

1  
2  
3

**City of Falls Church**  
**Planning Commission**

<b>Meeting Date:</b>  2-17-21	<b>TITLE:</b> Falls Plaza Shopping Center (FRIT) Renovations, Administrative Site Plan Amendment Application (MUNIS # 2020-0979)	<b>Agenda No.:</b>  8A
<b>Proposed Motion:</b> None. Item scheduled for administrative action.		
<b>Originating Dept. Head:</b> Paul Stoddard, AICP, Planning Director 703-248-5041 <b>PS 2-11-2021</b>	<b>Report Prepared By:</b> Jeff Hollern, Planner 571-395-0707 <b>JH 2-11-21</b>	

4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10

**REQUEST:**

The Planning Commission is requested to review and comment on the application for a site plan amendment to the Falls Plaza Shopping Center. The proposed project includes updating the shopping center architecture and general improvements to the site, including the addition of outdoor dining, expansion of sidewalks, and painting of additional crosswalks.

11  
12  
13

Under the city’s site plan code, the project is eligible for administrative action and has been scheduled accordingly. Staff is requesting the Planning Commission’s review and comment prior to staff action, which is tentatively scheduled for the end of March 2021.

14

**RECOMMENDATION:**

City staff has reviewed the first submission of the project application and provided comments to the applicant. Overall, Planning staff is supportive of the application and expects the proposed project will improve the vibrancy of the center with updated architecture and improved pedestrian amenities for shoppers and diners.

20

Key comments raised by staff include the following

21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34

1. Recommendation to add trees/islands throughout the parking area, to strengthen green infrastructure and provide tree canopy
2. Recommendation to mark/sign a pedestrian and bicyclist route through the alleyway for greater connection to George Mason High School and West Falls Church Sites
3. Recommendation to add crosswalks along “Staples” (Lot 2) frontage between the storefronts and the parking lot
4. Inclusion of native and non-invasive species of shrubbery and landscaping throughout the site
5. Opportunities to improve the bus stops located along W Broad, to be more in line with those laid out through the City’s Bus Stop Master Plan
6. For the related application for a Comprehensive Sign Package, staff noted that some elements may require variances acted, which would require Planning Commission recommendation and action by the Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) (to be scheduled).

35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60  
61  
62  
63  
64  
65  
66  
67  
68  
69  
70  
71  
72  
73  
74  
75  
76  
77  
78  
79  
80

**APPLICATION:**

The applicant plans to renovate the exterior of existing buildings on the properties, improve pedestrian connections within the properties, increase outdoor seating areas, add bicycle facilities, adjust landscaping, and improve signage.

The proposed renovations will disturb approximately 36,808 square feet (0.845 acres) of land on the properties.

1. Various Proposed Landscaping Enhancements:
  - a. Retaining Walls
  - b. Plantings, Vine Trellises
  - c. Curb Edge Planters and Landscape Beds
  
2. Various Proposed Bicycle/Pedestrian Access Improvements:
  - a. Striped Crossings
  - b. ADA Ramps/Curb Cuts
  - c. Bike Racks
  - d. New pedestrian access from Haycock/Broad
  
3. Various Proposed Vehicular Traffic Improvements:
  - a. Pick-up/Drop-off Zones
  - b. Removal of curb to maintain drive aisles
  
4. Various Proposed Site Amenity Improvements:
  - a. Litter Receptacles
  - b. Benches and Bench Walls
  - c. Pedestrian lighting
  - d. Dining Tables/Picnic Tables with Umbrellas
  - e. Vertical Fire Element (Outdoor Fireplace)
  - f. Provide heaters at new outdoor seating areas

**Land Use Approvals**

The proposed project includes the following applications that require approval by the Planning Commission:

**Site Plan** – Pursuant to Sec. 48-1134, a site plan is required when any disturbance of land exceeds 2,500 square feet. This site plan amendment would amend the existing site plan for the properties, which was approved in 1997.

**BACKGROUND:**

The site is located in the City’s western end on the north side of West Broad Street at its intersection with Haycock Road. The subject site is comprised of two properties located at 1230 West Broad Street (RPC 51-219-011) and 1126 W. Broad Street (RPC 51-219-123). The individual land area for the two properties is 5.28 acres for 1230 W Broad St and 4.86 acres for 1126 W Broad St for a total of 10.14. acres. The properties are bisected by Birch Street. The existing uses on the two properties include retail shopping centers with a variety of shops.

81  
82  
83  
84  
85  
86  
87  
88  
89  
90  
91  
92  
93  
94  
95  
96

**STAFF ANALYSIS:**

**Zoning and Land Use**

Both properties are zoned B-1, Limited Business, with a small portion of one property zoned R-1A, Low Density Residential by default as it was acquired from Fairfax County in the 2013 boundary adjustment.

The site and surrounding area, known as the West End, is currently dominated by the Falls Plaza Shopping Center but also contains a mix of residential and commercial uses, including automobile sales and service, retail, office, Falls Plaza Condominiums, and single-family residences along Offutt Drive. This area is mostly zoned B-1, Limited Business. The properties directly across West Broad Street from the site are zoned M-1, Light Industry/Automotive and currently house automotive and light industrial uses.

