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Detailed Site Plan DSP-02054 & Variance VD-02054

Application	General Data
Project Name: EZ Storage – Forbes Boulevard Location: Southeast corner of Forbes Boulevard and Business Parkway Applicant/Address: Craig Pittinger Siena Corporation 12011 Guilford Road, Ste #100 Annapolis Junction, MD 20701	Date Accepted: 11/15/2002
	Planning Board Action Limit: 02/12/2003 (waived)
	Plan Acreage: 1.54
	Zone: I-1
	Dwelling Units: NA
	Square Footage: 118,673
	Planning Area: 70
	Council District: 05
	Municipality: NA
	200-Scale Base Map: 207NE09

Purpose of Application	Notice Dates
Consolidated Storage Facility with setback variances for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An eight-foot-high wall along Forbes Boulevard - An eight-foot-high wooden fence along Business Parkway - A 19-foot total side setback instead of the required 32-foot side setback 	Adjoining Property Owners: 11/15/02 (CB-15-1998)
	Previous Parties of Record: NA (CB-13-1997)
	Sign(s) Posted on Site: 01/29/03
	Variance(s): Adjoining Property Owners: 01/30/03

Staff Recommendation		Staff Reviewer:Laxmi Srinivas	
APPROVAL	APPROVAL WITH CONDITIONS	DISAPPROVAL	DISCUSSION
	X		

February 6, 2003

MEMORANDUM

TO: Prince George's County Planning Board

VIA: Steve Adams, Urban Design Supervisor

FROM: Laxmi Srinivas, Senior Planner

SUBJECT: Detailed Site Plan DSP-02054 and Variance VD-02054
Washington Business Park – E-Z Storage

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. The requirements of the following sections of the Zoning Ordinance:
 - Section 27-473 governing permitted uses in the I-1 Zone
 - Section 27-475.04 regarding consolidated storage
 - Section 27-568 regarding minimum parking requirements
 - Section 27-582 regarding minimum loading requirements
 - Section 27-230 regarding appeals and variances
- b. The requirements of the *Landscape Manual*
- c. Referrals

FINDINGS

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

1. Detailed Site Plan DSP-02054 was submitted in accordance with the requirements of Section 27-475.04, Consolidated Storage, of the Zoning Ordinance, which requires a Detailed Site Plan for all consolidated storage facilities in Industrial Zones.

2. Development Data Summary

	EXISTING	PROPOSED
Zone(s)	I-1	I-1
Use(s)	Vacant	Consolidated Storage
Acreage	1.54 acres	1.54 acres
Lots	1	1
Parcels	N/A	N/A
Square Footage/GFA	0	118,673 sq.ft.

3. The subject site in the I-1 (Light Industrial) Zone, consisting of approximately 1.54 acres, is located on the northeast corner of Forbes Boulevard and Business Parkway. Consolidated storage facilities are permitted uses in the I-1 Zone according to Section 27-473 of the Zoning Ordinance. The existing uses on the adjacent properties are as follows:

North – Gas Station (zoned I-1)

South – Business Parkway

East - Vacant (zoned I-1)

West – Forbes Boulevard

4. The applicant is proposing an 118,673-square-foot consolidated storage facility with 970 storage units on the site. The proposal also includes 866 square feet of office space and a residence for the resident manager. Entrance and exit to the property is from Forbes Boulevard. Parking and loading spaces are proposed on the north side of the building along Forbes Boulevard. A six-foot-high wall with a two-foot-high decorative railing on top is proposed along Forbes Boulevard and a portion of Business Parkway to screen the loading doors and parking areas from the streets. The proposed wall will be set back 11 feet from Forbes Boulevard and 25 feet from Business Parkway. A decorative gate is proposed for providing access to the parking area. A condition of approval has been added to ensure that the proposed gate is sight-tight.

