TOWN OF FLETCHER

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Heart of Fletcher Review
Firestone Complete Auto Care
(26-19-HOF)

Planning Department Staff Report
Tyler Morrow, Planning and Zoning Director

Project Summary 2
Existing Zoning & Land Use Map and Description 3
Site Images 4
Site Plan Summary: 6
Heart of Fletcher Map and Description 7
Heart of Fletcher Design Review: 8
Alternative Design Review: 9

Project Summary

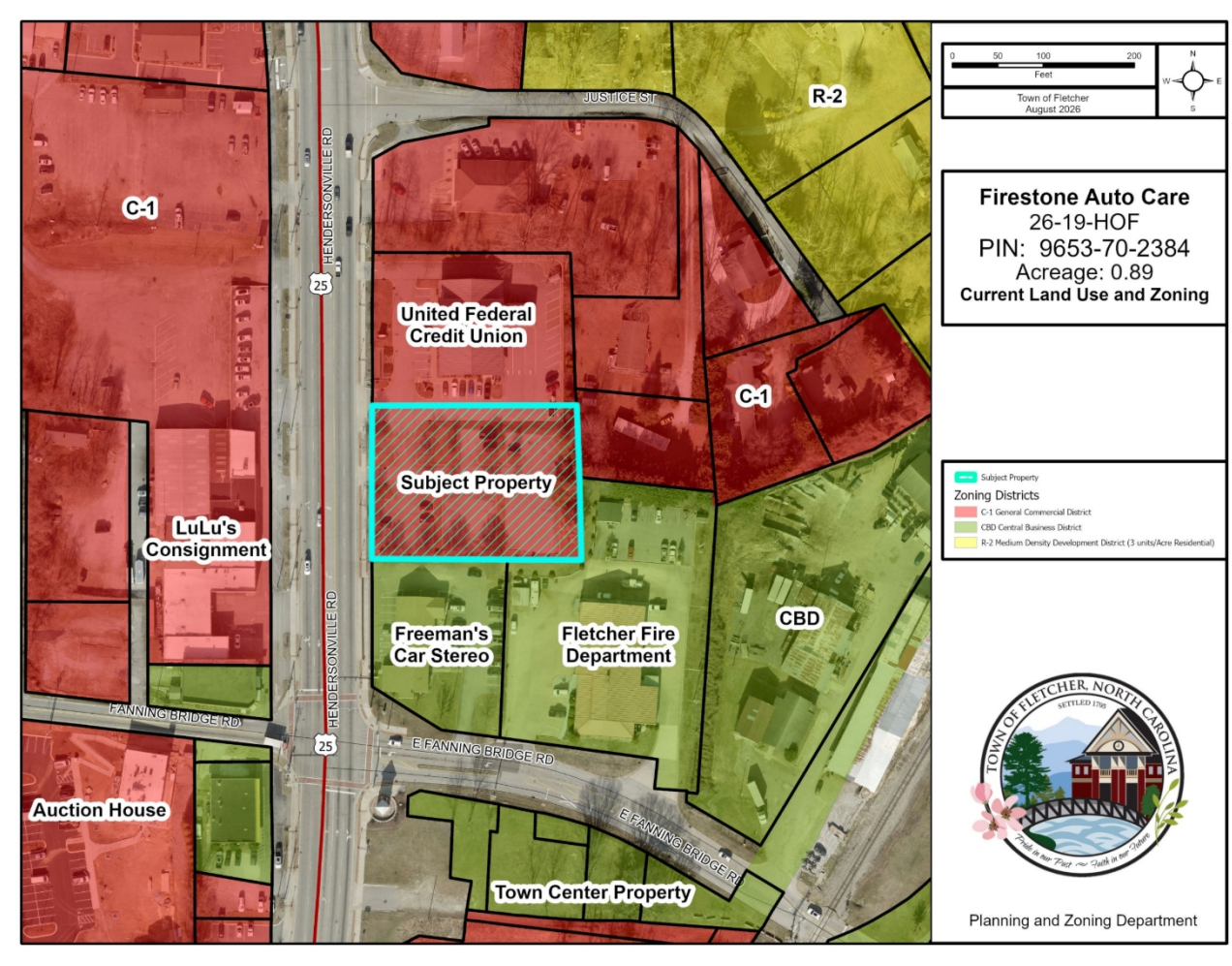


SITE VICINITY MAP

- **Project Name & Case #:**
  - Firestone Complete Auto Care
  - 26-19-HOF
- **Applicant:**
  - Southeastern Development
    - Frank Mowitz
- **Property Owners:**
  - United Federal Credit Union
- **Project Acreage:**
  - 0.89 Acres
- **Project overview**
  - New 7,045 square foot firestone auto care business with 8 service bays.

