



County of Albemarle
Department of Community Development

Memorandum

To: Board of Supervisors
From: J.T. Newberry, Senior Planner; Elaine Echols, Chief of Long Range Planning; Mark Graham, Director of Community Development
Division: Planning Services
Date: October 24, 2016
Subject: Recommendations for Interparcel Connectivity – SP201600015 Springhill/Towneplace Suites (Hotel) and SP201600016 Springhill/Towneplace Suites (Parking Structure)

At its meeting on October 12, 2016, the Board directed staff to work with the applicants to further explore possible points of interparcel connection. Specifically, the Board asked staff to recommend possibilities for pedestrian interconnection between the site of the proposed hotel and parking structure and the designated Community Center shown in the Comprehensive Plan (see Attachment A). The Board also asked that a condition be imposed to ensure that stormwater management facilities shown on the concept plan would be required during site plan review.

Following the meeting, staff and the applicants studied five different locations on the boundary of the parcel and off-site to determine the best options for interconnectivity (see Attachment B). Areas 1-3 were studied previously, but were examined further, whereas Areas 4 and 5 were evaluated for the first time. To fully assess each of the five locations, staff worked internally with transportation, inspections, engineering, police, and Architectural Review Board (ARB) staff.

Each location yielded its own set of potential risks and benefits, however, both staff and the applicants agree the two most viable options for the Board's consideration lie within Area 1 and Area 2. Exhibits for pedestrian improvements in these areas are found in Attachment C and Attachment D. The connection in Area 1 would provide a five-foot-wide stairwell between the proposed hotel and the rear of the existing Fairfield Inn site. The connection in Area 2 would construct a five-foot-wide sidewalk along Branchlands Boulevard, which would link a five-foot-wide sidewalk from the entrance to the subject parcel to the entrance of the parking lot for the adjacent shopping area.

Area 1 provides the most direct access to the neighboring parcel that adjoins the grocery store via a stairway. The neighboring parcel contains a hotel that is part of the same hotel group as Springhill/Towneplace Suites. Providing the stairway would allow for pedestrians to walk from the Springhill/Towneplace Suites to the nearby grocery store through the neighboring parcel. If a restaurant such as a coffee shop is provided between the Springhill/Towneplace Suites and Route 29, the stairwell could enable patrons of the adjoining hotel to more readily access the restaurant. However, the stairwell would be difficult for mobility impaired persons to use. In addition, the owner has indicated concerns for liability should patrons accidentally sustain a fall in the stairwell.

Area 2 provides less direct access to the grocery store, but would help complete a sidewalk system so that patrons could use public sidewalks to access the grocery store. It could be used by mobility impaired individuals as well as non-mobility impaired persons. Liability issues would be transferred from a private owner to the public. The downside is that it creates an approximately one-third mile walk, which might be far enough to cause a patron to drive and is beyond the 0.25 mile goal in the Comprehensive Plan for walkability between uses in a Community Center.

The applicant has looked at these two options and cannot decide which option to offer at this time. To help advance the approval process, though, the applicant will accept a condition that would require either option (see Condition #5 on Attachment G). This action would allow the project to move forward in the approval process while also ensuring pedestrian connectivity is provided. It is important to note that this condition would be satisfied in the case that another party completes the sidewalk along Branchlands Boulevard, but it would then require an extension of the interparcel connection easement labeled on the concept plan as “Future Interparcel Connection” (see Attachment E). This extension would preserve the opportunity for more connectivity in the future as the area continues to redevelop.

Regarding stormwater management, staff has added a condition that requires that all stormwater treatment shall comply with the County’s water protection ordinances (see Condition #4 on Attachment G).

Staff recommends that the Board adopt the Resolution approving the special exception to waive the stepback requirements (Attachment F) and the Resolution approving the special use permits (Attachment G), subject to the conditions attached thereto.

Attachment A: Comprehensive Plan Map

Attachment B: Areas of Study Map

Attachment C: Option 1 – Stairwell Connection

Attachment D: Option 2 – Completed Sidewalk Connection

Attachment E: Concept Plan

Attachment F: Resolution to approve Special Exception for Stepback

Attachment G: Resolution to approve Special Use Permits SP201600015 and SP201600016