



Date: February 9, 2022
To: Falls Church City Council
From: Citizens' Advisory Council on Transportation
Subject: CACT Comments on Proposed One City Center Development

On Dec. 13, 2021, City Council referred the One City Center Special Exception and Rezoning Application to boards and commissions for review and comment. On Jan. 12, 2022, the One City Center development team presented to the CACT. We appreciate the attention given to the proposal's transportation elements so far, particularly regarding bicycle parking, electric vehicle (EV) charging, and public spaces. That said, CACT believes several elements merit further consideration and improvement in the next revision.

One thing stands out in the proposal: a lack of focus on transportation options other than motor vehicles. If Falls Church wants to be known as a leader for alternative transportation, such as bicycles and pedestrians, we need to ensure new development embraces environmentally friendly solutions. The City and the One City Center development team should collectively give S. Maple Ave. and W. Annandale Rd. a multimodal makeover to ensure safety and accessibility for all users.

While CACT's recommendations cover a broad set of transportation topics, we feel most strongly about our comments related to:

- Pedestrian consideration for the Broad St. and Washington St. intersection (page 2)
- Additional traffic evaluation for a broader picture of impacts (page 6)
- Improved solutions for managing app-based ride sharing and delivery drivers (page 3)

PEDESTRIANS AND BICYCLISTS

It is critical that the site is friendly to bicyclists and pedestrians to promote a "village" atmosphere, ensure the City is safe and welcoming to people of all ages and backgrounds, and minimize added traffic congestion and pollution.

- **Bicycle Routes:** S. Maple Ave. is identified as a bicycle route in the City's Bicycle Master Plan. W. Annandale Rd. may also provide critical links to the Hillwood Ave facilities and the S. Washington St. Multimodal Plaza. S. Maple Ave. is designated for an "on street facility" but is not a road that bicyclists of "all ages and abilities" would feel comfortable riding on. Riding on the sidewalk is likely not a viable option given the anticipated obstacles and conflicts, such as planters, utilities, and pedestrian activity.

Recommendation: *The developer and City should provide a comprehensive solution for protected bicycle travel on S. Maple Ave. and W. Annandale Rd. as part of both the One City Center project and the proposed conversion of the S. Maple Ave. and W. Annandale Rd. intersection to a roundabout, as is required by the Bicycle Master Plan adopted by City Council in July 2015.*

- **Path through City Center Park:** As part of City Center Park design, consideration should be given to how pedestrians and bicycle users would most likely prefer to transit through the park, in addition to consideration given to how visitors may like to dwell in the park.

Recommendation: *The developer should implement a shared use path along the southern edge of the part as a “cut-through” connection for pedestrians and cyclists from S. Maple Ave. to W. Annandale Rd.*

- **Path from S. Maple Ave. to the Woonerf:** The path proposed through the building from S. Maple Ave. to the Woonerf seemed a bit of an afterthought. It is circuitous and transitions through multiple parts of the building. Understanding that there is an elevation difference that must be overcome, consideration for improving this path should be made.

Recommendation: *The developer should make the path through the building from S. Maple Ave. to the Woonerf as bright, open, accessible, welcoming, dedicated, and direct as possible to encourage its use and improve non-motorized connectivity.*

- **Sidewalk Space:** Despite a code exception request for building height, the sidewalk width remains 20 feet on W. Broad St. and S. Washington St., with slightly narrower widths on S. Maple Ave. and W. Annandale Rd. That space will need to be shared by outdoor seating, bus shelters, bicycle parking, trash receptacles, benches, tree planters, streetlights, and outdoor seating. Similar widths exist in Falls Church City (301 W. Broad St) and provide good flow when not encumbered by obstacles from two sides.

Recommendation: *The developer should provide open pedestrian space of at least 13 feet **after** accounting for outdoor dining seating and other obstacles alongside the buildings, particularly for W. Broad St. and S. Washington St. Utility boxes should be undergrounded or grouped to provide pedestrians as straight and clear a path as possible.*

- **Broad St. and Washington St. Crossing:** The developer has provided significant detail on plans to address motor vehicle movement through this intersection. However, pedestrian and bicycle safety are not as clearly addressed. With a collective 10 lanes of vehicle traffic entering the intersection, this is a large and intimidating intersection for pedestrians and bicyclists. This area will see more non-motorized traffic due to the large number of restaurants and other destinations of interest in the area. With the approved Broad and Washington project soon to come in addition to a potential One City Center, that activity will only increase.

