

December 17, 2021

James Snyder
Director of Planning and Zoning City of Falls Church
City Hall
300 Park Avenue
Falls Church, VA 22046

Re: Third Submission of Founders Row Phase II (the “Site”); Letter of Transmittal and Justification of Application for a Rezoning a portion of the Site from T-1 to B-1, Special Exceptions to allow Mixed Use, and for a Building Height Bonus (including Statement that Founders Row Phase II Is An Exemplary Project Meeting the Recently Revised Special Exception Criteria for Mixed Use and Bonus Height); includes Statements regarding impacts on existing community facilities; conformance with City’s Comprehensive Plan and Design Guidelines; Net revenues; and review of Affordable Housing Guidelines

Dear Jim:

Please find enclosed an updated letter of justification for a proposed new development in the City of Falls Church by MCRT Investments LLC. The applicant has contracts to purchase the properties at 1001 and 1003 West Broad Street comprising 2.0756 acres. These parcels are proposed to be redeveloped for mixed use as “Founders Row Phase II” (the “Site” or “Project”).

This is the Third Submission for this Project, which includes changes to the program as requested by and discussed with the City’s various Boards, Commissions, and City Council, along with neighbors of the Project and the general public. While the Second Submission (dated August 20, 2021) contained major modifications to the programming and architecture of the project, including large reductions in height and density, this Third Submission reflects more subtle and specific changes as reviewed with these various groups. This submission also contains an updated Voluntary Concession / Community Benefits package, which further defines the applicant’s commitments.

This letter will summarize the key changes to the program, along with the justification for re-zoning the site and the requested Special Exception. The applicant would encourage Staff to reference prior letters of justification and submissions for a more detailed background on the evolution of this project since its initial submission in November 2020.

Summary of Major Changes between Second & Third Submissions

The following table highlights the changes between the Applicant’s Second Submission and today:



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Program Comparison			
	<u>Second Submission</u>	<u>Revised</u>	<u>Variance</u>
Total GFA	330,403	326,926	-3,477
Total Residential GFA	309,555	304,648	-4,907
Total Residential Units	280	280	0
Total Retail	15,026	22,278	7,252
Total Office	5,822	0	-5,822
Total Co-Working Space	5,000	5,000	0
Total Commercial	25,848	27,278	1,430
Commercial Ratio	8.0%	8.5%	0.5%
Total Parking	433	409	-24
Parking Reduction Requested	17%	26%	9%

Major changes to the program are summarized as follows:

- Ground-floor retail increased from 15,000 square feet to more than 22,000 square feet. This was driven by the conversion of prior “office / flex retail” space to true commercial retail space. It also resulted in a net gain of nearly 1,500 square feet in commercial in the project. The exchange of “office / flex retail” for conventional retail is a positive programmatic direction. The reality is that it provides for taller ceilings and wider spaces, which in turn allows for a larger variety of quality users to occupy space at Founders Row II. It will have a net positive fiscal impact for the City, as well as activating the Founders Plaza to a higher degree as well. Lastly, as committed to in the Voluntary Concessions, a minimum of 10,000 square feet of the retail will be set aside for food and beverage/restaurant use.
- Total residential GFA was slightly reduced due to a reconfiguration of space within the building, along with the addition of a north-south passageway to the western boundary which required removing a section of the residential building. Total residential units stayed the same.
- The program maintains a commitment to a 5,000 square foot co-working space accessible via South West Street. This is an element that will function as both a building amenity, as well as a working space for members of the public on a membership basis. Additionally, the space will incorporate a conference room that can be reserved by civic boards/associations.
- In total, our commercial ratio increased by 0.5% with the reconfiguration of these spaces.
- Lastly, we have increased our requested parking reduction to 26% at the request/urging of various Boards & Commissions. The current request is predicated on retail/commercial



parking at the stated zoning requirement of 1 per 300 square feet. The residential parking request is based on a ratio of 1.2 spaces per home. Phase I, for comparison purposes, was approved at 1.3 spaces per home. The Zoning requirement for parking based on the proposed unit mix would be a 1.7 ratio, which the applicant feels is excessive for this market. Based on the operation of similar communities both within and nearby the City, we feel a 1.2 ratio is very supportable for a project of this size and location.

