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## Detailed Site Plan DSP-02033, Variance VD-02033, Departure from Design Standards DDS-534

Application	General Data
Project Name  Brentwood, LLC  Location  North of Eastern Avenue and Bladensburg Road intersection  Applicant/Address  The Wilkes Company 6031 Kansas Avenue, NW Washington, D.C. 20011	Date Accepted 08/19/2002
	Planning Board Action Limit Waived
	Plan Acreage 2.35
	Zone I-1
	Dwelling Units NA
	Square Footage 55,182 sq. ft.
	Planning Area 68
	Council District 2
	Municipality Cottage City
	200-Scale Base Map 204NE03

Purpose of Application	Notice Dates
Consolidated Storage	Adjoining Property Owners 06-12-02 (CB-15-1998)
	Previous Parties of Record N/A (CB-13-1997)
	Sign(s) Posted on Site 09-20-02
	Variance(s): Adjoining 09-17-02 Property Owners

Staff Recommendation			Staff Reviewer: Elizabeth Whitmore
APPROVAL	APPROVAL WITH CONDITIONS	DISAPPROVAL	DISCUSSION
	X		

July 30, 2009

**MEMORANDUM**

TO: Prince George's County Planning Board

VIA: Steve Adams, Urban Design Supervisor

FROM: Elizabeth Whitmore, Senior Planner

SUBJECT: Detailed Site Plan DSP-02033  
Brentwood, LLC  
Variance VD-02033A  
Departure from Design Standards DDS-534

The Urban Design staff has reviewed the Detailed Site Plan, the two (2) Variances and Departure from Design Standards for Brentwood, LLC. Based on that review and the findings in this report, the Development Review Division recommends APPROVAL with conditions as stated in the Recommendation section of this report.

**EVALUATION**

This Detailed Site Plan, Variance and Departure were reviewed and evaluated for conformance with the following criteria:

- a. Section 27-475.04 (Consolidated Storage) of the Zoning Ordinance, and the *Landscape Manual*.
- b. Conformance with Site Design Guidelines as outlined in Part 3, Division 9, Subdivision 3, of the Prince George's County Zoning Ordinance.
- c. Referrals.

**FINDINGS**

Based on evaluation and analysis of the subject application, the Urban Design staff recommends the following findings:

1. The subject site is located north of the intersection of Eastern Avenue and Bladensburg Road. The proposed use is for consolidated storage. The existing building is approximately 10 feet in height and encompasses 49,562 square feet of existing gross floor area (GFA). The subject application proposes to add an additional 5,620 square feet of GFA. The architectural elevations indicate that the existing and proposed façade are a combination of Exterior Finish Insulation System (EFIS) and CMU block. The proposed increase in GFA has been incorporated into the existing architecture to

provide a harmonious façade. The majority of the roof is flat and a small amount of standing seam metal roof has been incorporated into the design. Decorative bands are depicted on the elevations that will help to break the mass of the building. No mechanical equipment is designated on the elevations.

2. Development Data Summary

	EXISTING	PROPOSED
Zone(s)	I-1	I-1
Use(s)	Vacant Warehouse	Consolidated Storage
Acreage	2.35 acres	2.35 acres
Lots	N/A	N/A
Parcels	C and Part of B	C and Part of B
Square Footage/GFA	49,562 sq. ft.	55,182 sq. ft.
Dwelling Units:	N/A	N/A

Other Development Data

Interior accessed units	775 units
Exterior accessed units	27 units
*Total Units	802 units
Parking spaces required	21 spaces
Interior units only, 1 space per 50 units ( $775 \text{ units} / 50 = 15.5$ )	16 spaces
Plus 4 spaces per 1,000 square feet of office space ( $2 / 1,000 \text{ sq. ft.} \times 1,200 = 3$ )	3 spaces
Resident Manager	2 spaces
Parking spaces provided	24 spaces
Loading spaces required (interior units only)	
2 spaces for first 10,000 square feet	
plus one space per 40,000 square feet thereafter or fraction of	
Total required	3 spaces
Loading spaces provided	3 spaces

