

Development Activities Meeting Report

This report created by the Neighborhood Planner and included with staff reports to City Boards and/or Commissions.

Logistics	Stakeholders
Project Name/Address: 5401 Baum Blvd	Groups Represented (e.g., specific organizations, residents, employees, etc. where this is evident): Bloomfield Development Corporation Bloomfield Garfield Corporation Friendship Community Group Valvoline
Parcel Number(s): 51-L-190/194/198	
ZDR Application Number: BDA-2024-04915	
Meeting Location: Zoom	
Date: Thursday, December 12, 2024	
Meeting Start Time: 6:30 pm	
Applicant: Valvoline Instant Oil Change (VIOC)	Approx. Number of Attendees: 31
Boards and/or Commissions Request(s): Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Special Exception (911.02)<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Vehicle/Equipment Repair (Limited) is a Special Exception in the UNC zoning district.• Variance #1 (912.04.M)<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Use Variance for drive through. Drive through uses not permitted in the UNC zoning district.• Variance #2 (911.04.A.73.a.3)<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Vehicle/Equipment Repair (Limited) uses in the UNC District shall be located at least thirty (30) feet from any right-of-way line, building proposed 5.5 ft. from ROW line.- Building cannot be located further away from ROW line without interfering with the structural integrity of the existing retaining wall.• Variance #3 (922.04.E.3.a)<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Sixty-five (65) percent frontage required on primary build-to-line, fifty (50) percent required on secondary frontage; build-to requirement is not met on either frontage.• Variance #4 (922.04.E.3.b)<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Street level façades shall be transparent between 3 and 8 ft. above grade, South Aiken façade does not meet the transparency requirement.• Variance #5 (922.04.E.3.c)<ul style="list-style-type: none">- All primary structures shall provide a prominent and highly visible street level doorway or entrance on facades that front a street; South Aiken façade lacks prominent entry.- Although a prominent entrance is not visible, pedestrians have no reason to walk into the store from the street. Access is provided from the site parking. <p>Planning Commission review and approval as a Project Development Plan (PDP) is required as the site is located in the Baum Center Overlay District and includes exterior alterations over \$50,000 (907.02.H.4)</p>	

How did the meeting inform the community about the development project?

Ex: Community engagement to-date, location and history of the site, demolition needs, building footprint and overall square footage, uses and activities (particularly on the ground floor), transportation needs, and parking proposed, building materials, design, and other aesthetic elements of the project, community uses, amenities and programs.

Project Description:

- 1,726 SF building
- Abandon single driveway in lieu of (2) driveways—1 enter & 1 exit
- 3 service bays
- Parking decreased from 66 to 11
- Primary Frontage on Baum Blvd
- Building to face Baum Blvd
- Trash enclosure to match building façade

Applicant presentation included some background on Valvoline as a company, information about the services Valvoline provides, Valvoline's environmental impact, zoning information including the requested variances and special exception, existing site conditions, proposed site plan, proposed landscape plan, and proposed elevations.

Input and Responses

Questions and Comments from Attendees	Responses from Applicants
Many of us are here to hear about the variance requests. Will you please spend more time on them?	
We actually have many guests here who are well versed in variances and would appreciate more time spent covering those.	
The variances are not boring details, I also want to hear more.	
Replying to "The variances are not boring details, I also want ...": Agree	<p>Project Engineer: Sure, on the screen here we have a list, it's actually two pages but I'll go through it one at a time here:</p> <p>So the special exception, that's basically required just based on the use of the building, as well as one of our first variance requests here. Again, this building use is considered a drive through use and it's not permitted in the UNC zoning district so we would need a use variance to use the building as such.</p> <p>The next variance is related to the location of the building, in this case it's (UNC Zoning) requiring at least 30 feet from any right of way line and we are proposing it 5.5 ft from the ROW line. I'll head back to the site plan just for a second (refers to slide 10, shows where the ROW is located on Aiken Ave and points out the distance to where the building is located).</p> <p>There's also a build-to line, if you can see just the corner of this building (existing building to the north of the site) and, again, all the buildings to the north kind of line up with this front façade or this front wall here. Part of the requirement of the code is that we also match the build to line and if you were to extrapolate this line down (towards the lot), it's somewhere in this neighborhood (midway through the</p>

