

City of Fairfax, Virginia
City Council Work Session



Agenda Item # WS4

City Council Meeting 9/27/2016

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of City Council

FROM: Robert Sisson, City Manager *RS*

SUBJECT: Request of Regency Centers for a City Council work session to discuss a potential application for the redevelopment of Fairfax Shopping Center.

ISSUE(S): Informational Work Session of City Council to discuss a proposed plan for the redevelopment of Fairfax Shopping Center. Although a formal application has not yet been submitted, the applicant has prepared a concept plan for discussion. Initial feedback is sought from City Council regarding the submitted concept plan.

SUMMARY: The applicant proposes to redevelop the existing 75,000 square foot shopping center into a new 48,000 square foot shopping center, including a 30,000 square foot grocery store and 18,000 square feet of other commercial space.

FISCAL IMPACT: A fiscal impact analysis has not been conducted at this time.

RECOMMENDATION: Discussion.

ALTERNATIVE COURSE OF ACTION: City Council may choose to postpone discussion to a future date.

RESPONSIBLE STAFF/POC: Paul Nabti, Senior Planner
Jason Sutphin, Community Development Division Chief
Brooke Hardin, Director, Community Development & Planning

COORDINATION: Community Development & Planning, City Attorney, Public Works

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Comprehensive Plan Citations
2. Conceptual Site Plans
3. Perspective Views

Background

The subject site is located near the northwest corner of Fairfax Boulevard and Eaton Place. It consists of four parcels totaling approximately 6.27 acres as shown in Figure 1. The entirety of the site is zoned C-2 Retail Commercial, which will be considered CR Commercial Retail in the new Zoning Ordinance to be effective on October 1, 2016. The site is also located within the Highway Corridor Overlay District, which will be removed from the new Zoning Ordinance, and the Architectural Control Overlay District, which will remain. Approximately 51% of the site is encumbered by flood plain. A Resource Protection Area is also located in the south eastern corner.