An eight-foot-high wooden fence is proposed along Business Parkway to screen the patio area of the resident manager's apartment. Landscaping in front of the proposed fence will help blend it with the proposed building and the six-foot-high wall with the decorative railing. The fence will be set back 20 feet from Business Parkway. The proposed 11-foot and 20-foot setbacks are not consistent with the required setbacks of the Zoning Ordinance. The applicant has submitted a variance application for the proposed setbacks. The variance application is discussed in Finding 16.

The proposed building will be 36 feet high with light beige split-faced blocks around dark beige glazed blocks at the top of the building. A band made of red glazed blocks is proposed as a design element. The building façade will consist of dark beige split-faced blocks. The entrances to 14 out of a total of 970 storage units will be from loading spaces in the parking lots. The entrances are proposed to be red in color and will have light beige split-face borders around the doors. Glazed windows are proposed on the side and rear elevations. The entrance doors and windows for the office area will be glazed. The applicant is proposing two identification signs on

the building, one along Forbes Boulevard and one along Business Parkway. The signs will be white and red in color in accordance with the E-Z Storage corporate colors.

The applicant is also proposing a freestanding monument identification sign at the entrance. The monument sign will be 13 feet 4 inches wide and 9 feet 6 inches high with a dark beige split-face block base to match the building color.

5. Section 27-475.04 (a)(1), Consolidated Storage, establishes the following parameters for Consolidated Storage proposals:

- (A) *No entrances to individual Consolidated Storage units shall be visible from a street or from adjoining land in any residential or commercial zone (or land 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 Consolidated Storage 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.*
- (C) *The maximum height shall be 36 feet*

The entrances to the externally accessed individual storage units will face Forbes Boulevard. The applicant is proposing a six-foot-high wall with a two-foot-high decorative railing on top to screen the entrances to the individual units. Extensive landscaping is proposed in front of the wall along Forbes Boulevard and Business Parkway to further screen the doors and screen and soften the appearance of the wall. The applicant has submitted site sections that demonstrate that the entrance doors will be completely screened from the streets by the proposed wall and landscaping. A condition of approval has been added to require posts with a decorative feature on top every 20 feet to break the monotonous appearance of a continuous wall along Forbes Boulevard and Business Parkway.

6. The proposal is subject to the requirements of Section 4.2 (Commercial and Industrial Landscape Strip) and Section 4.3 (Parking Lot Requirements) of the *Landscape Manual*. The proposal complies with these requirements.
7. The proposed parking is consistent with the following requirements of Section 27-568, Parking Requirements, and Section 27-582, Loading Requirements, of the Zoning Ordinance:

REQUIRED PARKING SPACES		PROPOSED
One per 50 individual consolidated storage units (for 970 storage units)	20	20
Four per 1,000 sq.ft of office space (for 866 sq.ft. of office space)	4	4
Two spaces for the resident manager	2	2
Total number of parking spaces	26	26
REQUIRED LOADING SPACES		PROPOSED
Two per 1,500 to 10,000 sq.ft. of gross floor area of the building	2	2
One (1) for each additional 40,000 sq.ft. of gross floor area or fraction	3	3
Total number of loading spaces for a total of 118,673 sq.ft.	5	5

8. The Permits Review Section (Jessee to Srinivas, January 30, 2003) has requested verification of compliance with the Zoning Ordinance and the *Landscape Manual*.
9. The Subdivision Section (Chellis to Srinivas, December 16, 2002) has stated that the subject site, Lot 32, Block A, is the subject of record plat NLP 141@63 recorded on October 19, 1988.
10. The State Highway Administration (McDonald to Srinivas, November 26, 2002) has stated that they have no objections to the Detailed Site Plan approval.
11. The Department of Environmental Resources (Guzman to Srinivas, December 2, 2002) has stated that the proposal is consistent with the approved stormwater management concept plan, #35953-2002.
12. The Washington Sanitary Suburban Commission (Thacker to Srinivas, December 30, 2002) has stated that water and sewer are available on site.
13. The Environmental Planning Section (Ingrum to Srinivas, January 6, 2003) has stated that there are no steep slopes, 100-year floodplains or wetlands on the property. No Marlboro Clay is found to occur on the property. There are no rare and endangered species on the site. The site is subject to the provisions of the Woodland Conservation Ordinance because the entire site is more than 40,000 square feet in size and contains more than 10,000 square feet of woodland. The section has recommended approval of the Type II Tree Conservation Plan, TCPII/133/02, subject to conditions of approval.

