



**Zoning Text Amendment #2022-00013**  
**Floor Area Exclusion for Internal Loading and Circulation**

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<p><b>Issue:</b> (A) Initiation of a Text Amendment and (B) Public Hearing and consideration of a text amendment to the Zoning Ordinance to add section 7-2503 to create a special use permit for internal loading spaces as an exclusion from floor area and amend sections 2-165 and 2-145 to clarify the definition of loading space and to allow additional floor area exclusions for loading spaces with special use permit approval. Staff: City of Alexandria, Department of Planning &amp; Zoning</p>	<p>Planning Commission Hearing:</p>	<p>November 1, 2022</p>
	<p>City Council Hearing:</p>	<p>November 12, 2022</p>
<p><b>Staff:</b> Robert M. Kerns, AICP, Chief of Development, <a href="mailto:rob.kerns@alexandriava.gov">rob.kerns@alexandriava.gov</a>  Catherine Miliaras, AICP, Principal Planner, <a href="mailto:catherine.miliaras@alexandriava.gov">catherine.miliaras@alexandriava.gov</a>  Sam Shelby, Principal Planner, <a href="mailto:sam.shelby@alexandriava.gov">sam.shelby@alexandriava.gov</a>  Stephanie Sample, Urban Planner, <a href="mailto:stephanie.sample@alexandriava.gov">stephanie.sample@alexandriava.gov</a></p>		

**Staff Recommendation:** Staff recommends that the Planning Commission INITIATE and recommends APPROVAL of the text amendment.

**PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION, NOVEMBER 1, 2022:**  
On a motion by Vice Chair McMahon, seconded by Commissioner Lyle, the Planning Commission voted to initiate Zoning Text Amendment #2022-00013. The motion carried on a vote of 6-0 on the Consent Calendar, with Commissioner Ramirez excused.

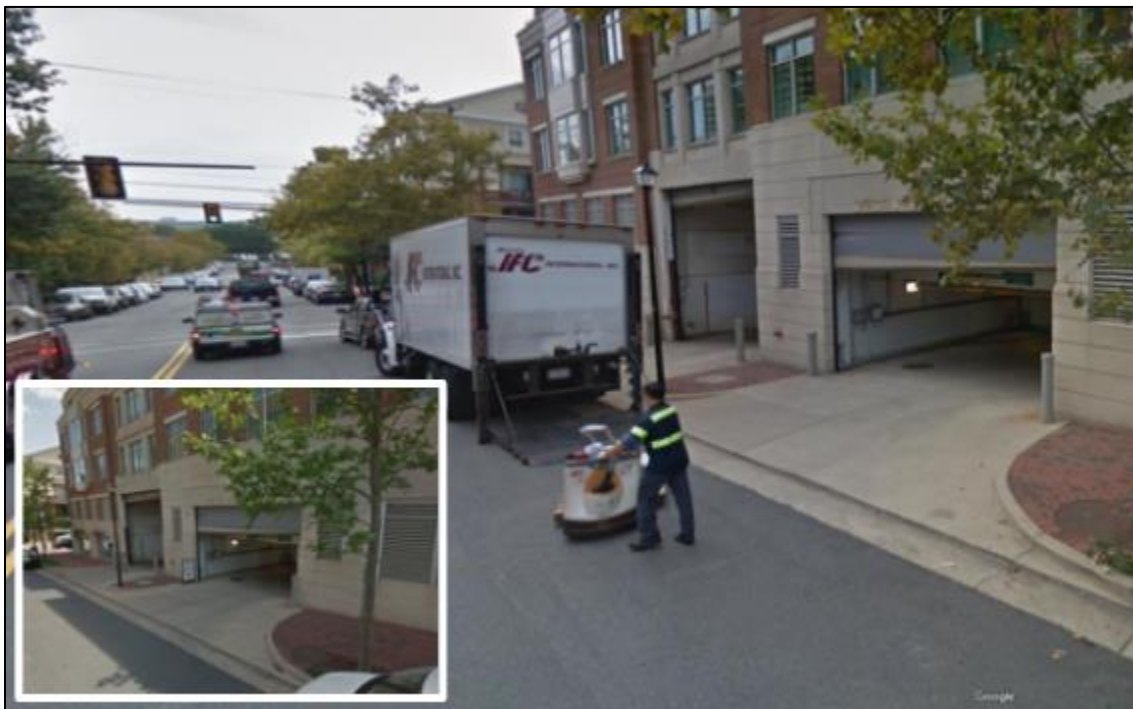
On a motion by Vice Chair McMahon, seconded by Commissioner Lyle, the Planning Commission voted to recommend approval of Zoning Text Amendment #2022-00013. The motion carried on a vote of 6-0 on the Consent Calendar, with Commissioner Ramirez excused.

