



Staff Report for PLSUP-2607-0008

Application Information:

Application Type: Special Use Permit

Location of Subject: 1 Calvary Rd

Legal Description: 010-0660-00010

Applicant: Blue Sky Coffee

Applicant Contact: Adam Kinnunen

Agent:

Agent Contact:

Staff Contact: Jason Mozol, jmozol@duluthmn.gov

Deadline for Action:

Application Date: July 3, 2026

Date Extension Letter Mailed: August 4, 2026

60 Days: September 1, 2026

120 Days: October 31, 2026

Site Visit Date: July 29, 2026

Sign Notice Date: July 30, 2026

Neighbor Letter Date: July 28, 2026

Number of Letters Sent: 39

Proposal:

Applicant is requesting a Special Use Permit for a coffee shop.

Recommended Action:

Staff recommends approval with conditions.

Zoning and Land Use:

	Current Zoning	Existing Land Use	Future Land Use Map Designation
Subject	MU-N	Mixed-use	Neighborhood Commercial
North	R-1	Residential	Neighborhood Commercial
South	MU-N	Mixed- Use	Neighborhood Commercial
East	MU-N	Commercial - Retail	Neighborhood Commercial
West	MU-N	Commercial - Retail	Neighborhood Commercial

Summary of Code Requirements:

Sec. 50-20.3.R. Use Standards for Restaurant. (applicable, paraphrased)

1. In the R-2 and MU-N district, no use shall exceed 5,000 sq. ft. in gross floor area;
2. Drive-ins and drive-throughs for restaurants are only allowed in the MU-N.
3. Drive-through lanes shall allow for stacking space for 5 cars;
4. When in the MU-N district, the following additional standards apply:
 - (a) The speaker box and drive-through window must be at least 50 feet from any property line containing a residential structure;
 - (b) Drive-through may be open at 6:00 a.m. during the weekday or at 7:00 a.m. on the weekend and close by 10:00 p.m. only if all speaker boxes and drive-through windows are at least 125 feet from any residential structure, excluding any residential use or structure on the same property;
 - (c) Glare and noise from cars in the drive-through lane and stacking space shall be shielded from adjacent residential properties through the use of screening, fencing, and/or a dense urban screen;

Sec. 50-24. Parking Standards (paraphrased). Parking stalls must be at least 9'x17' in size, drive aisles must be at least 24' wide, and the lot must be finished in a paved, hard surface material. If building renovations exceed 50% of the building value parking for at least three bikes must be provided.

Sec. 50-25.4. Parking Lot Landscaping (paraphrased). Parking lots with less than 25 spaces must provide 30 percent tree canopy coverage at maturity.

Sec. 50-26. Screening Trash Containers (paraphrased). Trash containers must be screened by durable weather resistant material, or dense vegetation.

Sec. 50-37.10 . Special Use Permits. Planning Commission shall approve the application or approve it with modifications, if it is determined that the application meets the following criteria:

1. The application is consistent with the Comprehensive Land Use Plan;
2. The application complies with all applicable provisions ... including any use-specific standards ..., and is consistent with any approved district plan for the area;
3. The Commission may deny any application that would result in a random pattern of development with little contiguity to existing or programmed development or would cause anticipated negative fiscal or environmental impacts.

Comprehensive Plan Governing Principle and/or Policies and Current History (if applicable):

Principle #5 – Promote reinvestment in neighborhoods – This project reutilizes a currently vacant storefront and adds activity to an existing commercial hub.

Future Land Use: Neighborhood Commercial- Small- to moderate-scale commercial, serving primarily the adjacent neighborhood(s). May include specialty retail; community -gathering businesses such as coffee shops or lower intensity entertainment; offices; studios or housing above retail (storefront retail with vertical mixed use). Typically situated in or adjacent to residential neighborhoods. May transition to neighborhood mixed use.

History: The property is currently occupied by a multi-use structure that includes space for several commercial uses on the first floor and apartments on the second floor. The storefront the coffee shop is proposed to occupy was previously a pharmacy.

