

STAFF REPORT ON PETITION FOR ZONE MAP AMENDMENT PLN-MAR-25-00022: SUBTEXT ACQUISITIONS, LLC

DESCRIPTION OF ZONE CHANGE

Zone Change:	From a Single-Family Residential (R-1E) and a Planned Neighborhood Residential (R-3) zone To a Neighborhood Business (B-1) zone
Acreage:	R-1E: 0.07 net (0.08 gross) acres R-3: 0.44 net (0.53 gross) acres
Location:	545-553 S. Limestone (Odd Only); 121-123 Prall Street (Odd Only); 118 Montmullin Street



EXISTING ZONING & LAND USE

PROPERTIES	ZONING	EXISTING LAND USE
Subject Properties	R-1E, R-3, B-1	Commercial/ Residential
To North	R-1E, R-3, B-1	Residential/ University of KY
To East	R-4	University of KY
To South	R-3/B-1	University of KY
To West	R-3, R-1E	Residential

URBAN SERVICE REPORT

Roads - The subject properties are located on the west side of South Limestone, between Prall Street, and Montmullin Street. South Limestone is a five-lane major arterial roadway and is identified as one of Lexington’s urban corridors. Both Prall Street and Montmullin Street are two lane local roadways. Access to the site is proposed from Montmullin and Prall Streets.

Curb/Gutter/Sidewalks - Curb, gutter and sidewalks exist along all three roadways that provide frontage to the site.

Storm Sewers -The subject properties are located within the Town Branch watershed. Storm sewers are currently located along the right-of-way. There are no special flood hazard areas within the immediate vicinity nor any known flooding issues.

Sanitary Sewers -The subject properties are located within the Town Branch sewershed, which is served by the Town Branch Wastewater Treatment Facility, located on Lisle Industrial Avenue, southeast of New Circle Road. Sanitary sewer capacity will need to be verified prior to certification of the final development plan for the proposed redevelopment.

Utilities - All utilities, including natural gas, electric, water, phone, cable television, and internet are available in the area.

Refuse - The Urban County Government serves this area with refuse collection on Mondays. Supplemental service may be necessary for high-density residential and commercial uses.

Police - The nearest police station is the main headquarters, located approximately one and a half miles to the northeast on East Main Street.

Fire/Ambulance - Fire Station #6 is located approximately 400 feet to the north of the properties, at the intersection of South Limestone and Scott Street.

Transit - LexTran service is available within the immediate area along S. Limestone. Outbound and inbound service for the Nicholasville Road (#5) route is available on the adjoining properties to the south. The Imagine Nicholasville Road Plan also designates a future Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) station adjacent to the subject site, near Prall Street.

Parks - The subject properties are approximately 900 feet northeast of Lou Johnson park, which is located on Prall Street. There is also significant public open space across S. Limestone on the University of Kentucky campus.

SUMMARY OF REQUEST

The applicant is seeking a zone change from the Single-Family Residential (R-1E), and Planned Neighborhood Residential (R-3) zones to the Neighborhood Business (B-1) zone in order to establish a high density mixed-use development.

PLACE-TYPE

CORRIDOR

Lexington’s major roadways focused on commerce and transportation. The overriding emphasis of Imagine Lexington is significantly overhauling the intensity of the major corridors. The future of Lexington’s corridors lies in accommodating the shifting retail economic model by incorporating high density residential and offering substantial flexibility to available land uses. Adding a mix of land uses to support the existing retail will provide a built-in customer base, create a more desirable retail experience, and allow a greater return on investment for landholders. Additional focus is on increasing the viability of enhanced mass transit, thereby reducing the reliance on single-occupancy vehicles and improving Lexington’s overall transportation efficiency.

DEVELOPMENT TYPE

HIGH DENSITY NON-RESIDENTIAL
MIXED-USE

Primary Land Use, Building Form, & Design

Primarily regional-serving commercial uses, services, places of employment, and/or a mix of uses within high-rise structures with a high Floor Area Ratio. Mixed-use structures typically include an abundance of multi-family residential units, places of employment, and entertainment options, and the retail and commercial options generally draw from a regional geographic area. Screening and buffers should be provided to adjoining lower-density residential developments; however, those adjoining neighborhoods should retain convenient access to the development.

