

Tad Lunger, Esq.
Arlington Land Use Group



Direct: 703-919-4314
tadlunger@arlingtonlandusegroup.com

May 24, 2024

VIA Electronic Delivery

Ms. Arlova J. Vonhm
Zoning Administrator
Zoning Division
Department of Community Planning, Housing & Development
2100 Clarendon Blvd, Suite 1000
Arlington, VA 22201

**Re: General Land Use Plan Amendment Application
1320 North Courthouse Road, Arlington, VA 22205, RPC Nos. 18-003-112
and 18-003-113 (collectively the “Property”)
Applicant: MCPP 1320 Courthouse LLC**

Dear Ms. Vonhm:

On behalf of MCPP 1320 Courthouse LLC (the “Applicant”), please accept the enclosed application for a General Land Use Plan Amendment (“GLUP Amendment”) for the Property. The following serves as a Statement of Justification for a GLUP Amendment to expand the *Courthouse Sector Plan Addendum: Courthouse Square* boundary on the GLUP to include the Property in coordination with a future 4.1 Site Plan application to be filed. The Property sits just outside of the existing southern boundary of the Courthouse Square Special District (the “CSSD”). The Applicant proposes to amend the existing CSSD to include the Property in the CSSD to fulfill the vision and goals provided in the CSSD and more fully articulated in the *2015 Courthouse Sector Plan Addendum: Courthouse Square*.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Property includes an existing, period-built 7-story office building and below grade parking structure at the corner of Veitch and 13th Streets that was constructed sometime around 1991. The existing office building occupies essentially the entire Property consisting of approximately 72,610 square feet (1.67 acres) of land. There are a variety of uses surrounding the Property including office, an existing large public surface parking lot, retail and restaurant uses, and multifamily residential uses. The Property is located immediately south of the surface parking lot for the Arlington County Justice Center buildings, north and east of multifamily residential

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buildings, and west of an office building built around 1983. The Property is centrally located at the southern end of the heart of the Courthouse Square planning area framed by the Arlington County Justice Center and Arlington County Government Offices, approximately 792 feet south of the Court House Metro station and 0.60 miles from the Clarendon Metro station.



The existing, 7-story office building was completed in 1991 and consists of approximately 373,246 square feet of Gross Floor Area (“GFA”) and has been consistently used for office purposes since that time. The Property is located within the Clarendon-Courthouse Civic Association boundary area and borders the Radnor/Ft. Myer Heights Civic Association across North Courthouse Road to the west. It is located within the Rosslyn-Ballston transit corridor and within an established urban neighborhood in the southern portion of the Courthouse area that is in

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need of revitalization, reinvestment and a healthier balance of uses with the surrounding judicial, commercial and government uses.