Review and Discussion Items:

Staff finds:

1. Applicant is requesting a Special Use Permit for conversion of an existing storefront to a coffee shop.
2. *Use Specific Standards (50-20.3.R):*
 - a. The coffee shop is less than 5,000 sq. ft.
 - b. The drive through provides space for 5 cars to stack, does not include a speaker box, and the window is more than 50 feet from residential properties.
 - c. The drive through window is at least 125 feet from residential structures. This allows the drive through to operate during the proposed hours of 6:00 am to 10:00 pm on weekdays and 7:00 am to 10:00 pm on weekends.
 - d. A retaining wall and vegetation to the north of the property buffer residential properties from glare and noise associated with the drive through.
3. *Parking Standards (50-24.5):*

- a. The parking lot is depicted meeting all dimensional and surfacing requirements. There are slight discrepancies between the dimensions shown and what is depicted in aerial photography. All parking must be located within the boundaries of the parcel. Final plans based on surveyed dimensions must be submitted to the Land Use Supervisor prior to building permit approval.
- b. The applicant proposes to provide bike parking in the south of the site. If the building renovations exceed 50% of the structure value, details depicting the design of the bike racks must be provided to the Land Use Supervisor prior to building permit approval.
4. *Parking Lot Landscaping (50-25.4)*: The applicant proposes to plant 2 trees that results in 31 percent of the parking lot being shaded when the trees reach maturity. The trees are located too close to the curb and over an existing utility line, amended plans relocating the trees clear of underground utilities must be provided to the Land Use Supervisor prior to building permit approval.
5. *Screening Trash Containers (50-26)*: The applicant proposes to provide screening for trash containers located to the rear of the structure. Details depicting the height and material of this screening must be submitted to the Land Use Supervisor prior to building permit approval.
6. *Special Use Permit Criteria (50-37.10)*:
 - a. This project is consistent with the comprehensive plan's future land use designation and will comply with all applicable provisions of Chapter 50.
 - b. This project is built on existing City infrastructure and will not result in negative fiscal impacts to the City or community.
 - c. This project maintains commercial use of an existing storefront in a commercial district. No negative fiscal or environmental impacts are anticipated.
7. The plaza area on the site adjacent to the corner of Calvary Rd and Woodland Ave is important for maintaining pedestrian connectivity and activation of the intersection. Staff recommend this area remain open and accessible to pedestrians with separation from driving areas provided in the form of bollards, planters or a similar mechanism.
8. Comment was received from the City Engineer regarding concerns for vehicle maneuvering space, tree locations, and tie ins between public and private curbs, driveways, and sidewalks. One public comment in support of the project was received. No other public, agency, or City comments were received.
9. Per UDC Section 50-37.1.N, approved special use permits lapse if the project or activity authorized by the permit has not begun within one-year.

Staff Recommendation:

Based on the above findings, Staff recommends that Planning Commission approve the Special Use Permit with the following conditions:

1. The project must be constructed and limited to the plans submitted with the application.
2. Amended plans depicting trash screening details, surveyed parking lot dimensions, tie ins to public transportation infrastructure, relocated trees, and bike rack design must be submitted to and approved by the Land Use Supervisor prior to building permit approval.
3. The plaza area at the corner of Woodland Ave and Calvary Rd is kept clear for pedestrian use and separated from driving areas by bollards, planters or a similar mechanism.
4. Any alterations to the approved plans that do not alter major elements of the plan may be approved by the Land Use Supervisor without further Planning Commission review; however, no such administration approval shall constitute a variance from the provisions of Chapter 50

Legend

- Road or Alley ROW
- County Parcel Data

R-1 (Residential Traditional)

