

# **Concept Plan Application**

**For:**

PEACH AFFORDABLE RENTALS  
A project of EMPOWERMENT, Inc.  
Johnson Street  
Chapel Hill, NC

**Applicant:**



**EmPOWERment, Inc.**  
109 North Graham Street  
Suite 200  
Chapel Hill, NC 27516

**Civil Engineer:**

Philip Post Engineering  
P.O.Box 4912  
Chapel Hill, NC 27515

**Architect:**

JGA Josh Gurlitz Architecture  
308 West Rosemary Street  
Chapel Hill, NC 27516

<u>Issue Dates</u>	<u>Description</u>
Jan. 12 2021	Concept Plan Submittal

# Developer's Program

## Project Description

### About the developer:

**EmPOWERment, Inc.** . Empowerment, Inc. has been providing a variety of affordable housing options for 20 years in the Chapel Hill community. These options have included rental opportunities in existing housing stock and affordable homes for purchase in new construction. PEACH will be the initial new rental project for EmPOWERment, Inc. and will be the first of future projects intended to help address the need for affordable rental housing in Chapel Hill.

### About PEACH:

EmPOWERment Inc. owns three lots located at Johnson Street , Chapel Hill. These lots are indicated on the accompanying site plans. The lots are currently vacant. One lot previously was the site of a small community center that has been demolished and playground. EmPOWERment, Inc. plans to develop a cluster of buildings that will be used to provide affordable rentals in this neighborhood

The rectangular shaped property is approximately 30,000 square feet of net land area. There is one existing concrete loop driveway off Johnson Street. The existing drive will be partially removed, and a new vehicular access to the site will be through the west paved driveway connection to Johnson Street. The developer plans to construct a parking lot and a refuse and recycling enclosure at the edge of the proposed parking lot. Pedestrian circulation through the site will be by a series of walkways connecting the buildings, the parking and Johnson Street. A public transit covered waiting area will be created at the street.

An area for a stormwater facility has been designated in the southwest corner of the property. Water and sanitary sewer connections will be made to existing services from Orange Water & Sewer Authority facilities located within the Johnson Street right-of-way.

PEACH is located within the Pine Knolls Neighborhood Conservation District and is intended to enhance and engage the district by creating new, safe and accessible rental housing alternative within the district.

PEACH will create a change in use from vacant, little used, property to affordable rental housing. This change in use will trigger a number of requirements in the LUMO, including a required RSSC rezoning and the need for stormwater treatment, among others.

Landscape buffers in compliance with the LUMO and Town Design Manual will border the project site.

EmPOWERment, Inc., is requesting R-SS-CZO zoning so that it can provide 10 rental units with a total of 7,700 square feet of floor area. This exceeds the number of living units and the floor area ratio under the existing dimensional criteria for the current R3 zoning on this site; hence the need for rezoning to the R-SS-CZO designation.

### **Statement of Compliance with the Comprehensive Plan**

#### **Site and Building Design:**

PEACH will incorporate sustainable construction attributes that will provide the owner and the tenants less expensive operating costs and less environmental impact from construction and from operation. Among the sustainable construction features are high efficiency thermal detailing for walls; product selection for longevity; low maintenance windows, doors, roofing materials; use of products produced and sourced as close to this project location as possible; low flow plumbing fixtures; high SEER HVAC systems; LED lighting throughout. This project will meet or exceed the North Carolina Model Energy Code.

PEACH will incorporate Universal Design with the intent of developing a better quality of life for the many people who will be living in these residences. The Universal Design features will be incorporated in addition to the NC State Building Code and ADA requirements for accessible design. The 8 principles of Universal Design will be considered and evaluated during the design process. An iterative process between the design team and the non-profit project developer will be followed as the design develops with the 8 principles as a guide for decision making.

PEACH has been designed to be functional, easy to construct and easy to maintain. An example is the rain garden used for storm water control. This method is now a best practice because it includes natural filtering of storm water, decreasing dependence on sand filters that need cleaning and maintenance. In addition, the rain garden will be complimentary component of the overall landscape design.

PEACH will be low impact by including strategies that minimize building footprint (using 2 stories), minimize new impervious surface through double loading the required parking lot and incorporating a best practice methodology for treating storm water (see above). The landscaping will be natural, non-invasive, plant types that will acclimate better and faster when planted and will need less maintenance to keep them healthy and alive. Recreation features include a children's playground, a community gathering gazebo, an edible food garden, a natural walking trail through an existing wooded area, easy access to a nearby basketball court and a covered shelter for public transit.