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	<p>proposed building footprint). So one section of the code says “hey we want you 30 feet” and the other section has us even a little further back from that. Trying to work with both of those as well as the site restraints here. You’ll notice that if we were to shift the building further east—let’s just assume we would have to move all this parking and drive isle further to the east—we’re starting to basically encroach into this existing retaining wall. I have a picture of it (slide 9), this is Baum Blvd, so there’s an existing retaining wall here because of the grade change so we’re trying to avoid, obviously, getting into that retaining wall and pushing this construction further towards Baum Blvd. So again, if we were to shift this way that’s going to start to encroach over here and kind of limit our site use, basically.</p> <p>That covers the two set back items. Variance 3, sixty-five percent frontage required on primary build-to-line and 50% required on the secondary frontage. Again, my understanding is that we would need the building, 65% to comply along this frontage line (indicates frontage on Aiken Ave.). In our opinion, the front of our building is designed and would actually face more toward Baum Blvd. Again, we have the very narrow end of this building which obviously doesn’t account for 65% of the frontage that we’re looking at over here, it’s a fraction of that.</p> <p>There’s another item in the code that requires certain level of building transparency and that would be for any part of the building that’s facing the roadways. If we go back to the site plan, this would include S. Aiken, this also would include Baum Blvd, it would not include Vintage Way. There would be a certain glass transparency requirement on this side of the building (west side towards S. Aiken) and this side of the building (south side towards Baum Blvd.) If we look at the elevations, we’ll call it the classic front view, so there obviously is inherent glass here just based on the use of the building and the garage doors. Then if you look at the S. Aiken side, there is no glass actually in our typical building that we typically design. This is where the product is stored, if we had glass windows here it would basically just show through to some of the product and one of the goals is to hide some of that product. As proposed right now, we don’t meet the transparency requirement on either side.</p> <p>The last one is that the code requires there needs to be an entrance, a doorway, for the façade that faces a street. This is the side of the building facing S. Aiken. We don’t typically have a door here. If we did, it would just go into the service bay area and the storage area. Let me find a picture so you can understand (Slide 5 image of inside building), this is the wall, and you can’t really have a door here, it interferes with operations so we’re looking for relief from that item as well.</p>

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	<p>I don't know if the Zoning reviewer wants to chime in at all or if there was anything I missed or if you want to elaborate?</p> <p>Zoning Reviewer DCP: Thanks for that overview, I think you've outlined it pretty well. There are a lot of variances that will be required for this site and I think you also outlined the kind of unique characteristics of the underlying use standards associated with the special exception which do require that 30 ft setback and the build-to-line requirements as part of the site review standards. Those two standards are conflicting as you noted and I believe there are other folks on this call who have also noted those conflicting standards. When there are conflicting standards in the code, the more restrictive one does apply and that was also pointed out to us by someone on this call so we appreciate that. In this case, the Zoning Administrator determined that both standards were restrictive kind of in their own way--so its restrictive in a sense to have the building required to be set back, but it's also, in a different sense, restrictive to have it pulled up to the street. So both are being included in the variance list.</p> <p>The applicant also outlined I think pretty well the site plan design variances that will be required in terms of transparency so if you have specific questions regarding the variances, I'm happy to elaborate more, but I think they were laid out pretty well.</p>
<p>Could someone explain the difference between a variance and a special exception?</p>	<p>Zoning Reviewer DCP: Yes, so follow specific criteria and be reviewed by the ZBA. A variance is not a permitted use. That's the main difference there.</p>
<p>For the Valvoline team: Are you familiar with Pgh Zoning Code standards for grant of a variance? Do you believe that your project meets those standards for the needed variances (and if so, how)?</p>	<p>Project Engineer: We are generally aware of the standards for the variance and I don't have them all in front of me but obviously some of that goes into the character and what are the impacts in some of the surrounding communities. I think generally speaking, it's our opinion that this is a good fit for this site. It's got uses similar in nature, there's some commercial here so, again, it fits well. From an aesthetic standpoint, from an environmental standpoint, I think we're improving both of those items. We're bringing more green space, we're making it look less pavement, we're improving the stormwater, right? There's less runoff. So from an environmental standpoint, again, it's a positive impact to the community.</p> <p>Some of these variances are created, in itself, by the zoning rules that, you know, we can't do two things at the same time. Again, some of it is just inherent because of the code, so in that case we can't meet both items so it's a hardship because of the zoning code itself. So we are familiar and</p>

