City Council Staff Report

Council Meeting Date

- April 28, 2026

Subject

- Conditional Zoning Request for 50 Coxe Ave

Staff Resource(s)

- Stephanie Monson Dahl, Planning and Urban Design Director; Chris Collins, Assistant Director; Will Palmquist, AICP, Principal Planner

Action Requested

- Adoption of an ordinance to conditionally rezone the properties located at 50 Coxe Ave from Central Business District (CBD) to Central Business Expansion - Conditional Zone (CBD EXP-CZ).

Background

Project Location and Contacts:

- The project site totals 1.6 acres located at 50 Coxe Ave (PINs 9648-39-4540, 9648-39-4353, 9648-39-6366).
- Owner: Buncombe County

Summary of Petition:
Project Site

- The project area consists of three properties totalling 1.6 acres located at 50 Coxe Ave and is identified in the Buncombe County land records as PINs 9648-39-4540, 9648-39-4353, 9648-39-6366.
- The site is currently zoned Central Business District (CBD).
- The current use of the site is the administrative offices of Buncombe County and associated surface parking.
- Given the size of the proposed project, a conditional zoning to the Central Business Expansion - Conditional Zone (CBD EXP - CZ) district is required.
- Based on the Living Asheville Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map (FLUM) the property is currently designated “Downtown”. A change to the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) will not be required.

Overall Project Proposal

- New building construction includes a new, 7-story, mixed-use development with 203 multi-family, affordable units and approximately 5,000 SF of retail space.

- The project's total building area is 251,059 square feet.
- A total of 121 parking spaces are proposed within a two-level parking structure.

Technical Modifications

- The project is seeking technical modifications to development standards through the conditional zoning process including:
    - Minimum building height of one-story for the portion of the proposed building fronting on Coxe Avenue.
    - Reduction in the Tree Canopy Preservation requirement from 10% to 1.2%.

Site Layout and Design

- Maximum building height for the Tallest Height Zone in the CBD district 265'. The minimum building height in the CBD district is two stories. The proposed building height is approximately 68' as measured in the CBD district, with an overall height of approximately 84' measured to the top of the roof. A portion of the building fronting along Coxe Ave is proposed to be one story in height.
    - The project is seeking a technical modification for building height minimums.
- There is no maximum residential density in the CBD district.The proposed project's density is approximately 127 units/acre.

Access, Sidewalks and Parking

- The project site has frontages on multiple streets including Coxe Ave, Aston St, Sawyer St, and Ravenscroft Dr. There is also a public alley between Sawyer and Aston Streets which is proposed to be improved and would facilitate one-way traffic to the north.
- The main vehicle access to the site will be via access to parking decks off Coxe Ave and Ravenscroft Dr.
- The project site is across the street from the ART Bus Transit Station.
- The project proposes new sidewalks along its frontages varying in width between 10'-12', and along the public alley with a width of 6'.
- The project proposes two new crosswalks and associated curb ramps at the intersection of Sawyer St and Ravenscroft Dr, specifically along the western and southern sidewalks of the intersection.
- The project is coordinating closely with the Coxe Avenue Streetscape project which proposes a new streetscape design for the entirety of Coxe Avenue from Patton to Southside Aves. The project will incorporate and construct this section of the streetscape, as designed by the streetscape project, with appropriate modifications, as needed, for the project elements such as curb cuts and building entrances.
- The public right-of-way on Sawyer St underneath the proposed building was officially closed via City Council Resolution 24-215, adopted September 24, 2024. The purpose of the ROW closure was to close the street to public, vehicular use, in order to build the portions of the building above. This area will not be open to vehicular traffic, and will instead maintain public pedestrian access between Coxe Ave and the remainder of the open Sawyer St at the dog-leg intersection with the public alley.
- The proposed parking deck contains a total of 121 spaces on two separate levels without access between them. The lower level of the deck is accessed from Coxe Ave and spans the first story of the lower portion of the proposed building with a total of 50 spaces. The upper level of the deck is accessed from Ravenscroft Dr and spans the second story of the upper and lower portions of the proposed building with a total of 71 spaces.

Landscaping / Open Space / Tree Canopy

- Minimal landscape requirements apply for projects in the CBD district, including street trees.
- The project proposes to meet partial Tree Canopy Preservation requirements through new tree plantings on the site. The project site is classified as "Urban" under the Tree Canopy Preservation standards, with a classification of “Class A”, resulting in a 10% canopy requirement.
    - The project is requesting a technical modification for tree canopy preservation requirements, reducing the 10% requirement to 1.2%.
- The project proposes two separate green roof/amenity spaces on the 3rd floor of the building. The area on the east of the building is proposed to be a programmed amenity space with play, lounge, and grilling areas, along with plantings. The area on the south side of the building is proposed to be a green roof with incorporated stormwater retention.
    - These proposed amenity and green roof areas are above what is required for landscaping, open space, or stormwater management.

Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan and Other Plans:
Living Asheville Comprehensive Plan (2018)

- The proposed development supports a number of goals in the Living Asheville Comprehensive Plan, including:
    - Encourage Responsible Growth - by providing infill development in targeted growth areas (p. 131).
    - Increase Mixed-Use Development Along Transit Corridors - by incentivizing redevelopment, especially mixed-use development that contains housing, within identified transit-supportive centers (p. 135).
    - Increase and Diversify the Housing Supply - by increasing the supply of housing, including affordable housing (pp. 179 & 183) in proximity to schools, transit and parks (pp. 246 & 251).
- The proposed development is compatible with the Future Land Use designation of “Downtown”, which is proposed in part, that: “Downtown continues to expand with new development and revitalization opportunities along the edges of the downtown core and via infill development,” and that, “Downtown is also an important residential area and it benefits from having year-round full-time residents. Opportunities for growing this sector of the downtown population through new development is important for the future including market-rate and affordable residential housing” (p. 339).

Compatibility Analysis:

- The proposed multi-family project is compatible with the surrounding land uses, including:
    - Existing multi-family residential, commercial, and institutional uses in the nearby vicinity.
    - Proposed microhousing project directly to the east of the project site known as Aston & Sawyer Microhousing.

Staff Recommendation:

- Staff recommends approval of this rezoning request based on the reasons stated above.

Council Vision 2036 Focus Area(s):

- A Well-Planned and Livable Community

Council Priority Recovery Area(s):

- Infrastructure & Environment
- Economic Recovery

Committee(s):

- Technical Review Committee (TRC) - March 2, 2026 - approved with conditions.
- Design Review Committee (DRC) - March 19, 2026 - approved with the following conditions: 1) Recommend reduction to the size of Coxe Ave garage door, and Sawyer St garage dumpster door, 2) Recommend considering planting selection in the covered pavilion area in regards to the species' ability to thrive in all seasons, 3) Recommend redesigning the retail glass on the Coxe Ave elevation and the brick on the south elevation, 4) Consider that the full portion of the proposed green roof be used to manage stormwater, 5) Consider ways to mitigate noise impacts from nearby entertainment uses, including the possibility of a noise easement, 6) Considering utilizing the area to the south of building for increasing vegetation and active outdoor space, with appropriate lighting, and 7) Consider vegetation on the roof of the 1st story portion of the building along Coxe Avenue.
- Planning & Zoning Commission (PZC) - April 1, 2026 - approved with the following conditions: 1) Recommendation to investigate with the City Traffic Engineer the potential impacts on multimodal safety on Ravenscroft Dr and the intersection of Ravenscroft Dr and Hilliard Ave, i.e. investigating the conversion of Ravenscroft Dr into a one-way street, and removing the wall at the northwest corner of the intersection of Ravenscroft Dr and Hilliard Ave; 2) Recommendation for the City to investigate designating the on-street parking on Ravenscroft Dr as resident only; 3) Recommendation that the City Traffic Engineer study the intersection of Ravenscroft Dr and Sawyer St, specifically for pedestrian safety; and, 4) That the applicant investigate the opportunity to add more trees to the site, including at the south side of the building.

Fiscal Impact

- N/A

Suggested Motion

- I move to approve the conditional zoning request for the properties located at 50 Coxe Ave from Central Business District (CBD) to Central Business Expansion - Conditional Zone (CBD EXP-CZ), and find that the request is reasonable, is in the public interest, is consistent with the city's comprehensive plan and meets the development needs of the community in that the request: 1) Provides infill development in targeted growth areas; 2) Incentivizes redevelopment, especially mixed-use development that contains housing, within identified transit-supportive centers; and, 3) Increases the supply of housing, including affordable housing in proximity to schools, transit and parks.

Attachment(s)

- This is the existing zoning map for 50 Coxe Avenue Exhibit A
- This is the proposed zoning map for 50 Coxe Avenue Exhibit A1
- This is the aerial imagery map of the area around 50 Coxe Avenue Exhibit B
- This is the existing future land use map for the area around 50 Coxe Avenue Exhibit C -
- These are the conceptual site plans, building elevations, and floor plan drawings for the project associated at 50 Coxe Avenue Exhibit D
- These are the draft project conditions that the applicant and the City and the applicant will agree to for the conditional zoning at 50 Coxe Avenue Exhibit E
- This is the ordinance for the conditional zoning at 50 Coxe Avenue Ordinance
- This is the Technical Review Committee Staff Report for 50 Coxe avenue TRC Staff Report
- This is the Downtown Design Review Staff Report for 50 Coxe Avenue DRC Staff Report
- This is the Draft Planning & Zoning Commission minutes of April 1, 2026, regarding 50 Coxe Avenue PZC Staff Report
- This is the Signed Planning & Zoning Commission Recommendation PZC Recommendation
- This is the draft Action Minutes of the Planning & Zoning Commission from April 1, 2026 PZC Draft Action Minutes (4/1/26)