TOWN OF Herndon VIRGINIA **Planning Commission Work Session**

STAFF REPORT

Agenda Item: Special Exception – SE #26-05, 757 Elden Street - Application to permit an indoor entertainment use within the central commercial zoning district.

Meeting Date: October 5, 2026

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Site Description & Background:



757 Elden Street is located approximately 100 feet from the intersection of Elden Street and Spring Street in the central commercial (CC) zoning district and is within the Historic District Overlay. Although the front facade of the building has been modified, it remains a contributing structure. The original use of the building was as a movie theater. The property is currently occupied by The Upholstery Shop and operates as a personal services and retail sales use. The property's inclusion in Herndon Downtown - Sector 2 of the Town of Herndon 2030 Comprehensive Plan, Downtown Master Plan, Comprehensive Plan Amendment #10-01 reflects the Town's intent to "[r]einforce Elden Street as the retail core by adding new mixed-use buildings and restoring certain historic buildings to accommodate viable commercial buildings." The intent of central commercial (CC) district is to "allow for a mix of office, service commercial, retail commercial, entertainment, cultural, government, and civic uses." Sec. 78-40.1.

Case Details & Proposed Operations:

The applicant seeks a special exception to convert the property to a venue for private events, including weddings, receptions, corporate meetings, private celebrations, nonprofit gatherings, recitals, presentations, and similar scheduled functions. The Town's zoning ordinance categorizes this type of use as indoor entertainment. Sec. 78-71.8. Indoor entertainment is permitted in the central commercial zoning district by special exception. Sec. 78-40.1(c)(3).

Private events will be held on the first floor of the building. The applicant anticipates most events to occur Thursday through Sunday, primarily during the evening. The venue will host no more than one event per day. In the first year of operation, the applicant anticipates hosting 30-45 events, or approximately one per week – increasing to 60-80 events per year as the business grows.

The second floor will continue to be used as a personal services and retail sales space. Design and Interiors by the Upholstery Shop will be an appointment-based design studio, sample library, showroom, sales and consultation service. Appointments for the design studio will not conflict with scheduled events. This is a continuation of the existing principal use and not part of the special exception.

The applicant is proposing the installation of a gate at either end of the property along the west elevation. Additionally, the applicant is proposing a ramp from the right-of-way to the entrance near the northwest corner of the property.

Staff Analysis:

Zoning Ordinance Compliance

Indoor entertainment is a permitted use by special exception in the central commercial zoning district. Sec. 78-40.1. Each proposed special exception use must be evaluated for compliance with the standards set forth in Sec. 78-155.3, the standard for the proposed use in Sec. 78-71, and any other relevant considerations. Sec. 78-155.3(b)(2).

Sec. 78-155.3(e) establishes general standards for all special exception uses. Staff evaluated the criteria for review of special exceptions found in Zoning Ordinance Sec. 78-155.3(e). Criteria (a)–(e), (g)–(i), and (j) were found to be applicable to the analysis. Criteria (f) and (k) – (m) were found to be not applicable to the analysis because there are minimal physical alterations to the structure proposed, and the building is not located within the floodplain overlay. Staff believes that conditions will be required to limit impacts.

The zoning ordinance requires that indoor entertainment uses in the Herndon Downtown shall be of a scale and impact harmonious with existing development and planning policy for the Herndon Downtown. Factors to be considered include traffic impact, parking availability, pedestrian access, peak period visitation for the proposed use and positive economic multipliers for existing downtown businesses. Sec. 78-71.8(d)(1).

Traffic

The zoning ordinance does not require a traffic impact study for a proposed change of use. Sec. 78-156.1. Preliminary analysis conducted by Town staff suggests that the current use generates 17 daily trips; 3 trips during the weekend peak. Using available Institute of Traffic Engineer (ITE) data for trips generated by a fine dining use as an approximate comparison, staff estimates that the proposed indoor entertainment use could generate 226 daily trips; 28 trips during the weekend peak. These rates assume a spread arrival and departure distribution, with guests staying for at least an hour, which may not match the proposed use. The applicant expects typical attendance to range from approximately 80 – 120 guests. Initial assessments of permissible occupant load by Town staff ranges from 145 with tables and chairs to 352 standing room only.

Parking

The zoning ordinance requires a flat rate of 3.3 spaces per 1,000 square feet of gross floor area, regardless of the use. Sec. 78-100.2(b). The building has 3,000 square feet of gross area. The property owners purchased ten spaces through the Town's Public Shared Parking program and are in compliance with zoning ordinance parking requirements.

As a special exception, the adequacy of required parking may be considered. Staff estimates that 24 parking spaces are required to accommodate trip generation from a fine dining use. The proposed use with scheduled events would likely create more peak demand for parking rather than spread demand seen in fine dining.

Loading/Unloading

There are double doors at the south end of the property that lead to a loading area and public alley. The loading area is approximately 500 square feet. This area will serve as the loading and unloading area for all vendors. According to the applicant, vendors will be given building access to set up no earlier than 9:00 a.m. Events will conclude by

10:00 pm Sunday – Thursday, and 10:30 p.m. Friday – Saturday. Vendors will be expected to finish cleanup and breakdown activities by 11:00 p.m. The potential conflict of multiple deliveries occurring at the same time has not been addressed, nor has the potential for drop-off and pick-up of guests.

Comprehensive Plan Adherence

The current proposal is consistent, in part, with the Herndon 2030 Comprehensive Plan and Downtown Master Plan – Comprehensive Plan Amendment #10-01. While the proposal makes progress in the expressed goals of enhancing Herndon's Downtown image as an attractive entertainment destination, sufficient conditions may be necessary to assure that the goal of creating a pedestrian-friendly environment while providing reasonable traffic circulation and adequate parking is also obtainable.

Fiscal Impact:

There is no immediate fiscal impact from this application. The proposed business would be subject to applicable taxes and fees, including the Town's BPOL tax.

Planning Commission Alternatives:

The following alternatives are available to the Planning Commission for its decision on SE #26-05:

1. Recommend approval.
2. Recommend denial.
3. Continuance to the November 16, 2026, Planning Commission regular meeting.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends continuance of this application to allow additional time to fully consider potential impacts and conditions, particularly those related to noise, pick-up/drop-off, deliveries, and occupancy associated with use type. Staff also suggests that the applicant provides details regarding how drop-off and pick-up of customers will occur and how deliveries will be timed or otherwise limited to decrease the likelihood of multiple deliveries occurring at the same time.