

DOCKET ITEM #9

Special Use Permit #2012-0030**501 East Monroe Avenue – Wholesale Business**

Application	General Data	
Consideration of a request to operate a wholesale business with a parking reduction.	Planning Commission Hearing:	June 5, 2012
	City Council Hearing:	June 16, 12
Address: 501 East Monroe Avenue	Zone:	CSL/Commercia20l Service Low
Applicant: M.E. Swing Company, Inc.	Small Area Plan:	Potomac West

Staff Recommendation: APPROVAL subject to compliance with all applicable codes and ordinances and the recommended permit conditions found in Section III of this report.

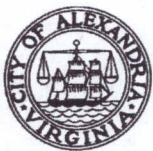
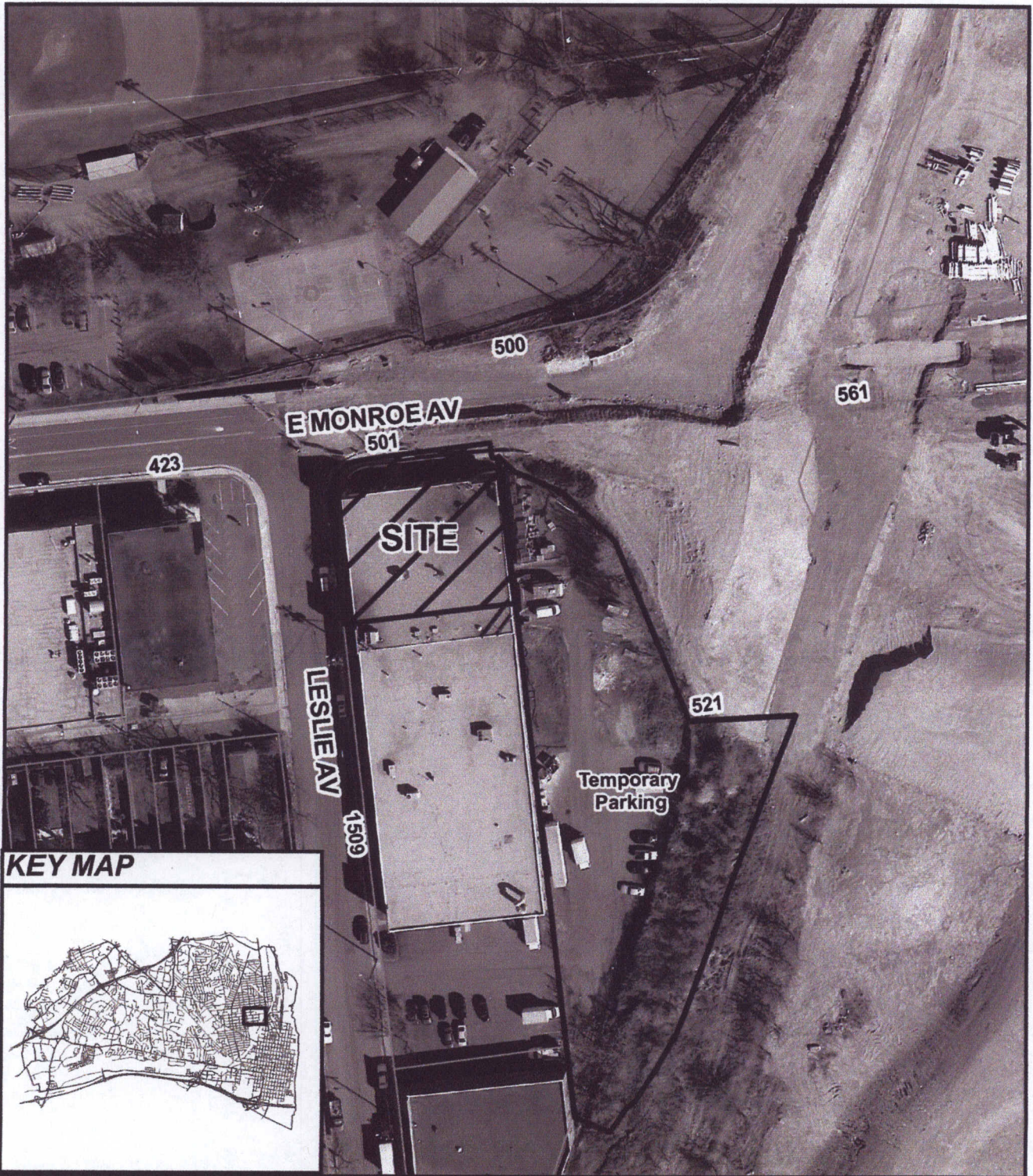
Staff Reviewers: Nathan Randall nathan.randall@alexandriava.gov

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION, JUNE 5, 2012: On a motion by Ms. Fossum, seconded by Mr. Dunn, the Planning Commission recommended approval of the request, subject to compliance with all applicable codes, ordinances and staff recommendations as amended. The motion passed on a vote of 5 to 0, with Mr. Wagner and Mr. Jennings absent.

