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## MEMORANDUM

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**TO:** Albert Frederick

**FROM:** G. Evan Pritchard

**DATE:** August 11, 2023

**RE:** Revised Statement of Support for Zoning Map Amendment, Special Use Permit, and Special Exception Applications for N29 WillowWood Plaza Residential Development Phase I

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My client, Capital City Real Estate, proposes an infill residential project (“Project”) at the WillowWood Plaza office center located on Eaton Place near Fairfax Drive. As shown on the enclosed plans dated August 11, 2023 and prepared by IMEG Corp. d/b/a Christopher Consultants Ltd. (“General Development Plan”), the Project would consist of a new multifamily building to be constructed on a surface parking lot located on Eaton Place immediately west of the office building located at 10306 Eaton Place. A parking deck would also be constructed to the north of the new building.

The application property (the “Application Property”) is a 2.97-acre portion of the parcel assigned tax Parcel ID 47 4 02 002, which includes the existing office building at 10306 Eaton Place, has a site area of 4.5 acres, and is zoned to the CR Commercial Retail District. The larger parcel will be subdivided to create a standalone lot for the new structures on the Application Property. The proposed new lot configuration is depicted on Sheet P\_001 of the General Development Plan.

The entire WillowWood Plaza area is identified in the Comprehensive Plan for the City of Fairfax (the “Comprehensive Plan”) as part of the Northfax Activity Center, which the Northfax Small Area Plan (the “SAP”) describes as being “marked by suburban commercial development, substantial impervious paving and a lack of sense of place.” The Northfax of the future is envisioned as a “dynamic, mixed-use center” whose existing commercial uses “can be greatly enhanced by additional uses” to include new residential typologies. Recommended building heights of up to seven (7) stories are recommended for the “Neighborhood Core” of Northfax, which includes the Application Property.

We propose to rezone the Application Property to the CU Commercial Urban District and construct a seven (7)-story multifamily building along with a parking structure. The Project will consist of 268 total units and approximately 1,980 square feet of retail space located at the southwest corner

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of the building. The parking structure will include a total of 635 spaces to serve existing office uses and residents. Approximately 125 spaces are intended to be compact in size. Another portion, 195 spaces, will be shared between the office and residential uses. Finally, 54 spaces will be shared between uses in the residential building. A separate application for shared parking, along with a request for an administrative reduction to the parking ratios, has been filed with the Zoning Administrator and is under review.

Based on feedback from staff, the proposed retail is located at the southwest corner of the residential building by Eaton Place. The General Development Plan incorporates several changes to the streetscape along the western side of the Project to ensure consistency with the SAP. The streetscape now incorporates a 6-foot-wide landscape panel, a 10-foot-wide shared use path, and a 4-foot-wide landscape panel. The Project is further setback to provide outdoor seatings for the retail space at the southwest corner.

We believe these revisions will help activate both streets and help create a sense of place for the community and the public plaza ultimately envisioned to the west of the Application Property while accommodating current and projected retail market conditions. To that end, in response to staff comments, the Project is designed to allow for the conversion of units along the western frontage to retail space in the future. The previously proposed live-work units have been removed.

Finally, the Project will comply with the Affordable Dwelling Unit requirements under § 3.9.6 of the Zoning Ordinance. As required, the Project will set aside 6% of total units as affordable, which has been notated on the General Development Plan. The affordable dwelling units will consist of 11 one-bedroom units and 5 two-bedroom units based on current unit count of the Project.

**Rezoning Considerations, § 6.4.9 of the Zoning Ordinance**

The proposed rezoning meets the approval considerations specified in § 6.4.9 of the City of Fairfax Zoning Ordinance (“Zoning Ordinance”):

- A. Substantial conformance with the comprehensive plan.

*The proposed rezoning to the CU District is consistent with the SAP’s call for dynamic, mixed-use residential development in Northfax. See Consistency with Comprehensive Plan section below.*

- B. Any greater benefits the proposed rezoning provides to the city than would a development carried out in accordance with the current zoning district (§3.2), and otherwise applicable requirements of this chapter.

*The proposed rezoning will allow for more urban residential development consistent with the SAP that would not be permitted under the existing CR District zoning. The proposed development will provide for greater housing opportunities in the City, generate greater commercial tax revenue, and create a more vibrant community than would otherwise be possible.*

- C. Suitability of the subject property for the development and uses permitted by the current versus the proposed district.

