

January 6, 2026

*Sent by Email (cityplanner@grandforksgov.com)*

Mr. Ryan Brooks  
City Planner  
City of Grand Forks  
225 N. 4th Street  
Grand Forks, ND 58201

**RE: Former Macy's Building at Columbia Mall, 2800 S. Columbia Road  
P&Z Commission Agenda Item 4-1 for January 7, 2026 meeting**

Dear Mr. Brooks:

I write to you on behalf of First International Bank & Trust ("FIBT") regarding the rezoning request for the former Macy's Building and surrounding parking lot at the Columbia Mall. As you know, FIBT is the record owner of the property, but such property is currently under contract for sale to Midtown Ventures, LLC.

With FIBT's support, Midtown Ventures submitted the request for a zoning change from PUD B-2 Shopping Center uses to PUD B-3 General Business Uses, which change allows for broader commercial activities that are consistent with the property's location and surrounding uses. FIBT is now submitting this letter to provide further context to its support.

As a starting point, FIBT has worked with Midtown Ventures on a similar redevelopment in Williston, North Dakota, where the group redeveloped an old K-Mart building. FIBT has been impressed with Midtown Ventures' work on this redevelopment and believes it has well-served the community of Williston and surrounding retail businesses. As a result, FIBT would similarly expect a positive impact from the redevelopment of the Macy's location in Grand Forks. In reality, it is very unlikely another national retailer is going to purchase or lease this building, and Grand Forks is lucky to have a local development group with experience in transforming big box stores into new, alternative uses.

In addition, FIBT has reviewed the commentary provided by Evan Shtulman from GK Development, the owner of a majority of the Columbia Mall property, regarding the zoning change request. We believe such commentary inaccurately describes the current status of the Columbia Mall, as well as the history of the GK Development's involvement with the Macy's parcel.

Specifically, Shtulman indicates that a change in zoning "would allow non-retail uses," which uses he claims would have a negative impact on the Mall and surrounding parcels. However, GK Development has already introduced non-retail property uses within the Columbia Mall itself. For example, GK Development has leased a sizeable portion of the mall to Sanford Sports for a "Sports

Performance” facility. As shown by Sanford Sport’s website ([Grand Forks | Sanford Sports](#)) , the facility is primarily used for performance training and sports physical therapy, which cannot be considered retail uses.<sup>1</sup> Considering GK Development’s own property uses, its claims about the negative impact of non-retail uses for the Macy’s parcel ring hollow.

GK Development’s commentary also provides misleading and incomplete information regarding the history of the Macy’s parcel, including a statement that GK Development “unfortunately” does not own the Macy’s parcel, which it claims is of critical importance to the mall. The Macy’s parcel has been for sale more or less continually for 8-plus years, and GK Development had the opportunity to purchase the parcel and control its development throughout such time period. In fact, FIBT and GK Development entered into a purchase agreement for the property in June 2024, but GK Development withdrew from such agreement without closing on the property. As you are also likely aware, GK Development opposed the efforts of another potential buyer to redevelop the Macy’s property into a private school. Now, GK is seeking to stop another redevelopment by Midtown Ventures, all the while doing nothing to improve the prospects for the Macy’s property itself.

With this history in mind, it appears clear that GK Development’s primary goal is to prevent any redevelopment of the Macy’s property, without any consideration or regard for how its actions impact the Grand Forks community.

As part of this strategy, GK Development’s opposition references the “Reciprocal Easement Agreement” governing the property uses of the Columbia Mall development. What GK Development fails to mention, however, is that the restrictive covenants of such agreement expire as of July 31, 2028. While the easements contained in such will continue, the covenants limiting the parcels to specified retail uses will terminate after such date.

Midtown Ventures is therefore wise to seek this zoning change now, in anticipation of the expiration of the Reciprocal Easement Agreement, in order to adequately prepare for the future redevelopment of the property without the limitations imposed by the Reciprocal Easement Agreement.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. Please contact me with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

First International Bank & Trust



Sean T. Foss  
General Counsel

CC: Adam Crary ([adam@crarydev.com](mailto:adam@crarydev.com))

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<sup>1</sup> Notably, the Sanford Sports Performance Center may also be inconsistent with the current PUD B-2 Shopping Center zoning designation for the Columbia Mall, but it would presumably be permitted under PUD B-3 General Business Uses that GK Development is currently fighting against for the Macy’s parcel, but I will leave that determination to your office.