BOUNDARY MODIFICATION REQUEST

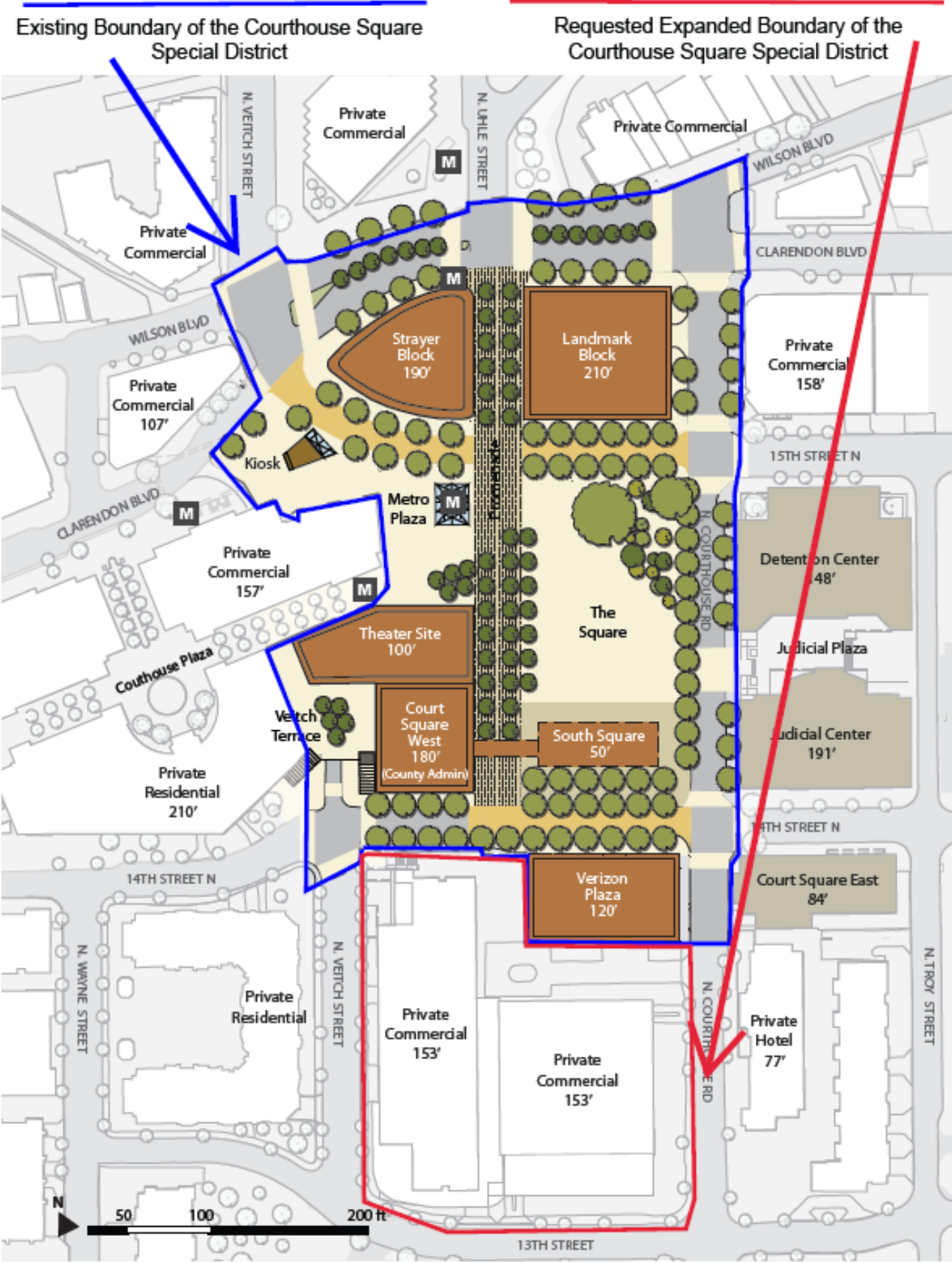
The Applicant is requesting an adjustment to the existing Courthouse Sector Plan to include the Property within the adjacent *Envision Courthouse Square Plan* boundary, which is already partially inclusive of the Property's 1300 block of Courthouse Road. The current ongoing use of the obsolete and underperforming office building at the Property is no longer practical and is not sustainable. After evaluating the Property's limited options, it was determined that ongoing commercial uses are not viable at this location and that a residential conversion project of the existing building is not feasible. The Applicant is requesting this boundary adjustment to facilitate the review and adoption of a coordinated, well planned-out development that will allow for the implementation of the vision and goals of the 2015 Addendum, bookend the expansive planned civic green opposite of the Landmark Building, and create the connectivity to tie together the planned shared-streets and civic green concept into one large cohesive and complete area envisioned for Courthouse Square. In order to facilitate this vision, the Applicant is requesting to engage in a GLUP Amendment process to modify the CSSD boundary map to pull the Property into the 2015 Addendum plan area.

