

November 3, 2020

Mr. Nate Macek  
Chair  
Planning Commission  
City of Alexandria

Re: DSUP2020-10022, proposed drive-through retail at 5001 Eisenhower Ave

I am submitting the below comments on my own behalf as an Alexandria resident. Note that I serve on the City's Environmental Policy Commission, as its member with an urban planning background, and am the representative of the EPC to the Eisenhower West/Landmark-Van Dorn Implementation Advisory Group. At the September Advisory Group meeting, I expressed my personal concern regarding the proposed auto-oriented site plan, especially in close proximity to a Metro station.

**Internal driveway and parking should not separate the building and patio from the street and sidewalk:**

I am not opposed to drive-through retail at this site, rather I am asking the Planning Commission to require the building to front the street, as has been standard urban design practice for urban, transit-oriented and/or neighborhood main street locations for the last three decades. Even an interim use should fulfill basic City goals and objectives to foster walkable and transit-accessible mixed-use neighborhoods near our Metro stations, and the Small Area Plan provides clear guidance. Fundamentally, uses only 0.3 mile from Metro stations should not be auto-oriented in design, as is the case with the current site plan.

In this particular case, the large site allows lots of flexibility to re-orient the drive-through lanes and parking so they do not separate the use from the street (see site plan excerpt, page 3). If this interim use is intended in part to support future occupancy of the Victor Center building as stated in the staff report, then the use needs to provide safe, convenient and attractive pedestrian access for building occupants (and also for the new townhome residents on the east side of the Victory Center property) as well as for neighborhood pedestrians and bicyclists in general. Currently, the site plan does not do this. With some refinements to the site plan, this use can provide needed retail while still signaling to the community that Eisenhower West is transforming into a more attractive, walkable, urban setting, not a suburban auto-oriented strip.

**Relevant Small Area Plan provisions:**

Interim uses:

- "New interim buildings will be required to be located adjacent to the street with the parking behind the building." (p. 99)

- Only mentions of potential “auto-oriented” interim uses are in Clermont Exchange Neighborhood at far eastern edge of plan area, far from the Metro station, and these generally are made in context of accommodating big box retail. (pp. 92-93)

Policies for Primary Streets, which include Eisenhower Avenue:

- “Buildings will front the street”
- “No driveways, curb cuts, or service alleys will be in view.”

Van Dorn Metro Center Neighborhood (and also Bush Hill Neighborhood, site is on border)

- Principles: “Create a high-quality and inviting public realm to encourage pedestrian and bicycling activity to and from Neighborhood 4 and the Van Dorn Metrorail Station.” (consistent language for Neighborhood 5)
- Building Form and Character: “New buildings will be configured to be parallel to the adjoining street and define the adjoining street and open spaces by establishing an urban street wall.”

Overall Goals, include: “Eisenhower West will be a transit-oriented community”

I applaud the other features of the proposed use, such as the stormwater management improvements and green building features. If designed effectively, this use will be a nice amenity and provide needed retail in the neighborhood. Thank you for considering my comments above.

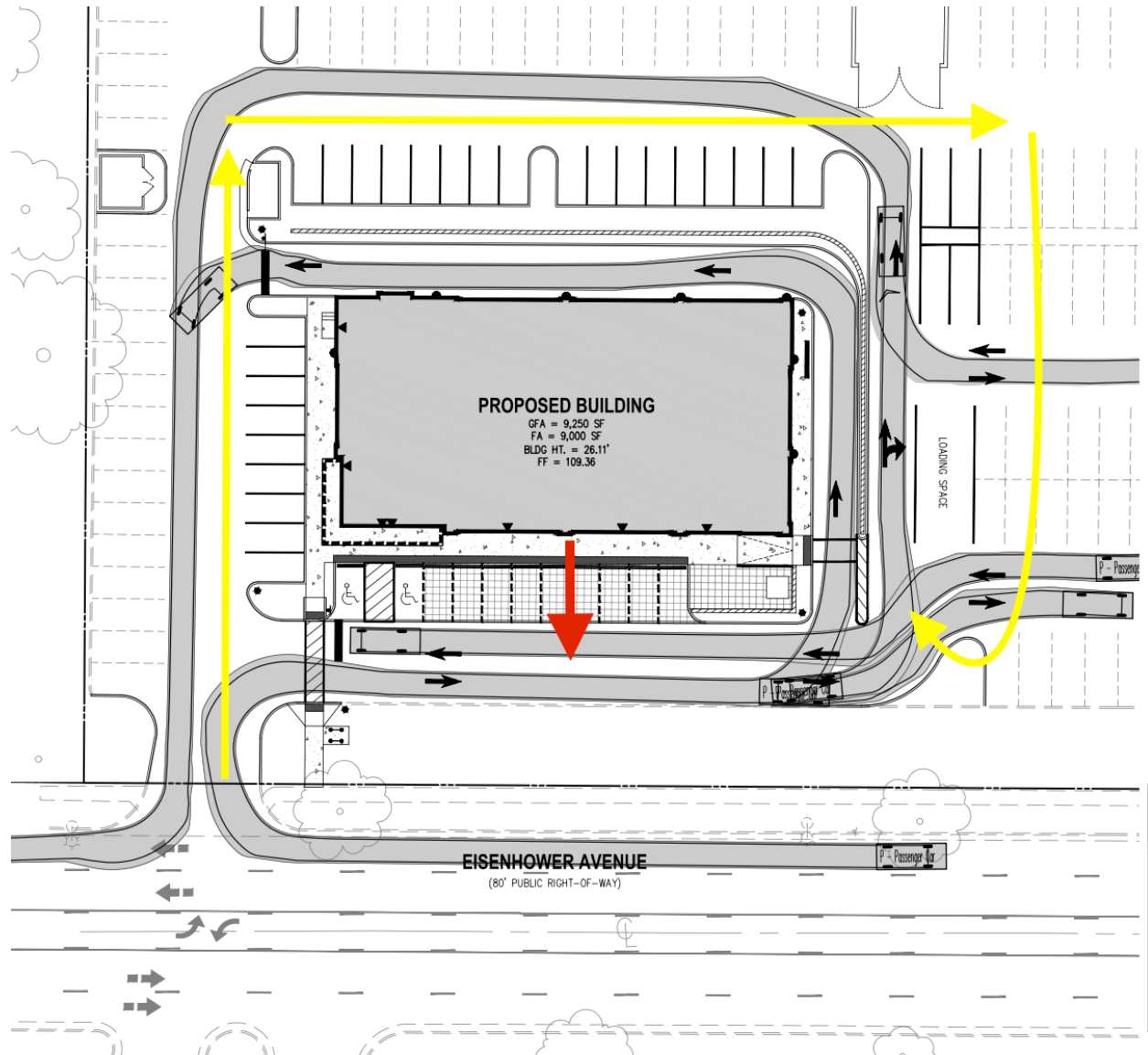


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Attachment: Site Plan Excerpt

## Site Plan Excerpt (Sheet P-1101)



- As designed, use is isolated by driveways and parking from street, sidewalks, and public realm.
- Yellow lines added by me to show rough, indicative possible idea for alternate vehicular circulation that could allow building to front the street and retain drive-through.
- Red line indicates building and outdoor seating area shifted to front sidewalk.