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RE: REZ 06-16 – Robbins Park Hotel

Dear Susan, Jake and Jeremy,

The Town of Cornelius has coordinated our first review of the project referenced above and located at the corner of West Catawba Avenue and Waterview Drive. Please incorporate these comments into any future revisions.

1. Architectural Elevations – To date, staff has not received detailed architectural elevations or floor plans for this project, which is a critical component to the conditional zoning (CZ) process. Please submit these to us as soon as possible, including elevations of all four sides, floor plans, and color perspective views from different angles of the property. Include landscaping and screening walls in elevations and perspective views as well. It is important to understand the scale of the proposed facility from Catawba Avenue, from Lake Norman, and from adjoining properties. This proposal must be conceptually approved by the Architectural Review Board prior to being heard by the Planning Board.

2. Watershed/Water Quality Review – The plan does not currently show any water quality Best Management Practice (BMP) measures per requirements of the Lake Norman Critical Watershed overlay, or the Post Construction Storm Water ordinance. However, it has been mentioned that underground detention was being explored. Maximum impervious or built upon area is allowed up to 50% in the Lake Norman watershed only with approved BMP's. Staff encourages the applicant to submit a storm water concept plan to Mecklenburg County Land Use and Environmental Services (LUESA) prior to rezoning approval to ensure the County has a chance to make any comments prior to rezoning approval. Also, please be advised that there is a 100-foot undisturbed buffer from the 760-foot contour line along Lake Norman for high density projects in the watershed. Please indicate on all future plan revisions the location of the 760-line, and the undisturbed lake buffer.

3. Setbacks, screening and dedication of right-of-way – As you are aware, West Catawba Avenue is scheduled to be widened by NCDOT over the next 5-7 years. Please coordinate with NCDOT and their

consultant, WSP/Parsons Brinckerhoff and reflect the proposed design for the road widening. The parking in the front, particularly the spaces that front Catawba may have to be relocated. In addition to the right-of-way and setback, an area must also be reserved for types B and D buffers according to Chapter 9 of the land development code. The town will also condition that payment-in-lieu be provided for the necessary improvements along West Catawba, which may include sidewalk, bike lane, curb and gutter, landscaping (street trees), and utility burial. Payment-in-lieu for a crosswalk may also be required depending on potential pedestrian crossing signal locations through coordination with NCDOT. These improvements will be incorporated into the design and construction of the road widening project. Please also clearly show all side and rear setbacks for the building, parking and driveway areas on all future plans.

4. Coordination with Duke Energy – Per our conversations with Duke Energy Lake Management, disturbance past the 760-foot contour line, including a dock, boardwalk, and beach will most likely not be allowed for this development, and the existing dock and boardwalk would have to be removed. Please coordinate with Duke and modify the plans in accordance with their requirements, which may also include shoreline stabilization. Also, please coordinate with the Town and Mecklenburg County on any proposed improvements within the 100-foot lake buffer.

5. Screening and Landscaping – Although parking lot landscaping is shown, please provide a landscaping plan that lists the type of species, and include shade boundaries to illustrate conformance with the type 'C' landscaping requirements of Chapter 9. No parking space shall be more than 60-feet from the base of a canopy tree. In addition, please show the details of the other landscaping areas adjoining neighboring residential properties. Staff is recommending a modified type 'A' buffer of 50-feet with a berm on the north side, and 30-feet with a wall on the south side. The 50-foot buffer shall include 5 evergreen trees, 2.5 deciduous trees, and 20 shrubs per 100 linear feet. The berm shall be placed in the middle of the buffer, shall be 30-feet in width, and have a minimum height of 5-feet with evergreens and shrubs placed on the berm in order to achieve an immediate screen of 6-8 feet at time of planting. The 30-foot buffer shall include a 6-foot masonry wall in the middle of the buffer with a combination of shrubs, evergreens and deciduous trees on both sides. Elevations shall also be submitted for the fence as part of the architectural review.

6. Pedestrian and Bicycle Connectivity – The site plan does not show good pedestrian connectivity overall through the site, particularly within the parking lot. Please designate where and how pedestrians and bicyclists will access the building from West Catawba. Landscaped islands within the parking lot may be necessary that include sidewalks leading to the building.

7. Bicycle Parking – Per section 7.4(M) of the Land Development Code bicycle parking (in the form of bike racks) is highly encouraged to be provided for this development. Based on FHWA guidance bike parking should generally be provided at a rate equal to 5 percent of the automobile parking space requirements. Bicycle racks should be located at least as close to the building entrance as the nearest parking space (excluding accessible parking spaces) in a manner that does not block pedestrian paths and avoids conflict with automobiles.

8. Parking and Circulation – Although the Town is moving toward being more flexible and understanding of market forces with regard to parking, it is expected that parking provisions shall have some rational nexus. The current parking numbers appear to be significantly below what normal and average use would be for a 302-room hotel with a restaurant, and an 11,900 square foot convention center. The Land Development Code still includes the following parking requirements per Chapter 7:

    - Hotels = 1 space per room or suite
    - Restaurant = 1 space per 3 seats
    - Commercial Uses = 1 space per 300 square feet of gross floor area

    Based on the hotel and convention center alone based on these requirements, you could have a minimum of 342 parking spaces. We recommend either providing more parking based on the proposed site plan, reducing the number of rooms or the size of the convention center, or providing to staff and the board a detailed analysis of why you believe the existing parking numbers work for this site and why you believe the Town should accept this count. Our concern is primarily based on full occupancy of both hotel and convention center.

9. Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) – Please note the attached scoping document and MOU requiring applicant signature for the Town's Engineering consultant to complete the TIA. Please sign, date and return three (3) original copies, and also include a check for the amount required to complete the TIA, or request an invoice from the Town. An NCDOT approved TIA is required in order for this project to move forward to the Planning Board.

Please be aware that staff will be providing constant feedback throughout this process. I have also attached our redline comments on the site plan. No future board dates have been set at this time until the architectural elevations are submitted and approved by the ARB, and the TIA is approved by the Town and NCDOT. We look forward to working with you during this rezoning process. Please call or email me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

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Attachments – Redline comments, TIA MOU, buffer req drawings

CC: Wayne Herron, AICP
Sreeramulu N. Nara