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FIGURE 2.1: COURTHOUSE SQUARE CONCEPT PLAN



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PLANNING AND ZONING CONTEXT; EXISTING GUIDANCE

Arlington County’s initial GLUP was adopted in 1961, and from 1961 to 1975 the Property was designated “Commercial Office Buildings.” In 1975, as part of a Comprehensive GLUP Amendment, the Property was reclassified as “General Commercial,” allowing for the use of shopper goods and other major mixed commercial uses, including offices, generally a maximum of seven stories. In 1983 the GLUP designation was changed to “High Office-Apartment-Hotel” allowing for a 3.5 FAR for office density, up to 135 units per acre for apartment density, and up to 210 units per acre for hotel density. Over the past 41 years, the Property has consistently been designated as “High Office-Apartment-Hotel.” The GLUP Map is consistent with the Zoning Map relating to the Property. The Property is designated “High Office-Apartment-Hotel” and Zoning Districts that correspond to this GLUP designation include C-O, C-O Rosslyn, C-O Crystal City and RA-H-3.2. The GLUP text does not contain any site-specific recommendations for the Property, nor is it located within an established revitalization district.

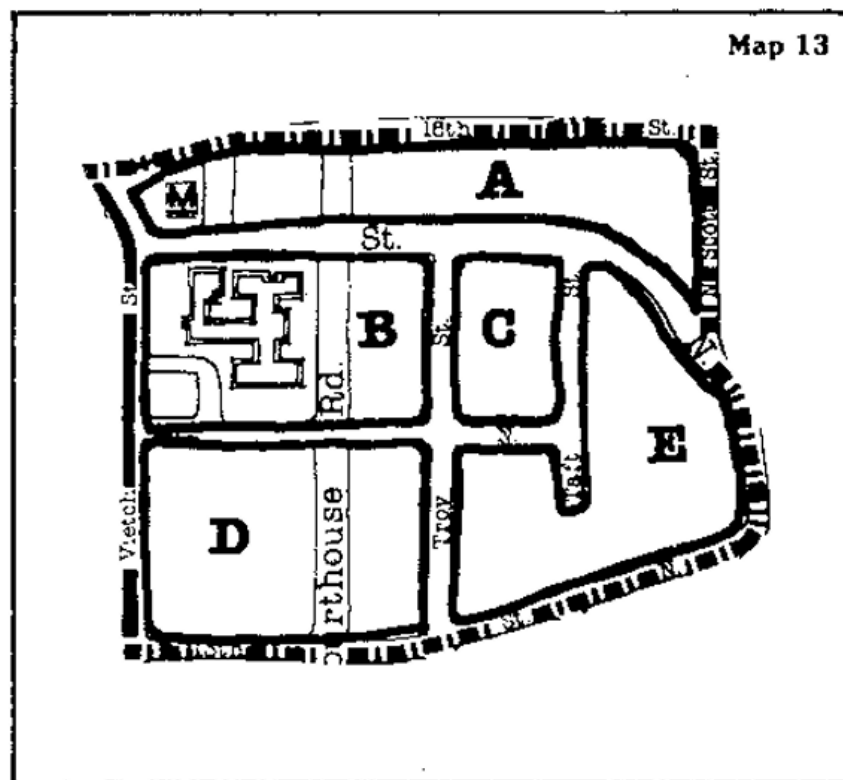
The Property is located within a dated, existing C-O Mixed-Use Zoning District. The Property is not identified in the Historic Resources Inventory as having any historical significance. The Property is not located in a Housing Conservation District. The Property was developed through the utilization of the 4.1 Site Plan process but is not located in or associated with any Phased Development Site Plan. Site Plan #153 was originally approved in 1979 for one office building and parking garage known as 1310 North Courthouse Road. Site Plan #153 was subsequently amended in 1989 to include a second office building at the Property (1320 North Courthouse Road). The two buildings were originally under the same ownership (Bell Atlantic), but have since been sold, and are now separately owned with different tenants. As a part of the 1989 Major Amendment, the Property was rezoned from the C-2 “Service Commercial-Community Business District” to the C-O Zoning District. The land use policy relating to the Property is guided by several principal planning documents, the General Land Use Plan (the “GLUP”), the Courthouse Sector Plan (1981) and the Courthouse Sector Plan Addendum (1993).