Transit Infrastructure & Connectivity

These developments are generally located along higher intensity roadways. Mass transit infrastructure, on par with that of other modes, should be provided, and bicycle and pedestrian connections to adjoining developments are required. Internal multi-modal connectivity throughout the development is critical.

Parking

Parking is generally provided in structures with activated ground levels.

PROPOSED ZONING



The intent of this zone is to accommodate neighborhood shopping facilities to serve the needs of the surrounding residential area. This zone should be located in areas of the community where services and facilities are/will be adequate to serve the anticipated population. This zone should be oriented to support and enhance a residential neighborhood. This zone should be established in accordance with the Goals, Objectives, Policies, and Development Criteria of the Comprehensive Plan.

PROPOSED USE



The petitioner is proposing the Neighborhood Business zone to establish a high-density mixed-use building. The proposed development consists of an eight-story, 90-foot tall mixed-use structure, with an integrated 215 space parking structure. The applicant is proposing a total of 170 residential units, with 491 bedrooms, and a density of 171 dwelling unit per net acre. The request includes 1,000 square feet of first floor retail space, located along the S. Limestone frontage.

APPLICANT & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



On August 30th, 2025, the applicant attended Pralltown Day in order to hear concerns and solicit feedback from the neighborhood residents concerning the revised proposal.

PROPERTY & ZONING HISTORY



The subject properties are located in Pralltown, an historic African-American neighborhood that was established in the mid-1800s. Over time, the character of the Pralltown area changed as growth and pressure from the University of Kentucky resulted in the removal of much of the original development, and a demographic shift towards student housing. While several single-family homes from the time of the original development remain, the area is now primarily characterized by development that has occurred since the 1980s. The subject properties include several single-family homes from the early 1900s along Prall Street, single-family homes constructed since 1980 along Montmullin Street, and two-story, mixed use commercial development from the 1950s along S. Limestone.

Current zoning of the subject properties consists of B-1 and R-3 zones that predate the 1969 Comprehensive Rezoning of the City and County. The R-1E zoning present on 118 Montmullin Street is the result of a 1998 zone change (MAR-98-27), which downzoned much of the Pralltown area in order to limit residential density. This change was requested by the Pralltown Development Corporation, and was supported by the map-based 1996 Comprehensive Plan, which recommended medium density residential future land uses for that area at the time.

In 2024, the applicant requested a rezoning for 2.13 net (2.80 gross) acres to the Corridor Node (CN) zone in order to establish a larger mixed-use development (PLN-MAR-24-00014). The 2024 proposal included an additional 14 properties, an additional 81 dwelling units, and extending approximately 375 feet further along Montmullin and Prall Street. The request was recommended for disapproval by the Planning Commission, and failed to pass the Urban County Council.

IMAGINE NICHOLASVILLE ROAD



In 2020, the Imagine Nicholasville Road Corridor study was adopted as a part of the Comprehensive Plan. The study set a framework for future development along this corridor, with recommendations for transportation improvements, as well as land use. Included within the recommendations of the corridor study was the implementation of dedicated Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) within the center of S. Limestone/ Nicholasville Road. The study suggested locations for BRT stops, including directly adjacent to the proposed development. In order to create the demand necessary to effectively support transit efforts, the plan called for intensification of the areas surrounding the proposed station. Included in these recommendations was a minimum building height of 40 feet, no maximum structure height, and activated commercial uses on the first floor, with residential incorporated above.

The applicant's proposal is in line with the proposed development called for within the Imagine Nicholasville Road Corridor Study, and would support the effectiveness of transit in the area.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMPLIANCE



The 2045 Comprehensive Plan, Imagine Lexington, seeks to provide flexible yet focused planning guidance to ensure equitable development of our community's resources and infrastructure that enhances our quality of life, and fosters regional planning and economic development. This will be accomplished while protecting the environment, promoting successful, accessible neighborhoods, and preserving the unique Bluegrass landscape that has made Lexington-Fayette County the Horse Capital of the World.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, & POLICIES

The Comprehensive Plan strongly supports the type of mixed-use development now envisioned for the site by the petitioner. The B-1 zone offers the most flexible zoning tool outside of the downtown business zones or mixed-use zones. The form-based neighborhood business project, with its required character and context study, allows for the petitioner to achieve the building height and residential density desired at this location.