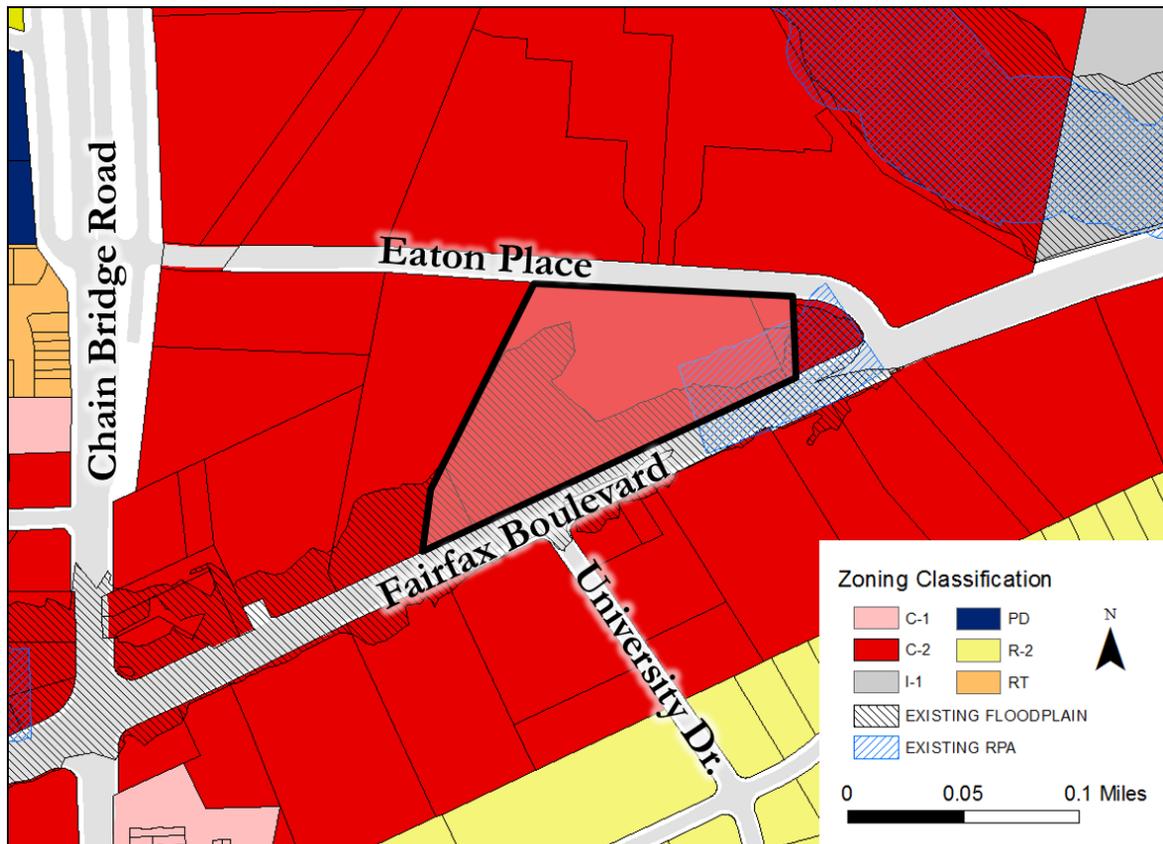


Figure 1: Existing Site and Zoning

The site is located within the Northfax Center as designated in the Comprehensive Plan and the Fairfax Boulevard Vision Summary. It is designated as Mixed Use on the Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map as shown in Figure 2. All surrounding properties are zoned C-2 and are designated as Business Commercial or Mixed Use on the Future Land Use Map. The exception is the parcel immediately east of the site, at the northwest corner of Fairfax Boulevard and Eaton Place. This parcel is owned by the representative of the Willow Wood Office Complex north of Eaton Place and is designated as Open Space-Conservation on the Future Land Use Map. A summary of existing zoning, land uses and future land uses for the subject site and surrounding properties is provided in Table 1.

