

October 23, 2023

Lexington-Fayette Urban Co Planning Commission  
200 E. Main Street  
Lexington, Ky 40507

Dear Planning Commission:

I represent 214 Waller Avenue LLC, which has filed a zone change application and an associated preliminary development plan for the property located at 416-418 W. Maxwell St, Lexington KY, 40508. I am submitting this supplemental justification letter to further explain our request to change the zone from Wholesale and Warehouse Business (B-4) to the Lexington Center Business Zone (B-2B.)

In accordance with The Placebuilder and the Downtown place type, the existing structure is zoned B-4 which does not align with the city's vision for this neighborhood. The existing structure does not provide dense residential uses, ground level pedestrian engagement or economic development and job creation. Additionally, it is not aesthetically pleasing and lacks curb appeal. It was an auto body shop which was abandoned and is now an empty garage which is fully leased and being utilized in a way that is compliant with the existing non-residential zoning. It may therefore continue to operate in its current state.

The proposed zone change to B2B would bring the property in alignment with the current zoning on adjacent properties to the northwest and across Maxwell Street to the northeast (the Lexington Center parking lot). A failure to rezone to the more compatible B2B zoning would represent a lost opportunity for the city to bring the property into closer alignment with its long-term plans for the area.

To address the city's concerns regarding the design of the proposed improvements, we have contracted with *Townscape Architecture & Planning* to assist in the development of the building and site design. Townscape is headed by architect and planner, Michael Huston, a long-time practitioner of new-urban planning principles and an advocate for walkable communities. Mr. Huston recently relocated from Florida to Kentucky and will be supporting our development team throughout the course of this project.

In response to feedback and inquiries from the first Commission meeting, we prepared an initial Concept Sketch to illustrate our initial design approach.

- The drawing shows an adaptive reuse of the existing building's ground floor with a second story addition to accommodate additional units on the property. The design emphasizes the building's presence on Maxwell Street with an active storefront facing the sidewalk and ample windows above providing "eyes on the street." Two free-standing piers reinforce the "street wall" and provide some separation between the public space of the street and the semi-public space of the courtyard behind.
- Based on input we received from city staff, we have removed the vehicle access point off Maxwell Street from the site plan to improve pedestrian safety along Maxwell. The new design approach will minimize vehicular use of the property and maximize open space and pedestrian

connectivity. Although the building will be primarily residential, we will give high priority to a commercial use along the ground floor facing Maxwell in order to “activate” the sidewalk.

- While the Downtown Place-Type envisions higher density development than what can be accommodated on the site and supported by the current market, it does move the needle in the right direction toward higher density development. The proposed 4 units on a .13 acre site, is equivalent to a density of 30 units/acre, which falls within the high end range of “missing middle” housing types.
- Our development partners have ownership interests in all of the properties on Maxwell Street between Annie Alley and Spring Street. With the impending development of the Lexington Center across the street, we made the decision to purchase 416-418 W Maxwell to give us long-term development potential. The current market does not support the cost of building a higher density product at this location. However, if the walkability of the area is dramatically improved by nearby new development and enhancements to Maxwell Street (we advocate for curb extensions and parallel parking), the target market could change in the future and allow for higher density development to replace the currently proposed development.

The feedback from council has been invaluable and has given us a roadmap to create a unique and attractive space to live and work. Thank you again for taking the time to review this letter and the plans that were submitted. We ask that you favorably consider the proposed zone change and its relationship to fulfilling the mission, goals, objectives, and policies of *Imagine Lexington: The 2018 Comprehensive Plan*. We are glad to answer any questions about our proposal.