

STAFF ANALYSIS

STAFF PERSON: Syd Shoaf, Senior Planner I
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS: June 7, 2023
PROJECT: SE202300011 Starbucks Parking Special Exception
PARCEL ID: 046B4-00-00-001D1

Special exception request to modify the minimum parking requirement in County Code § 18-4.12.6.

PROPOSAL

The applicant requests a special exception to reduce the minimum number of parking spaces otherwise required by County Code §18-4.12.6. The Code requires restaurant uses to provide 13 parking spaces per 1,000 square feet of gross floor area. The site contains the former Albemarle County First Citizens Bank building, which is 3,150 square feet with 24 existing parking spaces. The applicant proposes for the existing building to remain with some site adjustments, specifically: removing the three bank drive through lanes and canopy, replacing them with one drive-through lane, adding an additional patio of approximately 1,500 square feet, and adding eight additional parking spaces along the southern property line. This proposal would result in 4,650 square feet of gross floor area total. The applicant requests a special exception, as authorized by § 18-4.12.2(c), to reduce the required minimum parking and provide a total of 32 parking spaces on-site, instead of the 60 parking spaces otherwise required by the Code. As stated in the applicant’s materials (Attachment A), the reduction request is based on a parking study by the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) trip generation data specific for coffee shops with drive-through windows. The applicant has also indicated that site constraints hinder adding more parking spaces to the site. Further analysis is provided below.

CHARACTER OF THE AREA

The property measures 1.34 acres and is zoned Highway Commercial (HC), currently developed with a 3,150 square foot bank building (1815 Fortune Park Rd.) and 24 parking spaces. The property fronts on both Seminole Trail and Fortune Park Rd., with access from Fortune Park Rd. Surrounding properties are all commercially zoned and developed with commercial uses, with the exception of the parcel to the north, which is Forest Lakes open space and contains landscaping and signage.

ANALYSIS OF SPECIAL EXCEPTION REQUEST

Under County Code § 18-33.9(A), proposed special exceptions are reviewed under the criteria from the applicable section(s) of the Zoning Ordinance. County Code § 18-4.12.2(c) allows for parking reductions in commercial zoning districts in an individual case if the Board of Supervisors finds that the public health, safety, or welfare would be equally or better served by the modification or waiver and that the modification or waiver would not otherwise be contrary to the purpose and intent of the Zoning Ordinance. Because findings are limited in County Code § 18-4.12.2(c), staff has also considered relevant criteria found in County Code § 18-33.8(A) that would be applicable to special use permits.

Staff offers the following analysis of the proposed modification against these criteria:

County Code § 18-4.12.2(c)-that the public health, safety or welfare would be equally or better served by the modification or waiver and that the modification or waiver would not otherwise be contrary to the purpose and intent of this chapter.

Staff in the Planning, Zoning, and Engineering divisions have reviewed this request and believe that the proposed 32 parking spaces would accommodate the expected needs for this use. As indicated by the ITE Parking Generation Manual 5th Edition (2019) and based on Starbuck’s experience, the amount of parking needed for this restaurant based on its square footage is 28 parking spaces. Staff

has no public health or safety concerns with the proposed parking reduction. Parking spillover onto adjoining parking lots or streets is not expected. Therefore, the 32 spaces proposed by the applicant would exceed the expected parking needs.

County Code § 18-33.8(A) -*Character of the nearby area is unchanged. Whether the character of the adjacent parcels and the nearby area will be changed by the proposed special use.*

Granting the special exception would allow the existing landscaping buffer along the property's frontage with Route 29 to remain in place. The buffer already serves as a visual screen along the Route 29 Entrance Corridor. If the request were denied, the applicant would need to remove the buffer and convert it into surface parking, which would change the character of the area. Therefore, approval of this request would allow the existing site characteristics to remain in place and would not affect the character of the surrounding area along the Entrance Corridor.

County Code § 18-33.8(A) -*Harmony. Whether the proposed special use will be in harmony with the purpose and intent of this chapter, with the uses permitted by right in the district, with the applicable provisions of section 5, and with the public health, safety, and general welfare (including equity).*

There are no applicable supplemental regulations from Section 5 that apply to the parking reduction request. However, drive-through windows are subject to County Code § 18-5.1.60. This proposal meets all requirements in that section of the ordinance, including providing a longer drive-through lane than required. This special exception would be in harmony with the purpose and intent of the Zoning Ordinance, and would not negatively affect the public health, safety, and welfare as indicated above.

County Code § 18-33.8(A) -*Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan. Whether the proposed special use will be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.*

This request is consistent with the Neighborhood Model Principles listed under Objective 2 of Chapter 8 of the Comprehensive Plan, and meets the strategies of the relegated parking and pedestrian orientation principles. The 32 proposed parking spaces would all be relegated to the sides and rear of the parcel, away from the Route 29 Entrance Corridor. If the applicant were required to provide the 60 spaces required by the Ordinance, new parking would need to be installed at the front of the parcel, in front of the building.

This request is also consistent with Objective 6, Strategy 6c from Chapter 8 of the Comprehensive Plan, which encourages private development to use land efficiently within the development areas. The parking proposed by the applicant is suitable for the expected parking needs. Providing the required 60 spaces would create additional impervious surface area on the site. The parking reduction would allow the existing landscape buffer on site to remain, which would promote compatibility between this site and the surrounding area along the Entrance Corridor.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Board adopt the attached Resolution (Attachment C) to approve a special exception to reduce the minimum required on-site parking from 60 spaces to 32 spaces.