Furthermore, there are substantial additional improvements and changes to the project that have been made based on feedback received from Boards, Commissions, and the general public. It has been the applicant's attempt throughout this process to focus on three main areas: 1) pedestrian / traffic safety; 2) the maximization of open space and green areas; and 3) an optimal programmatic mix of commercial and residential. As outlined prior, we have continued to reprogram our design to achieve goal #3. The two aforementioned goals have been addressed as follows:

- Pedestrian Safety – pedestrian safety has been a key focus throughout our many conversations since the Second Submission. To ensure safe passageway in/around the project, the following measures have been considered:
 - Pedestrian Passageway – we have redesigned the western boundary of our project (including the elimination of a portion of the residential building) to incorporate a north-south passageway that will allow for safe and direct connection between West Broad and Ellison Streets. This was a specific request of the neighbors, among other Boards & Commissions. The passageway will be well-lit and landscaped, and building infrastructure along that path will be appropriately secured and screened. The commitment to this passageway is preserved in our Voluntary Concessions
 - Streetscapes – the applicant will fulfill the obligations of the City's adopted Streetscape Standards to ensure that pedestrians and bicyclists can navigate the sidewalks around the project. The existing sidewalks presently offer, at most, a 6'0" pedestrian zone on West Broad Street, and a 5'0" zone (including encroachments such as utility poles) along South West Street. The proposed sidewalks will have a *minimum* of 6'0 pedestrian zone, only when a retail tenant has outdoor seating, and a maximum of 20'0". This commitment is also preserved in our Voluntary Concessions.
 - Crosswalks – the proposed site plan calls for the realignment and improvement of crosswalks at West Broad and South West Streets (north-south and east-west), along with the crosswalks at South West and Ellison Streets (east-west and north-south). The reconfigurations of these intersections better align pedestrian crossings, along with improving accessibility via ramps. These commitments are stated in our Voluntary Concessions.



- Sidewalk Improvements – the applicant has committed to in the Voluntary Concessions a \$100,000 contribution to the City’s “missing links” program to be utilized for the improvements of sidewalks and associated infrastructure in the vicinity of the Project, above and beyond any stated streetscape improvements detailed in the site plan.
- Other – additional pedestrian safety improvements include the installation of bollards, signage, mirrors, and alternative materials at the garage entry/exit along West Broad Street to ensure that vehicles and pedestrians are aware of turning movements. Bike storage facilities are also located at the entrance to the garage, with direct access to Broad Street, and in the closest proximity to the W&OD Trail entry.
- Traffic Calming – similarly, traffic calming, specifically along South West Street and at the Broad & West signalized intersection, has been a priority for the applicant’s team to address. As has been stated throughout the Boards & Commissions process, this signal is currently receiving of a borderline failing grade, which will continue to degrade with additional development. However, the proposals the applicant has made will improve that signal at least to a “D” Level of Service, which is a healthy LOS for an intersection that wants to maintain a balance of vehicular and pedestrian/bicycle safety. The following summarizes the key tactics for addressing traffic calming, as supported in the Wells & Associates traffic studies and addenda as included in this (and prior) submissions:
 - West & Broad Signal - the applicant will work with the City and VDOT to adjust the signal timing/phasing to eliminate the split signal phasing for the West Street approaches, and replace with concurrent left turn phasing. This will have a significant impact on the performance of that intersection.
 - West Broad Street Garage Exit – the applicant also proposes that a median break be created along West Broad Street to allow for left-turn exits from the property’s parking garage. A dedicated “Left Turn Only” lane will also be added to the building’s design to allow for easier movements. This will allow for retail patrons and residents to access West Broad Street directly, rather than needing to turn first onto South West Street, thus relieving traffic impacts at the intersection. The median break, as studied by Wells & Associates, would improve northbound traffic at the intersection by a full letter grade.
 - South West & Ellison Street Crosswalks – the aforementioned crosswalks will also contain curb extensions (bump outs) at both directions of the east-west crosswalk. This effectively reduces the width of that crosswalk across South West Street to 22’, enhancing pedestrian safety while also effectively providing a traffic calming measure as well.
 - “Your Speed” Signs – the applicant has agreed to install two “Your Speed” speed limit signs in both directions of South West Street near the intersection of Ellison Street. These



signs, found elsewhere in the City, have had a proven impact on reducing driver speeds, which is one of the biggest reasons for traffic issues along that area of South West Street.

