

STAFF ANALYSIS

STAFF PERSON: Lea Brumfield, Senior Planner II
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS: March 5, 2025
PROJECT: SE-2025-00003 Rockfish Gap Turnpike Country Store
PARCEL IDs: 07100-00-00-004A1 and 07100-00-00-004B0

Proposed special exception to increase the permitted square feet gross area for a class A country store at 6701 Rockfish Gap Turnpike per County Code §18-5.1.45(a)(4) to approximately 5,600 square feet.

PROPOSAL

The applicant requests a special exception to increase the permitted square feet gross area for a class A country store from 4,000 square feet to approximately 5,600 square feet as it applies to the country store at 6701 Rockfish Gap Turnpike (“Greenwood Grocery”), on Parcel ID 07100-00-00-004A1. This modification would allow the incorporation of the existing residential structure on Parcel ID 07100-00-00-004B0 into the country store. The County Code permits class A country stores a gross floor area of the building as it existed on November 12, 2008, or 4,000 square feet gross floor area, whichever is greater. County Code § 18-5.1(a) permits the Board of Supervisors to modify any requirement of County Code § 18-5 if modifying such a requirement would satisfy the purposes of this chapter to at least an equivalent degree as the specified requirement.

CHARACTER OF THE AREA

Parcel ID 07100-00-00-004A1 is a 0.688-acre Rural Area parcel that contains a 4,000 square foot class A country store “Greenwood Grocery,” with an address of 6701 Rockfish Gap Turnpike. The Greenwood Grocery structure currently in place was completed in 2003 to replace a historic country store structure, which was destroyed in an electrical fire in 1999. The property retains its class A country store designation.

Parcel ID 07100-00-00-004B0 is a 0.26-acre Rural Area parcel that contains a 1,592-square foot residential structure with an address of 6695 Rockfish Gap Turnpike. This residential structure was previously used as a secondary location for a fruit stand, which later became the country store at 6701 Rockfish Gap Turnpike. Additionally, during the reconstruction of the store after the fire in 1999, the residential structure was used as the primary location for the country store.

Both properties are located in the Samuel Miller Magisterial District on the south side of Rockfish Gap Turnpike [Route # 250 West] approximately 1/2 mile west of the intersection with I-64. The immediate surrounding properties are largely residential parcels, which are either forested or in fields. Directly east of the I-64 intersection, the Yancey Mills area contains a mix of village residential and industrial properties.

ANALYSIS OF SPECIAL EXCEPTION REQUEST

Under County Code § 18-33.9(a), factors, standards, criteria, and findings, however denominated, in the applicable sections of the Zoning Ordinance, are to be considered in special exception applications. The Board of Supervisors may make the requested modification upon a finding that restricting the Greenwood Grocery to the required maximum 4,000 square feet gross area would not forward the purposes of this chapter or otherwise serve the public health, safety, or welfare or that increasing the area of the Greenwood Grocery would satisfy the purposes of this chapter to at least an equivalent degree as the regulation.

Staff has evaluated this request based on the intent of the country store regulations, which included promoting access to a variety of goods within crossroads communities, preserving historic country store structures, and providing alternative uses for rural properties.

Providing access to goods within crossroads communities

Located ½ mile from the I-64 intersection and 1 mile from Crozet, Greenwood Grocery provides a wide variety of goods in keeping with country store regulations. These goods include local produce, prepared foods, groceries and packaged foods, wine and beer from both local and non-local producers, artisan goods, plants, and gardening supplies and décor. The country store provides both access to local goods and produce and a market outlet for local producers.

While not located in a designated crossroads community, the proximity of the properties to both I-64 and Crozet is a favorable factor toward an increased permitted square footage for the country store.

Preservation of historic country store structures

The historic country store structure on Parcel ID 07100-00-00-004A1 was destroyed in the 1999 fire, and the rebuilt store retains its by-right country store designation. However, as the residential structure requesting to be incorporated into the Greenwood Grocery is not a historic country store building, this factor is irrelevant.

Providing alternative uses for rural properties

While not a historic country store building per LOD-2024-00009 (Attachment C), the residential structure at Parcel ID 07100-00-00-004B0 has historically been used as part of the country store's operations. Additionally, the residential structure was used to house the country store operations in full during the reconstruction of the Greenwood Grocery building following the 1999 fire.

As the residential structure is located approximately 50 feet from the Greenwood Grocery building, the residential structure is unlikely to be used as a primary residence in the future. Permitting the residential structure to be used as part of the country store would provide an alternative use for the existing structure, which would otherwise be unusable.

The property owners have indicated that they are intending to combine Parcel IDs 07100-00-00-004A1 and 07100-00-00-004B0 to bring the entire proposed country store onto a single parcel.

Additional factors

Reuse of the existing residential structure is a favorable option to meet the Rural Area Comprehensive Plan objectives of protecting and preserving natural resources and reusing historic structures. Additionally, the Greenwood Grocery promotes local produce, beer and wine, and artisan goods in its store, supporting local agriculture, farm wineries and breweries, and local craftspersons.

The Greenwood Grocery structure is advantageously located for a country store to serve both locals and Albemarle County visitors, and its expansion into an existing structure provides the opportunity for the business to serve those customers without the construction of a new structure or reduction of useable housing stock in the Rural Area.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Board adopt the attached resolution (Attachment D) to approve the special exception to increase the permitted square feet gross area for a class A country store at 6701 Rockfish Gap Turnpike to approximately 5,600 square feet, on the condition that all structures and uses associated with the subject class A country store must be located on the same parcel.