The applicant opines that they are in agreement with the adopted Goals and Objectives of the 2045



Comprehensive Plan. The applicant argues that their proposal addresses a need for housing, and emphasizes the proposed increase in residential density along a major corridor (Theme A Goal #1.a, #1.b & #1.d; Theme E, Goal #1.d). The applicant further states that the proposed development will be well connected, as it will be located adjacent to future transit improvements and will improve the pedestrian facilities along Prall Street, Montmullin Street, and S. Limestone (Theme A, Goal #3.b). Finally, the applicant opines that the density and intensity of the proposed development will strengthen demand for transit along the corridor (Theme D, Goal#1.b). Staff agrees that these Goals and Objectives can be met with this request.

The applicant also addresses several policies of the 2045 Comprehensive Plan that they opine are being met with this request. The applicant states that the request provides a people first/pedestrian friendly design that will improve the area's safety and connectivity and creates inviting streetscapes. (Design Policy #1, #5, and #6). Additionally the applicant states that the request responds to the context of the corridor, providing additional density and intensity (Design Policy #4; Density Policy #1 and #2). With an interior parking garage, the proposed development plan ensures the vehicular use areas enhance walkability and bikeability. (Design Policy #7). The applicant states that the request will provide additional housing options for this area, which is predominately characterized by student housing in single family structures (Design Policy#8). The proposed amenities and open space areas will provide neighborhood-focused open spaces with the interior courtyard and neighborhood-focused retail (Design Policy #9 and #12). Staff agrees that these policies can be met with this request.

PLACE TYPE, DEVELOPMENT TYPE, AND ZONE

In an effort to allow for the greatest contextual development of Lexington's Urban Service Area, applicants are asked to identify a Place-Type based on the location of the subject properties. Within each Place-Type there are recommended Development Types based on the form and function of the proposed development. Based on the Place-Type and Development Type there are also several recommended zones that are most appropriate based on the Goals, Objectives, and Policies of the Comprehensive Plan. While these zones are the ideal zoning categories to develop within a specified area, other zones may be considered, provided there is an appropriate justification addressing the unique situation and provided the development is able to adequately meet the associated Development Criteria.

The applicant indicates that the project is located within the Corridor Place-Type and is a High Density Non-Residential/ Mixed-Use Development Type. The subject property is located on South Limestone, one of the most highly traveled corridors in Lexington, and is proposing a development with a density of over 100 units per net acre. As such, staff agrees with the applicant's choice in Place-Type and Development Type. Within this Place-type and Development Type, a Form-Based Neighborhood Business Project is recommended within a Neighborhood Business zone.

DEVELOPMENT CRITERIA

The development criteria for a zone change are the distillation of the adopted Goals and Objectives, as well as the policies put forth in the 2045 Comprehensive Plan. The development criteria for development represent the needs and desires of the Lexington-Fayette Urban County community in hopes of developing a better built environment. The applicable criteria are defined based on the proposed Place-Type and Development Type.

1. Land Use

Staff finds that the request meets the criteria for Land Use, as the request significantly increases the residential density on-site (A-DN-2-1; E-ST8-1), provides for pedestrian-oriented first floor commercial uses along the S. Limestone frontage (A-DN3-1), and helps encourage the success of transit by increasing the residential base near a proposed transit node (E-GR10-1; D-CO3-1).

2. Transportation, Connectivity, and Walkability

Staff finds that the request meets the criteria for Transportation, Connectivity, and Walkability as the request provides connectivity to the adjacent transit stop (A-DS1-2) improves the sidewalk connections along Montmullin and Prall Streets, provides for street trees and commercial uses to create a pedestrian friendly streetscape (A-DS5-2), and is transit-oriented (A-EQ5-2).

3. Environmental Sustainability and Resiliency

The proposal meets the requirements for Environmental Sustainability and Resiliency, as the site does not remove any significant trees (B-PR7-1), and provides for the addition of street trees along all three frontages (D-SP10-1).