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	certainly will discuss those more at the ZBA meeting and we'll have responses to all those items individually.
So in your plan, people walking down Aiken will see the butt of the building 5 feet away from the sidewalk?	Project Engineer: So I would say in the plan, yes, we've got a sidewalk here, our building would be 5/5.5 ft from the right of way line. Correct. We do have some shrubbery that would be on the side of the building here to help soften the building, but yes you would see the elevation that you see right here (slide 12). This would be the proposed elevation on that side.
What is the landscaping plan directly in front of the side of the building fronting S. Aiken?	Project Engineer: We are just doing, basically, a series of shrubs. We have a shrub line along the building here. We have it listed out as basically just 8 shrubs, as you can see here (slide 11) we've got some Boxwoods and some Spiraea so that's what we're kind of proposing at this point in time. Certainly willing to work with the city if there's a different type of species or something that would be preferred.
Often, a Special Exception is granted or justified on the basis of an "unnecessary hardship," that shows the site in question cannot be used for the permitted purposes it's currently zoned for. Are you claiming the physical features of the property are such that it is unable to be used for a purpose other than what you're proposing, other than at a prohibitive expense?	Project Engineer: From a hardship standpoint, which is what I think we're getting after, I think there's a couple hardships here. There's some underlying zoning criteria that contradicts itself so that's a hardship that is itself created, it's a hardship that just happens to run with this property. From a development standpoint, and certainly what we're trying to achieve here, we have some physical site restraints that present a challenge, a hardship. Again, we can't really push this building to the east here without completely altering some of the grade--and getting this drive isle and what not to work here before the large drop off and grade change. I think there's certainly a couple factors in that—at least why we feel like this is a hardship that we're having to seek the variances for.
Follow-up Question: The way the code is written for the UNC zone, one of the criteria is that things that are built in this zone reinforce qualities of the built environment such as the continuity of store fronts and pedestrian oriented streetscapes. Do you feel like this achieves that?	Project Engineer: I feel like if we're talking about the location of the building and pulling that towards the, you know, to provide more of that kind of storefront, pedestrian feel, we've got a little more of that going on here (points to shrubbery on S. Aiken). Obviously, as discussed, we don't have a door, we can't really have a door here, it can't function that way. We are continuing the sidewalk here (on S. Aiken). We're replacing the streetscape here (on S. Aiken) with some of the trees, so we're certainly trying to keep that feel the same. Let me look back at the google image, if you don't mind, and take a general look at the area, I would say while there are some very streetscape type of buildings and what not, we kind of got little bit of a mixed feel in general—we've got a large parking lot off to the west, we've got a Wendy's over here which is not terribly different from what we're proposing. In general, we're kind of matching

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	<p>some similar characteristics to some of the other adjacent areas and we're trying to do our best to pull that building up to the street as noted and to meet those guidelines as best as possible.</p>
<p>Can you please let us know about the plans around signage?</p>	<p>Project Engineer: Sure, first and foremost we would have a proposed pylon sign in the southwest corner of the lot. To give you a relative idea of what that would look like it would be something of this nature (image on slide 3). We don't have a full sign package necessarily developed yet and certainly that would be submitted and part of the permits and requirements, but that's kind of the general feel. If we look at the building itself, just to give a sense of what we're trying to do, facing Baum Blvd basically we have signage here (on the building), we've got signage facing the rear, signage on Vintage Way and again on S. Aiken. I would note that the site is relatively unique in the fact that we're basically three frontages so in essence we're getting visibility from these three sides and we have this proposed sign in the back here for more of a consistency basis. The size of the signs, they're not extremely large for typical commercial facilities. I don't have those details in front of me now, but again we would submit those at some point in time and make sure that the correct approvals and signed permits were obtained. I don't have them at this second, but will develop those soon and submit them to the city, if they would like to see them.</p>
<p>How will traffic be managed? This is already a dangerous corner for pedestrians because the walk signal is very short and there are a lot of cars trying to race through the intersection. How will your drive through factor into this already troubling situation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A pedestrian was hit a block down the road at Baum & S Graham back in March. 	<p>Project Engineer: I think the positive factor here is really the demand for the vehicles. You know we do a lot of different work for a lot of different clients, including QSRs, quick service restaurants, and they generate demands that are 80 vehicles an hour and then some. This facility, you're looking at somewhere in the neighborhood of 4 to 8 cars an hour. Maybe at peak you're approaching 10 cars an hour. Those cars are going to be exiting the facility, if you had three exiting at once you won't have another three exiting for another 15 minutes. I don't want anyone to have the notion that this is a huge generator of traffic, it is not. Again, typically you're looking at between 4 and 8 cars an hour, obviously that doesn't mean they're spaced out evenly over that hour, but 4 to 8 cars turning into the driveway up here, 4 to 8 leaving down here, knowing that they're not coming out at the same time, certainly they could come in at the same time. I think that's a huge benefit—it's miniscule from a traffic engineering standpoint. I also want to mention we are doing a one-way-in/one-way-out so we're automatically restricting the conflict points on a typical two-way driveway. Here we have one direction to flow in and one direction to flow out so if we're talking cars or</p>

