



STAFF REPORT FOR PLANNING COMMISSION OF SYKESVILLE

TITLE: Zoning Text Amendment Request - Warfield

MEETING DATE: 02/07/2022

Map/Parcel: Several
Zoning: Planned Employment Center (PEC)
File Number: N/A

SUMMARY:

The property owner of the Warfield project has requested a change in the text for the Planned Employment Center (PEC) zoning district. In general, the notable changes are the movement of conditional uses to the principal permitted category, changes to the required percentages of land uses, and an increase in the residential density allowed.

INFORMATION:

Requests for zoning amendments are allowable under the Town's Zoning Code under Article XIX which requires the Council to refer all requests to the Planning Commission for report and recommendation. The Town Council referred the request to the Planning Commission at their meeting on January 24. It is now the responsibility of the Planning Commission to evaluate the request based on the purpose of the zone being amended (*does the change meet the purpose of the zone or is the change of purpose something the PC is willing to recommend to Council*) and determine if the change will have a positive, negative, or neutral effect on the goals and objectives outlined in the Town's Comprehensive Plan.

It should be noted that, though the request for this text amendment is from a specific developer with a specific project in Town, the change would affect all properties that carry the PEC zoning designation now and in the future. The Planning Commission should not base their review or recommendation solely on the Warfield development.

Section §180-134 Purpose for the Planned Employment Center zone is copied below for ease of reference:



The purpose of the PEC – Planned Employment Center District is to provide for logical locations where high-quality mixed use developments can occur in harmony with surrounding land uses (including site layouts and architecture that is aesthetically pleasing and consistent with applicable guidelines) and in support of Sykesville’s goals for growing the employment base, providing housing for existing and future residents, and offering retail services that complement the existing businesses within the Town. The following objectives will help fulfill this purpose:

- A. To encourage orderly, staged development of comprehensively designed mixed-use centers.*
- B. To create a mixture of office, retail, recreational, hotel, institutional, light industrial and residential uses within a single structure or within multiple structures where all related structures, parking, and open spaces are designed to function as a cohesive and integrated site, while protecting the residential character of surrounding neighborhoods.*
- C. To provide for an enriched and enhanced natural environment by the preservation of trees and the incorporation of stormwater management techniques which maintain the hydrologic regime of the site*
- D. To assure compatibility of the proposed land uses with the internal and surrounding uses by incorporating innovative standards of land planning and site design.*
- E. To encourage harmonious and coordinated development of sites, considering the existing natural features, bicycle, pedestrian and vehicular circulation and compatibility with surrounding uses.*
- F. To encourage development that is of excellent design and architecture with a mix of uses that will create a synergy of uses, efficiency of design, and contribute to a reduction of vehicle miles traveled.*

The section of the Town’s Comprehensive Plan that is most relevant to the request is Growth and Future Land Use which does specifically mention Warfield in several areas. The specific goals and objective for this section are as follows:

- Infill and expand Downtown
- Consider a hybrid form-based zoning policy
- Explore annexation options for expansion south of Oklahoma Avenue, south of the South Branch Patapsco River, and northeast of the Town municipal boundary
- Support mixed-use redevelopment of the Warfield Complex

An important line in the same section states “The Comprehensive Plan recommends the Town work collaboratively with the developers of Warfield to engage in an urban design workshop to



develop a new vision for the mixed-use development. The outcomes of which may be used to inform future zoning.”

ANALYSIS:

The request itself reduces the number of conditional uses in the zone by shifting most into the permitted use category. This includes such uses as Auditoriums, theatres and performing arts facilities, Automobile gasoline and service facilities (with or without accessory car washes), Pubs, taverns, breweries, distilleries, and wine bars, and Retirement homes and senior housing facilities including independent living, assisted living, memory care and skilled nursing facilities, whether stand-alone or within a continuing care retirement community among many others.

These changes would certainly increase the commercial flexibility within the zone, but by permitting all of these uses, the Town loses the ability to analyze each proposal on a case by case basis to ensure that the requested use is being integrated into the community appropriately.

There is also a significant change to the “Required percentage of land uses” where the separate categories of Office/research/institutional/hotel/light industrial and Retail/services are combined into the general “non-residential” designation.

The combination of these categories reduces the amount of required variety within the zone. This is particularly true as some of the “institutional” uses are somewhat residential in nature and would count toward the new “non-residential” minimum.

The required percentages of the previously mentioned use categories has been adjusted from a combined 30%-75% to the requested “no less than 5%” and the residential category would be adjusted from the current 10%-35% to “no more than 75%”. The open space requirement of 25% is unchanged.

These proposed adjustments would have a significant effect on the zone as the intent of the zone itself would no longer truly be “Planned Employment Center” but rather residential with a neighborhood commercial allowance. Though the zone would still allow for a significant amount of non-residential uses, the changes would make the zone very similar to the Town’s current R-7,500 district with a Planned Unit Development designation (See Zoning Codes §180-52 and §180-93). The purpose of the PEC zone would have to be re-evaluated particularly items “B” and “F” of the purpose section as the Town would no longer be able to require said objectives.

The maximum residential density is proposed to be increased from 2 homes per acre to 6.5. Calculating the density would remain based on the total development parcel. This change would effectively make the Planned Employment Center district to most dense zone in Sykesville.



AGENDA ITEM NO. _____

The Town's Comprehensive Plan does discuss the mixed-use re-development of Warfield and the allowance for flexibility from the approved plan. The Planned Employment Center zone currently allows for flexibility from the approved plan so long as the project stays within defined residential and non-residential categories. The proposed changes expand greatly on the existing flexibility.

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION:

The applicant will be present at the meeting on February 7th to give a presentation on the proposed amendments. The Planning Commission will have the ability to ask questions of the applicant and staff. Discussion regarding this request can be carried over to another meeting or workshop if so desired by the Commission in order to prepare the most appropriate recommendation to Council.