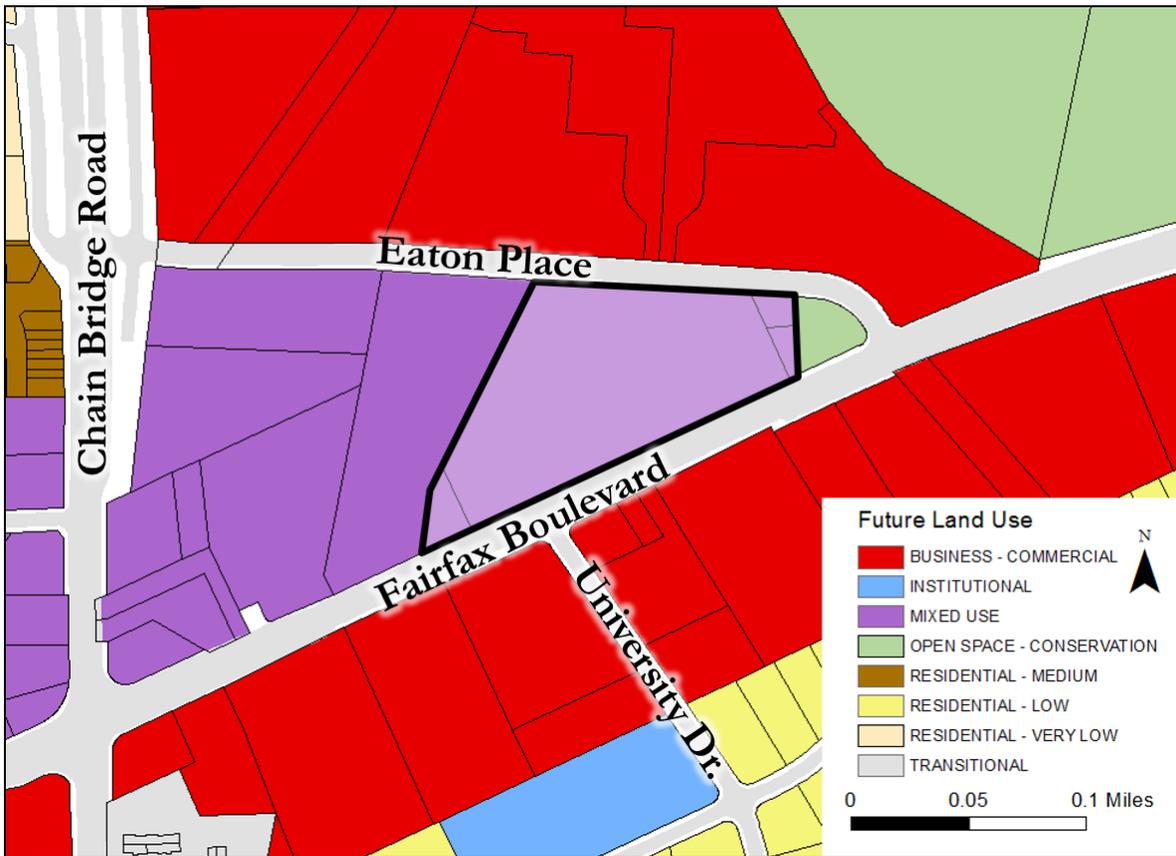


Figure 2: Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use

	Existing Zoning	Existing Land Use	Existing Description	Future Land Use
Site	C-2 Retail Commercial	Commercial/Retail	Shopping Center	Mixed Use
North	C-2 Retail Commercial	Commercial/Office	Office Park	Business - Commercial
South	C-2 Retail Commercial	Commercial/Retail	Retail, Auto Service	Business - Commercial
East	C-2 Retail Commercial	Open Space	Open Space	Business – Commercial, Open Space - Conservation
West	C-2 Retail Commercial	Commercial/Retail	Vehicle Storage	Mixed Use

Table 1: Surrounding Property Descriptions

Public Projects

The potential redevelopment of this site is heavily influenced by two public infrastructure projects that are intended to improve circulation and stormwater in the immediate area; The Northfax Transportation and Storm Drainage Project and the University Drive extension. An explanation of each of these projects, and their impact on the potential redevelopment of the site is provided below.

Northfax: The Northfax Transportation and Storm Drainage Project includes transportation improvements around the Fairfax Boulevard and Chain Bridge Road intersection, as well as a stormwater culvert that will remove a significant area from the flood plain. The proposed culvert would traverse the southern portion of the subject site resulting in several easements where certain future improvements, such as structures, vertical elements and trees would be restricted. Despite this, the overall impact of the flood plain on the site would be significantly reduced. Figure 3 shows the anticipated extent of the floodplain once the Northfax Project is complete. The location of easements along Fairfax Boulevard are provided in Figure 4. The property owner has the right to make improvements in these areas, though inclusion of structures, vertical elements and trees are limited. This project also requires the removal a 7,500 square foot retail building, resulting in a total of 68,500 square feet of commercial space on the site.