- Ellison Street Parking – the applicant has offered a \$10,000 commitment to working with the City to preserve Ellison Street for neighborhood resident (not Founders Row II resident) parking only.
- Rideshare/Delivery Parking – the applicant has committed to allocating a minimum of three (3) parking spaces interior to the garage for rideshare and food delivery/pickup parking. In that capacity, drivers will have ease of access so that they do not stop on the street and block traffic.
- Open Space & Tree Canopy Coverage – the applicant has sought to maximize open space and green areas to the greatest extent possible. Most of this maximization occurred in between the Initial and Second Submissions with the creation of Founders Plaza and open areas along Ellison Street. In total, approximately 30% of the site area is “open area” to the sky, with 19% of that open area at ground-level and accessible to the public. The north-south pedestrian passageway along the western boundary is the largest change to the open space since the Second Submission. Additionally, 20-year tree canopy coverage for this site is approximately 14%, compared to Phase I which was 7.5%. We have pushed this as much possible to maximize tree area, including expanding canopy coverage along the western boundary along the pedestrian pathway.
- Public Art – public art has also been a big focus during this process. We envision the Founders Plaza as being anchored by an interactive art exhibit. To that end, the applicant has committed to in the Voluntary Concessions a public Site Plan Amendment process, in conjunction with the Planning Commission and Arts & Humanities Council, to select the appropriate installation for this space (very similar to how the mural was handled at Phase I). Furthermore, the applicant views this as being a high touchpoint process, involving the City’s schools and general public. The outline of this process has been committed to in the Voluntary Concessions. Furthermore, the applicant has also committed to the incorporation of two (2) historical markers within the public space of the project, recognizing the history of the site and neighborhood.
- Environmental Commitments – the project incorporates the following environmental commitments:
 - LEED Gold certification, including a minimum 20% improvement in the baseline energy performance. A LEED checklist and scorecard, as prepared by a LEED AP, will be submitted prior to site plan approval demonstrating that both goals are to be achieved.
 - Two green roofs have been incorporated into the project along the western façade of the building. Bioretention planters are included along Ellison Street.



- The applicant has committed to a minimum of 5% of the total parking spaces to be installed with charging stations for electric vehicles. The applicant further commits to providing conduit so that up to 50% of the total parking spaces can include electric vehicle charging stations in the future.
- The building has been designed as all-electric, which assists in the reduction of greenhouse gases.
- The applicant has committed to a reduction of the stormwater runoff from a 10-year storm by 20%, along with a \$20,000 donation to the City's stormwater fund.
- **Building Design / Architecture** – the architecture of the project continues to evolve with feedback from various groups, specifically the Architecture Advisory Board. The applicant acknowledges that this process will continue throughout Site Plan as well, with a focus on varying facades and quality building materials. It is our objective to provide a building that is differentiated from Phase I while remaining complimentary.

There are many other aspects to this project that bear repeating as well. The applicant maintains a commitment to 12% of the total housing as affordable, which is well above the levels of previously approved projects. The total benefits package of this project exceeds \$41,000 per unit, which is among the highest total packages the City has received. The fiscal impact model for the Second Submission places it roughly in line with the median of other Special Exception projects, and should perform even better with the updated program and increased commercial.

Request to Rezone the Property from T-1 to B-1

The current T-1 zoning was designed decades ago to provide a rather rudimentary zoning tool to provide for commercial uses typically allowed “by right” in the City’s “B” districts prior to the amendment of the B zoning districts so as to allow multi-family residences and additional height beyond the then extant height limits. The City has repeatedly rezoned land bearing the “T” designation to match the B-1 designation of the overall site proposed for mixed-use, as it has reviewed, and later approved, mixed-use developments. Projects sharing this land use dynamic and similar in scale to Founders Row Phase II include Akridge’s Gateway and Hekemian’s Northgate Projects on North Washington Street

Fortunately, from a planning perspective, the City has examined this site for many years, and has considered it as suitable for Mixed Use. Mixed Use is called for in the Future Land Use Map and in the City’s Small Area Plan for West Broad Street, thus no change to the Future Land Use Map is needed. However, a portion of the Site has remained T-1, and as a part of this application Mill Creek is requesting that it be rezoned to B-1. The original T-1 zone was designed decades ago, to provide a “transition” from commercial uses to the single family detached area contiguous to the T-1 zoned area. However, the Special Exception provisions of the B-1 District (adopted around 2004) itself has essentially supplanted that function of the T-1 zoning district, as the City Council has a wide range of discretion to use the tools of the Special Exception provisions of the Zoning Code, to fashion a more appealing and useful transition



from the mix of uses to the contiguous lower density residential areas. Thus, the Future Land Use Map and sound planning and zoning principals support the rezoning of the T-1 Area to B-1.