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	pedestrians—very limited conflict points, very limited amount of vehicles per hour so we don't see it as an issue at all.
It appears that the “ugly side” of the building is facing Aiken. Why is this building proposed with a flat (industrial looking) roof, where others in this area use hip roofs, that look more like the residential structures surrounding it?	Project Engineer: I guess my first response to that would be the building we are proposing here is the most modern, it's the latest version of the Valvoline out there and is what we would like to do here. We obviously just have started the proposal right now; this is what we're proposing. There could be some adjustments, perhaps, we can consider as we move through the processes, but I guess I would just kind of consider that this is the starting spot and it's the starting spot because this is basically the most up to date, the freshest version of the Valvoline which is typically what they would like to use on sites. Again, there could be some things perhaps that could be done to the building, we're just getting into the process so we haven't talked incredibly much with the city yet or gone through any rounds of comments. This is really the first introduction and certainly we will take that into consideration.
The Pittsburgh Zoning Code requires that the property has a unique physical hardship that is peculiar to this property. Can you explain how your property is physically unique in a way that creates a hardship? The Hyatt House, the Morrow Park Apts and the Tender Care Daycare all have similar landscapes and are all also on a similar grade.	Project Engineer: In general, I guess, if we're talking about the site itself, it's unique in the fact that it's raised from the adjacent roadways so this is not a typical site that is conducive to being able to access the three roadways that surround it. Normal sites are going to be at grade with some of the roadways. Certainly, from a physical aspect this is a raised 4 ft high, or whatever it is, 5 ft high site that doesn't have access to these roadways so I would definitely say that's physically unique. Because of that, it restricts our access points, which in turn, restricts some of our options for the site layout. We are limited to basically tying in over on S. Aiken. Again, that kind of restricts what we can do here-- we've got the grade change and existing walls here, they provide difficulty with construction. If we have pavement that's 5 ft up, we can't really make this work, we need walls here. Again, the more I slide towards this road, Baum Blvd down here, the less I can get this to work. I need to get some separation to be able to keep this grade much higher than the grade down on Baum Blvd. That would be our primary physical uniqueness for this site. I don't want to play too much on this, but the roadway (S. Aiken), the grade change on the roadway as well is relatively significant. We're able to deal with that within the site itself, but it's a rather steep grade along that roadway as well.
Hyatt, Tender Care and Morrow Apartments are also fronting three streets. I'm not sure, per the zoning code, how you can argue that your site is different from those other sites. The Tender Care is at grade on its frontage street, but both the Hyatt and the Morrow Apartments are not. They're up maybe 5 ft or 6 ft or so—the Morrow	Project Engineer: Maybe to circle back, the first question was “what's unique about this site”, I would still argue that our site is unique for those reasons. Obviously, when we say unique to me unique is “this is not a typical site”, it doesn't mean that it's the only site in city proper or Pennsylvania or the U.S. that would probably have the exact same

