



WAWA LABELLE
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENT
REQUEST STATEMENT AND COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMPLIANCE

The Wawa LaBelle PUD is located along the north side of State Road 80 between College Street and North Main Street (see attached aerial map). The subject property is currently zoned as PUD and Downtown Business District and is surrounded by commercial uses. The subject property has historically been used for commercial retail uses but was recently torn down and the site remains currently vacant.

The proposed comprehensive plan amendment is being filed concurrently with a zoning application to change the current PUD (The LaBelle Trading Post PUD) and DBD zoning to allow for a Convenience Store with fuel pumps. The proposed future land use category will allow for the proposed development, consistent with the uses surrounding the property on the south, west and east and will allow for the redevelopment of the current vacant site to something that adds value to the area, rather than detracts from the City's core. The proposed use of the subject property will be compatible with surrounding properties and add significant additional tax base and convenience food options to downtown LaBelle.

The PUD request is specifically for a convenience store and ancillary food and beverage services. The total intensity request in the Planned Development is for 7,000 square feet of commercial area over approximately 1.5 acres.

Surrounding Uses and Compatibility

The subject property is in an area where commercial uses are both necessary and the most appropriate use. The property is surrounded on three sides by commercial development and is located along State Road 80, a major transportation thoroughfare. The attached Aerial and Land Use Map demonstrates that given the surrounding public infrastructure and uses, the property is most suited for auto-centric uses and convenience for the residents and businesses in the core of LaBelle.

Commercial uses and zoning surround the property to the south, east and west. To the north of the subject property is land in the Residential Medium Density future land use category and zoned for agriculture in unincorporated Hendry County. The properties to the north of the subject site are a mix of smaller scale office uses and residential homes.

The subject property is located along State Road 80, a major roadway corridor extending from Fort Myers to West Palm Beach and is only two blocks from the

intersection of Bridge Street (SR 29), another major north-south roadway. Given the surrounding major transportation system, the Commercial future land use category is much more appropriate for the subject property.

Justification for the Amendment

As stated above, the subject property is located along a major east-west roadway corridor that is designed to move large volumes of vehicles. While in many respects, this is the “heart of LaBelle” it is not designed as a pedestrian oriented area within the City, nor is State Road 80 a corridor that is realistically intended to become pedestrian oriented. Few uses along State Road 80 front the street and every use is principally designed to accommodate vehicular traffic, with pedestrian movement as a secondary afterthought. Typical design elements that would create a pedestrian environment, such as on-street parking and building abutting the sidewalk, are not present. For the City to create a pedestrian oriented environment, it is more realistic to focus on the side streets running perpendicular to State Road 80. These areas, if designed correctly, could provide the greatest opportunity for safe pedestrian movement.

The proposed amendment seeks to balance the City’s desire for a pedestrian oriented downtown with the reality of State Road 80. The building fronts directly on Main Street with parking located to the west, north and south. Unlike typical Wawa stores, there is not going to be circulation and parking entirely around the building. On the east side of the building will be a 5-foot-wide sidewalk between the building and Main Street to accommodate safe, convenient pedestrian movement that will not need to cross vehicular lanes to access the convenience store. In this way, the convenience store will accommodate pedestrian traffic in a safer, more comfortable manner than almost every other use along State Road 80, and consistent with the commercial uses along Bridge Street.

The proposed use is primarily a café/convenience store and secondarily a gas station. Wawa only recently (within the last 25 years) started including fuel pumps with their convenience stores. The use is primarily known for its subs and other food offerings. Wawa is the only convenience store that is universally designed to accommodate EV fast chargers to install when viable. The EV charging stations fit Wawa’s use, which is primarily a café, which allows EV owners to park and order food while charging. The café/quick serve restaurant use will be a benefit to the central part of LaBelle. It will provide convenience needs to the nearby residents in a central location, accommodate pedestrian movement and cater to the traveling public.

Comprehensive Plan Compliance

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 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 wil 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 other retail 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.

Conclusion

The proposed approximately 1.5-acre development is located along a major roadway corridor in Hendry County and presents an opportunity for the redevelopment of a former commercial site that now sits vacant. As the application demonstrates, the proposed development will not have an undue burden on public infrastructure and will not create incompatibilities with surrounding uses. The analysis also demonstrates that the proposed amendment is consistent with the City of LaBelle Comprehensive Plan. For these reasons, the proposed amendment should be adopted.