- **Property Address:**
  - 3665 Hendersonville Road
- **Parcel Identification (PIN):**
  - 9653-70-2384
- **Current Parcel Zoning:**
  - C-1, General Business District
- **Requested Uses:**
  - Vehicle Services – Minor Maintenance/Repair
- **Heart of Fletcher Overlay Designation:**
  - Town Center Business

Existing Zoning & Land Use Map and Description



The subject property is zoned C-1, General Commercial District, similar to most other parcels that front along US 25. The C-1 district was created for this corridor and, through time and new development, has helped shape the highway commercial zoning pattern seen along US 25 today.

The subject property also abuts a transition in zoning to the south, where the Central Business District begins. This area is the only location in Town where the CBD zoning district is currently found. The CBD district is associated with the Town's future Town Center area and includes development standards that are more consistent with that vision. The district is intended to accommodate a range of uses in pedestrian scaled buildings. The Central Business District is intended to serve as Fletcher's traditional downtown area.

Per the LDC, the goals of the C 1 district are to promote the sensitive conversion of vacant land to more urban uses, support development that is compatible with and enhances the visual attractiveness of the area, promote well planned and economically viable development, encourage attractive signage and business visibility, ensure safe and efficient traffic flow through access management, and avoid uncoordinated strip development patterns.

Site Images



This site photograph shows the existing access to the property. This access is proposed to be removed as part of the development, with the site instead utilizing a shared full access entrance with the adjacent bank.



This photograph shows the subject property from US 25. As shown, the grade increases as the property extends eastward.



This photograph shows the neighboring Fletcher Fire Department property. As shown, the subject property sits at a higher elevation than the fire station.



This photograph shows the existing buffer along the rear of the property. The buffer is proposed to be impacted but not completely removed as part of the development. The exact extent of vegetation removal is not fully known at this time.

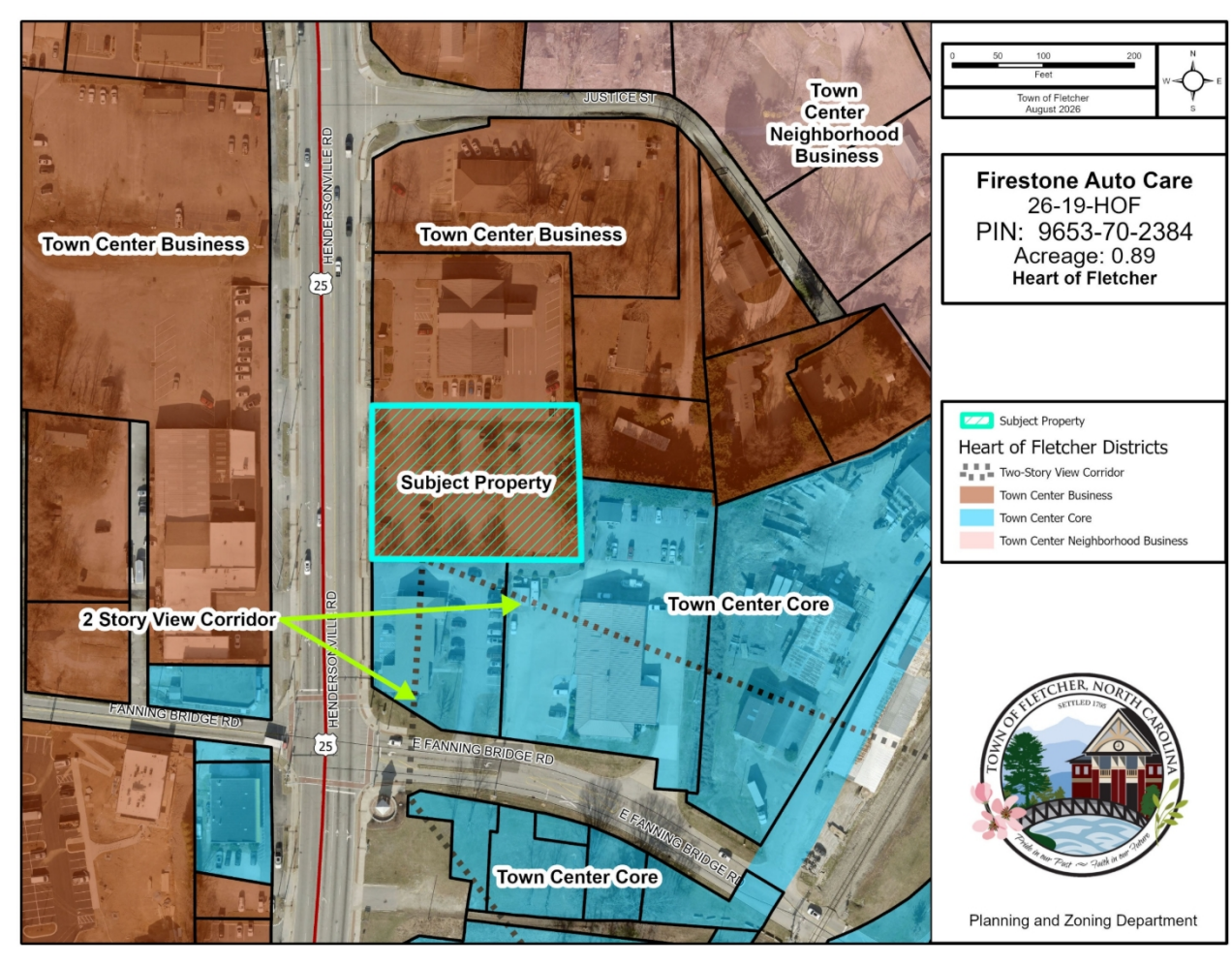
Site Plan Summary:

