

Broad and Washington
Comprehensive Plan Amendment and Special Exception

Narrative Statement

November 20, 2019

Revised April 3, 2020

The new Broad and Washington brings a full service organic grocer, enhanced public open spaces, community theater, new public parking, and transportations improvements in the heart of downtown Falls Church. The applicant has a signed lease to open the first Whole Foods Market in the City of Falls Church within a redesigned building that keeps many of the successful elements from the original Broad and Washington approval. The new application incorporates the City owned Park Place parking lot for use as public parking within a structured parking garage, along with a new signal at N. Washington Street that provides enhanced access for both vehicles and pedestrians. The project includes significant net new revenue for the City of \$49.879 million over 20 years. That net new revenue is also significant increased over the prior approval and represents a \$4.379 million increase over the first special exception amendment submission.

I. Comprehensive Plan Amendment

The Applicant requests a change in the Comprehensive Plan’s Future Land Use Map on the City owned parking lot to permit the concurrent processing and approval of a Special Exception application for that property and adjacent property located at E. Broad Street and N. Washington Street. The City owned parking lot (RPC 53-104-015) is identified on the Future Land Use Map as Business. Concurrent with the submitted Special Exception applications for Broad & Washington, the Applicant is requesting a change in the Future Land Use Map designation of the City lot to Mixed-Use. Under the original approved Broad and Washington application, the adjacent property was changed from Business and Transitional to Mixed-Use. The proposed change will permit the incorporation of this lot into the overall project and allow the City lot to develop in a way that is consistent with the goals and visions in the Comprehensive Plan. At the time of the Applicant’s resubmission on (date), the City and the Applicant continue to work diligently toward completing a purchase sale agreement for the City-owned parking lot.

The proposed development is located in the Downtown/City Center area and fulfills the plan’s vision and goals for that area by creating a vibrant, urban, streetscape with a varied mix of uses that will bookend the eastern end of downtown Falls Church. Most of the guidance in the Comprehensive Plan for this area is directed toward the City Center, which does not include the City lot or the adjacent parcels that are part of Broad and Washington. However, there is some specific language applicable to this property in the general text and the more general Land Use and Economic Development Goals in the Comprehensive Plan.

- **Provide the appropriate level of commercial uses within the City that meets the needs of residents and supports the economic vitality of the City (Chapter 4 – Goal 9).** The proposed project contains a significant commercial component that furthers the goal and accomplishes the associated strategies. The proposed commercial uses allow residents to meet their needs locally and will reduce auto trips to outside the City. The mix of grocery, retail, and restaurants will provide the needed services to the City’s residents, including residents of this project. The project also maximizes the amount of net new commercial revenue to the City.
- **Provide for mixed-use development areas composed of retail, office, and residential uses (Chapter 4 – Goal 11).** The proposed project includes significant amounts of grocery, retail, and residential uses into one building. The co-location of various uses will facilitate the use of shops and restaurants by residents and will create foot traffic during the day and on nights and weekends.
- **Ensure that parking solutions enhance the character and efficiency of commercial areas (Chapter 4 – Goal 12).** The surface parking for the three existing buildings and the City lot will be replaced with a structured garage that is mostly below grade or screened from view on N. Washington Street and E. Broad Street. The project replaces the existing public parking with new public parking within a new, more efficient structured garage. Additionally, the project facilitates a new leg to the signal at N. Washington Street and Park Place. That new signalized intersection creates significantly improved vehicular access to the public parking. It also creates new crosswalks and pedestrian connections between the public parking and existing business in Downtown Falls Church. The varied mix of uses will also allow for shared parking on the site, thereby reducing the overall number of needed spaces. Parking demand will further be diminished by the provision of bike parking on the site.
- **Promote efficient use of land within the City’s commercial corridors (Chapter 4 – Goal 14).** As provided in the strategy for implementing this goal, the project is a multi-story building that is seeking a 15-foot increase in by-right height and will efficiently use the available land.

II. Special Exception Applications

A. Conformance with Primary and Secondary Special Exception Criteria

This application is requesting two Special Exceptions to permit 1) residential development within a mixed-use project, and 2) a bonus height above the by-right height permitted in the B-2 zoning district. Section 48-90 of the City’s Zoning Ordinance provides primary and secondary criteria for use when evaluating special exceptions. The proposed project, because of its

compliance with the Comprehensive Plan, Design Guidelines, and Downtown Falls Church POA Small Area Plan.