3. Section 27-475.04(a) of the Prince George's County Zoning Ordinance states:

- A. No entrances to individual mini-warehouse units shall be visible from a street or from adjoining land in any Residential or Commercial Zone (or land proposed to be used for residential or commercial purposes on an approved Basic Plan for a Comprehensive Design Zone, or any approved Conceptual or Detailed Site Plan).**

**B. Entrances to individual mini-warehouse units shall be either oriented toward the interior of the development or completely screened from view by a solid wall, with landscaping along the outside thereof.**

All entrances to individual mini-warehouse units located within the existing building are accessed in the interior of the building. However, mini-warehouse units proposed by the additional square-footage will be accessed from the exterior. It should be noted that the proposed addition on the southeast corner of the existing building is offices. An access point is located along the exterior of the building on the southeast side. Staff conducted a site visit and concluded that the existing access points will not be visible from Bladensburg Road, in part because they are recessed with a screen roll-up door being present. Due to the elevation change on the site, staff is of the opinion that doors on the north side of the building will not be visible from Eastern Avenue.

4. The subject site is surrounded by land zoned I-1 within the same use category, therefore, the site is not subject to the requirements of Section 4.7 (Buffering Incompatible Uses) of the *Landscape Manual*. However, the site is subject to Sections 4.2 (Commercial and Industrial Landscape Strip) and 4.3 (Parking Lot Requirements) of the *Landscape Manual*. The applicant has requested a Departure from Design Standards from Section 4.3 (Parking Lot Requirements) which is discussed at the end of this report. In regard to Section 4.2 of the *Landscape Manual*, the applicant should apply for Alternative Compliance to be approved by the Director of the Planning Department.
5. Signage has been included in the package provided by the applicant for review. The applicant calculated the amount of signage proposed incorrectly and thought that a Departure from Design Standards would be necessary. During the referral process it was noted that the proposed signage is approximately 81 square feet below what is allowed in the I-1 Zone. Therefore a Departure from Sign Design Standards is not necessary. The calculations on the site plan for both the building-mounted signage and freestanding sign shall be revised accordingly.
6. The Community Planning Division, in a memorandum dated July 15, 2002 (O'Connor to Whitmore), offered the following comment:

“The proposed expansion of 3320 Bladensburg Road, located in the Eastgate Industrial Center as a self-storage facility, conforms to the Approved Master Plan and Sectional Map Amendment for Planning Area 68 in terms of land use and zoning. This is a gateway location into the county from the District of Columbia and special attention should be given to the design of this facility due to its prominent location.”

**Comment:** The Community Planning Division views this as a major gateway into the county and is requesting that “special attention” be given to the design of the facility. The Urban Design staff believes that this is an appropriate re-adaptive use of an existing building and the additional square footage that is being added to the building will help to upgrade the facades of the existing building. It should also be noted that the proposed site does not include the highly visible corner lot which is currently developed as an Auto Service Center.

7. The Transportation Planning Section, in a memorandum dated September 22, 2002 (Masog to Whitmore), offered the following comments:

“Access and circulation to the uses on the site are certainly limited by the existing building. The transportation staff has determined that access to and circulation within the site are acceptable. Staff has based this finding on the existing conditions and the likelihood that smaller vehicles would access a consolidated storage facility than a general industrial building.

“There is one minor site plan issue which concerns the right-of-way along Bladensburg Road. This roadway is a planned arterial with a right-of-way of 100 feet. Currently 45 feet exists as dedicated right-of-way from the center line of the roadway. Therefore, five feet of the landscaped buffer along the front of the property is actually within the planned right-of-way. No buildings or parking exists within the planned right-of-way nor are any shown on the current plan. Also, there are no current capital projects or studies underway which would lead to the purchase of the additional five feet within the next six years.”