Reason: The Planning Commission agreed with the staff analysis but deleted Condition #17 and changed Condition #16 because it found that that no off-street parking should be required for employees.

Speakers:

David Chamowitz, attorney for the applicant, spoke in support of the request. He asked for the removal of recommended Condition #17 requiring the provision of 10 off-street parking spaces for employees, citing difficulties in obtaining such parking.



SUP #2012-0030

6/5/2012



I. DISCUSSION

The applicant, M.E. Swing, Inc. by David Chamowitz, attorney, requests Special Use Permit approval to operate a wholesale coffee roasting business with a parking reduction at 501 East Monroe Avenue.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The subject site is one lot of record with approximately 102 feet of frontage on Monroe Avenue, approximately 100 feet of frontage on Leslie Avenue and a total lot area of 11,508 square feet. The property is developed with a one-story, 10,200 square-foot warehouse building recently the location of Gold Crust Bakery.



The surrounding area is comprised of a mix of institutional, commercial, and residential uses. Simpson Field and the Alexandria YMCA are located to the north across Monroe Avenue. A newly-renovated office building and the Giant supermarket are located to the west. Residential uses and additional warehouse space, featuring kitchen cabinet and furniture businesses, are located to the south.

Vacant property, once partially occupied by the old Route 1/Monroe Avenue bridge, is located to the east. A Dominion Virginia Power substation and a new City-owned dog park are proposed for the land immediately to the east of the subject site. Potomac Yard Landbay L, on which a new multi-family residential building with ground-level retail and new residential townhouses are planned, is located farther to the east.

BACKGROUND

Gold Crust Bakery operated a commercial bakery in this space from 1999 until it closed last year. It retains ownership of the property. In the most recent SUP approval (SUP#2008-0047) for the bakery in June 2009, City Council approved a condition change to allow a new loading/unloading arrangement using a planned new driveway along the eastern side of the building which would be accessed from a new curb cut on East Monroe Avenue. The planned access arrangement is dependent on a series of complicated land transfers among the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), Dominion Virginia Power, and the City that were the subject of subdivision approval in December 2009 and were re-approved in July 2011 (SUB#2011-0005). The land transfers have not yet occurred but are still planned.

PROPOSAL

The applicant proposes to relocate its wholesale coffee distribution and roasting business from South Pickett Street. Approximately 9,500 square feet of the 10,200 square-foot tenant space will be used for coffee roasting, packaging and associated offices. Coffee roasting is expected to occur only between 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. A space referred to as a "cupping room" will be used primarily for internal coffee testing purposes but will occasionally be open to the public either directly or as a part of facility tours.

An accessory retail/restaurant space with 22 seats will occupy the remaining 1,000 square feet in the building. Here the applicant plans to offer individually-prepared cups of coffee and other coffee drinks and a limited number of pastries and other food items that are baked off-site. Coffee beans, coffee accessories, and a limited number of packaged foods such as chocolates, will be available for retail purchase in this space as well. Additional elements of the applicant's proposal are as follows:

- Hours of Operation: 7:30 a.m. – 5 p.m. seven days/week
- Restaurant Seats: 22
- Number of Customers: 100-200 customers/day
- Number of Employees: Approximately 12 employees are expected
- Odors: Coffee roasting odors will be controlled using a thermal afterburner and catalyzer.
- Trash/Litter: Cardboard, paper waste, food waste and coffee grounds are expected trash, which will be picked up once/week.
- Noise: Minimal noises are expected from the use

ZONING/MASTER PLAN DESIGNATION

The subject property is located in the CSL/Commercial Service Low zone. Section 4-303(CC) of the Zoning Ordinance allows a wholesale use in the CSL zone only with a Special Use Permit. The proposed use is consistent with the Potomac West small area plan chapter of the Master Plan which designates the property for commercial and service uses.

PARKING

According to Sections 8-200(A)(19) of the Zoning Ordinance, a non-storage-related business in an industrial building in this location is required to provide 1.1 parking spaces for each 500 square feet of space plus one space for each 400 square feet of office area. The proposed business, which has 9,000 square feet of non-office space and 1,200 square feet of office space, is therefore required to provide a total of 23 parking spaces.