By consolidating the parcels in this site, Mill Creek has achieved a number of the goals in the City's Comprehensive Plan. Specifically, the proposed mixed-use development provides for sustainable development as it will allow for improvements to stormwater management and energy efficiency; to locating residents nearer to employment, transit and shopping areas; and enhances the integrity of the low-density residential area by establishing a "gateway" to Ellison Street.

Demographic and market trends demonstrate that the future development in this area should be an innovative and integrated approach to a mixture of uses including retail, residential, and service uses. Whereas Phase I is programmed to be more a lifestyle, entertainment commercial district, Phase II will function as a compliment with more neighborhood-focused service retailers that cater to every day needs. In that capacity, Founders Row as a whole (Phases I and II) will service both a daytime and nighttime population for residents of the property, the surrounding neighborhood, and the City of Falls Church.

Special Exception for Height Bonus: Founders Row Phase II is Exemplary and meets the Standard for Bonus Height

The area of the site to be used for the mixed use project is currently zoned B-1, which permits a by-right height of up to 55 feet. The developer proposes the requested development to be a maximum height of approximately 85 feet. The height of the project for purposes of the "bonus" refers to the height of the building as the average of the height of the building measured along the entire perimeter of the building. Up to 30 feet of bonus height may be granted if the project is "exemplary" in terms of conformance to the Primary Criteria 1 and 2 set out below, and assists in conformance with Primary Criteria 2 and 3.

Respecting the single-family residential character of the surrounding neighborhood, the Property tapers to 30 feet in height along Ellison Street. Those homes along Ellison Street will be designed with "townhome style" architecture that is much more residential than commercial in context, very similar to the treatment of Phase I architecture along Park Avenue. This includes front stoops, lawns, and landscaping that create a "residential gateway" at the intersection of West and Ellison Streets, which will be a dramatic improvement over the "dry" storm-water pond, overgrown brush, and parking lot that currently exists.

The building along Ellison Street is set back approximately 20 feet from the property line. The "Townhome Building" itself is approximately 30 feet deep, before transitioning to the main residential building. In total, a pedestrian or resident passing along the sidewalk of Ellison Street would be more than 50 feet removed from the taller building, a significant distance that creates the appropriate "transitional buffer" that the City was seeking. Furthermore, the six-story main building element also tapers at the top floor (sixth story) to provide even more view relief for the residents along Ellison Street.

We note here that there is a twenty-five (25) foot wide "Landscape Buffer" easement along Ellison Street that was created in 1977. This easement did not specify any particular landscaping and does not provide the type and quality of buffer that is currently required in the City between the uses proposed in Phase II.



Furthermore, the City subsequently created an additional fifteen (15) foot wide “Street Tree” easement in 2001. This is in addition to a twenty (20) foot wide “Building Restriction” line (“BRL”). The likely intent behind these easements was to serve as a buffer and screening between the Ellison Street residential and the unsightly surface parking, commercial uses, and stormwater pond on the Property. With the applicant’s proposed development, those concerns will be addressed by creating a congruous residential environment with landscaped lawns, trees and bushes, and sidewalks for pedestrian passage. This will improve the streetscape and the residential character of the neighborhood, ensuring that the intent behind those easements continues to be met. Thus, Mill Creek is requesting a vacation of a portion of those easements or, should the City deem it more appropriate, a vacation of the entirety of both easements since their original purpose (mitigation of environmental impacts of the current outdated commercial uses) has been supplanted by the protections of the Special Exception and later Site Plan.

The Founders Row Phase II Development Satisfies the City’s Revised Special Exception Criteria for Mixed Use

The City reviews applications for Special Exceptions using the criteria set out in the City Zoning Code. The following is an overview of the criteria; please also consider the comments above concerning the project and its positive impact on the community.

1. Primary Criteria (Section 48-90(1)):

a. The resulting development conforms to the City’s adopted Comprehensive Plan, Small Area Plans and Design Guidelines (Section 48-90(1) (a)).

