

September 27, 2000

MEMORANDUM

TO: Prince George's County Planning Board

VIA: Steve Adams, Urban Design Supervisor

FROM: Laxmi Srinivas, Senior Planner

SUBJECT: Detailed Site Plan SP-00010  
Santos Concrete - Walker Mill Business Park - Lot 11

The Urban Design staff has reviewed the site development plans for the subject proposal and presents the following evaluation and findings leading to a recommendation of APPROVAL with conditions.

EVALUATION

This Detailed Site Plan was reviewed and evaluated for compliance with the following criteria:

- a. Preliminary Plat 4-89052
- b. The requirements of the following sections of the Zoning Ordinance:
  - Section 27-473 governing permitted uses in the I-1 Zone
  - Section 27-469 regarding the I-1 Zone (Light Industrial)
  - Section 27-568 regarding minimum parking requirements
  - Section 27-582 regarding minimum loading requirements
- c. The requirements of the *Landscape Manual*
- d. Referrals.

FINDINGS

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

1. The subject site (Lot 11), consisting of approximately 1.004 acres, is located on the north side of Rochell Avenue, a cul-de-sac street in the Walker Mill Business Park. The adjacent properties to the north, east and west are zoned I-1 and are vacant.

2. The proposed use is an outdoor storage yard for heavy motorized equipment. The applicant is proposing a six-foot-high board-on-board fence along Rochell Avenue. The fence will be set back approximately 22 feet from the property line along Rochell Avenue. There is an existing 30-foot-wide tar and chip driveway with an entrance gate.
3. A Preliminary Subdivision Plat 4-89052 was approved on July 23, 1989 (PGCPB No. 89-345) for 5 lots, 4 parcels and 1 outlot on 55.07 acres of land known as Walker Mill Business Park. Note #2 of Record Plat NLP 152@47, Walker Mill Business Park, recorded in October 1989 reads as follows:

**Detailed Site Plans for individual lots must be approved by the Prince George's County Planning Board prior to issuance of building permits. Development shall be limited to 580,873 sq.ft. per Resolution No. 89-345 (4-89052).**

A previous Preliminary Subdivision Plat 4-87194 was approved on January 7, 1988 (PGCPB No. 88-06) for 43 lots and one parcel on a 74.4-acre parcel of land known as Walker Mill Business Park. Condition #3 of Preliminary Plat 4-87194 reads as follows:

**Detailed Site Plans for individual lots shall be approved by the Planning Board prior to building permits. These site plan reviews shall address, but not be limited to, the items listed in the Area Planning Division's memorandum dated September 16, 1987.**

The design guidelines listed in the above Condition #3 do not technically apply to the subject lot because the subject lot is required to comply with the requirements of Preliminary Plat 4-89052. However, since the subject lot is a part of the Walker Mill Business Park, these guidelines should be applicable as general design guidelines of the Detailed Site Plan review for the subject lot because they were intended as criteria for review of any proposed development within the Walker Mill Business Park. Applying these guidelines to the subject lot will also help maintain consistency of design standards throughout the development.

The master plan approval, CR-147-1985, which set forth guidelines for development of the subject property, also adopted language identical to that of the above referenced Area Planning memorandum that was specifically for the purposes of providing criteria for review of any proposed development within Walker Mill Business Park.

The memorandum dated September 16, 1987 lists the following design criteria that are applicable to the subject property:

1. *All projects within this subject property shall be subject to site plan review by the Prince George's County Planning Board. The site plan shall contain a landscaping plan.*

The applicant has not submitted a landscape plan. Conditions of approval requiring landscaping have been added and are discussed in Finding 6.

2. *The Planning Board shall review the development to assure its compliance with the following design guidelines:*

- a. *An effective visual buffer created by substantial berms and landscaping shall be provided along Walker Mill Road, Rollins Avenue and Addison Road and along abutting areas which are planned or developed for residential purposes in order to maintain the residential character of surrounding properties.*

This section is not applicable to the subject lot because it is not located on any of the above streets. However, screening of the subject lot is addressed in Finding 6.

b. *The internal organization of the site shall address the following:*

- (1) *Minimizing the views of parking, loading, storage and service areas.*
- (2) *Providing architectural elevations consistent in materials and treatment on all sides, and with all mechanical equipment enclosed or screened. Screening and enclosures shall be treated as integral elements of building design.*
- (3) *Signs shall not be placed above the roof or parapet line. No moving or flashing signs, or signs projecting significantly from a building, shall be permitted. Low ground-mounted and landscaped signs in keeping with the scale of the buildings and the site shall be encouraged in lieu of building-mounted signs.*

Since there are no buildings on the site, the above design criteria for buildings do not apply to this site. Staff has added a condition of approval to require a landscape buffer along Rochell Avenue to ensure minimizing views of parking, loading, storage and service areas. The landscape buffer is discussed in detail in Finding 6.

