage (UDO Design District Updates, 16.2.2)

- Development must preserve a minimum of 2% of the site area as open space (UDO Design District Updates, 16.2.4)
- Maximum building height is 100 feet, though additional provisions allow height up to 175 feet (UDO Design District Updates, 16.3.3). Eligible provisions to qualify for additional height allowance that are applicable to this site:
 - For residential development, if 15% of units are affordable, there is an additional height allowance of 45 feet
 - For including a green roof, there is an additional height allowance of 15 feet
 - For stormwater capture and reuse, there is an additional height allowance of 15 feet
 - For using metal, brick, stone or other masonry materials to cover at least 30% of the building façade and constructing façade projections of either three feet or recesses of at least 50 feet, there is an additional height allowance of 30 feet
 - For providing public structured parking spaces (minimum of 50 spaces, or 20% of the development's minimum required parking), there is an additional height allowance of 30 feet

Site Specific Documents Reviewed:

- 505 West Chapel Hill Street Disposition Strategies Presentation
- 505 West Chapel Hill Street Preferred Design Considerations
- *Ordinance to Amend the Unified Development Ordinance Regarding Design Districts*, effective September 1, 2017.

II. Initial Site Impressions

Duda|Paine, HR&A's design partner, led our team's tour of the site and the existing DPD HQ Building. In general, overall impressions were that the building is in better shape than expected, given its age, though significant upfit would be required to deliver office space that meets today's market standards for Class A office and/or to deliver residential units comparable to other newly developed residential product in the area. The Duda|Paine team observed potential for building redevelopment, including re-purposing the existing core for new uses, such as open-plan office space or residential units. Overall site impressions are detailed below:

Renovation Potential

- The existing five-story building seems to have 'good bones' and is well-designed and articulated from the exterior.
- Given the proportions of the plan, the existing building feels conducive to being incorporated into a larger mixed-use development, especially one that develops across the entire site. We would need to study further, but we would want to extend the first floor with retail space towards West Chapel Hill Street to create an urban street edge, creating the possibility to add a second-level roof terrace as a residential amenity. The first floor could also engage the terrace, expanding towards the south, through the use of shade structures or canopies to promote outdoor dining and other suitable street-level activity. Finally, we need to study how close new construction could be to the existing building, but we could consider doing an addition to the building's south, keeping the existing core in the middle intact while potentially doubling the overall building footprint.

- We noticed the panelized walls, granite-faced columns and cut limestone coping features of the building. Most of the masonry on the building seems to be holding up well.
- Some portions of the exterior wall (facing south) will need to be renovated but the biggest need of modernization is the exterior glazing, which appears to be 1/4" (or less) monolithic without any coating. There appears to be lots of dark film and sun shades added over the years to try to mitigate solar heat gain and glare, giving the building a very closed off appearance from the outside. Upgrading the windows with present-day high-performing Low-E glass and curtain wall would be a logical and sustainable solution, while adding a lot more visual transparency.



Pictured: Exterior window with dark film



Pictured: Close-up of film covering windows



Home Security Life Insurance Building
 Title: Home Security Life Building, Durham, Durham County
 Citation: Joseph Mellor, Home Security Life Building (No. 3246), Durham, Durham County, Joseph Mellor Collection, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York, New York
 Source: Joseph Mellor Collection, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University

Pictured: 505 W. Chapel Hill Street in 1958, as the Home Security Life Insurance Building

Future Uses

- The building core (elevators, stairs, bathrooms, mechanical specs) are all offset or off-center, which makes it suitable for an open office or unassigned seating layout, which is increasingly popular with IT and tech firms.
- The building's core arrangement also lends the building to be considered for development into boutique residential apartments or condos. Our initial impression is that the existing building footprint, with single-loaded corridors, could accommodate approximately eight residential units per floor, with unit size ranging from approximately 1,050 to 1,500 square feet.
- There are opportunities to activate the ground floor and improve the building's connection to the street.

General Facts

- Building originally constructed in 1958 as the Home Security Life Insurance office building
- Considered first example of Miesian skyscraper in NC
- The building was honored with a NC-AIA Award in 1959
- Square feet per floor = approximately 12,000 GSF
- First floor height = 17'-6"
- Typical floor to floor height = 13'-2"
- Building dimensions = roughly 70' tall, 48' wide (main portion) and 196' long facing West Chapel Street