14. The Transportation Planning Section (Masog to Srinivas, December 31, 2002) has stated that the site plan is acceptable from the standpoint of access but additional information is needed regarding the adequacy of circulation space within the parking areas for large vehicles. The applicant submitted additional information with revisions to facilitate internal circulation. The Transportation Planning Section in a revised memorandum dated January 24, 2003, had the following comments and recommendations for possible conditions of approval:

“Staff had previously commented that the site plan did not allow adequate circulation for larger vehicles. In particular, staff believed that the access and egress would not allow access by larger vehicles to the loading spaces, and that the larger vehicles would likely conflict with other parked vehicles on the site. The site plan is somewhat unusual in that the majority of the parking spaces and all of the loading spaces are located behind a security fence and gate, and are therefore not accessible by the general public.

“In response to staff’s concerns, the applicant has modified the entrance to the site by angling the gate differently and moving the entrance closer to the street. The applicant also provided the transportation staff with a number of drawings depicting truck movements within the revised site plan. These drawings are attached. Staff has reviewed the materials, and has the following findings:

- “1. The revised entrance and parking layout is much better than the original submission. The original plan placed at least two loading spaces at such an angle behind the security gate that they were fully unusable. Also, the placement of the gate would have caused trucks attempting to turn into the site to disrupt traffic along Forbes Boulevard in front of the site.
- “2. Presumably, most truck traffic using this facility would enter and leave the site from the north along Forbes Boulevard. The drawings provided indicate that larger trucks (the drawings are based upon a 40-foot wheelbase tractor-trailer combination) would be able to enter and leave the site from the north safely and easily. Less truck traffic would approach this site from the south; however, due to the need to negotiate a 150-degree angle to enter or leave the site from the south, truck traffic approaching from the south could pose a disruption along Forbes Boulevard. Steps should be taken by the applicant to minimize the likelihood that trucks would enter this site from the south.
- “3. The applicant has indicated that the gates into the secured parking and loading will have an override feature that will allow a staffperson on duty to open either gate. This is very important to truck movement since the site geometry will only allow larger trucks to exit through the inbound gate. Therefore, a tractor-trailer combination can enter the secure area through the inbound gate, but cannot leave via the outbound gate; the inbound gate must be manually opened to allow a larger truck to leave. Staff can reluctantly agree to this arrangement, but would recommend that a staffperson be on duty at any time that clients are allowed into the facility for the purpose of opening the gate in the event that a truck needs to exit the site.
- “4. Staff remains unconvinced that trucks can maneuver within the site safely. The submitted drawings clearly indicate that a tractor-trailer maneuvering on the site would conflict with no fewer than eight of the parking spaces facing the security fence. It is not apparent that a truck can neatly back into any of the loading

spaces; a truck will likely have to straddle two or three loading spaces. Finally, staff does not believe that a tractor-trailer can maneuver on the site while another larger truck is parked within a loading space. This certainly defeats the purpose of having five loading spaces on the site.

“The applicant has indicated that the incidence of larger trucks using their facilities is very rare. The applicant has also stated that there is little likelihood that more than a handful of automobile parking spaces would be in use at any time. Staff appreciates that the applicant knows the trends associated with his business and the customers using his facilities and services, and if the site plan meets the needs of all customers then the applicant should demonstrate that to the Planning Board. Staff acknowledges that circulation issues resulting from the site plan are minor beyond the limits of the site. However, the Transportation Planning Section has grave reservations in making a determination that circulation within the site is acceptable.

