



Division of Zoning and Development Review

City of Pittsburgh, Department of City Planning

412 Boulevard of the Allies, Second Floor

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15219

ZONING BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT

Date of Hearing: July 9, 2026
Date of Decision: August 24, 2026

Zone Case: 74 of 2026
Address: 4411 Howley Street
Lot and Block: 49-S-21
Zoning Districts: LNC
Neighborhood: Bloomfield

Request: Renovation of building for online order fulfillment center

Application: BDA-2026-01851

Special Exception	Section 911.02	Grocery Store (General)
Variance	Section 914.02	106 parking spaces required; 60 spaces proposed
	Section 914.06	5 accessible spaces required; 4 proposed

Appearances:

Applicant: Griffen Bobbet, Bobby Galindo

Opposed: Jodi Lincoln, Aaron Pearlstein, David Maynard, Dan Mahon, Melanie Reddin, Stephen Chechak, Ross Greenburg, Brenna Stackhouse, Jennifer Scarpino-Label, Bruce Chan, Ryan Leverett-Patak

Findings of Fact:

• **Description of the Subject Property and Proposed Use**

1. The Subject Property is located at 4411 Howley Street in a LNC (Local Neighborhood Commercial) District in Bloomfield.
2. The LNC District extends along the Liberty Avenue commercial corridor.
3. An R1A-VH (Residential Single Unit Attached Very High Density) District extends along the rear of the parcel, and an R1A-H (Residential One Unit Attached High Density) District is on the opposite side of Howley Street.

4. The built environment in the immediate vicinity of the Subject Property includes a grocery store on the opposite side of Howley Street; an auto repair garage and restaurant adjacent to the site on Main Street; and several two- and three-story houses in the same LNC District and in the adjacent R1A-VH District to the side and rear of the site.

5. Howley Street is one-block long and one-way. It extends from the five-way intersection of Liberty Avenue, Main Street and the Bloomfield Bridge to a signalized T-intersection at Friendship Avenue.

6. Located on the Subject Property is a one-story commercial building and a 60-space parking lot with access from two curb cuts on Howley Street.

7. The gross floor area of the building is approximately 16,000 sf.

8. A 1982 Certificate of Occupancy permits the use of the Subject Property for "Thrift Drug Store with 60 outdoor parking stalls."

9. Walmart, the Applicant here, proposes to renovate the interior of the structure for use as a "Walmart Depot."

10. The proposed "depot" use that the Applicant described is not intended for direct customer shopping. Groceries and other retail items that are available to purchase online would be stored in the building, and independent contractors would have access to the building to pick up orders, which they would then deliver to customers.

11. Individual customers would not have access to the building to browse and purchase items. Only employees and delivery drivers would be permitted to access the building.

12. Employees and delivery drivers would make use of the existing 60-space surface parking lot.

13. Based on the description of the use that the Applicant provided, the Zoning Administrator determined that the proposed use is one that is unlisted in the Code and that would have characteristics similar to a "grocery store," as the Code defines that use. The grocery store (general) use is permitted as a special exception in LNC Districts.

14. Based on the area of the existing structure and the Code's parking requirements for grocery stores, the Department of City Planning determined that a grocery store with a gross floor area of 16,000 sf would be required to provide 106 off-street parking spaces and 5 accessible parking spaces.

15. The Board conducted a hearing on the application for the special exception and variances on July 9, 2026.

- **Applicant's Evidence and Testimony**

16. The Applicant generally described the existing structure on the site and the intended interior lay-out. Although certain features of a typical grocery store use would be included within the building, the Applicant confirmed that the use is not intended for individual customers and that only employees and delivery drivers would be permitted inside.

17. The Applicant would not make significant changes to the exterior of the structure and would not install signage on the exterior.

18. The Applicant offered testimony that the proposed use would operate from 6 a.m. until 11 p.m., and that 16 employees would typically be on-site during that time.

19. Box trucks would deliver products to the Subject Property approximately 5 times per day during the daytime operating hours.

20. Bobby Galindo, a transportation engineer with Kimley Horn, presented findings from a transportation study prepared for the proposed use. The study estimates that the delivery hub would generate approximately 940 trips per day, which includes delivery drivers, deliveries of product to the site, and employees.

21. The study estimated the number of trips that the former pharmacy generated, and concluded that the proposed use would result in approximately 23 additional trips per day.

22. The Applicant asserted that, based on the operational plan and limited access to the building, the existing on-site 60 parking spaces would be sufficient to support the proposed use. In seeking a reduction in the number of parking spaces required for a “grocery store,” the Applicant essentially acknowledged that the proposed use is not consistent with a grocery store use, as defined.