The Comprehensive Plan and Small Area plan shows that the Site is located in Planning Opportunity Area 6. Founders Row Phase II fully supports the increased sensitivity to environmental sustainability (Chapter 5 of the Comprehensive Plan). The proposed development meets or exceeds the strategies called for in that area:

1. Consolidation of lots to accommodate higher density.
2. Promotion of redevelopment that eliminates stand-alone automobile and light industrial facilities.
3. Improve pedestrian accessibility with controlled crosswalks at various locations.
4. Create a consistent design, in terms of building height and design, streetscape improvements, and other aspects of the built environment in the City.
5. Preserve recreational resources in the area. Include green space and appropriate transition to detached residential areas.



6. Assess existing and provide for improved stormwater management; be open to taking opportunity to provide better SWM for areas other than just Founder Row Phase II.
7. Provide for lower impact vehicles by including electric vehicle charging stations, be open to new sources of energy (solar for example).
8. Create development to promote a positive image of the City in an area that has not seen any significant new development in decades.
9. Locate buildings as close to West Broad and West Streets as possible with parking located in the rear or in shared buildings or in structured facilities (in this case covered and underground).
10. Achieve consistent architectural goals.

The Design Guidelines show that the Site is located in the West Broad Street Area. As called for in the Guidelines, the proposed development will reflect an urban street-front, will provide a consistent identity for the area, increase pedestrian activity, and indicate the high standards of the City. In addition, the proposed development will improve paving at crosswalks at the Ellison and West Street intersection, and create superior connectivity to the W&OD Trail, all of which will work to increase pedestrian and bicycle activity in the area.

b. The resulting development provides for significant new or renovated commercial space and allows for a mix of commercial and residential uses (Section 48-90(1) (b)).

Currently, the two properties comprising the Property contribute very minimally in tax revenue. The “Drug Store Property” (Parcel #52-102-065) was redeveloped from a McDonald’s and a small restaurant in 2003 into a “by right” Rite Aid drug store. The building is 13,963 square feet and is best characterized as a “box;” the site is asphalt with its most prominent being feature a large dry stormwater detention pond area. The FAR is only .185. The box is in poor condition and has been vacant for several years since the Rite Aid chain was purchased and the new owner chose to cease operation of that store. The lease is believed to expire in 2022.

As a by-right development, the Drug Store has few site amenities since the City had no leverage to secure community benefits as it would have had if the redevelopment had been by Special Exception. This is readily seen by the fact the box has no windows facing West Broad Street and has a useless landscaping strip between the building and the streetscape. The size of this box and its condition makes the store very difficult to re-tenant to a superior operator, and if not redeveloped as proposed here, it may well remain vacant.

It is believed by the applicant that there has been no income to the City other than real estate taxes for this site based on its assessed value of \$5,124,200 in 2018, \$5,215,400 in 2019, and \$5,254,200



in 2020. The assessed value has dropped to \$4,948,300 for 2021. The assessed value of the box is about \$2,000,000 today. The applicant does not have access to tax income data.

The “Carpet Store Property” (Parcel #52-102-060) contains a warehouse type building of 11,223 square feet. The site is only a bit larger at 14,977 SF, with an FAR of .749. This “dense” FAR is result of the site being legally non-conforming in many ways. The box was built in 1950 and is believed to have originally been constructed for and used as the show room and service area of a car dealership. At that time, both West Broad and South West Street operated as two lanes, without any turn lanes or wide sidewalks. Parking for the Carpet Store was provided around the building with access from West Broad and West Streets; most importantly, this parking was done in conjunction with the contiguous uses. In fact, the parking spaces on the west side of the building cannot be accessed without using the drive aisle of the former Drug Store. To compound this access and parking deficiency, the parking spaces along West Broad were lost when the street was widened in the 1960s, and the spaces on the east side were reduced to being nearly unusable when West Broad and associated intersections were widened again and streetscape installed in the mid-1980s. This structure essentially has no parking, and it has had only warehouse-type tenants for decades. Improvements or changes in use require a new structure with conforming access and parking and hence are likely not legally feasible unless the new structure were small enough so as to allow for conforming access and parking.

The current use is a carpet store but the applicant has no access to the taxes generated by this commercial activity. It is believed to be minimal over the past several years. Real estate taxes would be based on an assessed value of \$1,546,400 in 2018, \$1,600,700 in 2019, and \$1,632,500 in 2020. The assessed value dropped to \$1,536,200 for 2021. The structure is valued at about \$700,000 for each year noted. The structure likely requires razing rather than renovation.