(1) Primary criteria:

- a. *The resulting development conforms to the city's adopted comprehensive plan and design guidelines;*

Conformance with the Comprehensive Plan

See above explanation of conformance with the Comprehensive Plan.

Conformance with Downtown Falls Church POA Small Area Plan

The proposed development substantially furthers the Downtown Falls Church POA Small Area Plan's goals and vision for the Core Entertainment Area and is in substantial conformance with the key concepts included in the plan.

Core Entertainment Area

The Core Entertainment Area is a centrally located, dense, walkable, bicycle friendly area that is "meant to leverage an existing area of unique restaurants, entertainment venues, and small offices to provide a focused area of dense retail businesses with supporting residential and hotel spaces." The project meets this vision by providing a walkable and bicycle friendly design that complements existing retail, restaurants, and entertainment venues in the area. Additionally, a potential community theater is proposed, which will directly add to the available entertainment options in the area and citywide. The varied mix of uses will create an active street during the day, and in the evenings and weekends.

Key Concepts

The proposed development is in harmony with and accomplishes the five key concepts for the Downtown Falls Church POA by increasing the tax base, improving the quality of life for City residents, and capturing a regional customer base for the area.

Leverage Existing Businesses

The proposed mix of grocery, retail, restaurants, residential, and a community theater will be complementary to and support existing local businesses. Whole Foods Market creates a destination that will complement existing business by drawing people into the City where they will visit other businesses. The new residential component will provide a base of new residents to support existing businesses on evenings and weekends. The potential community theater leverages the existing entertainment venue to create a hub of activity. Additionally, patrons of the community theater will support existing local businesses before and after shows.

Effectively Manage Growth

The plan calls for keeping “popular business and land uses while allowing growth on the land now dominated by unshared and uncoordinated surface parking, drive aisles, and other auto-oriented uses”. The proposed project consolidates four existing properties, removes the existing uncoordinated surface parking and drive aisles, and provides a varied mix of uses that will increase the coordinated development in the Downtown POA, while still maintaining the character of the area.

Improve Connections

The proposed project improves pedestrian connections within the Downtown POA by providing wider sidewalks and uses that activate the street to create a more pleasant and inviting space for pedestrians to access the proposed use and area restaurants and attractions. The new Urban Plaza at the corner of E. Broad and N. Washington creates an inviting and activated space for community gathering at the City’s zero intersection. The new traffic signal at Park Place provides significantly improved access to the City’s public parking, which will make it more convenient for those accessing surrounding sites and the greater downtown area. The new signal also includes a new pedestrian crossing at N. Washington that provides stronger pedestrian connections between the downtown area and the State Theater, existing restaurants, and our project.

Provide Public Parking

The project includes public parking in a more efficient layout than the current City parking lot. Along with other improvements, the new parking will have better access for vehicles and better pedestrian connectivity.

The (date) resubmission includes a draft interim parking plan and a draft permanent parking plan.

Interim Parking Plan: The interim parking plan seeks to minimize the amount of time public parking is available during construction and to accommodate local businesses impacted during construction. The interim parking plan stipulates that the Applicant will contract with a valet parking provider to provide valet parking to Clare and Dons and Thompsons Italian. The Applicant will also contract with off-site property owners for to provide parking for users of Clare and Dons, Thompsons Italian, and the State Theater. The Applicant is confident that the arrangements outlined in the interim parking plan will minimize the impact closing the public parking lot will have on the City’s local businesses.

Permanent Parking Plan: The permanent parking plan provides an overview of how the Applicant will provide and manage the parking supply for the various uses that will be part of the project upon completion. The permanent parking plan

dedicates 64 public parking spaces. This represents a 1:1 replacement of the 64 public parking spaces on the current City lot. An additional 78-shared public parking spaces will be provided in the parking structure, which is an increase of 46 parking spaces from the first submission. Moreover, the Applicant is providing an additional 39 residential parking spaces in this resubmission compared to the first submission. The permanent parking plan demonstrates that the parking supply will exceed parking demand both on weekdays and weekends. Atlantic Parking will professionally manage the garage once the project is complete.

