

2 Research Place
Statement of Justification
Site Plan Application (Level 2)

I. Introduction

2 Research Place, LLC (the “Applicant”), the owner of the property located at 2 Research Place (the “Property”) is seeking approval of a Level 2 Site Plan to accommodate the development of a 200,000 square foot building on the Property (the “Project”).

II. Property Description

The Property is known as Part of Lot 5, Block A, Washington National Pike Industrial Park as reflected on Plat No. 9024. The Property, zoned Mixed Use Employment (“MXE”), contains 122,839 square feet of land area and is improved with a three-story 45,400 square foot office building and surface parking. The Property is bounded on the east by I-270 and on the north, south and west by other MXE zoned sites containing office buildings and surface parking.

III. Project Description

The Applicant proposes to construct a seven-story (not to exceed 120 feet in height) life sciences building on the Property containing approximately 200,000 square feet of gross floor area. The building will be located in the eastern portion of the Property, across most of the I-270 frontage of the Property. In this way, the highly visible iconic building will promote Rockville as the center for life science uses to the 250,000 cars travelling north and south on I-270 every day. Internal loading will be provided at the southwest corner of the building.

The Project is designed as a state-of-the-art research office building, with 30,000 square foot floorplates and 15’ floor to floor heights that deliver optimum performance for lab and office workplace. With health and wellness focused environments in mind, the Project has a series of cantilevered volumes carved into its massing that create outdoor terraces overlooking the main entry plaza, and a connection to nature at multiple levels. The Projects highly visible long façade parallels I-270 and is sheathed in an iconic, high-performance glass and metal façade system with variable panel shapes and spacings that amplify the feeling of movement, making a strong connection to the high-speed passersby.

Unlike the existing surface parking condition of the Property and most of the surrounding area, parking will be provided in a six-story structured parking garage that will be located to the west of the building (and not visible from I-270). Pursuant to the Zoning Ordinance, 300 parking spaces are required and the parking garage will provide approximately 400 parking spaces.

In accordance with the MXE Zone, the project will satisfy the required 10 percent green area requirement by providing a minimum of 12,267 square foot of public open space which will

be located along the frontage of the building. This space is envisioned as a large central lawn, lined with trees and ample seating opportunities. This space will provide a welcome outdoor area to the life science employees and visitors. In addition an amenity space consisting of an outdoor patio space and landscaping, will be provided between the building and the parking structure. In order to promote pedestrian activity in the area, the project will include the construction of a 4 foot wide sidewalk leading from the Research Place cul-de-sac to the building.

The project will provide building signage and a monument sign in accordance with Article 18 of the Zoning Ordinance.

IV. Civil Engineering

A Natural Resources Inventory was submitted to the City of Rockville on June 9, 2022. A Preliminary Forest Conservation Plan is submitted concurrently with the site plan. Given the age of the existing structure on the Property, there is no quality/quantity on-site stormwater management. Stormwater management will be addressed by runoff routing through Environmental Site Design (“ESD”) facilities. A number of surface mounted devices will be incorporated throughout the site.

Public water and sewer service will be provided by WSSC with their facilities located in Research Boulevard. Electric service from PEPCO will be brought to the project and will run through one transformer, which will be located within the driveway area.

V. Compliance with the Mixed Use Employment Zone Development Standards

The density of development in the MXE Zone is determined by compliance with the various development standards set forth in Section 25.13.05, the additional design guidelines of Section 25.13.06, and the special design regulations of Section 25.13.07 for mixed use zones. The Project complies with the applicable provisions of the Zoning Ordinance, as described below.

A. Section 25.13.05 – Development Standards

1. *Subsection 25.13.05a – Build to Line*

Not Applicable.