“The site is very tight and leaves little room to reconfigure the secured parking and loading area. It is possible that constructing the storage building with a 15- to 20-foot recess to accommodate the loading spaces would make the entire arrangement more functional. There may be other solutions short of redesigning the site which are not as obvious.

“In the event that a determination were to be made, given all information, that this Detailed Site Plan is a reasonable alternative for satisfying the site design guidelines, the Transportation Planning Section would recommend two possible conditions. The first should minimize the likelihood that trucks would enter this site from the south by requiring that all marketing and promotional materials for this business indicate that larger trucks should utilize MD 450 and Forbes Boulevard to access the site. The second condition should require that a staffperson be on duty at any time that clients are allowed into the facility for the purpose of opening the inbound gate and directing traffic in the event that a truck needs to exit the site.”

Conditions are proposed in the Recommendations section below which address the concerns of the Transportation Planning Section.

15. The Community Planning Division (Fields to Srinivas, January 6, 2003) has stated that the proposal is not consistent with one of the guidelines in the Glenn-Dale-Seabrook-Lanham and Vicinity Master Plan regarding the design and siting of storage-type facilities. The applicant had proposed a gray and blue building using the E-Z Storage corporate colors that was completely out of character with the surrounding office park development. As proposed, the E-Z storage building would have had negative impacts at the proposed location. The building would not have been consistent with the Master Plan guidelines requiring that the storage facilities should be confined to internal parcels within an employment area and should not be visible from surrounding highways. The structures should be architecturally compatible with the overall employment park. The section recommended modifying the color scheme and softening the appearance of the warehouse structure.

In response to the concerns of the Community Planning Division, the applicant has significantly modified the corporate colors and architecture for consistency with the Master Plan guidelines. The gray and blue color scheme has been replaced with a more subtle beige and dark beige combination. More windows have been added to articulate the blank walls of the warehouse building. However, a few minor revisions to the building design are required to further enhance

the appearance of the building and soften its appearance. The following conditions of approval are proposed to further enhance the appearance of the building:

- The area of the proposed building sign facing Business Parkway shall be reduced by half (50 percent reduction in area) so that the proposed sign is a less dominant feature of the building.
- The red color for the entrances to the individual storage units shall be changed to light beige to match the bands on the building or dark beige to match the building color so that the doors blend with the overall color and design of the building
- Six additional windows shall be added to the rear elevation to soften the appearance of the rear elevation from the adjacent properties.

Variance

16. Section 27-465 (a), Fences and Walls, of the Zoning Ordinance states that:

“Unless otherwise provided, fences and walls (including retaining walls) more than six (6) feet high shall not be located in any required yard, and shall meet the setback requirements for the main buildings.”

Section 27-474 (a) (1) (b), Regulations, of the Zoning Ordinance requires a minimum 25-foot setback for all buildings along the streets. The section also requires the side yard setbacks for one or two side yards to be a total of 30 feet from adjoining land in any nonresidential zone, one-third (1/3) foot for every one (1) foot of building height above thirty (30) feet shall be provided.

The applicant is proposing an eight-foot-high wall (six feet of masonry wall with two feet of decorative railing) and an eight-foot-high wooden fence, both of which should be set back 25 feet from the property line to meet the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance. The proposed wall will be set back only 11 feet from Forbes Boulevard and the proposed fence will be set back only 20 feet from Business Parkway. The applicant has applied for two variances along the streets. Variance A along Forbes Boulevard will require a 14-foot variance to the street setback requirements and Variance B along Business Parkway requires a five-foot variance to the street setback requirements.

The applicant is providing a total side setback of 19 feet (11 feet along Forbes Boulevard and 8 feet along the eastern property line). The Zoning Ordinance requires a total side setback of 32 feet (30 feet total combined side setback and one-third (1/3) foot for the six additional feet of building height over 30 feet). Another 13-foot variance is required to the side yard setback requirements.