*A rezoning of the Application Property to the CU District will allow for the development of multifamily rental housing consistent with the SAP recommendations. Furthermore, the*

*introduction of residential uses adjacent to the existing office buildings will help create a more dynamic and active, mixed-use community.*

- D. Adequacy of existing or proposed public facilities such as public transportation facilities, public safety facilities, public school facilities, and public parks.

*The Application Property is well-served by public transportation facilities, including the CUE Bus Green Routes 1 and 2 that provide service to the Vienna/Fairfax-GMU Metro Station. Existing public safety facilities, public school facilities, and public parks will all be adequate to serve existing community needs and the proposed development.*

- E. Adequacy of existing and proposed public utility infrastructure.

*Existing public utility infrastructure has been deemed adequate for the proposed development.*

- F. Compatibility of the proposed development with adjacent and nearby communities.

*The proposed multifamily development will be compatible with adjacent and nearby commercial development. It will also introduce more housing into the area as envisioned in the SAP.*

- G. Consistency with the stated purpose of the proposed district.

*The proposed development will be consistent with the stated purpose of the proposed CU District zoning, which is to “provide an urban, mixed use development option for appropriate parts of the downtown area and sites in the general vicinity of the three key Fairfax Boulevard intersections: Main Street, Chain Bridge Road, and Old Lee Highway, or as may be more precisely specified by a current or future adopted plan.” The proposed mixed-use, residential development will be more urban in character and will be near the intersection of Fairfax Boulevard and Chain Bridge Road, aka “Northfax,” consistent with the SAP.*

**Special Exception Approval Criteria, § 6.17.7.A**

The following Special Exceptions are requested pursuant to § 6.17.1 of the Zoning Ordinance along with justification for the request:

1. A modification of § 3.5.1.D to permit less than 75% ground floor nonresidential use in a mixed use building;

*75% ground floor nonresidential use would entail more retail than the surrounding area could support, particularly given recent market trends and nearby retail centers such as the Amazon grocery that have captured nearly all retail demand in the market.*

2. A modification of § 3.6.2 to permit more than 24 dwelling units per acre;

*The proposed density is in line with the building form and planning goals for Northfax specified in the SAP.*

3. A modification of § 3.6.2 to permit a front yard that is greater than the maximum fifteen (15) feet;

*We are seeking to provide a 17-foot front yard rather than the maximum 15-foot yard in order to provide a better sidewalk and streetscape treatment in keeping with the SAP. This approach will also provide a better transition to the building line of adjacent office building.*

4. A modification of § 3.6.2 to permit a side yard that is less than the minimum ten (10) feet;

*We are seeking to provide an 6-foot side yard along the southeastern portion of the Project rather than the minimum 10-foot side yard. The 6-foot-wide portion of the side yard is needed to ensure the neighboring parcel to the east is compliant following subdivision of the Application Property. Nonetheless, the Project's side yard meets the minimum required 10 feet for the remainder of the site.*

5. A modification of § 3.6.2 to permit height greater than five (5) stories or sixty (60) feet;

*The proposed height relief is necessary to achieve the vision for the area specified in the SAP.*

6. A modification of § 4.4.4 to permit one sidewalk along a street.

*We are proposing one sidewalk along the private road to the west of the Project. The proposal includes only one sidewalk because the parcel to the west of the Application Property has not been redeveloped. In the event that parcel is redeveloped, a sidewalk would be added.*

7. A modification of § 4.3.3 to provide cross-access to the adjacent parcel.

*Due to the creation of the new private road on the western edge of the Application Property, an easement for cross-access to the neighboring parcel, which is improved with an office building, is needed. In the event that parcel is redeveloped, a road expansion would likely be completed and the cross-access easement would not be necessary.*

8. A modification of § 4.2.6 to provide compact spaces as required parking.

*The parking structure will include 635 parking spaces, 125 of which will be compact spaces that are 8 ft. in width by 16 ft. in length. The inclusion of compact parking spaces allows for an increase to the total parking on site in order to meet the needs of the existing office uses and proposed mixed-use building.*

The proposed development will meet the following criteria for special exceptions specified in § 6.17.7.A of the Zoning Ordinance:

1. Ensure the same general level of land use compatibility as the otherwise applicable standards.

*The proposed development will be compatible with the surrounding commercial development.*

2. Not materially and adversely affect adjacent land uses and the physical character of uses in the immediate vicinity of the proposed development because of inadequate transitioning, screening, setbacks and other land use considerations.