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<p>Apartments are significantly higher up off of the street than the Hyatt—but they were both able to make that work by fronting Baum Blvd, raising the building artificially, creating either windows there or the appearance of windows and then their parking lots were up the grade, up the hill a little bit.</p> <p>From my perspective—and I know that my other Friendship residents are on the call and some of them live significantly closer to this site than I do, I live a few blocks away but I walk past very frequently—and the developer of the Hyatt House, the Morrow Park Apartments, and the strip mall that’s on Liberty, all had worked with the neighborhood to really pull their buildings up closer to the frontage to keep that urban environment. What you’re presenting is more of a suburban feel, to me. Someone else in the chat had asked, “how many of your businesses are in urban centers?” and I’m not sure if you have that data with you, but this just does seem to me to feel more of a suburban environment. We have the Jiffy Lube down the street from here, that was built, maybe someone else from BGC can let us know, but that was built decades ago and that was before we had the modern zoning code that we have now in the city of Pittsburgh. I’m just concerned that we’re trying to put a square peg in a round hole to try to make this site work for the Valvoline.</p> <p>But I really, I appreciate you being in the hot seat. I appreciate you answering all of our questions, I really do. I know this is a tough environment to come in cold. This might be your first presentation that you’ve given on this project to community groups so I do really appreciate you taking the time and explaining things to us. Thank you.</p>	<p>restriction. However, this is a very nontypical site, in all of my years doing this, having nonaccess to two roadways and only access to one. In my opinion, I think we still have a very physically unique site.</p> <p>I guess maybe where I could use a little more explanation, we’ve made it kind of work the way we have it shown there, is there something the way we have it shown that is not necessarily what you would like to see? I feel like the site’s unique, this is the best way we could kind of make it work, is there something in particular? It sounds like, based on some of the questions and comments here, that maybe there’s some questions over the side of the building that faces Aiken, is that kind of what you’re leaning towards? Or what’s the pain point I guess so maybe I can help address that question.</p> <p>Project Engineer: No problem at all and I appreciate the questions and the comments. This is great, you know, we, as Valvoline, want to make sure this project fits and that we hear concerns and we hope that we can come to some sort of remedy and alleviate anyone’s concerns on this project. But, maybe to just go back just a little bit, you had mentioned its maybe more of a suburban feel, so again, your comment of “hey can we maybe pull it closer to Baum”, I think, you know, inherently, we are different from the hotel. We are different from a lot of other facilities, we have a drive-in-drive-out facility. We need vehicles to access two sides of this building. That, in itself, makes it difficult to slide this building towards Baum. We need room to maneuver vehicles coming out. We need room to get around the building. So again, that’s the part that makes it difficult to position the building closer to Baum here. As shown, we’ve got this big grade change. As the layout has shown, I can’t simply just move it. We’d have to talk about looking at rotating the building and you’d have a narrow side of the building and cars coming here and here and, inherently, it feels like we would be chewing up a lot more of the landscaping and pavement and I don’t even know if that layout would even work. I guess my answer to you would be, because of the layout here, it makes it difficult to bring it towards Baum. Again, appreciate the questions, the concerns, but I would say our use is a little bit different than some of those other ones, that’s why it’s a little more difficult for us to do that. I don’t think its dramatically different from some of the other uses in the area, again, I know we have the Wendy’s near by and some other similar uses that maybe aren’t quite that same urban feel that you had mentioned. I don’t know if that completely answers your question, but it at least gives you some of our thoughts.</p>

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<p>A question for the project applicant; Just curious how Valvoline came to know that the site was available for development? I don't recall seeing a sign at the site stating that it was on the market for lease or purchase.</p>	<p>Applicant: With that, what I can share is we do share a connection with the hotel. We were currently outside of Pittsburgh, Western Pennsylvania is a corporate market for Valvoline so this would be a corporate location, the eastern part of the state is all franchise. We do work with the owner of the hotel parcel. They actually brought this site to us.</p>
<p>What proportion of Valvoline service centers are currently found on urban sites?</p>	<p>Applicant: That's a good question. We are very early on in trying to penetrate select urban markets throughout the country, most recently Columbus, Ohio has been a big one where we've done similar sites and developed similar sites, very similar to districts like this and areas like this. We're still relatively new at it. We have a lot of data that we are collecting and there are a lot of different understandings that we are still learning as we go into these markets. This one, it is a first swing for us in the greater Pittsburgh area, I think there's no denying that, but right now there's not really a true percentage. I can only share with you that in the areas that I cover for Valvoline, I've mainly only worked in Ohio where we penetrated those urban markets.</p>
<p>My questions are related to how they are thinking about mitigating environmental impact of construction given the daycare that is next door and that the playground is on the other side of vintage way. Additionally would like to know will this business have several idling cars on premise.</p> <p>If you go right on the otherside, where it looks like kind of an open asphalted area, that's a fully functioning playground for the daycare. They take care of kids aging from 6 weeks to 5 years old.</p>	<p>Project Engineer: Can I get clarification on the location of the daycare and the playground relative to the site arial here?</p> <p>Project Engineer: I think our site is quite unique, I'm just going to drop into street view for a moment, this existing wall is going to remain and this existing chain link fence will remain as is. So really, we kind of have an existing boundary so to speak already there. We would be doing some work immediately adjacent to that wall—that work would be relatively minimal, we basically would be ripping up the asphalt pavement and just laying down new lawn areas. We would be working in relatively close proximity, but I guess I would say we have this natural wall and fence already there and this large grade change, so all of the construction would be completely enclosed with that and again, we would be doing very minimal construction here, ripping up asphalt pavement and simply putting down top soil. The majority of construction would be more in this area here (towards S Aiken) so further away from that daycare facility.</p> <p>With respect to idling cars, and maybe even the applicant can answer this better, I've gone to these facilities myself, we actually have one just a mile from my office, when you pull up, if nobody's in the queue, you can go right into the facility, you go in, they basically have you shut the car off, the cars are off while they do all of the work, they will have you start the car just to make sure the oil pressure comes up, but then generally speaking your car is shut off, they tell</p>