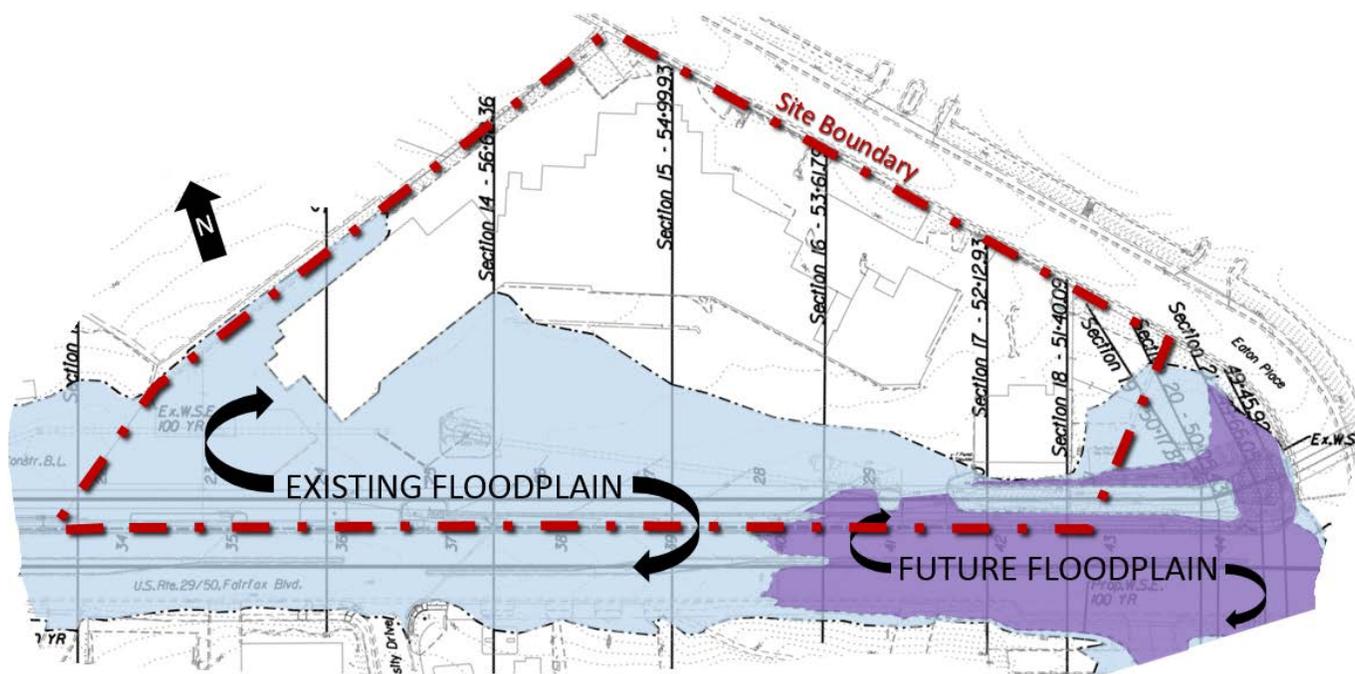


Figure 3: Existing and Future Floodplain

University Drive Extension: This project would extend University Drive from the current northern terminus at Fairfax Boulevard to Eaton Place. It is dependent on a right-of-way width of approximately 60 feet that splits the subject site into two sites. It would improve access to the site by providing a direct connection to Eaton Place as well as sites to the west, allowing for a seamless redevelopment opportunity should those sites become subject to redevelopment. The general location of the anticipated right-of-way necessary for the University Drive Extension is included in Figure 4. The University Drive Extension project has not yet been approved by City Council. It will be discussed as a work session item independent of the Fairfax Shopping Center redevelopment proposal at the September 27 work session.

Proposal Summary

The applicant proposes to replace the existing approximately 75,000 square foot shopping center with 48,000 square feet of retail space, including an approximately 30,000 square foot grocery store and 18,000 square feet of additional retail/restaurant space. This application is likely to be filed after the new Zoning Ordinance becomes effective on October 1, 2016. A summary of available site tabulations as compared to the requirements of the new Zoning Ordinance is provided in Table 2. Note that complete plans have not yet been submitted by the applicant and these tabulations are based only on information received to date.