Recommendation: *We recommend the developer assess expected pedestrian and bicycle crossing movements and identify how the recommended design will improve flow and reduce the likelihood/severity of injuries at the intersection. As an output of this assessment, the developer should provide a Level of Service analysis for pedestrians similar to the analysis provided for motor vehicles. The assessment should include an analysis of a pedestrian scramble (aka [Barnes Dance](#)) at the intersection at peak times of non-motorized activity and a review of whether to restrict right-turns-on-red.*

The City should coordinate and harmonize intersection design with the Broad and Washington developers as well to ensure a consistent design with sturdy materials that will withstand snowplows.

- **Bicycle and Scooter Share Solutions:** With the desire of Falls Church City to encourage environmentally friendly transportation, it is important to provide support for transportation sharing programs. Capital Bikeshare and scooter/bicycle sharing programs are prevalent in Northern Virginia with current or future presence in Falls Church City.

Recommendation: We recommend the developer identify designated locations for bicycle parking, and staging areas for shared scooter and undocked bicycle services. These locations should be convenient to exterior retail entrances and for building tenants and not obstruct pedestrian, bicycle, or vehicle travel.

- **Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety:** The potential always exists for wrecks and unsafe behavior by motor vehicles that can injure or kill unprotected pedestrians or bicyclists. The plans for One City Center do not describe details that mitigate these risks.

Recommendation: We recommend the developer incorporate unobtrusive solutions into the design that add protection for outdoor seating, pedestrians, and bicyclists. These solutions could be in the form of attractive multi-purpose physical barriers, trees, elevation changes, or bike lane dividers.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

- **Employee Transit:** The application does not describe public transportation options beyond bus stops and distance to Metro. With the development’s anticipated restaurants and retail tenants and the recent trends in staffing shortages, convenient employee access is required so commercial tenants can hire as needed.

Recommendation: We ask that the developer or City staff describe the expected transportation and parking options for employees.

MOTOR VEHICLES

Recent changes in consumer behavior, historical experience and expected uses should be considered in providing:

- **Vehicle Travel from the Woonerf to Washington St.:** The travel route from the garage entrance at the end of the Woonerf is large and inviting but it is still entering a garage area that does not inherently show itself as a through route. We are concerned that drivers will not know that they can exit on Washington St. However, this route should not be so efficient for motor vehicle drivers to want to use it as a quick cut-through to head south on Washington to avoid congestion around Broad and Washington.

Recommendation: The developer should make travel route through the garage obvious and differentiated from the rest of the parking garage. This could include higher ceilings, enhanced lighting, brighter colors and easy to navigate lanes. The through travel route should accommodate delivery vehicles. One suggestion is to make the travel route more of an interior extension of the Woonerf through the building.



An inviting through travel path will also improve the utilization potential of interior spaces for delivery and ride-sharing services.

- **Vehicle U-Turns in the Woonerf:** The Woonerf will attract short duration usage by vehicles which will be further encouraged by parking limitations. Unless they are dissuaded through design choices, drivers may consider making U-turns within the Woonerf instead of travelling through the garage. We believe this increases the risk of injuries to bicyclists, pedestrians, and other drivers.

Recommendation: *The developer should ensure that there are physical dividers within the Woonerf that block vehicles from making U-turns. These do not need to be large and could be as simple as a raised divider.*

- Restaurant Delivery Services:** Delivery services have become increasingly popular during the pandemic. The plans do not appear to provide for a dedicated space for delivery drivers to pick up food. It seems unlikely that most drivers would want to enter a garage even with reserved spaces, but at minimum areas should be well-signed and coordinated with major ride-sharing apps.

Recommendation: *While we appreciate the reserved spaces, we recommend the developer provide a location for delivery drivers that does not impact traffic on Broad St. and Washington St. and will have a high likelihood of use by drivers **without** requiring increased police enforcement.*

We also recommend that the developer investigate if the delivery service systems can direct drivers to the appropriate locations.