The applicant will park its vans, delivery trucks, and employee vehicles on a temporary basis in a partially unpaved parking area located to the east/southeast of the site and accessed from Leslie Avenue. The parking area, which the applicant estimates can hold at least 60 vehicles, is currently available to the applicant through a lease between its landlord, Gold Crust Bakery, and Dominion Virginia Power, the owner of the property. The lease is expected to end in the future once the expected land transfers are complete, since Dominion will use one portion of the re-subdivided land to construct a power substation and the City will assume ownership of the remainder for the future extension of East Nelson Avenue between Leslie Avenue and Potomac Yard Landbay L.

Since no parking spaces are being provided on a permanent basis for this use, the applicant is seeking a parking reduction for its entire 23-space requirement.

DELIVERIES

The proposed use includes both the delivery of supplies to the site and the delivery of coffee products from the site to restaurant and retail customers. In terms of supply deliveries to the site, the applicant expects approximately one delivery of raw coffee beans each month that would arrive to the site in large tractor trailer trucks on weekday mornings. Smaller deliveries of paper, cardboard or other supplies will be more frequent and are expected to arrive on smaller trucks.

Loading/unloading activities from these supply trucks will occur in one of two locations. In the short term and until the termination of the Gold Crust's lease with Dominion, all delivery trucks will park in the unpaved parking area and, if necessary, use the loading dock on the eastern side of the building. In the future, most deliveries will occur in the new driveway accessed from East Monroe Avenue, except that the delivery of raw coffee beans is proposed to occur in a yet-to-be-approved on-street loading zone on the south side of East Monroe Avenue in front of the business. The raw beans will be shuttled from the truck parked on-street to the loading dock using forklifts.

The applicant expects to deliver its coffee products to retail/restaurant customers in one of two ways. For long-distance customers, coffee will be shipped using a private delivery service such as FedEx, who will pick up directly at the site. The applicant will use two cargo vans that will be parked in the Dominion-owned lot, for now, and in the new driveway area in the future. The cargo vans are expected to be in the field for most of each working day and should not compete for parking space with delivery vehicles bringing supplies to the business.

II. STAFF ANALYSIS

Staff recommends approval of the proposed coffee wholesale business in this long-standing industrial building. It finds that the light industrial-type use is generally appropriate in this location and that the presence of an accessory retail/restaurant use in this building will help maintain an active street life in this transitional location between the Del Ray neighborhood and the planned redevelopment projects located to the east in Potomac Yard. The proposal also represents an opportunity to retain an existing business that wishes to relocate and expand within Alexandria.

Parking

The SUP request seeks permission to operate the coffee business with a 23-space parking reduction because the building was constructed without any off-street parking.

Although Gold Crust Bakery was approved for two parking reductions in the past, one of which was a 100% parking reduction, staff is hesitant to support such a request now without the provision of at least some off-street parking on a long-term basis. Currently, parking in the area can be tight during games at Simpson Field and the new soccer fields, even with the recent addition of new on-street parking spaces on both sides of East Monroe Avenue. Staff understands that the recently-renovated office building to the west across Leslie Avenue, which is grandfathered in terms of parking, has also increased demand for parking in the neighborhood. Three new uses are planned nearby that will further increase the demand for on-street parking spaces in the vicinity. A multi-family residential building with ground-level retail and a townhouse project have been approved for Potomac Yard Landbay L and a new dog park is planned to the east of the site on the opposite side of the future Dominion substation. Although additional on-street parking will be available when Main Line Boulevard is built, the residential, athletic, and other uses in the vicinity will compete for those spaces.

Although the applicant reports that it can use the large unpaved area located to the southeast of the property to meet its parking requirement at the present time, this arrangement is only temporary. The land is being leased from Dominion to the applicant through Gold Crust Bakery and once the anticipated land transfers are complete, the City will own part of the land for future right-of-way purposes, while Dominion will own a reconfigured parcel on which it plans to build the power substation. The applicant has requested a full parking reduction of 23 spaces now in anticipation of this future loss of all off-street parking for the use.

Sufficient parking should be available for patrons of the accessory retail/restaurant, which is small at only 22 seats and is likely to be a pedestrian-oriented and high-turnover use, and for small groups that have arranged for facility tours. However, employee parking remains problematic because employees who drive to work would have no alternative but to park on-street all day. This situation is likely to increase competition for on-street spaces, at least during certain times of the day, and could potentially push drivers toward parking in adjacent residential areas. Staff has asked the applicant to explore off-street arrangements with neighboring businesses, such as the YMCA, but it reports that it has been unable to reach an agreement since it is unsure when it would lose the right to use the existing unpaved parking lot. Staff is therefore recommending condition language in this report (Condition #16) to require the applicant to

provide at least 10 off-street parking spaces, which would be intended for employees, to the satisfaction of the Directors of Planning & Zoning and Transportation & Environmental Services. Condition #16 also requires that the applicant's employees be required to park off-street.