Encourage Thoughtful Design

The project's design creates an urban, highly walkable, and active public street that is at a pedestrian scale. A new Urban Plaza is proposed at the corner of E. Broad and N. Washington that will serve as a community gathering space, with outdoor seating and activating elements. Additionally, the building is designed to a scale that complements the pedestrian realm. LEED Gold certification will be pursued for the project and rooftop amenities are provided. Bike parking is provided for both within the project.

Conformance with Design Guidelines

The high quality architectural design furthers the City's Design Guidelines by:

- Providing appropriate landscaping to define the pedestrian realm and creating an attractive pedestrian realm.
- Providing direct access to publicly accessible open spaces.
- Utilizing special paving materials for sidewalks and minimizes curb cuts along E. Broad Street and N. Washington Street.
- Orienting building and ground-floor uses toward E. Broad Street and N. Washington Street.
- Using the building's design to create an urban edge that is scaled for the pedestrian realm.
- Providing service and loading areas inside the screened garage.
- Providing parking in a structured garage that is screened from view.
- Significantly upgrading the project architecture over existing uses on the site, which do not meet the City's design guidelines.

- b. *The resulting development provides for significant net new commercial square footage and allows for a mix of commercial and residential uses;*

The proposed development creates a significant net new commercial square footage and provides a significant commercial component along with residential uses. The existing development on the property contains 59,417 square feet of commercial space. That space will be replaced by approximately 70,000 square feet of commercial space that is of a significantly higher quality than the existing commercial uses on the site.

- c. *The resulting development produces substantial positive net new commercial and residential revenue to the city;*

The project provides substantial positive new commercial and residential revenue to the City. The overall positive net revenue is \$49.879 million over 20 years. That is a significant increase over the existing revenue on the site and the \$31.4 million over 20 years in the previously approved project. It also represents a \$4.379 million increase over the first special exception amendment submission.

(2) Following the evaluation of applications using the primary criteria in subsection (d)(1) of this section, the following secondary criteria will be applied:

a. *The resulting development is not disproportionate to surrounding land uses and planned land uses in size, bulk, or scale;*

The City envisions this site as an area of dense retail uses with support residential to leverage the existing restaurants and entertainment uses in the area. Our project is of a scale and design that is compatible with surrounding uses and appropriate for a building at the prominent Broad and Washington Street intersection. The building's architecture is broken up to provide a more pedestrian scale, which is enhanced by a wider pedestrian realm, activated ground-floor uses, and outdoor seating. The building height on Lawton Street has been significantly reduced and setbacks on residential edges have been significantly increased to harmonize the building with surrounding residential uses. These factors combine to create a project that enhances its surroundings

b. *The resulting development does not overburden the existing community facilities, including the school, transportation, and water and sewer systems;*

The project will provide the transportation improvements outlined in its transportation study. Additionally, the project will provide any necessary improvements to the sewer and water systems needed to accommodate the project. Finally, a contribution to the school system will be part of the voluntary concessions.

c. *The resulting development provides community benefits, such as affordable housing, as it is described in article VII of this chapter;*

The project will provide community benefits through the varied number of uses included, including the potential community theater. The variety of uses, including the grocery and residential, will create a critical mass of activity that will benefit the existing businesses in the area. The increased tax revenue from the project will help the City provide additional benefits to its residents. The proposed residential uses will include 6% of units as affordable 60% of AMI. Those units are committed affordable for the life of the project. Additionally, the voluntary concessions include a provision for a cash in lieu payment.

d. *The resulting development contributes to a vibrant, pedestrian-oriented environment, both on site and in relation to adjoining properties, with street level activity throughout the day and evening;*

The Urban Plaza, activated streetscape, and pedestrian oriented design of this project will provide significant activity during the day and evening. The combination of a Whole Foods Market that drives pedestrian activity throughout the day on weekdays and weekends, the residential component that supports the grocery, retail, restaurants, and a community theater in the evening and on weekends is a unique aspect of the

project that will help anchor Core Entertainment Area. The building is designed and sited to provide an enhanced pedestrian experience.