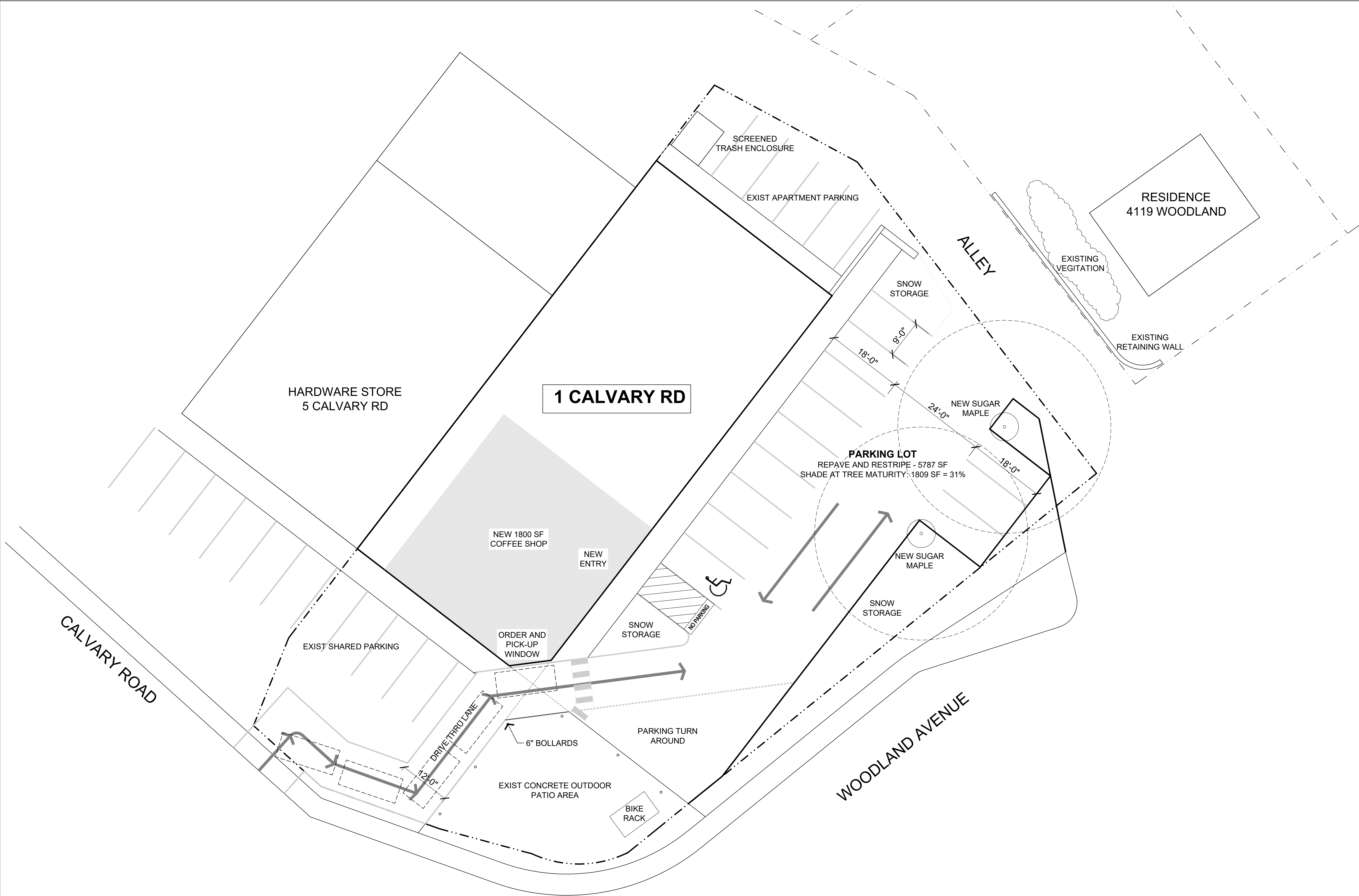
MU-N (Mixed Use Neighborhood)

0 40 80 160 240 320 Feet

Prepared by: City of Duluth Planning & Economic Development, May 13, 2026. Source: City of Duluth.

Aerial imagery captured in 2025, showing Parcels #010-0660-00010 outlined at the northwest corner of Calvary Rd and Woodland Ave, a property shown to exist within the MU-N (Mixed-Use Neighborhood) zone district.

The City of Duluth has tried to ensure that the information contained in this map or electronic document is accurate. The City of Duluth makes no warranty or guarantee concerning the accuracy or reliability. This drawing/data is neither a legally recorded map nor a survey and is not intended to be used as one. The drawing/data is a compilation of records, information and data located in various City, County and State offices and other sources affecting the area shown and is to be used for reference purposes only. The City of Duluth shall not be liable for errors contained within this data provided or for any damages in connection with the use of this information contained within.



FOUNDATIONS

ARCHITECTURE

GREGORY P. STROM, ARCHITECT

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BOECKER

Drafting and Design

TRAVIS J. BOECKER (TJB)
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NEW COFFEE SHOP

MAIN LEVEL

1 CALVARY ROAD

DULUTH, MN 55803

SHEET TITLE:

SITE AND LANDSCAPE PLAN

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PLAN, SPECIFICATION, OR REPORT
WAS PREPARED BY ME OR UNDER MY DIRECT SUPERVISION AND
THAT I AM A DULY LICENSED ARCHITECT UNDER THE LAWS OF
THE STATE OF MINNESOTA