The proposed site plan includes the construction of a Firestone Complete Auto Care facility consisting of approximately 7,045 square feet with a building height of 30 feet. The building will be located on the southwestern portion of the site, with frontage along Hendersonville Road (US 25). The proposed facility will include eight service bays dedicated to minor vehicle maintenance and repair. Typical services include oil changes, lubrication, minor tuneups, tire and battery installation, wheel balancing and alignment, brake replacement, and other minor mechanical repairs that do not require major engine or drivetrain dismantling. The facility will not be used for the storage of wrecked, junked, or towed vehicles.

The site will provide 31 parking spaces, including three pervious parking spaces. As part of the development, one existing curb cut along Hendersonville Road will be removed, and the affected sidewalk and brickwork will be replaced to match the surrounding streetscape. The existing public bench and trash can located along the sidewalk will remain undisturbed. The development will provide a pedestrian connection from the public sidewalk to the building entrance through a combination of stairs and an accessible ramp. Due to the site's topography, building layout, and operational needs, the applicant is unable to provide a primary entrance directly facing Hendersonville Road as required by the ordinance. Instead, the applicant is requesting approval of an alternative design that locates the entrance at the northwest corner of the building. This location provides a more practical connection to the building's lobby and improves pedestrian access while still maintaining an entrance near the public street. The proposed corner entrance is intended to satisfy the overall intent of the ordinance's pedestrian accessibility requirements.

The submitted architectural renderings illustrate all four elevations of the proposed building. Due to the operational characteristics of an automotive service facility, certain architectural design requirements present challenges that are not typically encountered with traditional commercial or retail buildings. The applicant has worked to incorporate the Town's design standards to the greatest extent practical while requesting alternative design considerations for certain architectural elements. These requests are discussed in greater detail later in this report. The south and east elevations incorporate windows to address the ordinance's blank wall requirements. However, these windows will utilize opaque glazing rather than transparent glass. Because these elevations face directly into the vehicle service areas, transparent windows would provide views into operational spaces that may not be visually desirable from the public realm or practical for the business. The proposed opaque glazing allows the building to maintain the appearance and architectural rhythm of windows while screening the service areas from public view. The building design also incorporates brick and stone as prominent exterior materials, helping establish a more traditional commercial appearance consistent with the Town's architectural expectations. The elevation facing Hendersonville Road provides approximately 54% brick and stone coverage, exceeding the ordinance's minimum requirement of 50%. Overall, the proposed design incorporates several architectural and site improvements intended to support the pedestrian oriented character of the corridor while accommodating the operational needs of an automotive service facility. The applicant has made efforts to meet the Town's design standards where feasible, with the remaining alternative design requests outlined in subsequent sections of this report.

Heart of Fletcher Map and Description



The subject property is zoned Town Center Business within the Heart of Fletcher Overlay. Town Center Business, similar to the C 1 Zoning District, follows many of the properties that front along US 25. Farther north, the Town Center Business designation transitions to Town Center Gateway.