2. *Subsection 25.13.05b – Development Standards*

a. Subsection 25.13.05b(1)

The Project complies with the applicable development standards for the MXE Zone set forth in Section 25.13.05.b:

	Required/Permitted	Proposed
Maximum Height (in feet)	120'	120'
Total Open Area Required	20%	38%

	Required/Permitted	Proposed
Public Use Space Required w/in Open Area	5%	5%
Setbacks Abutting Public Right-of-Way	None	25 feet from I-270 and 150.34 feet from Research Boulevard
Side Setback Abutting Residential	25' or ½ height of building, whichever is greater	N/A
Side Setback Abutting Non-Residential Land	None; 10' min. if provided	15 feet from south side 24.33 feet from north side
Rear Setback Abutting Residential	25' or ½ height of building, whichever is greater	N/A
Rear Setback Abutting Non-Residential Land	None; 10' min. if provided	_14.48_'

b. Subsection 25.13.05b(2)

Based on the surrounding uses, the layback slope requirements set forth in subsection (d) are not applicable.

3. *Subsection 25.13.05c – Other Standards and Requirements for New Development*

Summary of Requirement	Proposed
Conversion of Space – commercial space is encouraged to be designed to allow for conversion to residential space [Section 25.13.05.c.1]	Not feasible, given the life science design of the building
Entryways – Requirements pertaining to residential buildings [Section 25.13.05.c.2]	N/A – Building is commercial
Access areas of a building intended for non-residential uses must not have any access to areas of the building used for residential purposes [Section 25.13.05c.3]	N/A – No residential provided
MPDUs – Residential development must comply with MPDU requirements [Section 25.13.05c.4]	N/A – No residential provided
Public Use Space – must be provided consistent with Section 25.17.01 [Section 25.13.c.5]	5% (9.2% provided) of public use space in accordance with Article 17 will be provided.
Floor Area Limitation – 65,000 s.f. limitation on retail tenant space on ground floor	N/A – Building contains only small area of accessory office space

B. Section 25.13.06 – Additional Design Guidelines

	Summary of Requirement	Proposed
<u>Aesthetic and Visual Characteristics for All Zones</u>		
Facades and Exterior Walls Including Sides & Backs [Section 25.13.06.b.1]	Avoid massive scale and uniform and impersonal appearance. Building walls greater than 100 feet should include projections, recessions and other treatments.	The building will present as different volumes to break down the mass. In addition, all facades will include projections, recessions and varying window treatments, plus terraces.
	Occupy at least 60 percent of street frontage with windows, arcades and awnings. Architectural treatment similar to front façade must be provided to the sides and rear.	At least 60 percent of the facades will be windows.
	Provide architectural features that contribute to the visual interest at the pedestrian scale.	Vertical and horizontal architectural treatment, glass, balconies and undulating facades will be provided.
Roofs [Section 25.13.06.b.2]	Provide variations in rooflines. Roof features should complement the architectural and visual character of adjoining neighborhoods.	The southern and northern rooflines will vary. Terracing along the western façade will also provide visual interest and the perception of a varied roofline.
Materials & Colors [Section 25.13.06.b.3]	Utilize building materials and colors compatible with those in adjoining neighborhoods.	Building materials of glass, architectural metal, and fiber cement panel will be compatible with the surrounding development.
Items Allowed Not Facing A Public Street [Section 25.13.06.b.4]	The following items are allowed either on sides not facing a public street or in the rear yard: (a) window and wall air conditioners; (b) electric utility meters; (c) air conditioning compressors; and (d) irrigation and pool pumps.	The building design complies with the requirements.