**Comment:** Condition 1.h. in the Recommendation section of this report addresses this concern

8. The Permit Review Section had numerous comments, which have either been addressed in the revised plans or in the Recommendation section of this report.
9. The Environmental Planning Section, in a memorandum dated July 29, 2002 (Metzger to Whitmore), offered the following comments:

“This site is exempt from the requirements of the Woodland Conservation Ordinance because it contains less than 40,000 square feet in area and does not have a previously approved Tree Conservation Plan. A Tree Conservation Plan will not be required. A Letter of Exemption from the Ordinance (E-006-02) was issued by the Environmental Planning Section, Countywide Planning Division, dated January 16, 2002.

“A Stormwater Management Concept Approval Letter and proposed concept plan have not been submitted with this application, nor was there any evidence of compliance. A copy of the Stormwater Management Concept Approval Letter is required prior to certification of the Detailed Site Plan.”

**Comment:** The applicant has provided staff with a copy of the approved Stormwater Management Concept Approval Letter (#2493-2002-00), valid February 13, 2002 to June 30, 2004.

10. The Redevelopment Authority offered no comment pertaining to this application.
11. No subdivision issues are raised with this application.
12. The Department of Public Works and Transportation had not responded to the referral request at the time of the writing of the staff report.
13. The Town of Cottage City, by letter dated June 12, 2002 (Cassidy to Hewlett), offered the following comments:

“Mr. Berkely Shervin and Mr. Anthony Brown appeared before the Chairman and Commissioners for Cottage City on May 8, 2002 in order to describe their proposal to establish a consolidated storage facility to be operated as a Storage USA. Mr. Brown

explained that under the Prince George's County Zoning Ordinance, a consolidated storage is permitted as a matter of right in the I-1 Zone, subject to the approval of a detailed site plan. Mr. Brown also explained that the Planning Board is the approval authority for this type of detailed site plan.

"On June 12, 2002, the Mayor and Commissioners voted to support Mr. Shervin's plans for this property, including his new site plan. The city supports the consolidated storage facility proposed by the Brentwood Development Group, LLC."

13. In general, the Detailed Site Plan meets the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance for development in the I-1 Zone, except as explained below.

Section 27-469, Regulations, of the Zoning Ordinance sets forth certain design criteria for the I-1 Zone. The Detailed Site Plan is in conformance with the criteria with the exception of the following sections:

Section 27-474(b) requires that all buildings be set back 25 feet from the street line.

Section 27-469(b)(1) states:

"At least ten percent (10%) of the net lot area shall be maintained as green area."

Section 27-469(b)(2) states:

"Any landscaped strip adjacent to a public right-of-way required pursuant to the provisions of the *Landscape Manual* shall not be considered part of the required green area."

## **VARIANCE REQUEST**

The applicant is requesting two variances from Section 27-474(b) and 27-469(b)(1)(2) in accordance with the criteria set forth in Section 27-230 of the Prince George's County Zoning Ordinance. The first variance is to allow a building setback of 11.25 feet instead of the 25-foot setback requirement from street lines, and the second variance is to allow 6.7 percent green area instead of the required 10 percent green area

Section 27-230 sets forth the following criteria for approval of the variances:

- 1. A specific parcel of land has exceptional narrowness, shallowness or shape, exceptional topographic conditions or other extraordinary situations or conditions.**

In response to the first criterion, the applicant submits the following:

"The main building on the subject property was built in 1963 at a time when a minimum setback requirement from street lines did not exist. In 1963, the Zoning Ordinance only required buildings to be set back between 50 and 75 feet from the street centerline, depending on the type of street. The main building, as depicted on the site plan submitted with this application, is set back 88 feet from the street centerline. However, the main building on the subject property is setback only 11.25 feet from the street line along Eastern Avenue. . . ."

