



The Alexandria Planning Commission and City Council are considering several text amendments to the Zoning Code that would reduce slightly the conditions imposed on small businesses seeking to operate in Alexandria, including restaurants, day care centers, farmers markets, amusement enterprises, and others. These proposed changes would also make it easier for restaurants to offer outdoor dining. The Old Town North Alliance wrote a letter of support for these amendments.

August 31, 2020

Chairman and Members of Planning Commission
City of Alexandria
VIA PlanComm@alexandriava.gov

Re: September 1, 2020 docket, item 14 -Small Business Practical Updates

Dear Planning Commissioners:

The Old Town North Community Partnership is in support of the proposed text amendment ZTA #2020-00003.

The practical updates in this amendment will ease the process of opening a small business in the City of Alexandria and encourage small business owners to look more closely at the City of Alexandria when considering a location in Northern Virginia.

This can only benefit the City, both in these current challenging financial times and, moving forward into future, as the City's economy begins to recover from the effects of the business closures caused by CoVid 19. We are very supportive of reducing the types of applications that require public hearing special use permits. Many small business owners are working with limited funds and the period of time required to undergo this type of permit process often delays a business from opening for several months, requiring the business owner to pay rent for a space they do not yet occupy and lose potential business revenue and customer good will, because they are not yet open, but have possibly left their current location or revenue source.

The time delays and other potential opportunity costs caused by this complicated process may deter a small business owner from attempting to open a business in the City of Alexandria.

The Old Town North Community Partnership is also in support of the relaxed requirements on restaurants. The past six months has shown the City staff to be very responsive to the need for creative solutions to help our local restaurants, retailers, open air Farmer's markets, gyms ,spas and yoga studios remain in business during the quarantine imposed by Governor Northam's Edict, while maintaining a safe and healthy environment for the community.

Outdoor dining in the City of Alexandria has proven extremely popular and allowed several of our Old Town North Business Community members to remain open; keeping residents employed and landlords paid. We strongly support the administrative approval for increased seating and hours of operation so that more of the City's restaurants may offer outdoor dining.

In addition to the benefits to restaurant owners, their employees and restaurant patrons of the changes to the SUP Process, are the benefits to local outdoor markets, retail and fitness businesses, all of whom will also benefit from these proposed changes.

Our thanks to staff in creating and proposing these very thoughtful and well defined changes to the SUP process.

The Old Town North Community Partnership represents those who live, work or own small businesses within Old Town North and we believe all within the community and the City of Alexandria will benefit from the proposed changes.

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CC: Ann Horowitz, Planning and Zoning

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