**I. Issue**

The purpose of this proposed zoning text amendment is to amend three sections of the City’s Zoning Ordinance to allow for additional floor area exclusions for internal loading and circulation with Special Use Permit (SUP) approval in any zone. The proposed text changes are shown in Attachment 1.

**II. Background**

The Zoning Ordinance requires loading spaces for most uses pursuant to section 8-200(B). These uses range from manufacturing and warehouse storage to hotels and retail projects. Currently, section 2-145(B) allows for 850 square feet of each required space to be excluded from floor area. While the intent is that all loading and unloading is contained within the project site, there are instances where loading related activities overflow the dedicated loading areas and impact the public realm. The images below represent projects that provide required loading spaces, but which have regular impacts beyond the site, onto the sidewalk and street. These impacts include blocking of pedestrian, bike and car lanes causing changes in traffic patterns, and noise associated with backing up vehicles and loading/unloading in the public realm.



**Figure 1: The Saul Center loading on Wythe St.**



**Figure 2: The Dalton loading on N. Payne St.**



**Figure 3: The Kingsley/Harris Teeter on N. St. Asaph St.**

The proposed text amendment is intended to incentivize loading and circulation areas inside of buildings. With additional internal loading space, there would be ample room to accommodate a building's loading, circulation and maneuvering needs which would limit impacts to the public realm.

Zoning Text Amendment #2022-00013  
Floor Area Exclusion for Internal Loading and Circulation

The majority of project sites do not have excess square footage to accommodate larger indoor loading space, with the exception of two recent developments in Coordinated Development Districts which have incorporated internal loading and circulation. The Gables project in Old Town North (Figure 4) includes a one-way entrance and exit and an internal “alley” where trucks can queue. The location of the loading spaces deep within the building allows for truck maneuvering without obstructing the sidewalk or travel way. In the second example (Figure 5) at Carlyle Crossing where the Wegman’s grocery store is located, the large loading area accommodates as many as 15 trucks in the mixed use building.

