

**Statement in Support of Chick-fil-A, Inc.’s Applications to  
City of Worcester Zoning Board of Appeals for Special Permits for  
Food Service Drive-Through Use and for Noncompliance with Landscape Requirements at  
99 Stafford Street, Worcester, Massachusetts**

**I. Background and Project Scope.**

Chick-fil-A, Inc. (“Chick-fil-A”) has an executed lease with the owner of the property located at 99 Stafford Street, Worcester, Massachusetts (the “Property”), which property contains approximately 106,465 square feet of land and currently contains a Walgreens pharmacy building with a drive-through and surface parking.<sup>1</sup> The Property is located entirely within the Manufacturing, Limited 2.0 (“ML-2.0”) zoning district and no overlay districts, and is bounded by Stafford Street to the north/northwest, Heard Street to the west and railroad tracks to the south. The neighborhood generally consists of restaurants, a shopping plaza, retail stores and other commercial establishments. The nearest residential property is over 300 feet away and adjacent to the shopping plaza and on the other side of the railroad tracks off of Heard Street.

Chick-fil-A is proposing to remove the existing approximately 14,853 square foot Walgreens building to accommodate the construction and development of a new approximately 5,331 square foot Chick-fil-A-branded restaurant building, a dual lane drive-through with two canopies, new landscaping, outdoor dining area, curb cut modifications (i.e., new entrance from Stafford Street and a modified exit off the existing curb cut) and other site improvements (the “Project”).

**II. Requirement for Special Permits.**

Special permits are required for (1) the food service with drive-through use in the ML-2.0; (2) the drive-through escape lane requirements set forth in Article IV, Section 7.A.7(a) of the Zoning Ordinance; and (3) noncompliance with landscaping requirements (i.e., trees planted every 20 to 25 feet on center; 5-foot landscape buffer required under Article V, Section 5.C.1; and at least one (1) tree shall be planted within the parking lot (interior for every ten (10) proposed and existing spaces) per Note 6 of Table 4.4). In addition, Chick-fil-A will seek site plan review approval by the Planning Board.

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<sup>1</sup> The Property is owned by Stafford Street Worcester LLC, and has a parcel identification of 15-029-00001.

**III. Reasons for Approval of Special Permits.**

The Project satisfies the special permit criteria as set forth in Article II, Section 6.A.2 of the Zoning Ordinance for the reasons stated herein:

**1. Social, economic or community needs that are served by the proposal.**

Chick-fil-A is a family-owned and family-led company, together with its local Owners/Operators, that strives to graciously serve great food and have a positive influence on its customers, employees and communities. Chick-fil-A is committed to being a good corporate citizen and contributor to the local community. Chick-fil-A and its local Operator support a number of organizations that enrich the communities they serve. The intent of Chick-fil-A's foundation and corporate giving is to provide food donations/community support and enrichment programs. The Operator also holds "Spirit Nights" where a portion of sales go to community causes, including schools, hospitals, first responders and others. The proposed Chick-fil-A restaurant will contribute to the local economy and address social and community needs by serving local businesses and residents with a high quality quick-service chicken restaurant option, employing a number of full and part-time workers (including area residents) and paying local taxes and fees.

**2. Traffic flow and safety, including access, parking and loading areas.**

**a. Traffic flow, safety and access.**

The proposed modifications, dual lane drive-through, reconfiguration of the parking and changes to the access are not expected to negatively impact traffic conditions on adjacent roadways or intersections or cause traffic congestion, hazards or a substantial change to the neighborhood character. Stafford Street is a four-lane, two-way street that is a major high volume commercial artery in the City. There is currently ample traffic capacity within Stafford Street and Heard Street to accommodate the existing restaurant operations. There is also a traffic signal at the intersection of Stafford Street and Heard Street that provides traffic controls.

The Project proposes a safe and efficient layout and site design for vehicular and pedestrian traffic. The proposed parking will be safely and conveniently located in close proximity to the entrances of the restaurant building and outside of the new dual lane drive-through. The proposed drive aisles within the parking areas will provide sufficient widths and turning radii necessary to provide for safe and efficient travel for passenger delivery vehicles. Emergency vehicles can access to the building from both Heard Street and Stafford Street. Safe, convenient and efficient pedestrian access to the building will be provided along new and existing accessible walkways and sidewalks.

Access to the Property is currently provided via curb cuts along Stafford Street and Heard Street. The existing curb cut along Heard Street provides two-way access for the Property. Under the proposed Project, the existing curb cut along Stafford Street will be modified to provide one-way egress from the Property to accommodate the new drive-through and a new separate curb cut along Stafford Street will provide one-way access to the Property. This new curb cut configuration will provide for safe and efficient travel for vehicles entering and exiting the site.

The proposed dual lane drive-through will provide operational efficiency and appropriate vehicular queuing storage length, which will accommodate customer activity during peak periods with no negative impacts to on-site circulation or parking. The drive-through lanes will avoid queuing conflicts within parking lot drive aisles, pedestrian access routes to the restaurant building and vehicular access to and from Heard Street. An escape lane is also proposed for a certain distance after the order boards. There will also be a 36” wide team member zone located between the face-to-face (F2F) ordering canopy and outside meal delivery (OMD) canopy to facilitate food deliveries and order taking. Dual lanes create space and provide multiple options for delivering meals within the drive-through to reduce queue times. The restaurant can utilize single-lane meal fulfillment with a bypass lane or flex to dual-lane fulfillment depending on the level of customer volume. These options create flexibility for future growth in mobile ordering and traditional drive-through capacity. During peak hours, Chick-fil-A’s drive-through facilities and operations will allow restaurant guests and operations to flow in a more efficient manner and will aid in providing safe, clear, concise and efficient traffic patterns. By providing a second drive-thru lane, Chick-fil-A expects it will be able to reduce the departure rate and increase efficiency, thereby resulting in shorter wait times. The proposed layout will efficiently distribute the flow of customers who choose to purchase and consume restaurant offerings through various means. The proposed dual lane drive-through is consistent with other Chick-fil-A locations, including the restaurant within the City at Goldstar Boulevard.

