

Belle View Shopping Center
Justification for Comprehensive Plan Change Nomination

Bellevue SC Co LLC
Tax Map Numbers 93-2 ((1)) 1, 2, 4 and 93-1 ((1)) 72
November 1, 2019

The following statement of justification is filed on behalf of Bellevue SC Co LLC, the Owner of the property known as Belle View Shopping Center located at 1508A, 1500 and 1640 Belle View Boulevard and an unaddressed parcel (tax map no. 93-1 ((1)) 72) on Fort Hunt Road (the "Property").

The 16-acre Property is known the Belle View Shopping Center, a one-story shopping center of approximately 182,000 square feet with a large surface parking lot and several free-standing commercial structures. This family-owned shopping center was originally constructed in 1959 as a typical auto-oriented shopping center of that era. Ever since its inception, this center has served as a community-oriented shopping center providing services to the local neighborhood, anchored by a Safeway, and a variety of retail, restaurant and personal service establishments including a bank, pharmacy and gas station. In effect, this Shopping Center has been the community gathering place since its construction.

The Property is well-located in the Mount Vernon District, south of the City of Alexandria, west of the George Washington Memorial Parkway. It fronts Bellevue Blvd. to the south, Fort Hunt Road to the west, I street to the north and finally 13th Street to the east. Single family neighborhoods surround the Property to the north and east, while 2-3 story garden apartments, condominiums and small-scale retail lie to the east and south. Unfortunately, while still relatively successful, the Shopping Center is facing several challenges including, most recently, a minor fire in October that temporarily disrupted several of the smaller tenants.

More importantly, beyond the fire, the Shopping Center is facing a fundamental challenge in that the nature of retail has significantly evolved over the last decade in response to technological changes such as online retailing, ridesharing, co-working, etc. This critical change has caused a challenge to many suburban traditional shopping centers as they seek to transform themselves from auto-oriented, single-use shopping centers into vibrant mixed-use neighborhood centers with an atmosphere of experienced-based activities, dining, services, and even co-working services all within walking of residences and amenities. By putting forward this nomination request, the Owner of the Property seeks to transform its Property to such a vibrant mixed-use neighborhood for its foreseeable future. Simply put, the goal is to ensure the Shopping Center remains the "living room" for the community for decades to come.

The Comprehensive Plan guidance for the Property calls for it to remain a commercial/retail use on the Comprehensive Plan Map. There is no site-specific redevelopment guidance in the applicable Wellington Sub-Area section (MV 4) of the Mount Vernon District Comprehensive Plan text, as most the recent future planning focus in this area has been on the Route 1/Richmond Highway Corridor as part of "Embark" which simply did not take into account how community centers like this can contribute to the success of Embark as well as anchoring the community.

Further, given the Property's excellent proximity to the George Washington Memorial Parkway and Fort Hunt Road, it is well-located for additional residents who seek alternatives to

commuting by car, as both bus and bicycle options to the City of Alexandria or Washington, D.C. are numerous and convenient. The Property is already served by transit through the bus lines on both Belle View Blvd. and Fort Hunt Road. The large surface parking lot is an underutilization of the Property given its location. It has the future potential to develop as a mixed-use neighborhood while prolonging its retail and personal service uses focus and adding either office or residential uses (or both) atop for a complete live-work vibrant environment.

The Owner puts forward a range of density to accomplish a mixed-use option with ground floor retail and personal services uses with low-rise multifamily residential above, with townhomes and/or two over two units providing an appropriate transition to the existing community. In either case, the Owner proposes a 1.2-1.5 FAR and a building form of 3-5 stories, which is consistent with the surrounding garden apartments and condominiums. To that end, enclosed by find the preliminary concepts of how we envision this nomination being implemented on the Property.

Beyond responding to the challenge retail faces, this nomination advances several Fairfax County objectives as set forth in the adopted Policy Plan. First, the nomination is consistent with Land Use Objective 2 which states *“Fairfax County should seek to establish areas of community focus which contains a mixtures of compatible land uses providing for housing, commercial, institutional/public services, and recreation and leisure activities.”* Policy a under Objective 2 continues: *“Create mixed-use Centers which enhance the sense of community and reduce the need to travel long distances for employment and/or services.”* The Belle View Shopping Center is an area of community focus and the Owner seeks to provide a mix of uses in a vibrant center that would allow for residents to live-work-play in the same location without need to travel long distances.

Second, the nomination is in line with Land Use Objective 4 which states *“The County should encourage a diverse housing stock with a mixture of types to enhance opportunities for County residents to live in proximity to their workplace and/or in proximity to mass transit.”* Lastly, Land Use Objective 7 states *“Fairfax County should reserve and/or conserve areas which provide primarily community-serving retail and service uses.”* Policy c. under Objective 7 states *“Encourage redevelopment or repurposing projects in commercial areas that would preserve or increase desirable community services.”* This nomination seeks a mixed-use development that will allow for more people to live closer to regional employment centers to the north and will also include the retention and repurposing of the retail and personal service use component of the Belle View Shopping Center on the ground floor.

It is important to consider this nomination at this time: the Belle View Shopping Center will be facing future challenges to its car-centric single-use life and the Owners of the Property look forward to a vision of a vibrant mixed use future that will further stabilize this established, well-located neighborhood in the Mount Vernon District. As stated above, the nomination is consistent with several of the County’s Land Use Policy Plan Objectives, and the future development of the Property would be consistent with the surrounding building form. The future development is also envisioned to continue to serve the community through valuable neighborhood-serving retail and personal services uses; however, with an updated, vibrant and modern approach that allows for experiential retail as well as traditional retail uses on the ground floor with new housing or office uses above.