STAFF REPORT

Agenda Item: Resolution, to consider a Special Exception, SE #26-05, 757 Elden Street, to approve an indoor entertainment use within the Central Commercial, CC, zoning district.

Meeting Date: November 17, 2026

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Site Description & Background:



757 Elden Street is located near 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 Design and Interiors 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 applicant expects typical attendance to range from approximately 80 – 120 guests.

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

A traffic impact study is not required for a proposed change of use. Sec. 78-156.1. Preliminary analysis conducted by Town staff using available Institute of Traffic Engineer (ITE) data suggests that the current use generates 17 daily trips; 3 trips during the weekend peak. Using a fine dining use as an approximate comparison, ITE data 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. Town staff performed an initial assessment of the maximum occupant load based on the revised plans provided by the applicant showing two bathrooms. The initial assessment for maximum occupant load is 171 people.

The applicant proposes creating rideshare, taxi, limousine, and car-service pick-up/drop-off locations to the north and south of Elden Street along Spring Street. Staff cannot currently support designated spaces for these services, as there is not adequate space for a vehicle to move out of the travel lane for passengers to safely enter and exit a vehicle along Spring Street. Additionally, the proximity of the proposed space south of Elden Street to the Fairfax County Fire Station creates potential for a stopped vehicle to block the egress of emergency vehicles.

The applicant is requesting that one parking space in front of 757 Elden Street be designated as a passenger-loading location. Staff recommend that this proposal not be considered as part of this special exception. Instead, the request should be directed to the Transportation Engineering Improvement Committee (TEIC). TEIC is an advisory committee that reviews and evaluates transportation plans and makes recommendations to the Town Manager.

The applicant proposes an optional valet service with a reception podium. Staff cannot support a reception podium on any public property without a license agreement approved by Town Council. The applicant could pursue an agreement with an adjacent property to host the reception podium.

The applicant states that any bus, shuttle, or unusually large vehicle movement will require advance coordination and a lawful loading location. Staff recommend that any bus, shuttle, or limousine use one of the two designated vendor parking locations leased from the adjacent lot.

The Planning Commission did not request any additional information from the applicant regarding traffic impacts and mitigation. Traffic concerns throughout the downtown are a focus of the ongoing comprehensive plan and can best be addressed through that process. Staff believes that the proposed conditions will mitigate potential traffic issues related specifically to this special exception.

Parking

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.

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 purchased ten spaces through the Town's Public Shared Parking program and is in compliance with zoning ordinance parking requirements.

The applicant is currently leasing six parking spaces from an adjacent property owner. Two of the spaces will be reserved for vendors. The remaining four leased parking spaces will be used for event guest parking. The current lease is for six months with an option to extend for another 6-month term.

The applicant has proposed including two parking spaces in the loading area of the property. Under Sec. 78-100.5(b)(1) of the zoning ordinance, parking stalls at a 90^0 parking angle are required to have a depth of 18 feet. The distance from the rear of the property to the property line is 16 feet. The applicant is further proposing to store six refuse/recycling carts along the rear wall that will further reduce the space for parked vehicles. The two proposed parking spaces in the loading area do not comply with the zoning ordinance and cannot be included in available parking calculations.

Available parking remains a concern of staff and members of the Planning Commission. The property is in conformance with zoning ordinance requirements for off-street parking. The additional leased parking spaces demonstrate a good faith effort by the applicant to address outstanding concerns. Staff believes the proposed conditions will

further mitigate parking issues. In the event that staff receives complaints regarding the operation not meeting approved conditions, the Town maintains the ability to revoke the special exception in accordance with Sec. 78-155.3(h).

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. Vendors waiting to load or unload their materials will be required by the applicant to use one of the two leased parking spaces reserved for vendors. Staff believe that the proposed conditions will mitigate any issues created by vendor loading/unloading materials for a scheduled event.

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.

Pedestrian Experience:
During the October 5 Planning Commission work session, concern was raised regarding the pedestrian experience as the property transitions from retail to indoor entertainment use. The concern was that pedestrians would see an empty storefront when events were not scheduled. The applicant has stated that a limited number of tables and chairs will remain arranged as coordinated display vignettes. Table linens, chair treatments, and other decorative elements supplied by Design and Interiors may be incorporated and changed periodically to provide visual interest. The storefront windows will remain visually open. Interior lighting will provide a warm, welcoming appearance during business and appointment hours. The intent is to provide pedestrians with a view of a finished, furnished, and actively maintained event
venue.

Fiscal Impact:

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

Town Council Alternatives:

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

1. Approve the application without conditions
2. Approve the application with the proposed conditions.
3. Deny the application. The property maintains its by-right personal services and retail sales use
4. Continuation to the December 15, 2026, regular meeting.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends that the Town Council approve the application with conditions, as proposed.