- Ride Share Services:** Ride share services such as Uber and Lyft have become increasingly popular. The plans do not appear to provide for a space for these drivers to pick up and drop off passengers without adding congestion on W. Broad St. or Washington St. It seems unlikely that drivers would want to enter a garage, nor will they be directed to do so by the ride share applications. Riders are unlikely to designate the interior of the garage when requesting a pickup.

Recommendation: *We recommend the developer provide a location for ride share drivers to pick-up or drop-off passengers that does not impact traffic on Broad St. or Washington St. and will have a high likelihood of use by drivers **without** increased police enforcement.*

We suggest the city investigate the possibility of a designated ride share location within the parking lot on the northwest corner of W. Annandale Rd. and S. Maple St. While we understand that this location is outside the boundaries of One City Center, we believe the existing parking lot is underutilized and this would be an opportunity for the current owner to generate goodwill with the City.

We also recommend that the developer investigate if major ride-share systems can direct drivers to designated pick-up and drop-off locations.

- Area Traffic Studies:** The traffic study only addresses motor vehicles on streets immediately surrounding the project without an analysis of impacts along travel routes elsewhere in the City. We are concerned that the impacts on alternate transportation methods and further from the development are not being considered. A potential increase in drivers trying to avoid the Broad and Washington intersection by cutting through residential neighborhoods and streets where pedestrian and bicycle use is encouraged is especially concerning.

Recommendation: *We recommend the developer expand the traffic study scope to include impacts on bypass traffic and what will be needed to counter any increase. This may include funding additional traffic calming measures. There also needs to be more analysis of the traffic effect of other situations such as Woonerf events or vehicle wrecks at Broad and Washington.*

Other areas of concern we would like addressed are the potential impacts of the Broad Street HAWK signal as it relates to backing up traffic into the adjacent intersections and the potential impact of the [bus rapid transit](#) proposal restricting the Broad St. curb lanes to buses or right turn traffic only.



PARKING

- **EV Chargers:** We applaud that 5 percent of the parking spaces will be immediately equipped with EV chargers. But if automobiles are to be fully decarbonized by 2050, approximately 50 percent of the car parking will need to be electric by the mid 2030s.

Recommendation: We encourage the developer to install conduit to allow expanded future EV charging in more than 50 percent, and preferably 100 percent, of parking spaces during the initial build. The majority of these should be for the residential and business employees since we believe this will have a greater impact on EV adoption and commuter use than electrifying retail parking spaces.

We further recommend the developer identify what would be required in the next 10 years to electrify the remaining parking spaces. This can include options for commercial chargers for retail spaces and resident installed equipment.

- **Smart Parking Technology:** With a garage of the height and size proposed for One City Center, finding available parking can become a challenge for drivers. Smart parking systems, such as available space counters by floor and red/green lights over available/unavailable parking spaces can help users find a space quickly with the environmental benefit of reducing idling/circulation time.

Recommendation: We recommend the developer consider installing a smart parking system, particularly in the public areas of the garage, to improve customer experience and reduce circulation time. Any system selection should include consideration of long-term performance and accuracy.

- **Towing Policies:** We encourage the developer not to have predatory towing like some other nearby developments, allowing visitors to park at One City Center and walk across Broad St. or to other nearby commercial development without fear of towing. We also wish to avoid policies that frown on overnight parking. We believe an open attitude toward parking use will enhance the City’s ability to get the most out of the parking that will be built and reduce the perception that parking is hard to come by in the City.

Recommendation: We encourage the developer to provide signage that clearly communicates a policy that people may park while visiting nearby locations. The signage should encourage people who may be intoxicated or otherwise impaired to leave their vehicles in the parking facility and take advantage of public transportation or ride-share solutions.

Thank you for considering these concerns. We are excited about the continued investment in Falls Church City, pleased by the engagement in this project so far, and hopeful that One City Center will contribute to making the Little City a safer and more pleasant place to move about for everyone.

Regards,

Members of the Falls Church City Citizen’s Advisory Committee on Transportation (CACT)

Dave Gustafson, Chair
Jason Garman, Vice Chair

Arthur Agin
Andrew Olesen

Jessica Hegenbart