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SECTION 2: CENTRAL COURT HOUSE



The Property is located within the 1981 Courthouse Sector Plan (the “Plan”) area and is identified as Block D in the Plan. The specific guidance for the Property in the Plan recommends “‘High’ density residential use (91-135 units per acre; 136-210 hotel units per acre).”¹ The Plan recommends that the Property “be changed from ‘High’ density office-apartment-hotel to ‘High’ density residential” to “ensure a strong residential component close to the Metro stations.”² This proposed boundary modification allows the Property to develop and also contribute to the recommendations outlined in the 1981 Sector Plan for achieving additional residential population around Metro Stations.

After the approval of the 1981 Courthouse Sector Plan, on November 13, 1993, the Arlington County Board approved an Addendum to the Plan (the “1993 Addendum”). The goal of

¹ Arlington County Board, *Courthouse Sector Plan*, 1981, page 36, <https://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/31/2014/04/Courthouse-Sector-Plan-1981.pdf>

² Arlington County Board, *Courthouse Sector Plan*, 1981, page 36, <https://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/31/2014/04/Courthouse-Sector-Plan-1981.pdf>

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the 1993 Addendum was to establish a central open space to be developed as an urban plaza.³ Specifically, this 1993 Addendum suggests the creation of an amphitheater to “take advantage of the exiting topography.”⁴ This addendum recognizes the potential of this block and that it must balance the proposed central plaza by suggesting architectural and sculptural elements to “provide a sense of enclosure to the central plaza.”⁵ The proposed boundary modification allows for the fulfillment of this goal through utilizing the Property to provide a sense of enclosure to the proposed plaza, establishing a similar building to bookend and balance the Landmark Block (2050 Wilson Boulevard).

The 1993 Addendum planned a centralized civic green to monumentalize the Justice Center and Government Offices, promote walkability and open space in a dense urban setting, and support pedestrian shared streets in a Metro transit area. To achieve this “Courthouse Square,” the 1993 Addendum recommends substantial green open space, wide sidewalks and underground parking to facilitate shared streets to weave the central green through the buildings framing the civic green and shared streets to create an expansive, integrated pedestrian, central place in Courthouse, at a midpoint in the R-B Corridor and at the core of Arlington’s civic life.

The County Board initiated the *Envision Courthouse Square* planning process in 2013 to modernize the vision outlined in the 1993 Courthouse Sector Plan Addendum. This long-range vision was updated to encourage the development of a new civic center and public destination location in Arlington. The 2015 Courthouse Sector Plan Addendum envisions transforming Courthouse into “Courthouse Square,” an extensive, generous gathering place for recreation and leisure, shared streets, with significant venue capacity and event potential. The County Board officially adopted the Courthouse Sector Plan Addendum on September 21, 2015 (the “2015 Addendum”). The Property was removed from the “Courthouse Square” planning area and not included in the planning of the 2015 Addendum because of the inaction of ownership at the time, which did not engage in that process. As a result, the 2015 Addendum was approved without input or specific recommendations for the Property, although it is one of the most significant framing blocks of the central civic green vision. The Property was included in the 1981 Courthouse Sector Plan and 1993 Addendum as a key site to frame the core area until the 2015 Addendum. This

³ Arlington County Board, *Courthouse Sector Plan Addendum*, 1993, page 18, <https://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/31/2014/03/Courthouse-Add.pdf>

⁴ Arlington County Board, *Courthouse Sector Plan Addendum*, 1993, page 31, <https://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/31/2014/03/Courthouse-Add.pdf>

⁵ Arlington County Board, *Courthouse Sector Plan Addendum*, 1993, page 31, <https://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/31/2014/03/Courthouse-Add.pdf>

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boundary modification request would reverse this exclusion and correctly reestablish the Property as a significant site as originally outlined in the 1981 Sector Plan and 1993 Addendum.

The future Courthouse Square is planned as a well-connected network of open spaces designed to accommodate a variety of public uses, from casual daily uses to athletic and recreational uses, to events, both planned and spontaneous. It has all the attributes of being one of Arlington's best public venue spaces. It is conceived as the cornerstone for Arlington's central civic place, and for social and cultural activities in Arlington. The primary goal of the 2015 Addendum for Courthouse Square is to transform the area into the central gathering place for the community.



