



WAWA LABELLE PUD PROJECT PLANNING JUSTIFICATION STATEMENT

Introduction

The Wawa LaBelle PUD is located along State Road 80 between the intersections with College Road and Main Street (see attached aerial map). The subject property is currently zoned PUD for general retail use and formerly developed as strip commercial, though it is now a vacant lot. The property is currently located in the Downtown District on the future land use map but is being proposed for change to the Commercial future land use, consistent with the properties to the south of State Road 80.

The subject property is/near the historic center of the City of LaBelle. Prior zoning has produced development with little success. The current vacant lot at this location represents a significant underutilization of land in a key area of the City. In addition, the vacant lot at this location breaks up the urban fabric of the city and projects an image of decay, rather than the vibrancy the City hopes to convey. Therefore, new development at this location has significant value to the City as well as the surrounding properties.

The proposed rezoning requests approval of a commercial development with a maximum of 7,000 square feet of commercial floor area and fuel pumps on approximately 1.5 acres. This commercial development is consistent with the land uses to the south, east and west. The project will include a convenience store, known for its food selection, and uses ancillary to the store.

Surrounding Uses and Compatibility

The subject property is in the historic center of the City of LaBelle. Attached is a City of LaBelle zoning map which identifies the subject property. Specifically, the property is surrounded by the following zoning and land uses:

	Zoning	Land Use
North	DBD (Downtown Business District/Commercial)	Commercial/Office
South	B-2 (Commercial)	Commercial/McDonald's
West	DBD (Downtown Business District/Commercial)	Commercial/Retail
East	DBD (Downtown Business District/Commercial)	Commercial/Grocery Store and restaurant

Commercial uses and zoning surround the property on all sides. To the north of the subject property is an office use in the Downtown Business District. To the south, across from State

Road 80 is a McDonalds in the B-2 commercial zoning district. To both the west and east are retail uses, strip commercial and a restaurant/grocery store.

The subject property is located along State Road 80, a major roadway corridor extending from Fort Myers to West Palm Beach, and a very high-volume roadway corridor. A commercial use to both caters to the traveling public and provide a local convenience food option is an ideal use for the subject property and compatible with surrounding properties.

Standards of Review

The proposed Planned Unit Development meets the Standards of Review as follows.

1. Land uses within the development shall be appropriate in their proposed location, in their relationships to each other, and in their relationships with uses and activities on adjacent and nearby properties.

The proposed PUD is located on a property that is surrounded on all sides by commercial uses and along the north side of State Road 80, a major roadway corridor in Hendry County and the City of LaBelle. As stated above, a commercial use to both caters to the traveling public and provides a local convenience food option is an ideal use for the subject property and compatible with surrounding properties. The proposed change is the consistent land use with surrounding uses and a very big improvement over the current vacant lot, an underutilization of the subject property in the heart of LaBelle.

2. The development shall comply with applicable city plans and planning policies, and shall have a beneficial effect both upon the area of the city in which it is proposed to be established and upon the city as a whole.

The proposed comprehensive plan amendment is consistent with the City of LaBelle Comprehensive Plan's Goals, Objectives and Policies. A description of how the plan amendment complies with the Comprehensive Plan is detailed below.

Policy 1.1.1

The City will establish compatibility as one of the criteria in the review of development proposals.

As described above, given the location of the subject property, compatibility is not a concern for surrounding properties.

Policy 1.1.4

The City will assure that services and facilities are provided at the adopted level of service concurrent with existing and future demand.

The attached Transportation Impact Statement demonstrates that adequate road capacity exists to meet the needs of the proposed development. In addition, water and sewer capacity is available to the subject property. Because this is commercial use, schools, parks and similar services for residential development are not required. For this reason, commercial development generally has a very positive impact on fiscal resources of the City.

Policy 1.1.6

The City will require the availability of water and sewer and other facilities and services for which there are level of service standards.

The City has water and sewer available to the subject property and capacity exists to serve the intended uses.

Objective 1.3 Land Use Categories

Continue to promote LaBelle as a desirable place to live, work and play, by establishing land use categories that promote economic development while retaining the character and quality of life of the community.

The proposed Commercial future land use category will allow for the redevelopment of a former commercial building that now remains a vacant lot in the core of the City. The redevelopment will add a convenience store and popular quick-serve restaurant to the core of the City replacing a vacant lot, which detracts from the character of LaBelle. The commercial development will have a positive tax benefit for the city and provide services that enhance the quality of life for residents. The expansion of the tax base will give the city increased revenue to grow and invest in improvements that promote LaBelle and a desirable place to live, work and play.

Policy 1.3.4 Commercial Land Use Category

The Commercial Land Use Category applies predominantly to lands located along the street frontages of State Roads 80 and 29 South. This land use category accommodates commercial, retail and office uses that are more auto oriented due to scale and typology, while respecting the pedestrian and alternative transportation modes through land development code design standards.