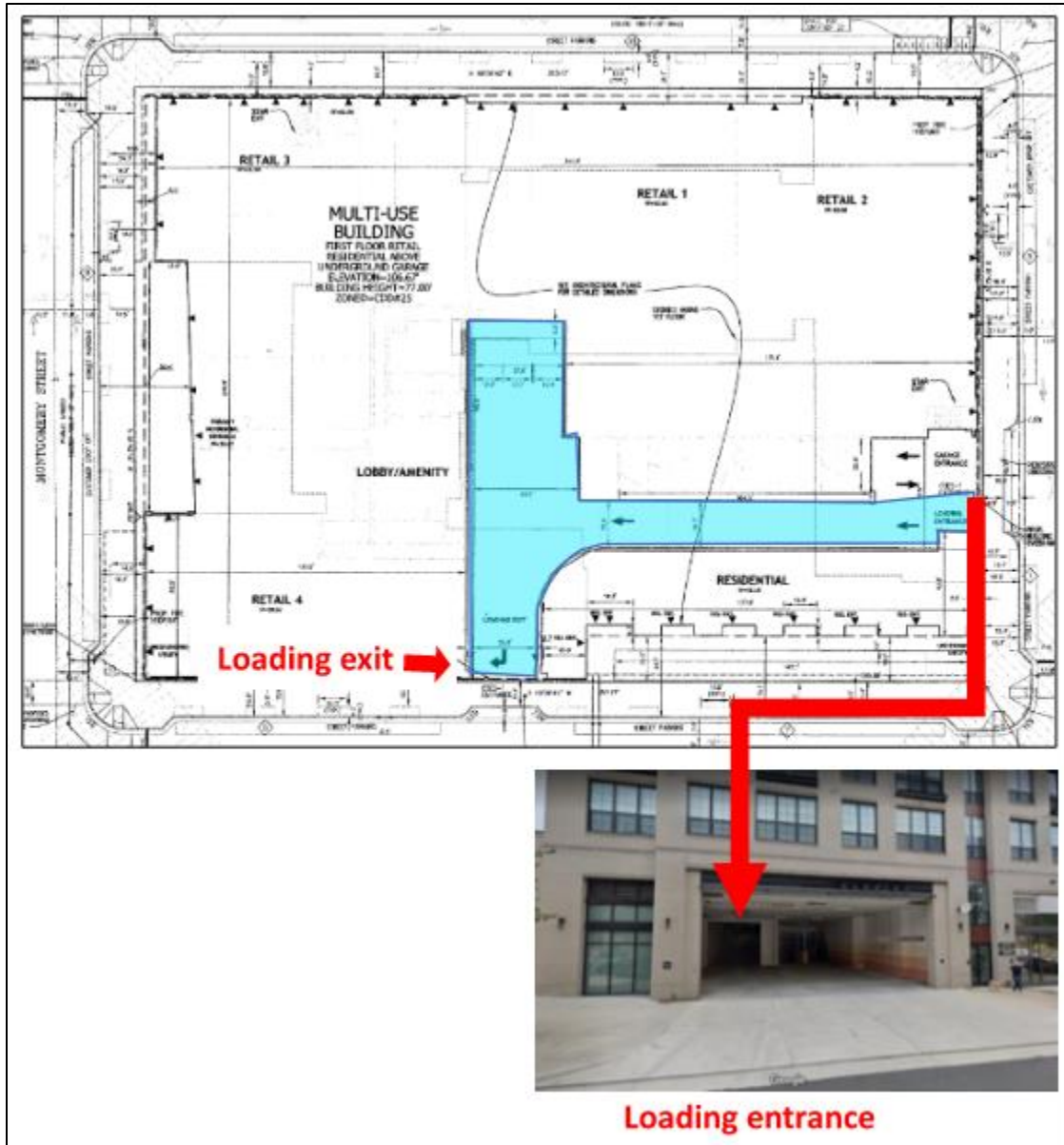


Figure 4: The Gables loading shown in blue



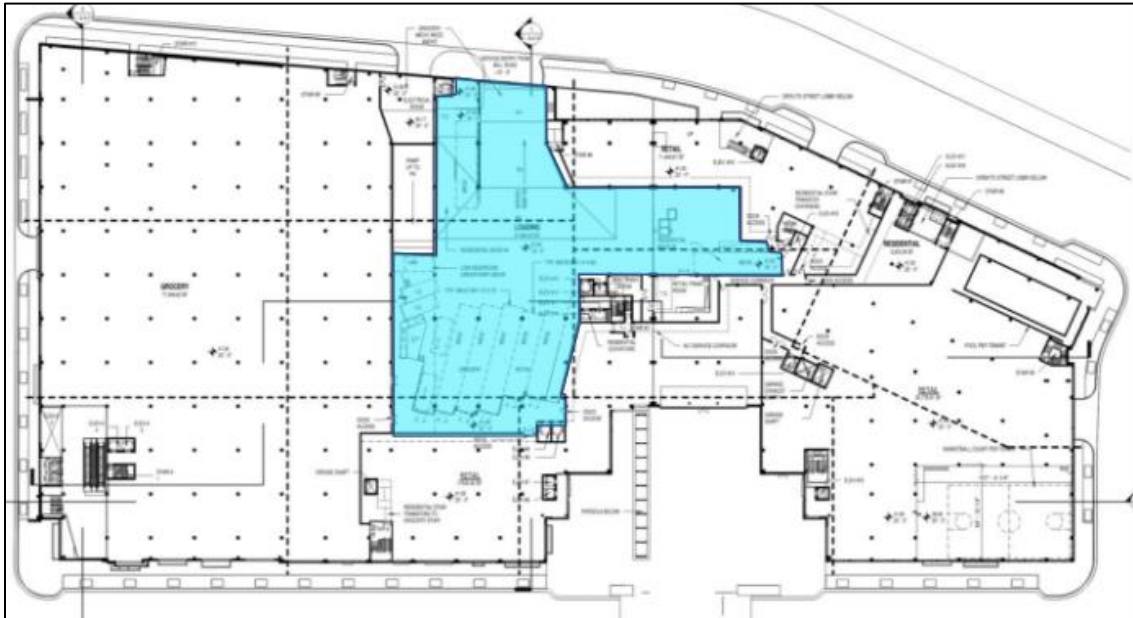


Figure 5: Carlyle Crossing/Wegmans loading in blue - 15 loading bays included

In addition to satisfying the standards City Council considers when approving SUPs generally, an applicant for the proposed SUP must demonstrate that the additional internal loading space would contribute to improved site design and an enhanced public realm. As each project will have different requirements and site conditions, there is not one design or approach that is encouraged. Rather, staff would be looking for benefits that the internal loading and circulation provide. Examples include back up and maneuvering within the building, fewer curb cuts and/or shared curb cuts, covered loading to minimize loading and unloading noise, additional streetscape improvements and an enhanced streetscape.

### III. Discussion of Proposed Text Changes

#### (A) Amend Definitions (Section 2-165 and 2-145)

- (1) Amend the “Loading Space” definition. Staff proposes adding language to clarify that loading space may include additional square footage used for circulation and maneuvering.
- (2) Amend “Floor Area” definition to allow loading space floor area exclusions pursuant to SUP approval. The existing floor area exclusion of 850 square feet per space would remain.

#### (B) Supplemental Zone Regulations (Section 7-2503)

- (1) Staff proposes a new section within the Supplemental Zone Regulations (Article VII) that would allow for additional floor area exclusions with SUP approval for

Zoning Text Amendment #2022-00013  
Floor Area Exclusion for Internal Loading and Circulation

internal loading and circulation. This section would establish criteria for projects seeking additional loading space floor area exclusions. The applicant would have to demonstrate that the proposal would result in improved site design and an enhanced public realm.

**IV. Recommendation**

Staff recommends that the text amendments contained in Attachment 1, be initiated, and recommends approval of each of the attached Zoning Ordinance text changes.

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**Attachment #1**

Section 2-100 – Definitions.

2-145 – Floor area.