#### **Community Design**

By including the variety of 1 bedroom, 2 bedroom and 3 bedroom living units, this project will contribute to the mix of housing in this community. This contribution will be enhanced due to the inclusion of Universal Design and code compliant fully accessible units being planned. Residents may not have to leave their community when they age or need a more supportive living environment if they can relocate to these living units. This is an important element for maintaining a sense of community

over time. This project is compatible with and will enhance the existing community within which it is situated. The design of the building includes horizontal siding, gable end pitched roof structures, walkways and other features that will help tie it to neighboring buildings. The quality and long-lasting nature of the construction will ensure that the building and site remain in excellent condition for many years, providing stability and dependability with the surrounding community. Currently there is a vacant building on this site. Providing a new residential building with useable outdoor areas will increase the security of the surrounding community and will also provide an example for future revitalization efforts. Because this project will be owned and managed by EmPOWERment, it will help assure the availability of affordable housing in this community.

- The PEACH Apartments Project is accessible to schools, healthcare, and grocery shopping. All are less than three miles away from Chapel Hill or Carrboro.
- Public transportation is accessible with the closest bus route being less than one tenth of a mile away.
- The PEACH Apartments Project is in the Pine Knolls community; an area of Orange County traditionally underserved by housing development. The project's intent is to preserve and bring more affordable housing to the Pine Knolls neighborhood.

### Community Sponsorship and Support

Since EmPOWERment first began formulating the PEACH Apartments Project, we have sought out community organizations and individuals at each step of the process, because we are committed to maintaining the legacy of the neighborhood. The Board of Directors for the Pine Knolls Community Center joined EmPOWERment to plan a project for the aging building that would be of value to the community. Because of the lack of affordable rental housing in Chapel Hill, all agreed that the building and the adjacent land could be used to bring new, state of the art, affordable rental units to the Pine Knolls neighborhood. The project would also include a park and a community garden that would serve as a gathering space for neighbors. We have continued to work with Board Members Dr. Ted Parrish, his family, Damita Hicks and Vence Harris that understand and appreciate the history of the community and the people that need to be served.

In December of 2019 EmPOWERment held a holiday event for the community. At that time, we conducted a survey of the community to assess their support for building PEACH Apartments. EmPOWERment outlined how the project will be dedicated to helping members of the community that need affordable housing as well as a project that will maintain the history of the Pine Knolls neighborhood. The results were overwhelming positive for adding more affordable rentals, as well as allow low-income families to live in the town where they work. Providing additional low-income rentals for the Chapel Hill workforce are two of the components of the Orange County 2020-2025 Consolidated plan.

We are pleased to include planners and architects that have designed units in Chapel Hill. They have an appreciation for the neighborhood and the people and are committed to helping construct a building that will help us maintain the integrity of the Pine Knolls community. Many of the existing homes surrounding the property are older, we are extremely excited to bring this multi-unit low-income housing project to the area

### **Affordability, Marketing, and Supportive Services**

The PEACH Apartments Project is in a Conservation District. It is designated to remain affordable permanently, 99 years. We will be ensuring housing affordability by capturing the cash flow from the project and subsidizing units further so that we can serve low income families. The funds contributed by our funding partners will be fully leveraged to help EmPOWERment recapture subsidies and maintain long-term affordability. The following documents will ensure long-term affordability of these rental housing.

- Deed Restrictions
- Performance Agreements
- Development Agreements
- Project is in a Conservation District

The process that EmPOWERment uses to ensure an adequate pool of income – eligible renters is marketing through our website, NCHousingSearch.com, recommendations from other partners such as Community Empowerment fund, Department of Social Services, local churches and Empowerment’s In-house waitlist of eligible individuals.

### **Alignment with Goals and Adopted Affordable Housing Policy**

The 2020-2025 Consolidated Plan for Orange County is the guiding document for Affordable Housing that includes Chapel Hill, Carrboro, and Hillsborough. Because EmPOWERment’s PEACH Apartments Project is a new rental construction it can encompass many of the defining goals of the plan, which include:

- New rental construction that is ADA compliant.
- The project is located on a bus route and is easily accessible to retail, schools, healthcare, and local employers.
- Subsidies have been included in the project to allow low, low-income families (at or below the 30% AMI) to qualify for designated units. This allows for individuals that work in Chapel Hill to have an opportunity to live near their job.
- EmPOWERment welcomes tenants that are voucher holders.
- EmPOWERment gives priority to applicants that are homeless, veterans, and seniors.
- EmPOWERment has been providing affordable housing in Chapel Hill and Orange county since 1996, and we have been and continue to be committed to providing affordable, safe and compliant rental units to the underserved population of Chapel Hill and Orange County.