These two existing properties are served by significant surface parking. These spaces have not changed in years and it is unlikely they will have any new tenants for the foreseeable future. The proposed development will remove these unsightly and grossly underperforming uses. While the two properties combine for a total of approximately 25,000 square feet of gross building area, that area is inclusive of warehouse and loading space that is drastically misaligned with the Broad Street commercial corridor. As noted they produce virtually no income to the City other than real estate taxes.

The Phase II program calls for replacing this with approximately 27,000 net square feet of brand-new ground-floor commercial space, along with the aforementioned residential uses, creating significant net new commercial revenue and impact for the City. This project will transform these functionally obsolete existing uses to the prime commercial intersection that the City desires, creating reliable and larger tax streams for the City, and providing the neighborhood with useable daily retail.



c. The resulting development produces substantial positive net new commercial and residential revenue to the City (Section 48-90(1) (c)).

In conjunction with this application, information has been submitted to the City to be inputted into the City's cost/revenue impact model to predict the project's net new revenue. The model runs for the Second Submission placed Founders Row II roughly in line with the median net fiscal impact from other Special Exception projects. As recognized by the Comprehensive Plan, the parcels that make up the property are underutilized currently in terms of their density and use. At their peak in 2014, the revenue generated from these two properties was \$60,000/year, based on feedback from City Staff. The Second Submission fiscal impact model showed revenue generation from Founders Row II of \$1,600,000. It is believed that Third Submission will yield a greater economic impact due to the increased commercial.

The existing uses are in such poor condition, they should be considered as having only a marginal contribution to the City. The proposed development will significantly increase the assessed value of and resultant property tax revenue generated by the property. The businesses located in the new space will provide personal property tax revenue, sales tax revenue, and gross receipts tax revenue. Of course these businesses also provide jobs. In addition, by adding to the growing vibrant, attractive area of the City, the development will encourage additional consumers to enter the area and patronize commercial uses throughout the City.

2. Secondary Criteria (Section 48-90(2)):

a. The development is compatible with surrounding land uses and planned land uses in size, bulk and scale (Section 48-90(2) (a)).

The proposed development consists of six stories of new development, inclusive of a one-story concrete podium on the ground-floor largely dedicated to commercial use and residential lobby entrances; and five stories of wood-framed multifamily homes and amenities. As outlined prior, the project does consider the surrounding low-density residential neighborhood by tapering to 30 feet in height along Ellison Street, with a deviation to more townhome-style architecture, and a setback that allows for even greater separation of commercial and residential aesthetic.

The exterior is proposed to be glass, brick masonry, and high-end concrete panels, along with vibrant retail storefront along the ground-floor. The architecture is fully consistent with the high standards established by the City for prior mixed-use projects, and similar to that of Phase I. The new building will blend well with its environment near the existing residences and evolving commercial and multifamily buildings. The proposed development works in conjunction with existing buildings to further create a dramatic, defined statement of quality for this area of the City. The proposed development is consistent with the discussion in the Comprehensive Plan, and Small Area Plan for this Redevelopment Opportunity Area, which calls for significant mixed (multifamily) uses.



- b. The resulting development enhances or expands the existing community facilities, such as the schools, multimodal transportation facilities, streetscape and public parking, and water and sewer systems (sanitary and stormwater) and utilizes green rather than grey infrastructure to the fullest extent possible to manage stormwater and to create a health and attractive environment for the community. (Section 48-90(2) (b)).**

Schools

The City has completed a school impact analysis, and the proposed development will result in some additional students added to the school system. However, out of proactive concern in mitigating the impact to both schools and other infrastructure, Mill Creek has designed the residential portion of the project with smaller unit sizes than Phase I, while also capping the number of 2 bedroom plus office style units that disproportionately impact the school system. This approach will bring a new citizenry to the City, creating an appealing home at a more affordable price point than traditional “family-style” units, while subsequently placing a comparatively smaller burden on the City’s school system. The Applicant has also included a contribution to the school system in their Voluntary Concessions.

Transportation

A traffic study has been conducted by Wells and Associates that evaluates the anticipated traffic impacts of the application and provides specific recommendations to mitigate those impacts. This study is dated November 6, 2020, was revised on June 8, 2021, with another revision included in this submission. The application envisions a vibrant mixed-use development that will be sensitive to the transportation concerns of the City. As outlined in the report, it is anticipated that the proposed development as compared to the existing retail (assuming it were functionally operational) would result in a net increase of 73 weekday AM peak hour trips, and 82 weekday PM peak hour trips.