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(B) For properties except for those specified in subsection (A), above, the floor area of the building or buildings on a lot or tract or tract of land (whether "main" or "accessory") is the sum of all gross horizontal areas under roof on a lot. These areas shall be measured from the exterior faces of walls or any extended area under roof and are to be measured from the shared lot line in the case of party walls. This space shall be based on permanent construction whether or not provided with a finished floor or ceiling. Excluded from floor area shall be:

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**(10) Loading space pursuant to section 7-2503.**

**(11)** Any floor area that was used as a private or public garage prior to March 17, 2018 with a height of less than seven feet six inches.

**(12)**~~(11)~~ Floor area excluded as part of a development site plan that was approved prior to March 17, 2018 within a Coordinated Development District.

**(13)**~~(12)~~ Sheds and other small accessory buildings in accordance with section 7-202(C)(2). The floor area excluded pursuant to this subsection shall not exceed the total floor area exclusion listed in section 2-145(B)(14).

**(14)**~~(13)~~ Porticos and portions of porches, including wrap-around porches, up to eight feet in depth located on the first or ground floor without second-story enclosed construction above the portico or porch.

**(15)**~~(14)~~ Floor area devoted to an accessory dwelling within an accessory building in accordance with section 7-203. The total floor area excluded pursuant to section 2-145(B)(12) and this subsection shall not exceed 65 square feet.

**(16)**~~(15)~~ Areas with a ceiling height of less than seven feet, except in an above grade parking garage constructed after March 17, 2018. Areas in a parking garage constructed after that date, regardless of height, may not be excluded.

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2-165 – Loading space.

An off-street space on the same lot with a building or contiguous to a group of buildings, for the temporary parking of a commercial vehicle while loading or unloading merchandise or materials, and which abuts on a street or other appropriate means of access. **Loading space may also be located within a building and include areas used for circulation and maneuvering such as drive aisles and other similar areas.**

Section 7-700 – Supplemental Zone Regulations.

**7-2503 – Loading space floor area exclusion.**

**Notwithstanding any contrary provision of this ordinance, loading space may be excluded from floor area with a special use permit obtained pursuant to section 11-500. No special use permit shall be approved unless the loading space contributes to improved site design and an enhanced public realm.**