The Commercial Land Use Category will have a maximum Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 1.0, to encourage a greater use of the site within an urban setting.

Development will provide access management plans that utilize frontage roads, alleyways, shared ingress and egress and parking.

The proposed amendment is to the Commercial future land use category. In accordance with this category, the property is located with direct frontage on State Road 80. The land use category also “accommodates commercial, retail and office uses that are more

auto oriented due to scale and typology". Given the subject property's location, the surrounding uses and the frontage on State Road 80 the Commercial future land use category is the most appropriate for the subject property.

The proposed Planned Unit Development limits the property to 7,000 square feet of commercial floor area, well within the FAR of 1.0.

The PUD site plan demonstrates that the development will not have any access directly to State Road 80, but will utilize both North Main Street and College Street for access, consistent with this policy.

Objective 1.6 Compatibility and Neighborhood Protection

The City of LaBelle's future land use map is comprised of a range of densities, all of which can be accommodated in the appropriate areas when the following policies and standards are met. All new development and redevelopment must be compatible with existing and planned surrounding development in order to protect the City's established residential neighborhoods and ensure a high quality of life for its residents. For the purposes of this objective, compatibility is defined as the characteristics of different uses or activities or design which allow them to be located near or adjacent to each other in harmony. Some elements affecting compatibility include the following: height, scale, mass and bulk of structures, pedestrian or vehicular traffic, circulation, access and parking impacts, landscaping, lighting, noise, odor and architecture. Compatibility does not mean "the same as." Rather, it refers to the sensitivity of development proposals in maintaining the character of existing development.

As described above, the subject property is surrounded by commercial uses on the south, east and west and north. Along the southern frontage is State Road 80, a major roadway thoroughfare that is not conducive for pedestrian oriented uses. Immediately to the north is an office use, creating a step down in intensity to the residential neighborhood to the north of the office uses. Because of the uses immediately surrounding the subject property and the former use of the property as retail, compatibility is not a concern. There are no adjacent neighborhoods that will be negatively impacted by the proposed development, rather, redevelopment of the now vacant lot will improve the character of the City.

Policy 2.5.3

The City shall, as part of its Land Development Code, encourage interconnectivity of adjacent development in order to minimize access points to major roadways, particularly SR 80 and SR 29.

The subject property is interconnected to the commercial and residential uses to the north, east and west via College Street and Main Street. There are no direct access points to State Road 80.

Objective 4.3 Potable Water Supply

Provide potable water supplies for the residents of LaBelle.

The proposed development will connect to utility lines along the State Road 80 corridor.

Policy 4.3.4

The City will provide adequate water supply facilities for the future population and associated growth of LaBelle.

The proposed development will connect to the existing water line along State Road 80.

Policy 4.5.4

The City will require redevelopment and new developments to have adequate stormwater drainage systems.

The attached drainage plan shows how the property will handle stormwater and connect to existing drains.

Policy 10.4.1

The City will partner with local and regional agencies to promote the City regionally, nationally and internationally as a tourist destination.

In order to thrive as a tourist destination, adequate commercial uses must be in place to serve the needs of both the existing population and visitors. The convenience store and fresh food uses will be of benefit to tourists visiting the area. Further, the redevelopment of a now vacant lot will be a benefit to the overall character of the City of LaBelle.

Policy 10.5.1

The City will support new commercial development that contributes positively to the economic vitality of the community and provides opportunity for new business development.

The proposed Commercial area will add to the economic vitality of the community and provide for new business opportunities in an area where commercial development is the most appropriate use. State Road 80 at this location, where the property is surrounded by commercial uses, is an appropriate area to implement Policy 10.5.1.

Policy 10.5.2

The City will provide land appropriately designated to sustain a robust commercial base.

The proposed Commercial area implements Policy 10.5.2 by designating a location for enhancement of the City's commercial base at a location where commercial is the most appropriate use.

3. The total land area within the development and the area devoted to each functional portion of the development shall be adequate to serve its intended purpose.

The proposed site is of sufficient size for the convenience store use with adequate open space and stormwater facilities. There is sufficient area to incorporate the required buffers, setbacks, and meet the City's standards for development.

4. Streets; utilities; drainage facilities; recreation areas; building heights, sizes and yards; and vehicular parking and loading facilities shall be appropriate for the particular use or uses involved, and shall equal or exceed the level of design and construction quality required of similar land development elsewhere in the city.

The subject property is located in the heart of the City of LaBelle. Drainage facilities and utility lines are already in place to serve development. The attached surface water plan shows how water will flow across the site and the location of the inlets. The letter of service availability shows the location of utility lines. The master concept plan shows the layout of the site, parking, setbacks and circulation, all of which will need to meet all code requirements at the time of final site plan approval.

5. Visual character and community amenities shall be equal or better in quality than that required by standard zoning districts for similar development.