To the south is the Town Center Core district, which, similar to the Central Business District, generally follows parcels that are located within or near the future Town Center project area. This location begins the transition into Town Center Core and is also near the beginning of the two story view corridor shown on the map above.

The view corridor begins to widen near this property. It is staff's understanding that the corridor was created to help preserve views of Town Hall from US 25, as well as mountain views from the corridor. Although the proposed building does not fall within the view corridor itself, it is proposed as a single story building approximately 30 feet in height.

Heart of Fletcher Design Review:

The overlay is intended to discourage traditional suburban development patterns while allowing creativity and flexibility in promoting urban, pedestrian oriented development within the Town Center. Pursuant to Section 14.1 of the Land Development Code (LDC), the Fletcher Planning Board is granted authority to review and approve development applications within the HOF-O. The Planning Board may also attach reasonable conditions and recommendations, as outlined in Section 15.14, to ensure proposed development meets the spirit and intent of the overlay district. The Town Center Business Precinct is intended to encourage compact development consisting primarily of office, retail, and institutional uses. The precinct promotes design elements such as buildings located near the street, covered arcades, awnings, storefront windows, outdoor gathering spaces, wide sidewalks, and building entrances oriented toward the street.

The proposed Firestone Complete Auto Care facility incorporates several design elements intended to meet the objectives of the HOF-O while accommodating the operational needs of an automotive service facility. The proposed building is located approximately 10 feet from the front property line, complying with the maximum front setback requirement of 75 feet. However, the building occupies approximately 32% of the lot frontage rather than the 70% encouraged by the ordinance. It is important to note that the 70% frontage provision is encouraged rather than required. Therefore, the proposed building placement complies with the applicable requirements of the LDC.

The proposed building does not meet the minimum 50% ground floor transparency requirement for street facing façades. The applicant is proposing approximately 39% glass along the Hendersonville Road frontage and is requesting approval of an alternative design to address this requirement. The reduced transparency is primarily attributed to the building's intended automotive service use and structural bracing located behind one of the proposed opaque windows. These operational and structural limitations make it challenging to achieve the required level of transparency typically associated with traditional retail or commercial storefronts.

Additionally, all proposed parking will be located along the side and rear of the building, with no parking situated between the building and Hendersonville Road. This arrangement supports the overlay's intent of maintaining a pedestrian oriented streetscape by placing the building closer to the public sidewalk and minimizing the visual prominence of parking areas.

Alternative Design Review:

The Heart of Fletcher Overlay allows the Planning Board to consider alternative designs when a proposed development does not fully comply with the established design standards. The Planning Board may approve an alternative design if it determines that the proposal meets the spirit and intent of the ordinance. Upon approval, the Planning Director shall issue a Certificate of Appropriateness at the time of zoning permit issuance. The Planning Board may also deny an alternative design and require compliance with the applicable standards. The applicant is requesting approval of two alternative designs related to building transparency and pedestrian access along Hendersonville Road (US 25).

Building Transparency

The ordinance requires at least 50% transparency along the first floor of building façades fronting a street to allow pedestrians to see into the building and encourage a more engaging streetscape.
The proposed development provides approximately 39% glass coverage along the Hendersonville Road façade, which falls below the required 50%. Of the proposed glass area, approximately 70% will be transparent, providing views into the automotive service center's lobby and waiting area. The remaining 30% will consist of opaque glass to conceal a large structural X brace located behind the windows.

According to the applicant, the structural design limits the amount of glass that can be incorporated into the façade. The opaque glass is intended to maintain the appearance of a storefront while screening structural components that would otherwise be visible from the street.
Because the proposed façade does not meet the minimum transparency requirement, the applicant is requesting Planning Board approval of an alternative design.

Building Orientation and Pedestrian Access

The ordinance requires buildings adjoining Hendersonville Road (US 25) or intersections to be designed to address the street. Buildings must provide at least one primary entrance facing the street, with a pedestrian connection to the public sidewalk.

Due to existing topography and the proposed building configuration, the applicant has indicated that providing a primary entrance directly along the Hendersonville Road façade is not feasible without significant changes to the overall site layout.

As an alternative, the applicant proposes locating the primary entrance near the corner of the building, immediately adjacent to the Hendersonville Road frontage. This configuration is intended to maintain convenient pedestrian access while accommodating the site's physical constraints and proposed building layout.

The applicant is requesting Planning Board approval of this alternative entrance configuration in place of an entrance directly facing Hendersonville Road.