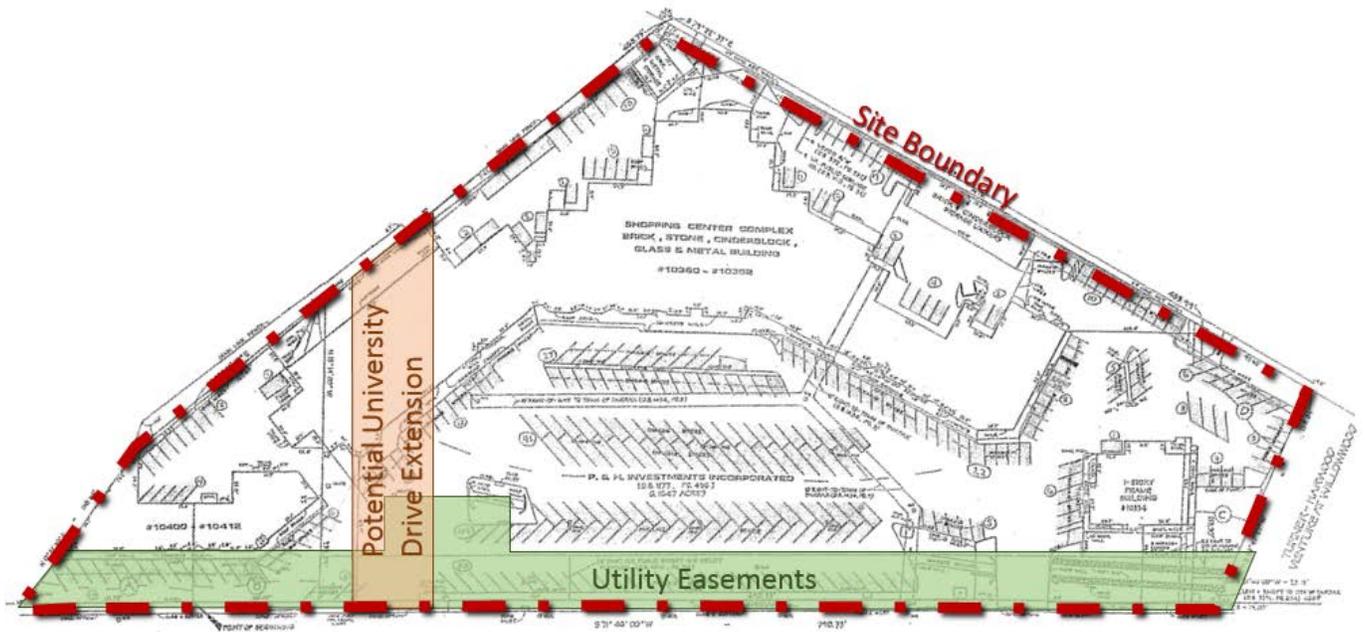


Figure 4: Easements and Restrictions

	Proposed	Required
Retail Area	48,000 sf	NA
Parking Quantity	309 spaces	240 min., 264 max. spaces
Parking Ratio	1/156 sf	1/200 sf min., 1/180 sf max.
Building Coverage	18%	60% max.
Lot Coverage	82%	85% max.

Table 2: Program Summary

The proposal accommodates the potential University Drive Extension as a primary entrance to the site and refrains from including buildings within the potential right-of-way. No buildings, other vertical elements or trees are shown within the utility easements along Fairfax Boulevard.

The site is arranged with the grocery store located in a stand-alone building and other retail uses located in three separate buildings of 9,200 square feet, 4,800 square feet and 4,200 square feet organized as a standard strip retail center. The grocery store is oriented perpendicular to Fairfax Boulevard with the southern edge of the building just outside the utility easement (approximately 40 feet from the Fairfax Boulevard curb). A surface parking lot with 150 spaces in four parking bays sits in front of the grocery store, fronting on Fairfax Boulevard as well as the potential University Drive Extension. The largest retail building shares the parking lot with the grocery store. The other two buildings are located on the opposite side of the potential University Drive Extension and behind the grocery store, functioning as pad sites. The 4,200 square foot building located behind the grocery store could potentially include a drive-through component, which would be subject to special use review by City Council. A conceptual site plan is provided in Figure 5 for reference. The full-scale plan, as submitted by the applicant, is provided in Attachment 2.