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

X - X - XXXX

REG. NO. 26197

GREGORY P. STROM

DATE: 7-31-2026

JOB NO.: 2636

DRAWN BY: GPS

APPROVED BY: GPS

PLANNING
SUBMITTAL

SPECIAL USE PERMIT

COFFEE SHOP DRIVE THRU

7-31-2026

SITE



1 SITE AND LANDSCAPE PLAN

3/32"=1'-0"



Project Narrative

Special Use Permit – Drive-Through Coffee Shop
1 E. Calvary Road, Duluth, Minnesota

Project Description

The applicant is proposing the construction of a new neighborhood coffee shop with an accessory drive-through at 1 E. Calvary Road in Duluth, Minnesota. The drive-through is intended to provide customers with a convenient service option while supporting safe and efficient site circulation. The proposed use is compatible with the existing commercial character of the area and is consistent with the City's vision for continued investment and economic development within established commercial corridors.

Existing Site

The property is located within the Woodland Marketplace commercial area, surrounded by existing retail, restaurant, office, and service businesses. The site is served by existing public streets, utilities, sidewalks, and other public infrastructure. Because the property is already located within a commercial district, the proposed coffee shop complements the existing pattern of development and does not introduce an incompatible land use.

Traffic and Site Circulation

The site has been designed to promote safe and efficient traffic movement. Customers entering the drive-through will remain entirely on private property while waiting to order and receive service. Vehicle stacking has been incorporated into the design to minimize the potential for vehicles to queue onto public streets.

Internal circulation separates drive-through traffic from customer parking and pedestrian walkways wherever practical, reducing the potential for vehicle conflicts. Site access points provide safe ingress and egress while maintaining efficient traffic flow within the development.

Coffee shops typically generate short customer visits, resulting in relatively quick turnover of vehicles compared to many other commercial uses.

Community Compatibility

The proposed coffee shop is expected to integrate well with the surrounding neighborhood and commercial businesses. Similar retail and service establishments already exist within the Woodland Marketplace area, and the project will provide an additional neighborhood amenity without changing the character of the surrounding community.

The project is not expected to create adverse impacts related to noise, lighting, odor, or hours of operation beyond those typically associated with a neighborhood coffee shop. Exterior lighting will be directed downward and shielded to reduce light spill onto adjacent properties. Landscaping will enhance the appearance of the site and provide an attractive streetscape.

Economic Benefits

- Create permanent local employment opportunities.
- Increase the local tax base.
- Provide a convenient service for nearby residents, employees, students, and visitors.
- Support continued investment within an existing commercial district.
- Make efficient use of existing public infrastructure.

Comprehensive Plan Consistency

The proposal supports the goals of the Imagine Duluth 2035 Comprehensive Plan by encouraging reinvestment in an established commercial area, promoting economic prosperity, utilizing existing infrastructure efficiently, improving access to neighborhood services, and creating development that is compatible with surrounding land uses.

Conclusion

The proposed drive-through coffee shop has been thoughtfully designed to operate safely and efficiently while complementing the existing commercial development surrounding Woodland Marketplace. The project utilizes existing infrastructure, promotes local economic growth, provides a valued neighborhood service, and is not expected to create adverse impacts on adjacent properties or the surrounding community.

The applicant respectfully requests approval of the Special Use Permit for the proposed drive-through, as the project is consistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan, compatible with surrounding land uses, and in the best interest of the community.

Supporting Exhibits

- Site plan showing building location, parking, drive-through lane, and vehicle stacking.
- Existing conditions photographs.



Blue Sky Coffee at 1 Calvary Rd.

From Ellie Sin [REDACTED]
Date Sat 8/1/2026 8:44 PM
To Jason Mozol <jmozol@DuluthMN.gov>

Hello,

I've lived in the Woodland neighborhood for the past five years, and during that time I've often thought that Woodland would greatly benefit from having a local coffee shop. Our neighborhood has very few places where residents can gather for a snack or drink, spend time with friends and neighbors, and build a stronger sense of community.

I strongly support granting the special use permit for Blue Sky Coffee to renovate the Falk's Building. The building has been underutilized and neglected for years, and this project would breathe new life into the space while providing a valuable gathering place for the neighborhood. In addition to creating a welcoming community space, the business would generate economic opportunities and contribute to the continued revitalization of Woodland.

I look forward to learning more about the rezoning process and the proposed project. Thank you for considering my support.

Ellie