

March 12, 2020

Michael Watkins, Zoning Administrator
Town of Leesburg
Department of Planning and Zoning
25 W. Market Street
Leesburg, VA 20176

Re: Catoctin Elementary School – Classroom Addition (TLSE-2019-0009)
Tax Map /48////////54A; (PIN 231-15-4538)
Request for Modification of Zoning Ordinance Section 11.6.1.F (Sidewalk)

Dear Mr. Watkins:

Our Client, Loudoun County Public Schools (the “Applicant”), has filed its application for approval of a Special Exception to allow a classroom addition to the existing Catoctin Elementary School, located in the R-4 Zoning District. On behalf of the Applicant, we respectfully request a modification of Section 11.6.1.F of the Town of Leesburg Zoning Ordinance, which reads as follows:

“F. Sidewalks and Pedestrian Facilities. *Sidewalks shall be provided along the entire street frontage of a site, as necessary to protect pedestrians and promote the safe and efficient movement of pedestrians and vehicles along a street. Sidewalks shall have a minimum unobstructed width of five (5) feet. In the case of a block containing a partial sidewalk, the width of the existing sidewalk may be continued for the remainder of the block length so long as ADA requirements are met. New sidewalks within a historic district or serving a historic district will be reviewed by the Board of Architectural Review and/or by staff, as required, in accordance with applicable historic district regulations to mitigate potential impact on the historic resource or historic streetscape.*

In those cases outside of the H-1 Overlay, Old and Historic District where the applicant can properly demonstrate that a sidewalk four (4) feet in width that meets ADA minimum requirements can adequately and safely accommodate pedestrian traffic, the Zoning Administrator may modify the five (5) foot width requirement. Any modification request shall be made in writing to the Zoning Administrator with adequate information testifying to the nature of the existing block or sidewalk and evidence justifying the modification sought. The Zoning Administrator shall set forth in writing the grant of modification with reasons for such determination.”

The Applicant seeks a modification of the requirement to provide a sidewalk five (5) feet in width along a portion of Catoctin Circle. The modification request is for an existing four (4) foot wide sidewalk, approximately 235-foot length to remain between two existing bus loop entrances along Catoctin Circle SW. The property and sidewalk are outside of the H-1 Overlay, Old and Historic District. The existing sidewalk adequately and safely accommodates all pedestrian traffic.

The Applicant provides answers to following questions per TLZO 3.4.6.H. and associated justification.

1. How is the requested modification/waiver intended to achieve a more reasonable use of the subject property.

The requested modification allows for an existing and functional condition to remain in place. The original building was constructed in 1966. The existing sidewalk has effectively served the use and all pedestrians for many years.

2. How does it achieve an innovative design.

The requested modification avoids demolition and disruption of a functioning piece of infrastructure. Its preservation reduces energy and waste that would result from unneeded replacement and reconstruction of a portion of sidewalk.

3. How does it improve upon existing regulations or otherwise exceed the public purpose of the existing regulations;

The Zoning Ordinance (Sec. 11.6.1.F) provides the opportunity to request a modification of sidewalk width for circumstances such as the one the Applicant is seeking. The proposed modification will allow an existing functioning sidewalk to remain where it has proven to adequately and safely accommodate pedestrian traffic for decades.

The intent of the regulation is to provide safe pedestrian access for all. The existing sidewalk meets this intent although technically does not meet the ADA requirement to provide a “passing space” every 200 feet. In this instance:

- there is an additional 35 feet in length over the 200-foot requirement;
- the sidewalk itself follows a straight path allowing anyone on the sidewalk to see ahead for any potentially passing pedestrians;
- there is a parallel sidewalk on the “outside” of the bus loop (interior to the school site) that would allow a pedestrian to “bypass” another if there were a conflict;
- pedestrian access into the school site is provided at both “ends” of the subject 235-foot section; and
- the school site also provides multiple ADA accessible routes from the right-of-way, along the outside of the bus loop, and from on-site parking spaces.

(Reference the attached Exhibit, Sheet 4 from the Special Exception Plan).

Retaining the existing sidewalk exceeds the public purpose by recognizing the utility of the existing condition and being fiscally responsible with limited public resources.

4. Demonstrate that it is not requested for the primary purpose of achieving maximum density on the subject property.

The requested modification has no impact on achieving maximum density. This request applies to a small segment of sidewalk located within the existing right-of-way and not within the subject property. Therefore, density is not affected.

Michael Watkins, Zoning Administrator

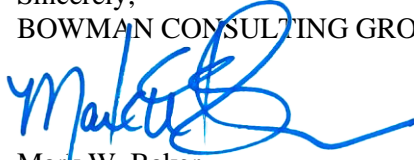
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We greatly appreciate your consideration of the above request and would be more than happy to answer any questions that you may have or provide any additional information should it be required. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

BOWMAN CONSULTING GROUP, LTD

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mark W. Baker", with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Mark W. Baker

Principal

cc: Sara Howard O'Brien, Loudoun County Public Schools
Chris Glassmoyer, Loudoun County Public Schools
Christopher Murphy, Senior Planning Project Manager