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	<p>you you're good, you leave. Maybe the caveat to that would be are cars occupying the base and you've got queued vehicles, I'm assuming those cars might stay idling until they enter the facility. The facility is designed to kind of get you in and out in 15 minutes or less and so perhaps if you had a full facility and a car or a couple cars queued up, that could be the case. I don't know the percentage of people who would shut their cars off waiting, I'm guessing most people would not, so that could happen. I guess I would also go back to the number of vehicles we're talking per hour. We've got a three bay for this particular facility. If we're looking at 4 to 8 cars per hour and they're operating three bays, I think a good portion of that hour would not have any queued vehicles there. Certainly, there's going to be times where there are cars there but I don't think it's the norm. I think the potential for idling cars would be very minimal. I would say certainly if we're talking about say like the Wendy's across the street, you know, nothing near to that extreme. Our wait time is 15 minutes. Given the low demand in traffic, I don't expect to see many cars in the queue lane, obviously it can happen, but I don't think you're going to see multiple cars stacked there.</p>
Yes, the back of the building on Aiken is concerning	
I am opposed to this service station in this location. The site is zoned to exclude such businesses for a reason: it does not fit the character of this urban neighborhood	
I agree that it's too suburban in appearance	
As a resident of the apartment right next door, I am concerned about the increased traffic, noise, light pollution, and potential smell. I work from home several days a week and my office window faces the tree line.	
Why did you select this property with a zoning code that explicitly excludes drive-through business knowing that your business model strictly requires a drive-through model?	<p>Applicant: Despite the conventional wisdom, this approach really isn't all that foreign to Valvoline as a whole. This is kind of part of our development program—we are on a march to grow more and more stores every year. We're trying to touch more households around the country so we do run into this case quite a bit where we do need a special exception or we do need a CUP, it's not something that's completely unfamiliar to us.</p>

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<p>So in other words, you did not care that you would need to work around these variances.</p> <p>Thank you, that's good to know.</p>	<p>Applicant: No, no, we knew there would be a struggle upfront in getting these variances. We do conduct a site investigation early on to see what this would involve so we were informed to a lot of these processes that were mentioned at the beginning of the call.</p>
<p>It appears that this property sits on three consecutive lots that were purchased a different times over the course of 23 years. Is there a plan for consolidation?</p>	<p>Project Engineer: I would say yes. We would be consolidating the three lots into one.</p> <p>Applicant: To add to that, that's actually the responsibility of the land owner and my understanding is that has already been complete.</p> <p>Zoning Reviewer DCP: I would need to double check on that, but I can do that. I can confirm that the lot was approved for the consolidation back in August.</p>
<p>You mentioned a basement level below the main level. Is that an entire basement below the service pits? And you mentioned it is for retaining liquids. Is it solely a liquid retention area, not accessible by people?</p> <p>If it's a liquid (oil and automotive fluid) storage area meant to retain liquids, is there any chemical mitigation that would</p>	<p>Project Engineer: I don't know if I mentioned a basement, we call it a lower level. I don't, unfortunately, have a photo that I can show you. This is the first-floor level, there's a staircase that does bring you down below this level. I don't recall what the ceiling height is, but you are able to fully stand up down there. That's where they store all of their liquids and their oils. The intent is really for the service technician to perform the work there under the car. Directly under the car there's actually a cat walk there that they can get on and that's actually how they can reach in the car as needed. What's down there is, basically, there's the oil, the product is down there, there's actually a changing room down there. It's big enough to walk around, but it's mainly used for the technicians to go down there and service the car and then they can come back up until the next vehicle comes. That's the primary use of it.</p> <p>My comment is that, from an environmental standpoint, it's important that everyone understands and is comfortable with the fact that this is a fully contained basement. This is different from a gas station. At a gas station you would typically have fueling tanks, typically underground storage tanks that are just within the ground themselves. We don't have that. All of our fuel, all of our product, the waste, oil, it's all within the lower level, itself, which is obviously surrounded by walls and a concrete floor. So again, a little bit different from your typical tank in the ground. I don't know how well I portrayed that earlier, but that was the intent. Did that answer the question?</p> <p>Project Engineer: No, everything is basically self-contained. The way this is designed, the way that this is built, if there was an oil spill it would be contained within the building</p>