**Table 1 – Surrounding Properties**

Direction	Future Land Use	Zoning	Current Land Use
North	High Density Res., Low Density Res	R-M & R1-B	Multi-Family Res., Single Family Residential
South ( <i>Gordon Rd. Triangle</i> )	Business	M-1 (MUR-3)	Light Industrial
East	Individual Retail,	B-3	Individual Retail,
West ( <i>WFC, GMHS</i> )	Mixed Use	B-2	Mixed-Use

97  
98  
99  
100  
101  
102  
103  
104  
105  
106  
107  
108  
109  
110  
111  
112  
113

**Comprehensive Plan**

The Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map designation for this site is Business. The “Business” land use category is used for this area to allow flexibility for possible redevelopment. The “Business” land use category allows a wide variety of uses included within the B-1, B-2, and B-3 Zoning Districts.

The Comprehensive Plan recognizes the need for commercial buildings to be aesthetically pleasing in accordance with the City’s Design Guidelines. This project proposes façade improvements, increased landscaping, and tree preservation as part of the renovation. Updating retail façade, signage, and hardscapes may contribute to economic stability by reactivating the space with modern amenities. The project is consistent with the following Comprehensive Plan Goal:

- Chapter 4. Goal 1. Strategy B. Encourage redevelopment that enhances the City’s character, while providing economic stability and environmental quality.

**West End Small Area Plan**

The West End Small Area Plan Concept map and Potential Future Land Use map show the project area as high density Mixed-Use with retail along West Broad Street and office above. The plan shows the area along West Broad Street rezoned to B-2, Central Business to allow for greater density. The small area plan also calls for a more pedestrian-friendly environment with

117

118 vibrant commercial areas. This project proposal is an improvement to existing uses, and the  
119 following goals and strategies from the plan are applicable:

- 120 • Chapter 5, page 15 Strategy: Enhance existing tree canopy coverage and green space  
121 throughout the West End and encourage the selection of native species.
- 122 • Chapter 7, page 7 Strategy: Encourage trees to be incorporated into green infrastructure  
123 projects and open space areas to manage stormwater and provide other benefits.
- 124 • Chapter 4, page 5 Strategy: Prioritize safe pedestrian spaces which provide access to a  
125 wide variety of uses, encouraging multiple, long visits.
- 126 • Chapter 5, page 9 Strategy: Provide opportunities to sit (architectural ledges, steps,  
127 chairs, benches).
- 128 • Chapter 5, page 9 Strategy: Encourage restaurants to include outdoor dining areas. If  
129 opportunities for phased development are expanded to POA 4 and 7, provide flexibility  
130 that supports outdoor dining.

131

**Site Plan Requirements**

132 Staff has reviewed the application for consistency with the city’s site plan requirements. Key  
133 items identified during staff review are noted in the ‘RECOMMENDATION section above.  
134 Detailed staff comments are provided in the attachments.

135

**BOARD AND COMMISSION COMMENTS:**

**Architectural Advisory Board (AAB)**

137 The proposed project was presented to the AAB on December 12, 2020. The Board shared  
138 enthusiasm for the extra usable space in front of the Shopping Space, increasing sidewalk area  
139 for pedestrians and those dining at the restaurants in the plaza. The board expressed additional  
140 appreciation for pedestrian access from Haycock and Broad, although there is not a clear way to  
141 the plaza itself. The Board also asked further questions about the seating’s proximity to the  
142 Façade, and how that effects pedestrian vs customer traffic.

143

**Urban Forestry Commission (UFC)**

144 The proposed project is scheduled for the UFC’s February 17, 2021 meeting.

145

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

146 No public comment was received at the time of this staff report.

147

**TIMING:**

148	Application Materials Submitted	December 28, 2020
149	Application Fees Paid	January 21, 2021
150	Staff Comments Distributed	February 9, 2021
151	<b>Planning Commission Work Session</b>	<b>February 17, 2021</b>
152	<i>Urban Forestry Commission</i>	<i>February 17, 2021</i>
153	<i>Application Second Submission</i>	<i>March 1, 2021</i>
154	<i>Architectural Advisory Board</i>	<i>March 10, 2021</i>
155	<i>Adjacent Property Noticing</i>	<i>March 21, 2021</i>
156	<i>Administrative Action</i>	<i>March 31, 2021</i>

157

**\*\*Future Dates Subject to Change\*\***

158

164  
165 **LIST OF ATTACHMENTS:**  
166 1. Falls Plaza Renovations Submission #1 (December 28, 2020)  
167 2. Falls Plaza Comprehensive Sign Package (December 28, 2020)  
168 3. Falls Plaza Renovations Pre-Submission Presentation (AAB December 2, 2020)  
169 4. Staff Review Comments Letter for Submission #1, Transmitted to Applicant on February  
170 2, 2021  
171 5. Memorandum to Building Safety and Zoning Staff, Transmitted February 4, 2021  
172  
173