*The proposed development will be harmonious with surrounding land uses and help create a vibrant, mixed-use community where only surface parking lots exist today.*

3. Be generally consistent with the purposes and intent of this chapter and the comprehensive plan.

*The proposed development will be consistent with the purpose and intent of the Zoning Ordinance and the SAP to create a successful and well-balanced mix of uses in the City’s urban activity centers. See Consistency with Comprehensive Plan section below.*

4. Be based on the physical constraints and land use specifics, rather than on economic hardship of the applicant.

*The requested special exceptions are necessary to achieve the mixed-use goals articulated in the SAP.*

A waiver is also requested of the Public Facilities Manual § 401-01 requirement that a typical curb and gutter street be provided on private accessways that are less than thirty (30) feet from face of curb to face of curb.

*The proposed development is designed to be an urban community that is more compact and integrated with reduced roadway widths. For the street along the western edge of the property, we have showed how the future layout of the street will allow for a full street section once the property to the west is developed. For the interior street to the east, we are providing a layout that allows for landscaping and a sidewalk. Therefore, support of this waiver is appropriate in consideration of the intended urban design of the proposed development.*

**Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan**

Below is a summary table of how the proposed development is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and SAP:

Comprehensive Plan Reference	Recommendation	Proposed Plan
Comprehensive Plan, p. 36, Activity Center – Northfax	“New residential uses and amenities such as open spaces and a pedestrian-friendly multimodal transportation network, should also be leveraged to improve the commercial marketability of the Activity Center.”	The new residential use will provide daytime activity and potential employees to support existing retail and office uses in the area. It will also replace expansive surface parking with a more attractive building served by garage parking. The project will also improve the walkability of the area for pedestrians with improved sidewalks and streetscape.

<p>SAP, p. 6, A New Identity</p>	<p>A new identity for Northfax includes “housing typologies that are not well represented in Fairfax, such as senior, living, market-rate apartments, condominiums and affordable housing....”</p>	<p>The proposed development will include market-rate and affordable apartments, which are currently under-represented in the City. A total of 17 affordable dwelling units (“ADUs”) affordable at 60% AMI, or 6% of the total number of units, will be provided. These units have been identified on the plans.</p>
<p>SAP, p. 7, The Linear Park</p>	<p>“The most important design feature in the Northfax vision is a new linear park that spans from Northfax West to Northfax East, and connects north with Accotink Creek.”</p>	<p>The proposed development will help create the eastern edge of the linear park by improving the sidewalk and streetscape. In addition, the proposed development will introduce retail units at the corner that will help encourage redevelopment and creation of a proposed new community green to the west. The Project’s western side is designed to allow for future conversion to more retail as well. The Project will also help provide a pedestrian connection to Accotink Creek.</p>
<p>SAP, p. 9, A Balanced Activity Center</p>	<p>“Northfax is a huge opportunity to transform into a mixed-use Activity Center that centers and anchors the surrounding communities. Transitioning to a more balanced mix of uses will help create a better sense of place, bring more activity around the clock, potentially reduce single-use peak traffic, and help create more dynamic public spaces. The existing offices and hotels would be greatly enhanced by additional daytime retail, including restaurants, and a</p>	<p>The introduction of apartments will help balance the mix of uses in Northfax. New residents will help support existing and future retail in the area as well as hotels and office by generating daytime pedestrian activity.</p>

	larger nearby residential population.”	
SAP, p. 12, Retail Frontage	<p>“While the Northfax study area has capacity for dynamic retail, there are limitations on the quantity and location of retail frontage in the study area. Studies have shown that retail works best in concentrated nodes of no more than two to three urban blocks, and in traditional two-sided walkable pedestrian-friendly streets and continuous retail frontage. Public open space can be advantageously used by adjacent retail uses.”</p> <p>***</p> <p>“Due to the limited amount of sustainable retail possible, it is important that retail is generally not spread out and fragmented across the entire study area.”</p>	<p>We propose retail along a portion of the southwestern edge of the Application Property that will complement existing retail at Point 50 and be appropriate for existing market conditions. In the future, once the property to the west redevelops and the community green is created, more retail may be sustainable in this part of Northfax. To that end, the Project’s western side is designed to allow for conversion of units to retail space in the future.</p>
SAP, p. 14, Surface Parking to Green Space	<p>“...[T]he plan proposes an increase in buildings - replacing mostly surface parking in the plan. These new buildings have the potential to better direct water, have green roofs, and other eco-friendly designs that improve the ecology of the study area.”</p>	<p>The proposed residential building and open space areas will replace existing surface parking lots. As a result, stormwater will be treated much more efficiently and in a more ecologically-friendly manner.</p>
SAP, p. 14, Connected Green Spaces	<p>“The proposed green space diagram demonstrates potential green spaces in a total build out of the plan.</p> <p>The goal of this green space approach is to create 1) interconnected green spaces to facilitate movement of people and wildlife 2) A</p>	<p>The proposed development will help create the eastern edge of the linear park proposed to the west of the Application Property by improving the sidewalk and streetscape.</p>