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<p>have to be done on the site in the event it would be redeveloped in the future?</p>	<p>itself. If and when this was to be reused—maybe the building’s demoed, maybe its retrofitted—during that process the oil and other fluids would need to be evacuated prior to any demolition occurring, but then at that point there’s no more product in the store so then your typical, conventional demolition could occur including the basement walls and the concrete slab itself.</p> <p>So I would say no, there’s no anticipated environmental concern if this was to be reused in the future as something different.</p> <p>Applicant: I’ll add to that, all of our tanks that have our oil products that are stored in our bulk tanks. This new prototype that we’ve put forth here tonight, it does incorporate double wall tanks. All of our other stores in the area, the old hip roof buildings, that was our older prototype, those were only single wall. That is an enhancement with this particular prototype that we are proposing.</p>
<p>I think a lot of people would consider the Wendy’s to be a logistic menace given the backup of traffic on Baum that causes congestion and potential accidents. I don’t think it should be considered a model to emulate for this area. If I am hearing that this site has challenges, I am curious why Valvoline chose this location. This area is an extremely walkable part of Pittsburgh, so I’m not sure what it would make sense to harm that with a drive through variance and two curb cuts. It surprises me that there aren’t other businesses that would fit a UNC zoned area without require so many variances.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agree. And also the other drive thru or car centric sites were built before the drive thru prohibitions, and many event before the current zoning code was enacted in the 1990’s 	<p>Applicant: I’ll kind of go into some background. My role to Valvoline is purely limited to building stores, we take them from concept all the way through opening. We do have a research and analytics team that does kind of an initial forecast in markets where we want to build and potentially operate locations. This one, being a 3-bay, it does show potential. Our current practice is to limit ourselves to 2-bays. This one being a 3-bay, we do see potential here as kind of the trend that I can share with that.</p> <p>It goes back to what I said earlier about going through these types of sites where we require lot of variances, we require maybe a special exception, a CUP, whatever the case may be, it’s something we’re willing to pursue to see if we can make it happen. We know the service that we can offer, we try to market ourselves as being a higher end service to the quick lube division. It’s kind of for us, this is just part of our program, this is where we want to be. We don’t necessarily want people to associate us with a McDonald’s or a Wendy’s, but we do like to be in areas near traffic generators, it does tend to do well, we try to compliment it with other businesses where we can. This particular location, I’d have to do some internal consulting to see if that was the case here. But this 3-bay does show potential and our research appears to be strong so that’ why we’re pursuing this location.</p>
<p>I completely agree, especially about the Wendy’s. And speaking as someone who lives within 500 feet of the site, it’s a walkable area in spite of the dangerous traffic, which this car centric business will only further stoke even if it’s “only” 4-8 cars per hour.</p>	

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<p>I'm opposed to this as well. The light pollution and unsightly building along our walkable neighborhood is not what we're going to support.</p>	
<p>Completely agree with the others. Even though there are similar suburban feeling businesses in the area, that doesn't mean we need to accept more of them. Baum would be so much better, and more walkable, without car-oriented businesses like this. Whoever has power to do so, please reject this proposal for a zoning variance</p>	
<p>So, would this traffic pattern mean that drivers on Baum deciding to visit this center would need to turn onto the residential street Aiken? It just seems that a driver would be more likely to expect to enter from the more major road.</p>	<p>Project Engineer: Yes, the driver would have to enter the facility off of Aiken. We just don't have access on the other roads so this would be the only area with access. Again, I'm hearing a lot about pedestrian safety and whatnot and I would just echo that a demand of 4 to 8 vehicles per hour is relatively unheard of in the traffic industry. You can't actually really do a business like that. I'm not trying to downplay safety, obviously that's a huge concern, but vehicles aren't screaming out of here. Talking about the entrance movement, vehicles are going to come off the road and they can't come in fast because they're making this turn, they're entering a building so the speed of this maneuver is going to be slow. It's a slight pitch downhill so again they have to take this slow. When they leave, they are at a complete stop in the building itself, they're obviously going to leave very slow as they come out because the technician is here guiding them and so at this point they're basically at a stop. Again, we're not waving a retail store where people speed. 90% of the vehicles are leaving from the building and then maybe some vehicles, like employees, leave from here (the parking lot). But again, this is a stop movement, going to a stop bar, and leaving at a rate of 4 to 8 cars per hour so every 8 to 15 minutes a car leaves. Again, don't want to downplay the safety of it, but from a traffic engineering perspective there really is nothing that generates less traffic.</p>
<p>The Baum Centre Corridor is part of a zoning overlay, which was created to "protect and enhance the corridor's architectural context" which includes building siting, massing, facades, materials, proportion and scale. Did you take the Baum Centre design standards into consideration when designing this building? I know it is a more modern version, but it looks exactly like other new Valvoline buildings and not at all like the Friendship or Bloomfield built environment. It seems as though this may be a pre-fab building, or in the very least a cookie cutter building.</p>	<p>Project Engineer: I think I mentioned it before, but I'll mention it again, we're at sort of the starting spot so we have not developed a full set of engineering site plans. What you have in front of you is kind of a site plan and a landscape plan, but in essence they're the same thing. We have not gone very far on the engineering side of things. We have not gone very far on the building side of things. What we have from the building side of things is basically a conceptual floor plan and conceptual elevations. I don't want it to be mistaken that this is the final product. We have not spent an enormous amount of time and effort on this. We are just starting, we are wanting to get some feedback from the city and the community. Again, we're hearing a lot of feedback so I want to be clear that what you see is the</p>