Section 27-230 of the Zoning Ordinance requires the Planning Board to make the following findings prior to approving an application for a variance:

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

In order to meet the Zoning Ordinance requirements for completely screening the entrances to individual consolidated storage units, the applicant must provide a six-foot-high wall topped by a two-foot-high ornamental fence along Forbes Boulevard and Business Parkway. Providing the required setbacks for these walls would result in a parking area that is not adequate for the proposed building. Therefore, the applicant has proposed the wall within the required setbacks.

The proposed setbacks provide adequate area for providing landscaping that also helps in screening the entrances. The extraordinary combination of the Zoning Ordinance's screening requirements and the extremely tight site area for the proposed use necessitates the provision of the walls within the required setbacks.

- (2) *The strict application of this Subtitle will result in peculiar or unusual practical difficulties to, or exceptional or undue hardship upon the owner of the property; and*

The strict application of this subtitle would result in an inadequate parking area for the proposed building. Therefore, the applicant has proposed the wall within the required setbacks. Although the applicant has proposed the wall within the required setbacks, adequate area has been provided to accommodate landscaping within the proposed setbacks. The proposal meets all other requirements of the I-1 Zone. The setbacks for the main building meet the requirements of the I-1 Zone. The variances are being requested only for the eight-foot-high wall and fence. Therefore, the granting of the variance is justified. The strict application of this subtitle by locating the required screening fence behind the normal setback would result in peculiar or unusual difficulties to the owner of the property because it would result in reduction of the parking area to the extent that it would be impossible to provide the use.

- (3) *The Variance will not substantially impair the intent, purpose or integrity of the General Plan or Master Plan.*

The proposed use, if modified in accordance with the proposed conditions below, will be consistent with the land uses recommended in the Master Plan and the surrounding land uses. The area of the subject site will be adequate to accommodate the proposed use. The design of the building and the wall has been modified for consistency with the design guidelines of the Master Plan. The proposed setbacks for the wall help adequately screen the entrances to the consolidated storage units and provide adequate area for the use. Therefore, the granting of the variance will not substantially impair the intent, purpose or integrity of the *General Plan* or Master Plan.

Staff finds that the approval of the variance application, VD-02054, is justified based on the fulfillment of the criteria mentioned above.

17. With the proposed conditions, Detailed Site Plan DSP-02054 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. With the proposed conditions recommended by the Transportation Planning Section, the proposal will be consistent with the site design guidelines in Section 27-274 (a) (2), parking, loading, and circulation, which states that loading areas should be visually unobtrusive and located to minimize conflicts with vehicles or pedestrians.

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 DSP-02054, VD-02054 and TCPH/133/02 subject to the following conditions:

1. Prior to certification of the Detailed Site Plan,
 - a. The site/landscape and architectural plans shall be revised to show the following:

- (1) Posts with a decorative feature on top at every 20 feet for the eight-foot-high wall (six-foot-high wall with two-foot-high decorative railing on top) to break the monotonous appearance of the wall.
 - (2) The area of the proposed building sign facing Business Parkway reduced by 50 percent.
 - (3) The red color for the entrances to the individual storage units changed to light beige to match the bands on the building or dark beige to match the building color.
 - (4) The proposed gate to the parking lot constructed to be sight-tight.
- b. The Type II Tree Conservation Plans shall be revised to:
- (1) Revise the Woodland Conservation Worksheet to show the correct amount of woodland conservation provided, the amount of credit for off-site mitigation, and the amount to be provided in the off-site woodland conservation easement.
 - (2) The TCPII, including the legend, shall be revised to remove the details for the tree protection device and the tree reforestation sign.
- c. The applicant shall:
- (1) Submit information that promotes the safe maneuvering of large trucks within the site by minimizing the likelihood of trucks entering the site from the south.
 - (2) Add notes to the plan that require a staff person to be on-duty to facilitate opening of the inbound gate through which large trucks must exit and directing traffic to exit the site.