Staff acknowledges that this site has been previously improved and while the applicant is proposing an additional 5,620 square feet of gross floor area, the increase in GFA maintains the setback of the existing building. Therefore, in regard to the required building setback, Urban Design staff concurs with the applicant's evaluation.

In regard to the reduction of the required green area, it should be noted that at the time of the original development a minimum green area requirement did not exist. Currently 2.76 percent of the site is dedicated to green area. The applicant proposes to provide 6.7 percent green area, a significant increase over what currently exists on the site. It should also be noted that the applicant is proposing 25 percent more plantings than what is required by the *Landscape Manual* in the landscape strip along Bladensburg Road. Therefore, Urban Design staff concurs with the applicant's evaluation and recommends that the Planning Board approve a reduction of 2.3 percent of the required green area.

**2. The strict application of the Subtitle will result in peculiar and unusual practical difficulties to or exceptional or undue hardship upon the owner of the property.**

In regard to the building setback it should be noted that this variance request seeks to validate an existing condition. The building is essentially a nonconforming building and the applicant is proposing to bring the building into conformance by providing a use that is allowed in the zone. To meet current setback requirements the entire side of the existing building on Eastern Avenue would have to be removed at a tremendous cost to the owner and the loss of revenue due to reduction of gross floor area.

In regard to the reduction of green area, it should be noted that if the applicant was not increasing the gross floor area the green area would be satisfied because the *Landscape Manual* would not apply. All building expansions are located in areas that would not accommodate green area because the expansions are located directly in front of existing entrances to the warehouse building. It should also be noted that the site is very tight for vehicular traffic and providing islands of green space would most likely create an ineffective and inefficient on-site traffic circulation pattern.

Staff is of the opinion that failure to approve the variances would create practical difficulties for the applicant.

**3. The variance will not substantially impair the intent, purpose or integrity of the general plan or Master Plan.**

In response to the third criterion regarding the request for both variances, the applicant submits that the consolidated storage as proposed in this application is allowed in the I-1 Zone and is envisioned in the master plan for this area. The requested variances do not propose any change to the allowed uses in the I-1 Zone and, therefore, does not impair the intent, purpose, or integrity of the General Plan of master plan.

The Urban Design staff concurs with the applicant's evaluation.

The Urban Design staff recommends that the Planning Board approve the variances to Sections 27-474(b) and 24-469(b)(1)(2) of the Zoning Ordinance. A variance should be granted to allow a reduction of 13.75 feet from the required 25-foot setback requirements, and a variance should be granted to allow a reduction of 2.3 percent of the required green area respectively, upon approval of the conditions in the Recommendation section of this report.

15. The plan will, if revised in accordance with the conditions of approval, represent a reasonable alternative for satisfying the site design guidelines without requiring unreasonable costs and without detracting substantially from the utility of the proposed development for its intended use.

## RECOMMENDATION

Based upon the foregoing analysis, the Urban Design staff recommends that the Planning Board adopt the findings of this report and APPROVE DSP-02033 and Variance VD-02033 for Brentwood, LLC, subject to the following conditions:

1. Prior to signature approval, the following revisions shall be made or information supplied:
  - a. A note shall be placed on the plan referencing the variance that was requested for 10 percent of green area and the reduced building setback from Eastern Avenue.
  - b. The 10-foot-high fence along the northeast property line shall be removed from the plan.
  - c. Chart III shall be revised to reflect the entire street frontage of Eastern Avenue as a Commercial Industrial Landscape Strip. Chart IV shall be deleted.
  - d. The note regarding Section 4.2, Commercial Industrial Landscape Strip, of the *Landscape Manual*, along the east property line (Parcel K) shall be removed from the plans. A schedule for Section 4.3 (b), Perimeter Area, of the *Landscape Manual*, for the southern 100 feet of the property line where the proposed parking lots abuts Parcel K shall be added with a note referencing the a departure that has been requested for the Perimeter Area.
  - e. The railroad property to the north shall be labeled as I-1 to the centerline of the railroad in accordance with Section 27-111(a)(1) of the Zoning Ordinance.
  - f. General Note 4 on the site plan shall be revised to reflect the correct setback from both streets and the side yard setback that is provided.
  - g. The calculations for signage shall be revised to state that the building-mounted signage area is 285.375 square feet and the freestanding signage area is 103.33 square feet.
  - h. The applicant shall obtain Alternative Compliance from Section 4.2 of the *Landscape Manual*, with the Planning Director having final approval authority.