4. The proposed use, outdoor storage of heavy motorized equipment, is a permitted use in the I-1 Zone. The green area to the rear of the property will be demarcated from the existing tar and chip gravel parking area by a six-foot-high board-on-board fence. There are no parking requirements for storage of heavy motorized equipment.

5. Section 27-469, I-1 Zone (Light Industrial), of the Zoning Ordinance establishes the following parameters for landscaping, screening and buffering of development in the I-1 Zone:

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

The applicant has provided 23% percent green area (10,147 square feet).

- (2) *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.*

Some of the landscaping and the green area along the public-right-of-way will be used for complying with the requirements of Section 4.2 of the *Landscape Manual*. Therefore, this landscaping must be excluded from the green area calculations. A condition of approval has been added to require the recalculation of the proposed green area. With the revisions, no landscaping proposed along the public right-of-way will be considered a part of the required green area.

6. The proposal is subject to the requirements of Section 4.7 (Buffering Incompatible Uses) of the *Landscape Manual*. The proposed use is considered a high impact use and the adjacent vacant lots are also considered to be high impact uses. Since the adjacent uses are compatible uses, no landscape buffers are required along these property lines.

According to the applicability section of the *Landscape Manual*, new uses on sites with existing buildings and addition of square footage of more than 10% of the existing building are subject to the requirements of Section 4.2 (Commercial and Industrial Landscape Strip Requirements) of the *Landscape Manual*. The applicability section does not specifically address new uses on sites with no buildings. Staff recommends that the Planning Board find that the requirements of Section 4.2 of the *Landscape Manual* also apply to properties like the subject site that have new uses but no buildings. If that is the case, this proposal is subject to the requirements of Section 4.2 of the *Landscape Manual*. A ten-foot-wide landscape strip planted with seven shade trees and 70 shrubs is required along Rochell Avenue to meet the requirements of the *Landscape Manual*.

The proposal is also subject to the requirements of Section 4.4 (Screening Requirements) of the *Landscape Manual* which requires that all outdoor storage areas be screened from the streets. Section 4.4 of the *Landscape Manual* provides that screening can be accomplished by any of the following options:

- 6 foot-high sight-tight fence or wall
- 6 foot-high berm
- 6 foot evergreen screen (trees or shrubs, minimum six (6) feet high at planting, minimum nine (9) feet on center, double staggered row).

Staff believes that the recommended elements for screening provided in Section 4.4 of the *Landscape Manual* are minimum standards, and as evidence of this Section 4.4 also provides the following statement:

**■Screening in addition to that specified below may also be required if, because of slopes or other specific conditions on the site, the normally required screening measures do not achieve the necessary level of concealment.●**

Furthermore, Section 27-469(c)(1) of the Zoning Ordinance provides the following:

**■Outdoor storage shall not be visible from the street.■**

The proposed plan includes a fence that will provide screening of the loading and storage areas but does not include landscaping that will provide some screening. No buildings or structures, mechanical equipment, or signs are proposed as part of this application. Staff has had recent meetings with surrounding community organizations specifically with respect to compatibility and effectiveness of screening elements, quality of development, and appearance of the lots within the subdivision. Although the subject plan appears to be in conformance with most of the requirements of CR-147-1985, staff is concerned that recent issues raised by the said parties are not addressed in the current development proposal.

Although the proposed board-on-board fence along Rochell Avenue appears to satisfy the minimum requirements of Section 4.4 of the *Landscape Manual*, and Section 27-469(c)(1) of the Zoning Ordinance, staff does not believe that it is adequate to completely screen the property and maintain consistency of views along the streets in Walker Mill Business Park. Screening outdoor storage yards with six-foot-high sight-tight board-on-board fences has been a typical approach for providing opaque screening in this subdivision. Although a board-on-board fence is a minimally acceptable screening material, staff is concerned with the stability and permanence of wood fencing with respect to wear and deterioration due to weather, and the appearance of the fencing over time along the lot frontages. The proposed fence should be weather resistant and maintenance free, with an architectural character that is appropriate for the proposed development. Of equal importance are the concerns of the community that, at a minimum, the lot frontages throughout the subdivision should provide an appearance of an upscale development. Therefore, it is recommended that the applicant provide a six-foot-high sight-tight wood fence with swinging or sliding gates along property lines which have frontage on any vehicular right-of-way within the subdivision. A detail of the recommended fence type (Attachment A) is attached to this staff report.