- e. *The resulting development offers creative use of landscaping, open space and/or public parks, public plazas, and walkways connecting to adjoining properties;*

The project includes an active, pedestrian-oriented streetscape that provides landscaping in accordance with the City's guidance. The well-designed pedestrian realm provides opportunities for pedestrians to comfortably stroll down N. Washington Street and E. Broad Street. The site includes a significant Urban Plaza at the corner of N. Washington and E. Broad streets that provides a public amenity and community gathering area that will anchor the east end of downtown. Additionally, a public pocket park is provided along Lawton Street that connects to Park Place.

- f. *The resulting development provides a variety of commercial services and products that are attractive to and meet the needs of all city residents for entertainment, art, recreation, dining, retail, and an array of consumable goods;*

The significant amount of grocery, retail, restaurant, and a community theater, in the project will serve a wide array of commercial services for residents. The potential community theater in particular will help meet the needs of all city residents for entertainment and art. Additionally, the Whole Foods Market will help draw provides an additional amenity for City residents.

- g. *The resulting development encourages local or independent businesses;*

The ground-floor restaurant and retail space are anticipated to be available for local or independent business, which will continue the tradition along Broad Street of providing unique restaurant and retail experiences.

- h. *The resulting development provides for a reduction of single-use parking requirements through the use of shared parking;*

The varied number of uses on site will encourage the use of shared parking. The uses complement one another in providing parking demand at different peak times.

- i. *The resulting development encourages multi-modal transportation through design and other techniques, to reduce the reliance on single-occupancy vehicles, and utilizes sheltered stops for mass transit whenever feasible; and*

The project will encourage multi-modal transportation through its TDM plan, which is included in the voluntary concessions. Multi-modal transportation will also encouraged through the inclusion of public bike racks and private bike storage for residents.

- j. *The resulting development utilizes (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) LEED criteria in the design of the project.*

A goal of LEED Gold is included for the project.

B. B-2, Central Business District Regulations – Mixed Use and Height Increase

The proposed commercial and residential mixed-use development meets the intent of the B-2 District as stipulated in the Zoning Ordinance by providing a varied mix of uses, including a Whole Foods Market grocery, retail, restaurants, a community theater, and residential.

Residential development within a mixed-use development project is a special exception use in the B-2 District. The proposed project aligns with the regulations specified in Section 48-488 (2) relative to the ability of the council to grant this type of special exception. Specifically, (1) the proposed retail uses are not included on the identified list of uses that are not encouraged on a primary street frontage, (2) the retail component is located on the first floor adjacent to a major thoroughfare and a Frontage A street as defined in the Comprehensive Plan, and (3) the proposed structure is over the minimum four (4) stories in height.

A height bonus of up to 40 feet may be granted by the city council, if the city council determines that the project is exemplary in terms of conformance with the criteria in subsections 48-90(d)(1) and (2) of the Zoning Ordinance, and the bonus shall significantly assist in conformance with subsections 48-90(d)(2) and (3) of the Zoning Ordinance. As discussed in this justification, the project aligns with the recommendations in the Comprehensive Plan and Design Guidelines (Primary Criterion 1) and provides a significant net new increase in the amount and quality of commercial square footage (Primary Criterion 2). The additional bonus height of 15 feet will also allow for increased revenue to the City (Primary Criterion 3).

C. Statement Regarding Projected Net Revenues

The Applicant engaged RCLCO (Robert Charles Lesser & Co.), a national real estate advisory firm based in Bethesda, Maryland, to analyze the fiscal impact on the City of Falls Church, Virginia, of its proposed development, Broad & Washington. Between 2020 and 2038, the typical 20-year time period for which RCLCO conducts fiscal impact analyses, RCLCO estimates that the property will generate tax revenues of approximately \$68.477 million against operating expenditures of \$18.598 million, resulting in a positive net fiscal operating impact of \$49.879 million. Without taking account of inflation or the fiscal benefits from construction, the annual net fiscal impact will be \$2,275,942. As noted above, these figures are an increase over the fiscal impact that was submitted with the original special exception amendment submission

Conclusion

For the above reasons, we respectfully request that the City Council approve the requested Comprehensive Plan amendment and special exceptions.

Respectfully submitted,



Scott E. Adams