## Departure from Design Standards (DDS-534)

## FINDINGS

1. The site is located north of the intersection of Eastern Avenue and Bladensburg Road. The site is zoned I-1 and encompasses 2.35 acres. The proposal is to adapt an existing building with an additional 5,620 square feet of gross floor area for consolidated storage which encompasses 55,182 square feet. The applicant is providing the required amount of parking and loading spaces.
2. The request of the applicant in Departure from Design Standards DDS-534 is as follows:

Section 4.3, Parking Lot Requirements, of the *Landscape Manual* requires that: “When a parking lot in any zone is located adjacent to a public right-of-way, a landscaped strip . . . shall be provided on the property between the parking lot and the right-of-way. The landscaped strip may not include any paved area except pedestrian sidewalks or trails which cross the landscaped strip.” A departure is requested from the providing 2 shade trees and 20 shrubs within the landscape strip as required in Section 4.3 of the *Landscape Manual*.

### **Required Findings**

3. **Section 27-239.01(b)(9) of the Zoning Ordinance provides that in order for the Planning Board to grant the departure, it shall make the following findings:**

a. **The purposes of this Subtitle will be equally well or better served by the applicant’s proposal.**

The purposes of the Zoning Ordinance are set forth in Section 27-102. They are varied in nature, but in general, are to protect the health, safety and welfare of the residents and workers in Prince George’s County. In this instance, the facts establish that granting the requested departure will in no way jeopardize these purposes. The subject site is located in an older area inside the Beltway that was developed before most current zoning and development standards came into effect. The current condition of the immediate area can be described as industrial in character. There are adjoining railroad tracks to the northwest, an auto repair service center located to the south, and an industrial site located to the northeast of the subject property. The proposed application of the subject property will enhance the physical characteristics of the area. It should also be noted that the existing building is currently vacant; therefore, bringing in a use will create activity in the area making it a safer environment.

b. **The departure is the minimum necessary, given the specific circumstances of the request.**

The departure is the minimum necessary given the specific circumstance of the site. The site is improved with an existing building, which encompasses the majority of the site. To the east of the subject site is an existing warehouse, which has had a shared driveway with the subject site for approximately 40 years. This shared access prohibits the installation of the five-foot perimeter landscaped strip installation.

c. **The departure is necessary in order to alleviate circumstances which are unique to the site or prevalent in areas of the County prior to November 29, 1949.**

The departure is necessary to alleviate circumstances which are unique to the site. The subject site has shared a common access easement with the adjoining property for approximately 40 years. The subject property’s property line is the centerline of this shared access. To require a five-foot-wide landscaped strip along this property line would create a situation where the subject property and adjoining property would not be able to access these lots.

d. **The departure will not impair the visual, functional or environmental quality or integrity of the site or of the surrounding neighborhood.**

The departure will not impair the visual, functional or environmental quality or integrity of the site or of the surrounding neighborhood. The applicant is proposing to implement landscaping along the frontage of the subject site which will screen a portion of the view of the access easement, and it has the potential to create a harmonious landscape strip along the frontage of the property which has not been present for the past 40 years. Urban Design staff is of the opinion that the site and surrounding neighborhood will benefit from the upgrade to the subject site.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Based on the preceding analysis and findings, staff recommends that DDS-534 be APPROVED as submitted.