The minimum landscaping required to meet the requirements of Section 4.2 of the *Landscape Manual* will be inadequate in terms of type and quantity. Shade trees planted approximately 35 feet on center will not provide any immediate screening and even upon maturity will only provide seasonal screening which will not be continuous across the entire property frontage. The proposed shrubs offer no element of screening, and only act as supplemental plantings to the shade trees for the purposes of variety in the landscape strip. Staff believes that the width of the required Commercial and Industrial Landscape Strip should be increased to a minimum of 12 feet to accommodate the type and quantity of plant units necessary to provide an effective and appropriate landscape screen, and that a row of large stock evergreen trees should be planted in the landscape strip with shrubs to add variety to the strip.

The surrounding community has requested that proposed storage yards in the subject subdivision be required to provide and demonstrate immediate 100 percent, year around, opaque screening of all storage areas from visibility at all adjacent rights-of-way upon

Detailed Site Plan approval. Therefore, it is recommended that the required landscape strip adjacent to the right-of-way be a minimum of 12 feet-wide, and planted with a row of large stock evergreen trees and supplemental shrubs.

Conditions of approval have been added for providing the recommended fence and landscaping.

7. The Permits Review Section (Bakka to Srinivas, August 28, 2000) has requested minor changes to the site and landscape plans. A condition of approval has been added requiring the same.
8. The Community Planning Division (Osei to Srinivas, August 17, 2000), has stated that the proposal must meet the design criteria listed in the *1985 Approved Master Plan for Suitland-District Heights and Vicinity* for Walker Mill Business Park property. The Division has also stated that the Master Plan requires that the trucks with weight limits that would require three or more axles be restricted from using Walker Mill Road for through trips from Ritchie Road to Addison Road. This would apply to all traffic generated by the industrial park using Walker Mill Road for ingress and egress. With the conditions of approval, the proposal will meet the design criteria listed in the Master Plan. The restriction on trucks with weight limits does not apply to the subject site.
9. The Transportation Planning Division (Masog to Srinivas, September 21, 2000) has no comments regarding this proposal.
10. The Environmental Planning Section (Metzger to Srinivas, August 6, 2000) has stated that the site is normally subject to the requirements of the County Woodland Ordinance because it is more than 40,000 square feet in size. However, the amount of encroachment into the woodlands is less than 5,000 square feet in size and, therefore, a letter of exemption can be obtained from the Environmental Planning Section at any time. A condition of approval has been added to require this.
11. The Subdivision Section (Del Balzo to Srinivas, August 2, 2000) has stated that the proposal must be consistent with the conditions of approval for Preliminary Plat 4-89052. The proposal complies with all the conditions of approval with the exception of Condition 6. Condition 6 required public utility and trail easements to be shown on the Preliminary Plat. A condition of approval has been added to require the applicant to revise the site plan to include a 10-foot- wide public utility easement.
12. The Department of Public Works and Transportation (Abraham to Srinivas, August 14, 2000) has stated that improvements like relocating the sidewalk, planting trees and installing street lights along the frontage of Rochelle Avenue are necessary.
13. The Department of Environmental Resources (De Guzman to Srinivas, August 24, 2000) has stated that the office has no objections regarding the proposal.
14. The Town of Capitol Heights was sent a referral. As of the date of the staff report, the

Town had not sent any comments.

15. With the proposed conditions, the Detailed Site Plan SP-00010 is found to 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 evaluation and analysis, the Urban Design staff recommends that the Planning Board adopt the findings of this report and APPROVE SP-00010 subject to the following conditions:

1. Prior to certificate approval,
  - a. the following revisions shall be made to the Detailed Site Plan:
    - (1) a continuous six-foot-high sight-tight wood fence with swinging or sliding gate
    - (2) Provide 12 feet of commercial/industrial landscaped strip along Rochell Avenue. the Planning Board or the Urban Design staff as designee of the Planning Board.
    - (3) cross-sections through the subject site to demonstrate that no area of outdoor storage is required
    - (4) correct paving width along Rochell Avenue
    - (5) a note indicating that the property is being used for storing heavy motorized equipment.
    - (6) the note indicating the parking area be eliminated.
    - (7) a ten-foot-wide public utility easement shown in the appropriate location on the plan
    - (8) revised green area calculations and the relocation of the green area along Rochell Avenue shown on the plan.
  - b. the applicant shall obtain a letter of exemption from the Environmental Planning Section.