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	<p>first go around. In the building, of course we're going to start with what Valvoline's preferred building is so that's where we are. Again, as we move through this process we will consider the comments that were made tonight and hope to find some commonality with our intentions and what the residents are trying to accomplish here.</p>
<p>I think the use is too industrial for the residential neighborhood, it would be located across from a church, a hotel and a daycare.</p>	
<p>A 2-bay structure would facilitate the offset requirements on Aiken, correct? Why was that not considered? Is that not commercially viable for Valvoline?</p>	<p>Project Engineer: Generally, most are 2-bay construction, this one is a 3-bay. Valvoline obviously look into marketing and how the store is going to function and how is it going to provide. What's going to make the most sense in terms of the community needs as well as Valvoline's. Given all those analytics, it was determined that a 3-bay works well here. I can't speak for Valvoline, I don't know if they could look at a 2-bay option for here, if that would work for them or not. Again, happy to hear these comments so we can regroup and see how we can appease some of these concerns. There's certainly things we can take from this meeting and talk offline and hopefully regroup and present something that might be a little more amenable.</p> <p>Applicant: The 3-bay offers us a little more flexibility when it comes to vehicle stacking. Obviously, oil change is our main service, but we do offer other services, a lot of times those other services we typically refer customers to the third bay to conduct those just because it's a break in the continuity of the day and it will also help alleviate some stacking</p>
<p>Traffic IS a huge concern. You're saying that you chose to be near "traffic generators" and yet are also downplaying the amount of cars. It doesn't make sense. I have lived in the neighborhood for years, the traffic is not slow. We don't need to encourage more cars to drive down these streets, we need to make it safer for pedestrians.</p>	<p>Project Engineer: I want to quickly respond, again, I don't want to downplay the amount of cars. I think we're looking at two different things. When the applicant indicated that they like to go into areas where there is traffic, from a business standpoint that makes sense. They like to compliment some of the other uses nearby. I don't have the exact numbers at my fingertips, but Valvoline's customers are going to be a bit of a mix. It's going to have customers who are going there with a purpose and that's their trip, it will also have some customers who are already on the roadway, that's called bypass traffic. So the goal is there's traffic in the area, they're driving past and they see the Valvoline, they need to get their oil change, that's convenient, lets go there, lets do that.</p> <p>So again, we're not necessarily increasing, I mean without doing a study, we're talking about 4-8 vehicles an hour. I can't tell you if 50% or 30% or whatever is bypass traffic, so really we're not increasing traffic and if we are it's not 4-8 cars an hour it's really more like 2-4 so the applicants notion</p>

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	of we want to be where there's already traffic, that's what he's alluding to. Not that we're going to be generating traffic above and beyond what's generally there.
Vehicles might not be "screaming" into and out of your facility, however they do at the traffic light all day long and this will increase that car traffic.	
Has Valvoline already purchased this property? Is this transaction complete?	Applicant: Typically we don't purchase properties, we lease them. In this case, we are under a contingent lease agreement.
Can you clarify if this Valvoline will be operated by corporate or is it a franchise?	Applicant: This one is a corporate location. All of our Pittsburgh and Western PA locations are corporate locations.
If you are looking for car traffic for your business, check McKnight Road or other areas outside the city. This development would be more appropriate in those suburban areas. Has Valvoline considered those areas?	Applicant: Yes, we actually opened a McKnight store last year.
Can you give a sense of the revenue you are expecting on this site? I'd like a sense of the tax generation from this site.	Applicant: Right now with the limited information I have I cannot share that for a multitude of reasons, but I will say that this store is not intended to be a relief store for other stores. We do sometimes go into situations where we might be building in an area in order to provide some relief to a store that's doing a high volume of cars, higher than our comfort levels. I would have to look into the analytics and forecasts for this particular site, that's not my role at Valvoline.

Other Notes

Planner completing report: Shoshana Davidson, Community Planner, Department of City Planning - Strategic Planning Division