4. Site Design

Staff finds that the request meets the criteria for Site Design, as the request provides activated first-floor uses and to create an activated streetscape (A-DS5-4), locates the parking within internal parking structures (A-DS7-1), and provides sidewalk connections to the surrounding neighborhood (C-LI8-1).

5. Building Form

While staff finds that overall the request meets the requirements for Building Form, there was one criteria that staff found warranted further discussion:

A-DN2-2 Development should minimize significant contrasts in scale, massing and design, particularly along the edges of historic areas and neighborhoods.

Staff would like to note that while this proposal represents a significant increase in density and intensity, the footprint has been greatly reduced when compared to the applicant's previous proposal for this site.

Otherwise, the development establishes a high-density mixed-use development that is in line with the intensification of our corridors called for within the 2045 Imagine Lexington Comprehensive Plan and Imagine Nicholasville Road Corridor Study (A-DS4-2), and creates active first-floor uses along S. Limestone (D-PL2-1; A-DS5-3).

PARKING DEMAND MITIGATION STUDY



Under the requirements of Article 16 of the Zoning Ordinance, all "Significant Developments," or developments with over 5,000 square-feet of building coverage that require a Zoning Map Amendment, shall provide a Parking Demand Mitigation Study for the project that details the following information:

1. Review of national best practices for parking calculations for the project, including the current ITE Manual Parking ranges or the ranges produced by the ITEParkGen Report;
2. The anticipated parking demand for the project;
3. How the anticipated parking demand will be satisfied on-site or off-site;
4. The methods and strategies to be implemented in order to reduce vehicle trips by site users;
5. The methods and strategies to be implemented in order to promote transportation options by site users;
6. The projected mode share by site users from the utilization of the study's strategies.

Within the applicant's review of the parking demand, they have provided specific calculations based on the ITE manual for the proposed residential multi-family and commercial uses. Based on the provided number of dwelling units and the proposed amount of retail space, the ITE manuals project a peak demand of 254 spaces for the entire development, with 484 spaces being proposed at this time. The applicant has indicated that the spaces within the structure will be restricted, with individual spaces being leased on a first-come first served basis. The applicant states that the walkability of the area near the University of Kentucky's campus, as well as the connections to transit will help reduce the on-site parking demand.

FORM-BASED PROJECT



Area Character & Context Study - The applicant submitted the required area character and context study along with their development plan application. That study describes the proposed development relative to the surrounding area and street system.

Building - The proposed eight-story building will be setback from South Limestone by a large pedestrian area measuring 16'-4" with the main entrance and pedestrian gathering space near the crosswalk at Prall Street. The proposed retail space and leasing office are located along the South Limestone frontage. The design includes improvements to the sidewalk facilities along Prall Street and Montmullin Street as well, with the renderings showing 18'-6" and 13'-8" respectively. The building incorporates an open, central courtyard in the interior as well as a covered outdoor space to provide open space for the residents.

Height - The study analyzed a number of other buildings and structures which demonstrates the wide variety of uses and heights that range from a modest 25-30 foot in height for both commercial and residential uses, to mixed-use and institutional structures with 85-90 feet in height. The building height and mass is consistent with other buildings in the area but is taller and larger than many of the commercial buildings along South Limestone and Upper Street, the two major corridors within the immediate area. Overall, the area is characterized by buildings of variable size and height.

Design - The building is designed to cover the entire site. Various façade elements, active pedestrian space, and the addition of street trees are designed to integrate the building to the surrounding area and enhance the pedestrian experience. Its orientation to the street system is a stronger urban design feature than several nearby commercial developments that reflect a more suburban style. In addition, several of the institutional buildings in the area are setback a considerable distance from the street system, although this is more of a reflection of the University's unique character and role in the community.

Open Space - There is a large interior courtyard proposed for the project as well as a covered outdoor space. The wide sidewalks surrounding the property have areas designated for public use that are defined by landscaping and benches.

Pedestrian Accommodations - Improved pedestrian facilities are an important aspect of the form-based project requirements, and the applicant has proposed well delineated pedestrian ways along all street frontages ranging from 16'-4" along South Limestone, 13'-8" on Montmullin Street and 18'-6" on Prall Street. These sidewalks greatly exceed the existing sidewalks in the area and are an essential element in integrating the development into the surrounding area.