23. The Applicant offered general assertions that the proposed use would not have a significant impact on the surrounding neighborhood.

24. The Applicant’s witnesses were not familiar with other uses in the surrounding area and did not address potential impacts of the proposed use on the proximate residential neighborhood.

- **Objectors’ Testimony**

25. Representatives of community organizations and a number residents from the surrounding area appeared at the hearing to testify in opposition to the proposed use, including: David Maynard, Board Chair of the Bloomfield Development Corporation; Rita Porterfield, Director of the Bloomfield Alliance; Jodi Lincoln, owner of property at 4741 Lorigan Street, Melanie Reddin, a resident of property at 4427 Howley Street; and Stephen Chechak, owner of property at 4301 Main Street; residents of Bloomfield, Ross Greenburg, Brenna Stackhouse, Jennifer Scarpino-Label, Ryan Leverett-Patak, and Bruce Chan; and Aaron Pearlstein, a resident of Garfield.

26. Because the use was described as a “grocery store,” which would not require a variance, no Development Activities Meeting was held with regard to the proposed use.

27. The objectors generally questioned the process for categorizing the proposed use and asserted that the proposed use should be treated as a “warehouse” and not a “grocery store,” noting that the building would be used to store and distribute products and would not be open to customers to make purchases in-person.

28. The objectors also noted that the LNC District is intended to support small-scale neighborhood-serving businesses, and that the proposed use would be incompatible with the other uses on Liberty Avenue and the surrounding residential districts.

29. The objectors expressed concerns about the impact on traffic safety in the surrounding neighborhood from the increased number of trips that the proposed use would generate and the impact of the proposed hours of operation on nearby residential uses.

Conclusions of Law:

1. Code Section 904.02.A provides that LNC Districts are intended to maintain the “small scale and rich diversity of neighborhood-serving commercial districts;” to promote and enhance “the quality of life in adjacent residential areas;” and to reduce the adverse impacts of commercial uses to promote compatibility with residential developments.

2. The Code defines “grocery store” as “a retail store, the primary function of which is the sale of staple goods and other basic life necessities.” The “grocery store (general)” use is permitted in LNC Districts as a special exception, pursuant to the specific requirements in Section 911.04.A.83.

3. The “warehouse” use is defined as “an establishment that is engaged in the storage of materials, equipment or products that will be distributed to wholesalers or retailers.” The “warehouse” use is not permitted in LNC Districts but is permitted in HC (Highway Commercial), GI (General Industrial) and UI (Urban Industrial) Districts.

4. A “freight terminal” is “a facility designed for the moving and storage of goods, including railroad and trucking terminals and railroad repair shops.” The “freight terminal” use is not permitted in LNC Districts but is also permitted in HC, GI and UI Districts.

5. Chapter 904 includes descriptions of the purposes of mixed-use zoning districts, including LNC, HC, GI and UI Districts.

6. Pursuant to Section 911.03, where an application is submitted for a use that is not listed in the Table of Uses, the Zoning Administrator is authorized to determine the classification of the new or unlisted use based on the definition that most closely fits the use proposed or its similarity to an existing and defined land use category.

7. Based on the information initially provided, the Zoning Administrator determined that the proposed use would be consistent with the grocery store (general) use. However, as the use was more completely described at the hearing, the proposed use also has attributes of a warehouse and a freight terminal, as the Code defines those uses. The goods stored in the building would not be sold directly to customers and goods would be moved from and stored in the building.

8. Most significantly, the proposed use would not allow any direct customer access, which is a characteristic of the other commercial/retail uses permitted in LNC Districts.

9. Based on the evidence presented at the hearing and a review of the purposes of the different mixed use zoning districts, the Board concludes that the proposed use is more

consistent with the “warehouse” and “freight terminal” uses and with the purposes of the zoning districts where those uses are permitted.

10. The objectors, including the community groups, presented substantial and credible evidence that the proposed use, as described, would not be consistent with the purposes of the LNC District and would have detrimental impacts on the adjacent residential neighborhoods.

11. For these reasons, the Board reverses the Zoning Administrator’s determination that the proposed use should be categorized as a “grocery store” and concludes that denial of a special exception for the grocery store (general) use is appropriate.

Decision: The application to allow the proposed Walmart depot use, as described to the Board, is DENIED.

s/Alice B. Mitinger
Alice B. Mitinger, Chair

s/Lashawn Burton-Faulk
LaShawn Burton-Faulk

s/ John J. Richardson
John J. Richardson

Note: Decision issued with electronic signatures, with the Board members’ review and approval.