	<p>variety of park sizes and spaces to support different activities and 3) connecting green spaces within the study area to active trail systems and cultural resources.”</p>	
<p>SAP, p. 20, Commercial Uses in Northfax</p>	<p>“Northfax is home to a large office complex (WillowWood Plaza) and a cluster of hotels serving a range of guests. What is absent in the overall setting is access to convenient / walkable amenities, such as restaurant and retail.</p> <p>Including providing enhanced neighborhood conveniences for nearby city residents, the redevelopment of the Fairfax Shopping Center into Point 50 will help address this commercial user serving gap. Adding further retailing offerings and other user amenities elsewhere in Northfax (i.e. green space) is key to strengthening these background existing commercial land uses.”</p>	<p>The proposed retail will complement the retail at Point 50 and the City’s business incubator space at 10300 Eaton Place.</p>
<p>SAP, p. 22, Residential Uses in Northfax</p>	<p>“Residential uses are key to supporting new development in the activity centers, both of which are currently dominated by office space. New residential construction also provides diversification of residential product type since most of the City’s existing residential inventory comprises older single family homes and apartment complexes.”</p>	<p>The proposed residential development will help diversify the City’s housing stock and bring much needed residential uses to Northfax.</p>
<p>SAP, p. 22, Building Height and Setbacks</p>	<p>“Areas not close to adjacent residential structures are recommended to have a (7 story) height limit.”</p>	<p>We are proposing 7 stories.</p>
<p>SAP, p. 23, Building Heights and Land Use</p>	<p>“As Northfax is designed as a mixed use center for the city,</p>	<p>The multifamily uses proposed are consistent with</p>



	<p>the bulk of the plan focuses on the neighborhood core use. Here, a variety of uses from office to multifamily to retail to hotel uses are proposed.”</p>	<p>the Neighborhood Core uses envisioned in the SAP.</p>
<p>SAP, pg. 38, Sustainability</p>	<p>“Stormwater &amp; Landscape” sustainability features</p>	<p>The Northfax Small Area Plan identifies the following five sustainability measures: (1) Green infrastructure; (2) Building efficiency; (3) Energy Production; (4) Green Roofs and (5) Native Plants and Erosion Control.</p> <p>With respect to measure (1), the proposed development will incorporate bioretention planters and new grass landscaping along all four frontages of the building, including on both sides of the new private road. With respect to measure (2), the project will be built subject to a Green Globes™ rating and certification. Green Globes™ is a comprehensive, science-based, three-in-one certification system that evaluates the environmental sustainability, health and wellness, and resilience of all types of commercial real estate. Specifically, the project will be built to the Green Globes™ for New Construction (NC) standard. This encourages opportunities to assess opportunities for energy savings and reduced environmental impacts. The rating system affords up to 1000 points, across the following categories: Project Management, Site, Energy, Water Efficiency, Materials, and Indoor Environment.”</p>

		<p>Green Globes™ project checklist will be provided to staff under separate cover. The project will not incorporate solar energy panels as identified in measure (3); however, the applicant is designing the building to meet Green Globes certification that will achieve energy efficiencies. The project will not have a green roof as identified in measure (4); however, the applicant believes the proposed stormwater management infrastructure is sufficient to meet the intent of this sustainability measure. With respect to measure (5), the project will incorporate new native trees, landscaping and planters throughout the site. In particular, the proposal includes new canopy trees and shrubs along both the western and eastern frontages. There will also be four canopy trees on the southern frontage along Eaton Place and three new trees along the northern frontage</p>
<p>SAP, p. 43, Zoning and Regulatory Recommendations</p>	<p>“Zoning (Land Use) – Currently, most of Northfax is zoned CR (Commercial Retail), which does not permit residential and hotel uses without special exception. The plan recommends that all properties in the study area be rezoned to also allow for residential, hotel and mixed-use. The Commercial Urban (CU) zone is a potential solution for the study area, as it has more flexibility in allowable land uses.”</p>	<p>Consistent with this recommendation in the SAP, we are proposing to rezone to the Commercial Urban (CU) zone.</p>