By providing a variety of complementary uses on the site and across from Founders Row Phase I, the proposed development will encourage self-contained, pedestrian trips. Additionally, due to its location proximate to several bus routes, including a new and relocated bus shelter as proffered in the Voluntary Concessions, along with implementation of Transportation Demand Management (“TDM”) measures, a percentage of the trips generated by the residential and commercial components of the proposed development are anticipated to utilize non-auto modes of transportation. TDM measures will include convenient bicycle storage facilities, transit incentives, and extensive resources conducive to teleworking. Furthermore, the applicant is requesting a 26% reduction in City parking standards (approximately 1.2 spaces per residential unit), which will enhance non-automotive means of transportation.

In addition to these TDM measures, the applicant and their engineering team recommends that the City adjust the signal phasing at the intersection of Broad & West Streets to allow concurrent



northbound and southbound movements. Additional traffic mitigation measures are summarized in the prior sections of this letter.

Water & Sewer

The project will greatly improve stormwater management with BMP's, and bring the site to current City and State standards. The applicant will work with City staff to determine capacity issues during the site plan process, and if any upgrades to sewer and water infrastructure are required, those will be performed during construction. The applicant is also committing to a 20% reduction in stormwater runoff from the 10-year storm, plus a \$20,000 commitment to the City's stormwater fund. The design also calls for two green roofs, and bioretention planters along Ellison Street.

- c. The resulting development provides community benefits such as affordable housing and/or workforce housing, as it is described in Section 38-43 (Section 48-90(2) (c)).**

The developer is proposing an on-site Affordable Dwelling Unit (ADU) contribution in significant excess of the "typical" 6% of all units at 60% of AMI. Specifically, the following ADU contribution is proposed: 6% of total units at 60% AMI, and 6% of total units at 80% AMI, for a total contribution of 12%, double that of the typical requirement. In whole numbers, this translates to 34 affordable homes out of the 280 total homes proposed. This larger contribution is made in recognition of the fact the City is making a concentrated effort to increase the amount of affordable housing that is offered, and that new development is the best opportunity for capturing these new homes.

Furthermore, the applicant is also including in this set of Voluntary Concessions cash contributions to schools, parks, and libraries. While those amounts are less than what has been included in recently approved projects, the applicant wants to make it clear that if the City desires an alternative mix of affordable housing and cash contributions, they are willing and flexible to evaluate based on the City's priorities.

- d. The resulting development contributes to a vibrant, pedestrian-oriented environment both on site and in relation to adjoining properties, with walkable street level activity throughout the day and evening (Section 48-90(2) (d)).**

The current uses at the site are distinctly automobile-oriented, with the majority of the property occupied by their own surface parking lots. The proposed development will move all parking within enclosed structures, which will contribute further to the walkable nature of the area

The provision of streetscape along the entire development's three sides facing streets will contribute to the vibrant, pedestrian-oriented environment with connectivity to adjacent commercial, residential, and park areas. Sidewalks will expand greatly beyond their current use, allowing for easier pedestrian/bicycle travel around the site. The applicant is also proposing a new



north-south pathway along the western boundary of the project to allow for direct pedestrian connection between West Broad and Ellison Streets. Crosswalks will be realigned and improved around the project, allowing for safer connection between adjoining properties, including Founders Row Phase I. The mix of development uses will generate pedestrian traffic throughout the day and evening. The street-level retail uses will be very visible, inclusive of outdoor spaces, and will encourage customers to enter the area to shop and visit not only this development, but the additional retail located nearby.

- e. The resulting development offers purposeful and creative use of landscaping, open space and/or parks, public plazas or and walkways connecting to adjoining properties that incorporates sustainable landscaping and green infrastructure best practices for stormwater mitigation, urban heat island management and wildlife habitat support (Section 48-90(2)(e)).**

Three sides of the proposed building will have the attractive “streetscape” design and fixtures, and there will be enhanced connections around the site to nearby businesses, parks, and residences. The development will invite pedestrians to ride bikes, rest, talk, sit, eat and simply enjoy the area, specifically along the Broad and West Street commercial corridor at the Founders Plaza that is proposed. The residential transition and open areas at the intersection of Ellison and West will encourage bikers and pedestrians to utilize the W&OD Trail and access to other neighborhood parks.