Figure 2.2: Conceptual birds-eye view looking northwest into Courthouse Square (2015 Addendum)

Currently, the central open space, known as the Central Square, is predominantly covered by an asphalt parking lot and is one of the worst, most lacking sites in regard to minimal tree

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coverage in the Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor. By relocating the parking underground, the current parking lot can be redeveloped into a vibrant gathering space. The 2015 Addendum provides that the Central Square, spanning approximately two acres, should be designed to accommodate a variety of activities, events, pedestrian circulation, and gatherings. The updated addendum also provides that the Central Square could consist of more than one main area: the Memorial Grove, featuring a diverse landscape with garden paths and native trees, and the Lawn, serving as a central park for the community with open lawn space for various uses. The South Square, located prominently at the south edge of the square, is conceived to enhance the overall design and functionality of Courthouse Square through architectural elements and open space solutions. Integration with the North Square, sustainable design, and stormwater management will play key roles in the development of the South Square.

Ultimately, the 2015 Addendum proposes to transform the current public surface parking lot and adjoining street network into community-oriented open space, a central civic green, with an emphasis on multi-modal transit accessibility. The surrounding streets are envisioned as shared pedestrian-friendly streets, enhancing the overall vibrancy and connectivity of the area and an expansion of public open space. Shared streets within Courthouse Square will facilitate connections between open spaces, buildings, and pedestrian activities with key pedestrian connections extended to create a centralized promenade linking various points of interest in the area. Sustainability will be a key focus in the design and planning of Courthouse Square, continuing to set a standard for environmentally responsible development in Arlington.

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Figure 2.4: Conceptual view looking southwest into Courthouse Square from the Memorial Grove (2015 Addendum)

SUMMARY OF REQUEST

For all of these reasons, the Applicant's proposal is to incorporate the omitted, missing 1300 Block of Courthouse Road in the 2015 Addendum planning area boundary to facilitate a future redevelopment pursuant to the C-O Courthouse Square Special District zoning regulations. As described above, the Applicant's proposal will meet many County goals including providing an increase in housing supply in a major transit area through the conversion of a large, dated and obsolete office block to productive and much needed residential uses. In addition to this, a redevelopment of the Property would be the catalyst for the realization of the long-sought walkable, pedestrian-focused, open space core of the Courthouse Sector Plan. The benefits and contributions provided by the Landmark Building project were significant, however insufficient and incomplete, addressed only a portion of the County's vision, and were not enough to effectuate the goals and vision for Courthouse. There is already a plan for Courthouse, this boundary modification request does not propose to change it, but rather provide for its effectuation.

The Applicant seeks to pursue a meaningful development consistent with the already identified objectives set forth in the 1981 Courthouse Sector Plan for providing additional housing

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in a transit area and the 1993 and 2015 Addendums for the place-making, revitalization, open space, and increase of residential uses in Courthouse. The Applicant's plan for development would complement and stabilize the unique mix of uses in the Courthouse planning area. The proposed boundary modification will allow for a more streamlined and coordinated development that will be respectful of the existing built environment and the scale and presence of the civic core of Arlington life. This set of circumstances presents an easily recognizable and valuable opportunity that will benefit the County and advance Courthouse toward realizing its planned vision. In order to ensure the timely progression of the project and take advantage of this opportunity in the time that the Applicant has to work within to implement the Plan, the Applicant respectfully requests that this modification be worked into this year's work schedule for meaningful progress by the end of the year.



Figure 2.3: Conceptual view looking east on 15th Street North as a shared street (2015 Addendum)
***Rendering of shared-street concept**

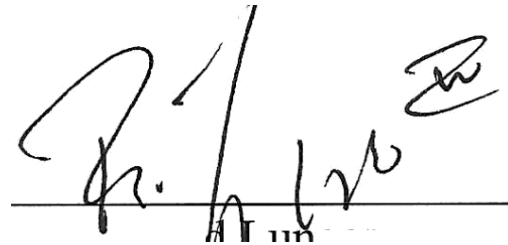
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We look forward to a productive, inclusive process with our neighbors, the community and County staff. If any questions arise relating to this application, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Thank you,



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