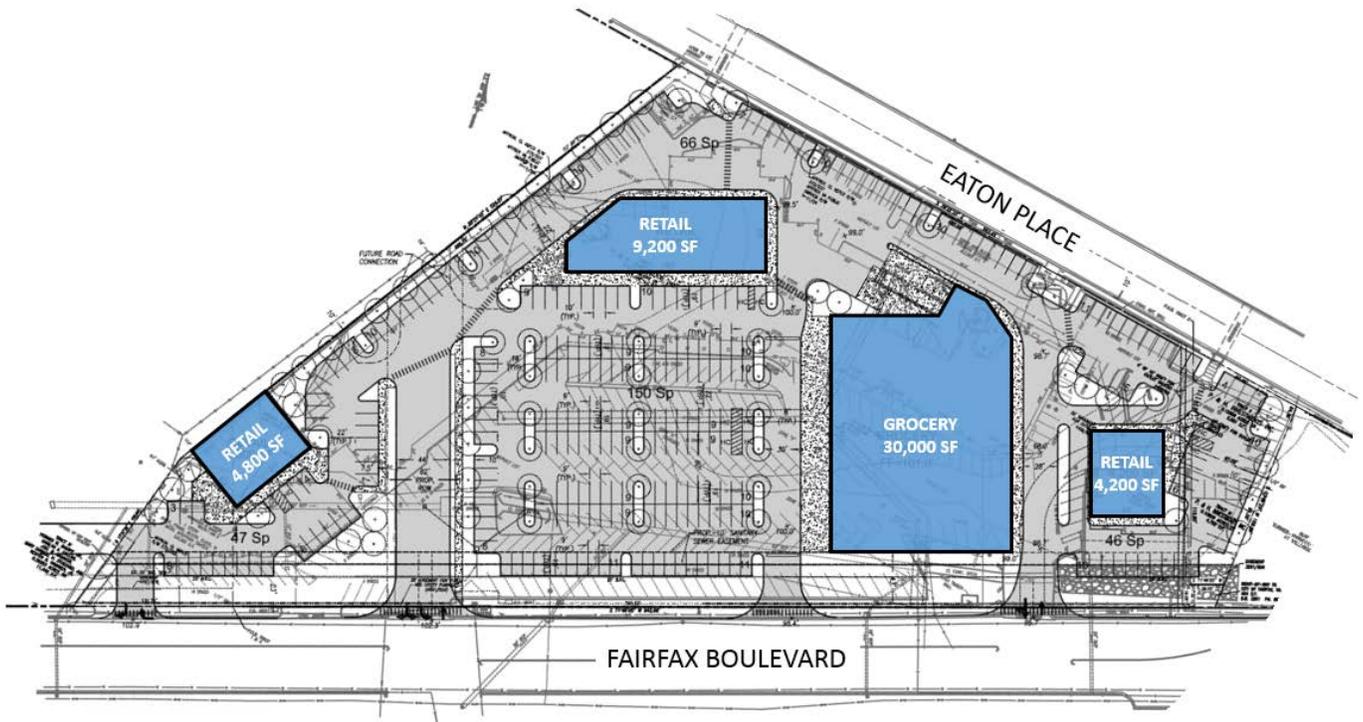


Figure 5: Conceptual Site Plan

Proposal Review

Staff has conducted an initial review of the development proposal in relation to guidance from the Comprehensive Plan and other current City goals and policy pertaining to land use, circulation, natural resources, open space and architecture, as provided below. Specific criteria are provided in Attachment 1.

Land Use: Although the proposal does not contain multiple uses, as would be preferred in a mixed use district, the Comprehensive Plan acknowledges that the types of uses that are generally considered acceptable should be flexible to accommodate market conditions provided that they contribute toward the cohesive vision of the plan. Retail is a supported use in mixed use districts and an entirely retail development may be appropriate; however, it should be designed to accommodate the physical characteristics described in Attachment 1 that contribute toward the comprehensive vision for the Northfax Center, including buildings that are oriented toward streets, walkable block sizes, and inclusion of open spaces and public gathering areas. In addition, the site should be arranged to allow potential future development within the Northfax Center to function along with this site in a cohesive manner. The proposed site layout is more consistent with that of a typical shopping center.

The Comprehensive Plan vision supports an active street presence for all three of the largest street frontages for this site at Eaton Place, Fairfax Boulevard and University Drive which would be a challenge to achieve. The proposed plan, however, generally directs active engagement inward and toward surface parking areas, although the grocery store could include an outdoor seating oriented toward Fairfax Boulevard.

Circulation: The Comprehensive Plan is dependent on several goals for redevelopment of the subject site including the transformation of Fairfax Boulevard into a “tree-line boulevard”, inclusion of “slow lanes” adjacent to the main lanes of the boulevard, provisions for inter-parcel access, and contribution toward an “interconnected series of small blocks”. The conformance of the current proposal with these goals is summarized below:

- The proposal contributes toward the creation of an “interconnected series of small blocks” by accommodating the potential University Drive Extension though it does not consolidate access points along Fairfax Boulevard.
- Due to the utility easements along Fairfax Boulevard, which generally do not allow for tree plantings, the ability for any kind of redevelopment on the subject site to contribute toward “a tree-lined boulevard” is limited. The proposed plan includes smaller plantings within the easement but does not allow for larger plantings outside of the easements which could soften the appearance of the building and parking areas of the site toward Fairfax Boulevard. The plan does not provide adequate space for appropriate plantings of street trees along Eaton Place.
- The plan does not include a provision for slow-lanes, though it does allow for inter-parcel connectivity to the west. This slow-lane component of the Fairfax Boulevard Master Plan could support bringing retail uses closer to the Boulevard while allowing for convenient, accessible parking.
- The resulting block length between University Drive and Eaton Place along Fairfax Boulevard is over 800 feet. A mid-block pedestrian accessway through this site, from Fairfax Boulevard to Eaton Place, would improve pedestrian accessibility in this portion of the Northfax Center. The new zoning ordinance prescribes mid-block pedestrian accessways across blocks that are over 600 feet in length. The proposed plan preserves access to existing mid-block crosswalks across Eaton Place and provides additional linkages to internal sidewalks.
- The existing bus stop at Fairfax Boulevard and University Drive would be relocated and could be improved with an appropriate setback from the curb and additional seating.

Natural Resources: The site is currently impacted by the 100 year flood plain and the Chesapeake Bay Resource Protection Area. Both of these areas will be significantly diminished on the site as a byproduct of the Northfax project, though both would still need to be addressed through any redevelopment proposal, particularly in the southeastern corner of the site. Construction and occupancy for the site would need to be coordinated with the timing of the Northfax project and issuance of a final Letter of Map Revision from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) confirming the anticipated change to the flood plain. A Special Use Permit may still be required if certain improvements are proposed within the area of the site that remains in the flood plain. The Comprehensive Plan provides recommendations for protecting flood plains, Resource Protection Areas and other key natural habitats that still exist on the site. This proposal may increase the total tree canopy coverage on the site from existing conditions.