- f. The resulting development provides a variety of commercial and community services and uses that are attractive to and meet the needs of all city residents for entertainment, public art, historic, and cultural resources, recreation, dining retail and an array of consumable goods (Section 48-90(2)(f)).**

As stated above, the proposed development envisions a mix of modest, but substantial, commercial uses. This includes opportunities in an area that are lacking sufficient quality retail currently. These commercial entities will serve the residential uses within the proposed development, as well as the neighborhood as a whole. A “Merchandising Plan” has been included as an exhibit to the Voluntary Concessions, illustrating the types of retail tenancy the applicant will be seeking. The applicant believes that providing for public art and cultural resources are best achieved by a collaboration with the local community. To that end, the applicant has committed to a public process within the Voluntary Concessions for a selection of public art within the project.

- g. The resulting development includes and encourages local or independent businesses (Section 48-90(2)(g)).**

The retail and restaurant spaces in Founders Row Phase II ideally provide opportunities for local, regional, and independent businesses. The high-quality development will help the area as a whole attract and cultivate local and independent businesses.



- h. The resulting development provides for a reduction of single use parking requirements through shared parking and transportation demand management strategies such as Bikeshare, car-sharing, and other techniques. Section 48-90(2) (h)).**

As shown in the submitted conceptual plan, the developer is requesting a 26% parking reduction from Zoning requirements. The reduction is almost exclusively for residential use, which would be parked at a ratio of 1.2 spaces per home. The applicant will also be implementing a TDM program, and has set aside three parking spaces for rideshare use. Additionally, bus service to the nearest metro rail station is easily available, and it is expected that some residents will bike to work (or to a multi-modal transit location for switching to bus or rail), and that the commercial uses will be patronized at least in part by pedestrians and cyclists.

- i. The resulting development encourages multi-modal transportation through design and other techniques to reduce the reliance on single occupancy vehicles, and provides sheltered stops for mass transit whenever feasible Section 48-90(2) (i)).**

As discussed, the property is in close proximity to existing bike ways, as well as the Metro station and several bus lines. It is expected that some residents will walk to the Metro station and others will bike to work, and that the commercial uses will be patronized at least in part by pedestrians and cyclists. The design includes attractive and user friendly places for bikes to be parked and stored, including locations directly adjacent Broad Street in proximity to the W&OD Trail.

- j. The resulting development utilizes LEED criteria (or other rating systems such as the WELL Building Standard) in the design of the project to achieve high standards for environmental sustainability and climate resilience, Certified projects are encourage to achieve LEED Gold or greater ratings and deliver a minimum 20 percent improvement in energy performance. Section 48-90(2) (j)).**

The proposed apartment development is committed to achieving LEED Gold, as well as achieving a minimum 20% improvement over baseline energy performance. The project will otherwise be designed using green design principles and elements. By removing the existing impervious parking lots and implementing a new stormwater management plan, the development will reduce stormwater runoff in the area. Additionally, the non-residential part of the project will incorporate eco-conscious, sustainable elements in the design of the commercial spaces.

Statement Regarding Conformance with the City's Adopted Comprehensive Plan and Design Guidelines

Please refer to the text above for a discussion of the Comprehensive Plan compliance. The Design Guidelines are also being met. Fundamentally, those Design Guidelines suggest that new development take its cue from existing development where that existing development meets the goals of the community.



Phase II takes its primary design cues from the Founders Row Phase I as that architecture, massing, forms, streetscape, and the transition to neighborhoods was recently extensively studied, including having been studied during the Small Area Plan for the “West Broad Street Area.” The applicant expects to make additional refinements during the Site Plan reviews and fully welcomes the community’s involvement.

Statement and Data Regarding the Projected Net Revenues from the Project

An updated formal Fiscal Impact Analysis will be provided by the City following the review of this Third Submission. It is anticipated that it will be of a greater economic impact than the prior model due to increased commercial. The applicant will work with the City on preparing the information. It is known that the proposed development will far exceed the existing and recent revenues generated by the current uses on the Property, and is likely to significantly outperform an alternative replacement users of those existing buildings as well.

Conclusion

The Founders Row Phase II redevelopment proposed by Mill Creek fully reflects the City’s vision for Falls Church. It is a complimentary and logical expansion of the immense vision and creativity that the City displayed in approving Phase I. The project meets or exceeds the primary and secondary criteria used to evaluate the merits of the special exceptions. Therefore, the requested special exceptions for residential use and height bonus at the City’s gateway should be granted.

Thank you and the City Staff for its guidance and attentiveness to this project.

Sincerely,



Joe Muffler
Managing Director
Mill Creek Residential Trust