	Summary of Requirement	Proposed
Entryways [Section 25.13.06.b.5]	Provide highly visible entryways.	Entrance includes high ceilings.
Screening of Mechanical Equipment [Section 25.13.06.b.6]	Screen mechanical equipment to mitigate noise and views.	Mechanical equipment will be centralized on the roof and screened from view.
<u>Site Design and Relationship to Surrounding Community</u>		
Vehicular Access [Section 23.13.06.c.1]	Provide safety and protection to adjacent residential uses	N/A
Buffers [Section 25.13.06.c.2]	Provide visual and noise buffers to adjacent residential uses	N/A
Outdoor Sales and Storage [Section 25.13.06.c.3]	Certain restrictions imposed outdoor sales	N/A
Trash recycling, screening [Section 25.13.06.c.4.b.]	Trash recycling outside of building must be secured and screened	To be provided internal to the building
Parking Lots [Section 25.13.06.c.5.a.]	Provide safe, convenient and efficient access. Use landscaping to define parking areas	Parking will be provided in a structured garage.
Pedestrian and Bicycle Flows [Section 25.13.06.c.6.]	Provide for pedestrian accessibility; 6' wide sidewalks should be provided from public ROW to entrance; provide sidewalks along length of building adjoining parking lot.	The Property has very limited frontage on Research Place. Sidewalks internal to the project will be provided and will be 6 feet in width minimum. The sidewalk leading from the Research Place cul-de-sac to the building will be 4 feet in width, due to site constraints. ¹
Central Features and Community Spaces [Section 25.13.06.c.7.]	Pedestrian scale features, private inviting entrances and parking lot locations. Special design features should define circulation paths and outdoor spaces	Outdoor amenity areas will be improved with benches and sidewalks. The entrance will be defined in part by the open space located immediately across from the entrance.

¹ As discussed below, and in accordance with Zoning Ordinance Section 25.17.05.b.3., the Applicant requests a waiver from the 6 foot width for this short segment of sidewalk.

	Summary of Requirement	Proposed
Delivery and Loading Spaces, Hours of Operation [Section 25.13.06.c.8.]	Design in accordance with Article 16;	Loading will be provided internal to the building in accordance with Article 16.
Noise Abatement [Section 25.13.06.c.10.]	Use must comply with noise regulations;	Project will comply with noise restrictions
Outdoor lighting [Section 25.13.06.c.11.]	Provide in accordance with the Landscape, screening and lighting manual	Lighting will be provided in accordance with the City's lighting manual.
Landscaping [Section 25.13.06.c.12.]	Provide in accordance with the Landscape, screening and lighting manual	Satisfied. The Project will provide in accordance with the landscaping, screening, and lighting manual.

C. 25.13.07c - Special Design Regulations for MXE Zone

Section	Summary	Proposed
Building Location [Section 25.13.07c.1]	When recommended in the Plan, buildings should be located close to the front property line or at the build-to line.	N/A
Uses by Floor [Section 25.13.07c.2]	Ground floor may contain retail and other uses along major pedestrian spines.	N/A. The building is not located along a pedestrian spine.
Façade [Section 25.13.07c.3]	Buildings should provide expression line above first floor and a defined cornice at the top of the façade wall.	The façade will be articulated with various treatment of architectural metals and glass.
Sidewalks	Where sidewalks required, must be in accordance with Article 17.	All sidewalks are internal to the Property and will be a minimum of 6 feet in width, except for the 4 foot sidewalk leading from the Research Place cul-de-sac to the building.
Parking	Comply with Article 16. Most parking should be located to the side or rear of the buildings.	412 spaces required and 412 spaces provided. Parking is provided in a structured garage that is located to the

Section	Summary	Proposed
		west of the building and not visible from I-270.

Zoning Ordinance Section 25.17.05.b.3 provides that the minimum widths of the sidewalk may be waived by the Approving Authority for short portions of a private sidewalk for “good cause shown.” The Applicant requests a waiver from the six foot width requirement to construct a four foot wide private sidewalk from the Research Place cul-de-sac to the project. The additional two feet in width cannot be accommodated for this short segment of sidewalk given the restrictive area resulting from the existing 20 foot drive aisle width and the existing five foot public use easement. In order to provide for the tree panel that the City has requested, the sidewalk must be narrowed to four feet in width. Accordingly, the Applicant requests that the Planning Commission grant the requested two foot waiver.