**b. Parking and loading.**

Table 4.4 of Article IV of the Zoning Ordinance provides minimum parking requirements based on use. Food service requires 0.5 spaces per person rated occupancy (based on seating capacity). In addition, “Fast food/drive-thru” use requires 1 space for every 60 square feet of gross floor area dedicated to the drive-through operations within the building. Based on the building’s seating capacity of 74 seats plus the 60+/- square feet within the building that will be dedicated to the drive-through operations, the Project requires a minimum of 38 parking spaces. The Project proposes 77 parking spaces, which complies with minimum parking requirements, and will adequately serve the restaurant’s operations. The proposed number of parking spaces is necessary based on the number of employees working on the largest shift and anticipated

consumer demand, including the increased demand since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic for 3<sup>rd</sup> party pick-up and delivery (e.g., Uber Eats, DoorDash) orders.

Loading activities will occur on-site during off-hours. Trucks will be able to enter the site from Stafford Street or Heard Street. The proposed loading area will be in close proximity to the building and a safe distance from electric utility equipment and pedestrian walkways.

### **3. Adequacy of utilities and other public services.**

The Project will not result in any material adverse effects on drainage patterns. The proposed Project will decrease the percentage of overall impervious surfaces through the addition of new landscape islands and buffers and decrease the rate of stormwater runoff. The best management practices for stormwater are incorporated in the design of the Project and will be adequate to manage stormwater runoff generated by the Project and to satisfy the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance, the Worcester Department of Public Works and Massachusetts Stormwater standards. Stormwater runoff collected from the building roof and canopy areas will be collected and conveyed to the existing underground infiltration system previously used for the Walgreens building in Stafford Street via underground connections.

Except for the new building and pole lighting and underground conduits for the EV charging stations, no new utilities will be required. The existing water and sewer connections at the site are adequate to support the proposed Project. The proposed Project will not result in additional demands on police or fire services.

### **4. Neighborhood character and social structure; buildings, noise, glare, lighting and signs.**

The Project will substantially enhance and improve the parking, pedestrian and vehicular site circulation, drive-through operations, safety and aesthetic appeal of the site. The Project is functionally and aesthetically compatible with the surrounding commercial properties in the neighborhood, which include a mix of restaurant, retail, personal service, office and industrial uses. The Project will have no greater impact on, adversely affect or be detrimental to adjoining premises or zones or the neighborhood. The proposed Project will improve the aesthetic appeal, design quality and economic vitality of the neighborhood. New outdoor seating will be located along Stafford Street. The new landscaping will significantly improve the appearance of the site and provide adequate screening with respect to the parking areas, which will be located farther away from Stafford Street as compared to the existing parking. Based on the foregoing, the Project will fit into the present character of the neighborhood and granting this relief will promote an appropriate use of the site.

The kind, size, height and nature of the Project and the proposed site improvements for the Property are consistent with the Chick-fil-A restaurant at Gold Star Boulevard and other properties within the City that have been developed for food service with drive-through use. Except as otherwise provided herein, the Project will comply with applicable dimensional and parking requirements of the Zoning Ordinance.

The Project will not result in any increase in noise levels that would be noticeable at any abutting properties. The Project will neither create a nuisance, hazard, congestion or concerns pertaining to health, safety or general welfare, and there will not be substantial harm to the neighborhood or derogation from the intent of the Zoning Ordinance as a result of the Project.

The proposed outdoor lighting, which includes building mounted lighting solutions on facades or within canopies, will be adequate for safe and secure access to and from the building, walkways, sidewalks and the drive-through area. The proposed lighting will be arranged and have directional shields so as to minimize light from shining onto abutting properties and streets and will not have a deleterious effect on neighboring properties. Any new Chick-fil-A restaurant signage will be provided in compliance with the Zoning Ordinance.

#### **5. Impacts on the natural environment.**

There are minimal natural terrain features at the Property (i.e., landscape buffers along the street), and the Project will minimize, to the extent practicable, changes to the natural terrain as a result of the Project. The Project is outside of the Floodplain and Water Resources Protection Overlay Districts and ecologically sensitive areas, and there are no wetland resource areas at the Property. There will not be any negative impacts on the groundwater. The proposed Project will decrease the percentage of overall impervious surfaces through the addition of new landscape islands and buffers, provide drainage improvements, decrease the rate of stormwater runoff and an enhance the stormwater quality through the use of best management practices.

#### **6. Potential fiscal impact, including city services needed, tax base, and employment.**

The Operator of this Chick-fil-A restaurant will employ a number of full-time and part-time team members and managers at this proposed restaurant, and the Project will create new construction jobs and generate additional tax revenues and fees for the City. The Project will improve the economic vitality of the neighborhood and surrounding areas by employing workers and providing a compatible business food service for residents and businesses in the area.