Landscaping - Supplemental landscaping is another requirement associated with the form-based project. The revised development plan illustrates the areas where the supplemental landscaping will be utilized along with large street trees. The study demonstrates this graphically and street trees are depicted on the development plan.

STAFF RECOMMENDS: APPROVAL, FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS:



1. The requested Neighborhood Business (B-1) zone with a Form-Based Neighborhood Business Project is in agreement with the 2045 Comprehensive Plan's Goals and Objectives, for the following reasons:
 - a. The proposal will address a need for housing, and emphasizes the proposed increase in residential density along a major corridor (Theme A Goal #1.b & #1.d; Theme E, Goal #1.d). S. Limestone and Nicholasville Road are high-volume roadways that connect downtown to major employment and community activity areas.
 - b. The proposed development will be well connected, especially because it is located adjacent to future transit improvements and will improve the pedestrian facilities along Prall Street, Montmullin Street, and S. Limestone (Theme A, Goal #3.b).
 - c. The density and intensity of the proposed development will strengthen demand for transit along the corridor (Theme D, Goal #1.b).

2. The requested Neighborhood Business (B-1) zone with a Form-Based Neighborhood Business Project is in agreement with the 2045 Comprehensive Plan's Policies, for the following reasons:
 - a. The activation of the first floor with retail, landscaping, and amenity spaces creates a people first/ pedestrian friendly design that will create inviting streetscapes. (Design Policy #1, #5, and #6).
 - b. The request responds to the context of the corridor, providing additional density and intensity (Design Policy #4; Density Policy #1 and #2).
 - c. By locating the parking internally, within parking structures, the proposed development enhances walkability and bikeability (Design Policy #7).
 - d. The request will provide additional housing options for this area, which is predominately characterized by student housing in single family structures (Design Policy #8).
 - e. The proposed amenities and open space areas will provide neighborhood-focused open spaces with the interior courtyard and neighborhood-focused retail on the first floor, facing S. Limestone (Design Policy #9 and #12).

3. The justification and corollary development plan are in agreement with the policies and development criteria of the 2045 Comprehensive Plan.
 - a. The proposed rezoning meets the criteria for Land Use, as the request significantly increases the residential density on-site (A-DN-2-1; E-ST8-1), provides for pedestrian-oriented first floor commercial uses along the S. Limestone frontage (A-DN3-1), and helps encourage the success of transit by increasing the residential base near a proposed transit node (E-GR10-1; D-CO3-1).
 - b. The proposed rezoning meets the criteria for Transportation, Connectivity, and Walkability as the request provides connectivity to the adjacent transit stop (A-DS1-2) improves the sidewalk connections along Montmullin and Prall Streets, provides for street trees and commercial uses to create a pedestrian friendly streetscape (A-DS5-2), and is transit-oriented (AEQ5-2).
 - c. These proposed rezoning meets the criteria for Environmental Sustainability and Resiliency development criteria, as the site does not impact any environmentally sensitive areas (B-PR2-1), does not remove any significant trees (B-PR7-1), and provides for the addition of street trees along all three street frontages (D-SP10-1).
 - d. The proposal addresses the criteria for Site Design, provides activated first-floor uses and to create an activated streetscape (A-DS5-4), locates the parking within internal parking structures (A-DS7-1), and provides sidewalk connections to the surrounding neighborhood (C-LI8-1).
 - e. The proposed rezoning meets the criteria for Building Form, as it creates a high-density mixed-use development that is in line with the intensification of our corridors called for within the 2045 Imagine Lexington Comprehensive Plan and Imagine Nicholasville Road Corridor Study (A-DS4-2), and creates active first-floor uses along S. Limestone (D-PL2-1; A-DS5-3).

JAY
9/3/2024
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STAFF RECOMMENDS: APPROVAL, FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS:



4. This recommendation is made subject to approval and certification of PLN-MJDP-25-00068 Hazen Property, Mountmullin Street Subdivision (EVER Lexington) prior to forwarding a recommendation to the Urban County Council. This certification must be accomplished within two weeks of the Planning Commission's approval.

JAY
9/3/2024
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