The proposed development will be a significant improvement over the prior use and will add a quality development to the City. Attached are architectural elevations that demonstrate the developer's commitment to meeting the City's architectural design guidelines.

6. Open space shall be adequate for the type of development and the population densities proposed.

The proposed development is for commercial use and therefore does not include population or density. Open space will be provided consistent with LDC Section 4-88.

7. Areas proposed for common ownership shall be subject to a reliable and continuing maintenance guarantee.

The proposed development is for a single use. The property will be maintained by the property owner.

8. In the case of developments which are to be constructed in several units, the proposed units shall be shown on the overall development plan. The proposed construction units shall individually comply with the standards set forth in this section in order that, if for any reason construction ceases prior to completion of the entire planned development, the resulting partially complete project will adequately serve its purchasers and occupants and will not cause a general public problem.

The proposed development is for a single use as shown on the master concept plan.

Special Exception Criteria

The proposed use would require Special Exception approval in accordance with LDC Section 4-87.3.1 if they were within a conventionally zoned area and not being zoned as a PUD. Because the proposed use is being zoned through the PUD process, a Special Exception is not required. However, the proposed development still meets the special exception approval criteria in LDC Section 4-87.3.2, which are very similar to the PUD approval criteria.

A. Consistency with the intent of the State Road 80 Overlay District in protecting and enhancing viewsheds from SR 80 and other public roadways.

As stated above, any proposed development will need to adhere to the enhanced landscaping and signage requirements of the State Road 80 Overlay. This alone will protect and enhance viewsheds. In addition, the proposed zoning includes architectural drawing demonstrating a high level of design for the proposed development and the proposed convenience store.

B. The request addresses the balance between auto-oriented design and multi-modal access, particularly pedestrian access, through enhanced design standards.

Although the proposed use is auto oriented, consistent with almost every other use along State Road 80, the site plan will accommodate pedestrian access through and along its perimeter directly into the convenience store. The building will be facing Main Street with a sidewalk that will connect directly to the convenience store entrances from the sidewalk along Main Street, without crossing any parking or vehicular circulation areas. The internal sidewalk system links directly to the sidewalk along College Street as well, providing safe pedestrian accommodation.

C. The site design standards incorporate innovative techniques to address the project's visual impact on the SR 80 corridor and demonstrate enhancements to the minimum standards.

The proposed architecture demonstrates an enhancement to the minimum standards through both articulation in the building façade and the use of varying materials along the building's siding.

D. The request demonstrates compliance with the locational criteria set forth in the Comprehensive Plan, relating the siting of intensive uses in areas with direct access to arterials roadways, connection to public utilities and infrastructure, and mitigation of impacts to residential neighborhoods.

The proposed use is along State Road 80, with direct access through the two perpendicular roads, College Street and Main Street, along the east and west of the property. The property is surrounded to the north by other commercial uses, creating a natural transition to residential areas to the north of the commercial. The utility infrastructure already exists along the corridor.

E. Conditions exist which warrant the proposed use, including but not limited to demonstrated market demand and minimum spatial separation of 500 feet from a similar use.

The proposed use is very unique in nature. Wawa is primarily known as a sandwich shop and convenience store with fuel pumps that are ancillary to its primary business. While there are other convenience stores and gas stations, none are located within 500 feet and there is no other Wawa in Hendry County.

F. The request will not be injurious to the neighborhood or otherwise detrimental to the public welfare.

As stated above, the subject property is surrounded by State Road 80 and commercial uses. The residential neighborhood to the north is separated by other commercial uses. The property is in a commercial area and will not in any way be detrimental to the neighborhood.

G. The request will be compatible with existing or planned uses.

As stated above, the proposed development will be compatible with surrounding uses based on the commercial character of the area.

H. The request will not cause damage, hazard, nuisance or other detriment to persons or property.

Given the property's location and surrounding uses, development of the proposed convenience store will not cause damage, hazard, nuisance or other detriment to persons or property.

I. The request will protect, conserve or preserve environmentally critical areas and natural resources.

The subject site is a redevelopment of a former commercial use and is entirely cleared of any vegetation. There are no environmentally sensitive or critical areas on the subject property.

J. The request is consistent with the goals, objectives, policies and intent of the LaBelle Comprehensive Plan.

As demonstrated above, the request is consistent with the Goals, objectives and policies of the LaBelle Comprehensive Plan.

K. The request is in compliance with all general zoning provisions, supplemental regulations and performance standards pertaining to the use set forth in this chapter.

As demonstrated above, the request is in compliance with the Land Development Code.

Summary

As detailed above, the attached application demonstrates that the proposed request complies with the LaBelle Comprehensive Plan, is compatible with existing uses in the surrounding areas, and is located where adequate infrastructure exists to accommodate this development. Based on compliance with these and other regulations, we respectfully contend that the proposed re-zoning application is appropriate at the subject location. For these reasons, the requested zoning should be approved.