

**AGENDA REPORT  
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION MEETING  
March 20, 2025**

**SUMMARY**

A request by A Civil Group (agent), on behalf of Todd Eckel, Successor Trustee of the E. Wayne and Kathleen Eckel 2003 Trust(owner), for approval to rezone 1.14 acres of property from the PD (Planned Development) district to the M-N (Mixed-Use Neighborhood) district to enhance avenues for development of the existing lot. The subject site, presently improved with a parking lot, is located west of Forum Boulevard and Chapel Hill Road, and includes the address 1710 Chapel Hill Road.

**DISCUSSION**

The applicants are seeking to rezone the 1.14-acres contained within Lot 1 of the Forum Chapel Plaza subdivision in order to facilitate redevelopment of the site. Forum Chapel Plaza was rezoned and platted in 1997 as a C-P/O-P development (now PD)and allowed to be improved with selected shown within an approved Statement of Intent that permitted selected uses from the former O-P and C-P districts.

The 1997 PD Plan illustrated Lot 1 as being improved with a building. Given the lot's location, topographic conditions of the site, and required parking minimums of the time, the building was shown as being allowed to have a maximum height of 25-feet, a maximum of 6,400 square feet of building area, and a maximum of 45 parking spaces (32 would have been required). This proposed building was never developed, and the site now contains a paved parking lot permitted by a 2012 "minor" PD plan amendment to accommodate overflow parking for the neighboring buildings to the east. Today, this parking lot is fenced off and inaccessible by vehicle, as it is no longer needed for overflow parking since Veterans United moved to their new location.

In January 2025, a concept review was conducted with the applicant regarding the rezoning of the subject site (Case #79-2025). The applicant discussed the potential for a retail use to build on the site, with a building footprint at approximately 4,000 square feet. Staff suggested avenues for a PD plan revision to return the lot to the original 1997 plan for Lot 1. It was concluded that a rezoning to M-N would be more desirable for all parties, as it aligns the subject site more closely to the intent of the UDC and Columbia Imagined, as well as removed certain restrictions from the original PD plan and the need to apply for a PD amendment every time something changes with the subject site.

The subject site is presently authorized to be improved with former O-1 uses identified in the pre-UDC zoning code via its O-P designation and was restricted from being used as a gasoline service station, convenience store, restaurant, self-storage or warehouse, laundromat, pet grooming or kennel, laboratory, freestanding radio tower, and businesses that employ outdoor speakers. M-N zoning would give this site back uses such as convenience store, restaurant, pet grooming/store, and research & development laboratory by right. While M-OF (Mixed Use, Office) may be more comparable to the current O-P uses allowed on the site as shown in the approved SOI, M-N zoning for this site would provide opportunities for retail uses that may benefit the surrounding neighborhoods and community.

The site is surrounded by M-N uses to the north, the Forum Chapel Plaza PD with O-P and C-P uses to the east and south, and R-1 uses to the west. Rezoning the subject site to M-N provides a less intense step-down from the predominantly C-P uses in Forum Chapel Plaza while allowing this site to be developed to modern UDC standards. The UDC has screening standards (Sec. 29-4.4(e)) and neighborhood protections (Sec. 29-4.7) that trigger certain improvements that are based on the type of development proposed or the height of that development when it abuts residential zoning and residential uses.

If this property is used for mixed-use or commercial purposes, it would require a level 3 zoning buffer. This means a 10-foot wide landscape buffer and an 8-foot tall screening device would be required as a means of mitigating potential impacts. However, staff observes a wide natural landscape buffer between the subject site and R-1 developments to the west by way of the woods along the creek to the west. There appears to be 250 feet of natural forest cover between the developable area of the site and the nearest R-1 single family structure, a significant portion (~100 feet) of which is on the subject site. There is also a 20-foot drop in site elevation on the west side of the property, towards the creek. There is also a 16-foot drainage easement along the west of the subject site and a 10-foot utility easement along the north and east.

There is no stream buffer on the subject site, as the site was platted before such requirements were adopted; however, the 1997 PD plan included screening and buffering protections on the west side of the Chapel Plaza site. Rezoning this lot out of the PD plan would remove those protections in favor of the neighborhood protection screening standards mentioned above. Furthermore, the 20-foot drop in elevation means that development further west on the subject site would need to mitigate this elevation change which may require installation of a retaining wall or other more costly building foundation improvements. Based on these existing site conditions as well as UDC screening protections, it is staff's conclusion that zoning out of the PD plan will not create any negative outcomes for neighboring parcels in the way of encroaching developments, unscreened commercial/mix-use developments, or creation of perceived eyesores.

Columbia Imagined identifies the site as lying within the Employment District. The employment district is intended to contain uses providing employment opportunities such as offices, corporate headquarters, manufacturing, warehouses, and research parks, while also including supporting uses such as multi-family residential.

## **CONCLUSION**

The proposed M-N zoning aligns with the existing land use context to the north and east and would still maintain a land use transition, albeit, slightly more intense than the currently permitted office uses. Approval of this rezoning request may make this site more desirable to develop due to the removal of PD restrictions and zoning. In staff's opinion, avenues for activating this site are a benefit to the surrounding community. Staff supports the requested rezoning.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Approve the request to rezone the 1.14-acres contained in Lot 1 of the Forum Chapel Plaza subdivision from PD (Planned Development) to M-N (Mixed-use Neighborhood).

### **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS (ATTACHED)**

- Locator Maps
- Rezoning Exhibit
- 1997 Rezoning to C-P/O-P
- 1997 O-P/C-P Plan and 2012 Plan Amendment
- Public Correspondence

### **SITE CHARACTERISTICS**

<b>Area (acres)</b>	1.14
<b>Topography</b>	Sharply sloping west
<b>Vegetation/Landscaping</b>	Wooded creek to the west
<b>Watershed/Drainage</b>	Perche/Hinkson Creek
<b>Existing structures</b>	Parking lot

### **HISTORY**

<b>Annexation date</b>	1964
<b>Zoning District</b>	PD (Planned District)
<b>Land Use Plan designation</b>	Employment
<b>Previous Subdivision/Legal Lot Status</b>	<i>Lot 1 Forum Chapel Hill Plaza</i>

### **UTILITIES & SERVICES**

<b>Sanitary Sewer</b>	City of Columbia
<b>Water</b>	
<b>Fire Protection</b>	
<b>Electric</b>	

### **ACCESS**

<b>Chapel Hill Road</b>	
<b>Location</b>	Northern Frontage
<b>Major Roadway Plan</b>	Minor Arterial
<b>CIP projects</b>	None
<b>Sidewalk</b>	Sidewalks installed, both sides

### **PARKS & RECREATION**

<b>Neighborhood Parks</b>	Forum Nature Area, Hinkson Creek Wetlands
<b>Trails Plan</b>	Hinkson Trail, MKT Connector, County House Trail
<b>Bicycle/Pedestrian Plan</b>	None adjacent to site

**PUBLIC NOTIFICATION**

All property owners within 200 feet and City-recognized neighborhood associations within 1,000 feet of the boundaries of the subject property were notified of this pending request on 3/3/2025. 53 letters were distributed, and an ad was placed in the Tribune on 3/4/2025.

Report prepared by Kirtis Orendorff

Report approved by Patrick Zenner