Deliveries

Staff has also closely considered the matter of supply deliveries at the site. Staff has no objection to the short-term delivery plan in which the applicant will continue accessing the existing loading dock from Leslie Avenue by way of the Dominion property. The long-term plan for deliveries, in which the existing loading dock will be accessed by way of the new driveway from East Monroe Avenue, also appears adequate for most delivery trucks. However, the large tractor trailer trucks expected to bring raw coffee beans to the site will not be able to turn into the new driveway. In addition, the 12-foot width of the new driveway, which will be bordered by walls on either side, is likely too narrow for these large delivery trucks.

Staff asked the applicant to consider receiving raw beans more frequently using smaller delivery trucks, but it reports that this arrangement is not possible through its distributor at the present time. As an alternative, staff is recommending (Condition #14) that the applicant be allowed to load/unload from large tractor trailer trucks parked on East Monroe Avenue in a new loading zone. Although final approval rests with the Traffic & Parking Board, the most convenient location for the new zone would be directly in front of the business on the south side of East Monroe Avenue. While staff is concerned about the displacement of parking spaces that would result from a new loading zone, no alternative exists to allow large truck deliveries here, and the large truck deliveries are only expected to occur about once each month. Staff has included restrictions in Condition #14 regarding the frequency (not more than once each week) and the times (only between 7 am and 12 noon on weekdays) that on-street loading/unloading may occur to further ensure that the area remains open for public parking to the extent possible.

Staff is recommending several conditions to address matters in addition to parking and deliveries. Some conditions incorporate standard language regarding matters such as hours of operation, litter, and trash storage. In addition to its standard condition requiring the applicant to control odors from becoming a nuisance to neighboring properties, the applicant will be required in Condition #13 to install the thermal afterburner/catalyzer as it has already indicated it will do. This equipment, which works by super-heating air from inside the roasting machines to eliminate odor-causing particles, should effectively mitigate potential coffee odors. Condition #2 regarding the hours of operation also prevents coffee roasting from occurring during overnight hours, which is consistent with the applicant's representation that such activities will only occur during its normal business hours.

In conclusion, staff believes that the use is generally a good fit for this location. The proposed move demonstrates the growth of a popular and successful local business. With the inclusion of several standard and special conditions in Section III of this report, staff recommends approval of the Special Use Permit request.

III. RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS

Staff recommends **approval** subject to compliance with all applicable codes and ordinances and the following conditions:

1. The Special Use Permit shall be granted to the applicant only or to any corporation in which the applicant has a controlling interest. (P&Z)
2. The hours of operation for the wholesale business (including the roasting of coffee) and accessory uses shall be limited to between 7:30 a.m. and 5 p.m., seven days/week. (P&Z)
3. The maximum number of restaurant seats at the site shall be 22. The on-site restaurant shall remain accessory to the wholesale business use to the satisfaction of the Director of Planning & Zoning at all times and shall not include a separate entrance or hours of operation that exceed those permitted in Condition #2. (P&Z)
4. The applicant shall post the hours of operation at the front of the business. (P&Z)
5. No alcohol sales shall be permitted at the accessory restaurant/retail business. (P&Z)
6. No live entertainment shall be permitted on the premises. (P&Z)
7. The applicant shall conduct employee training sessions on an ongoing basis, including as part of any employee orientation, to discuss all SUP provisions and requirements. (P&Z)
8. Trash and garbage shall be placed in sealed containers which do not allow odors to escape and shall be stored inside or in closed containers which do not allow invasion by animals. No trash or debris shall be allowed to accumulate on site outside of those containers. (P&Z)
9. Litter on the site and on public rights-of-way and spaces adjacent to or within 75 feet of the premises shall be picked up at least twice a day and at the close of business, and more often if necessary, to prevent an unsightly or unsanitary accumulation, on each day that the business is open to the public. (T&ES)
10. Coffee serving equipment shall not be cleaned outside, nor shall any residue be washed into the streets, alleys or storm sewers. (T&ES)
11. All waste products including but not limited to organic compounds (solvents), motor oil, compressor lubricant and antifreeze shall be disposed of in accordance with all local, state and federal ordinances or regulations and not be discharged to the sanitary or storm sewers or be discharged onto the ground. (T&ES)
12. The applicant shall install thermal/catalytic afterburners to control odors and other emissions from the primary and secondary coffee roasting devices. The applicant shall also control any other odors, smoke and air pollution from operations at the site and prevent them from leaving the property or becoming a nuisance to neighboring