VIII. Findings

The Project satisfies the required Site Plan findings set forth in Section 25.07.01 of the Zoning Ordinance in that the Project will not:

- A. Adversely affect the health or safety of persons residing or working in the neighborhood of the proposed development

The Property is ideally located for the proposed life science use. It is located within a designated employment area of the City surrounding by other commercial uses. It replaces an older office building struggling with vacancies and replaces it with a highly desirable commercial use that will generate significant employment. The highly designed building will be visible from I-270 and will help promote Rockville as a life science use “hub.” The Project will generate 124 A.M. and 124 P.M. additional peak hour trips and as noted in the traffic study there is capacity to accommodate these additional trips and thus there will be no adverse health or safety affects from the use. The building will be constructed in accordance with the City’s Green Building Code and thus there will be no adverse environmental effects.

- B. Be detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to property or improvements in the neighborhood

The Project will not be detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to the property or improvements in the neighborhood. The Project will replace the existing office building with a an iconic building. The surface parking will be replaced with structured parking and the Project will incorporate needed stormwater management measures.

- C. Overburden existing and programmed public facilities as set forth in Article 20 of this Chapter and as provided in the adopted Adequate Public Facilities Standards

A comprehensive transportation review is submitted as part of the Site Plan submission that shows there is adequate road capacity to accommodate the proposed use. The Property is served by at least one fire station with a response time within three to ten minutes and by the City of Rockville police station located less than three miles from the Property (at 2 West Montgomery),

thereby ensuring a prompt response time to the Project in the event of an emergency. The Project will therefore not overburden the public facilities.

D. Adversely affect the natural resources or environment of the City or surrounding areas

The Project will not adversely affect the natural resources or environment of the City or the surrounding areas. The current improvements were constructed in the 1970's without many parking lot trees and without stormwater management. With respect to forest conservation, there are no existing forest stands on the site, and no reforestation is required. An afforestation requirement 0.42 acre will be provided on-site with Significant Replacement Trees (SRT) which will also provide 15% Minimum Tree Cover (MTC) in accordance with city regulations. As discussed above, stormwater management will be addressed by runoff routing through ESD facilities meeting current standards.

E. Be in conflict with the Plan

The Property is located within the City's 2021 Comprehensive Plan Planning Area 15 entitled Falls Grove and Research Boulevard and is recommended for office use. The proposed use is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan's recommendation that the Research Boulevard area should be considered as a "cluster for research and development, laboratory and office uses." The Comprehensive Plan acknowledges the high office vacancy and the ever-increasing demand for commercial life science/laboratory space in the area. The proposed redevelopment of the Property to accommodate a new life science building is wholly consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

E. Constitute a violation of any provision of this Chapter or other applicable law

The proposed Project complies with the provisions and laws of Rockville governing the development of the Property. As previously detailed, the Project complies with all of the MXE development standards. The Project will comply with the City's Green Building Standards by minimizing the development's impact on the environment, and meeting the 2015 International Green Construction Code. The Project will also comply with the City's Art in Private Development Ordinance. Finally, the Project will provide the required afforestation with individual on-site tree plantings, under the provisions of the Forest Conservation Manual and Chapter 10.5 (Forest and Tree Preservation).

F. Be incompatible with the surrounding uses or property

The Project will not be incompatible with the surrounding uses. The closest residential use is more than 500 feet away, across I-270. Moreover, the Property is bordered on the east by I-270 and to the north, south and west by other commercial uses. The Applicant has paid special attention to the building's architecture with the goal of situating a well designed building along the highly visible I-270 corridor to promote Rockville as a community that supports and encourages life science uses.

IX. Community Outreach

In accordance with the City's requirements, the Applicant held a Pre-Application Meeting ("PAM") on June 8, 2022. Only two people attended the meeting and no questions were asked.

X. Conclusion

The proposed Site Plan provides an opportunity to provide a well-designed life science building in the heart of the City's MXE zoned employment area, with no adverse impacts to the surrounding uses.