Open Space: Two open space strategies from the Comprehensive Plan that are applicable to this site are the creation of vest pocket parks and incorporation of trails, small parks and open spaces in new development. These are further described in Attachment 1. The amount of area on the site that is dedicated to building footprint, parking and accessways minimizes the amount of space available to create vest pocket parks or other open spaces. With a location in one of the Fairfax Boulevard Centers, inclusion of such spaces in redevelopment proposals is critical in order to contribute toward a higher quality active environment for the Center as a whole.

Architecture: Perspective views of the grocery store and the 9,200 square foot commercial building are provided in Figures 6A and 6B below. Additional renderings as submitted by the applicant, are included in Attachment 3. No renderings of the smaller two buildings have been submitted at this time.

The Community Appearance Plan supports a variety of design styles for new development along commercial corridors, though emphasis should be placed on traditional, higher quality materials. The grocery store generally presents a more modern appearance while the commercial building presents a more subtle contemporary appearance. The materials that appear to be rendered on the commercial building, however,

would be more in conformance with the Community Appearance Plan, particularly including masonry. The grocery store building appears to include at least two types of precast concrete panel as primary elements of the façade, which are not supported by the Community Appearance Plan.



Figure 6A: Grocery Store Perspective



Figure 6B: Commercial Building Perspective

Review of Applicable Guidance from the Comprehensive Plan and the Community Appearance Plan

Land Use

The site is designated as Mixed Use on the Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map. A description of anticipated development in Mixed Use Districts as indicated in the Comprehensive Plan is provided below:

Certain locations in the City call for a flexible land use category that will support development with a mixture of appropriate uses. The Mixed Use category supports a combination of commercial, residential and institutional development to be tailored to specific site conditions and transition needs. The “centers” along Fairfax Boulevard (Kamp Washington, Northfax, and Fairfax Circle) are designated as mixed use, which is reflective of the Fairfax Boulevard Master Plan effort and other previous plans and studies.

Open space that provides uninterrupted pedestrian connections within the mixed use area and to adjacent areas, and can accommodate public gathering should be integrated within the project(s).

The types of uses and phasing of the project should acknowledge market conditions, but the mix of uses must nevertheless be mutually supportive and not haphazard. For smaller sites, or those in which a planned mix of uses among multiple buildings isn’t otherwise feasible, a vertical mix of uses within a single structure is preferred. For larger development sites, mixed use structures are still preferred, but single-use structures may be appropriate as long as the overall project adheres to the characteristics described in this section. [Comprehensive Plan, page 164]

With a location directly fronting onto Fairfax Boulevard, guidance for the site is further provided through the Fairfax Boulevard section of the Land Use Chapter and by the Fairfax Boulevard Vision Summary as provided in Appendix D of the Comprehensive Plan. All areas along the Fairfax Boulevard corridor are either defined as “Centers” or “Connectors” with Centers being targeted for relatively higher intensity, pedestrian oriented development and Connectors targeted for more moderate intensity development with appropriate transitions to adjacent neighborhoods. This site is located in the Northfax Center.

General guidance for Centers as provided in the Comprehensive Plan is stated below:

Centers: Within the Fairfax Boulevard Corridor, Centers would become mixed-use environments with short, walkable blocks for pedestrian activity. Scale would be moderate with building heights predominantly 2 to 5 stories.

Office, retail, lodging, and in some cases residential uses may be appropriate in these Mixed Use centers. Building and landscape design, decorative street lighting and pedestrian/ street level activity within these areas should be urban in nature. [Comprehensive Plan, page 169]

The Comprehensive Plan provides the following description specific to the Northfax Center:

During the 1990s, the City planned a project known as Northfax Gateway at the intersection of Routes 123 and 50 as the City's entrance from I-66 along Chain Bridge Road. The City recognized that the location is the primary gateway to the City from the north and that it should be developed as a signature project that visually reflects its importance. This Center, which includes properties on both the east and west sides of Chain Bridge Road, has become one of the City's premier potential economic development sites.

Considering the importance of this expanded redevelopment area, the City should continue to build upon the master plan Vision and Summary by refining the mix of uses and the design of the supporting street network. Important considerations in the redevelopment of Northfax should include architectural character, streetscape, pedestrian amenities, the stream/structure interface, open space, and connectivity between areas east and west of Chain Bridge Road and north and south of Fairfax Boulevard. [Comprehensive Plan, page 171]

The Illustrative Plan of the Fairfax Boulevard Masterplan Vision and Summary, included in Appendix D of the Comprehensive Plan, includes the following description for Eaton Place:

A main street is formed along Eaton Place with street-oriented buildings along both sides of the street.

The Community Appearance Plan also provides general guidance on the layout of buildings and parking areas within sites along corridors as follows:

Buildings should be placed as close to the minimum required building setback as possible to limit the amount of negative space (typically parking lots) that currently lines the corridor. Together with massing buildings along a defined setback line, distinct pedestrian entryways should be incorporated into buildings designs to encourage walking, bicycle and transit use and enhance building detail.

If parking cannot be placed to the rear or side of a building, it should be attractively landscaped with quality plant materials.

Circulation

The Transportation Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan provides the following guidance for consideration of redevelopment activity along the Fairfax Boulevard Corridor:

The redevelopment of the Fairfax Boulevard corridor has been established as one of the City's priority economic development projects. One of the redevelopment goals for Fairfax Boulevard is to create a tree-lined boulevard that will improve its appearance and create a more pedestrian friendly and inviting shopping and business environment. Fairfax Boulevard would be configured with landscaped medians, where possible, and enhanced streetscape features to encourage pedestrian

activity. Slow lanes (with on-street parking), separated from the main travel lanes by landscaped medians, while not intended to be a consistent feature throughout the corridor, should be considered within or adjacent to portions of the Centers if the nature of adjacent redevelopment activity is such that those features would be appropriate. Recognizing the importance of Fairfax Boulevard as a major arterial in the City, and its role as an east/west commuter route, redevelopment plans will attempt to control direct access from individual properties and improve public transit while emphasizing pedestrian accessibility and shared automobile connections to businesses as well as compliance with the aesthetic guidelines of the Community Appearance Plan.

In addition, the following guidance related to circulation is provided in the Comprehensive Plan Land Use Chapter description for the Northfax Center:

Vehicular access should be designed to enhance circulation within the Center through an interconnected series of small blocks with on-street parking, but should not promote pass-through traffic in the adjacent neighborhoods. [Comprehensive Plan, page 171]

Open Space:

The Comprehensive Plan identifies the following strategies to improve open space for the City while reviewing development proposals:

PRO-2.2 Facilitate the creation of vest pocket parks in areas of high pedestrian traffic or visual interest.

One manner of enhancing the City's mixed-use areas, particularly Old Town and the three major centers along the Fairfax Boulevard corridor, is to create vest-pocket parks. These parks can serve two major functions: adding green space to relieve the congesting effects of intensive development and providing places for people to relax or visit near areas of employment or shopping. When possible, the City should encourage the inclusion of vest pocket parks during the processes of reviewing plans involving the redevelopment of focal areas within the City. [Comprehensive Plan, page 93]

PRO-4.1 Incorporate facilities such as trails and small parks or open space areas within and adjacent to residential and commercial developments.

Through the rezoning and special permit processes, the City should seek proffers to enhance connectivity through local trails and parks and to provide open space areas throughout the City. Where feasible, those proffers may also include maintenance and replacement funds when trail and park facilities are being proffered. [Comprehensive Plan, page 94]

Architecture:

As a commercial use, this proposal is subject to the provisions of the Architectural Control Overlay District including review by the Board of Architectural Review. Guidance on architecture for new development along the Fairfax Boulevard Corridor is provided in the Community Appearance Plan. The following excerpts are applicable to this site:

Because of the variety of existing styles and lack of an historical architectural reference along the corridors, no single architectural style is favored over others. Both modern styles and traditional architecture are appropriate – if well designed and appropriately sited. While architectural style is of less importance, design emphasis should be placed on context, materials and appropriate detailing to ensure architectural quality. [Community Appearance Plan, page 51]

Traditional materials such as brick, wood and stone have survived the various architectural trends over time and exhibit longevity and quality. These materials are recommended in the developments within the corridor in lieu of the more modern glass, metal and concrete panel construction. Preferred roof material include wood shingle, slate shingle, composition shingle, bronzed aluminum and copper. [Community Appearance Plan, page 52]