

July 30, 2009

MEMORANDUM

TO: Prince George's County Planning Board

VIA: Steve Adams, Urban Design Supervisor

FROM: Elizabeth Whitmore, Senior Planner

SUBJECT: Walker Mill Business Park
Lot 7, Block A
SP-99018

The Urban Design staff has reviewed the Detailed Site Plan, SP-99018, for Walker Mill Business Park. Based on that review and the findings of this report, the Development Review Division recommends APPROVAL with conditions.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

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

- a. Compliance with the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance in the I-1 Zone, including the requirements of the *Landscape Manual*.
- b. Compliance with Preliminary Plat of Subdivision 4-87194.
- c. The requirements of the Prince George's County Woodland Conservation Ordinance.
- d. Referrals.

FINDINGS

Based on analysis of the subject application, the Urban Design staff proposes the following findings:

1. Location: The subject property is located west of the intersection of Addison Road and Walker Mill Road, at the terminus of Prosperity Court in the Walker Mill Business Park, most of which is in Capitol Heights. Northwest of the site is an existing stone and masonry company; to the north is an existing bus transport facility (both are zoned I-1 and are high-intensity uses); to the south is a vacant lot zoned I-1; to the southeast are two developed lots:

Parcel ■A• is a gas station/convenience store (zoned I-1 and a high-intensity use), and Parcel ■B• is a stained glass company (medium intensity use, zoned I-1); and to the east of the subject site is Addison Road.

2. The Proposed Development: The subject application, SP-99018, is a request to establish a trucking operation. The facility will contain 1,800 square feet of office space, 1,800 square feet of repair facility, and a 72-square-foot compression shed. An expansion is planned for the future, which will increase the total square footage by 1,128 square feet for a total of 4,800 square feet. The subject property, Lot 7A, has frontage on, and is accessed from, Prosperity Court.

The detailed site plans should be revised to reflect the correct square footage for the proposed buildings.

3. Background: The (1985) Approved Master Plan for Suitland-District Heights and Vicinity shows this tract as part of an extensive employment area extending from Rollins Avenue to Walker Mill Road within the Town of Capitol Heights. The Suitland-District Heights and Vicinity Sectional Map Amendment (1986) shows the property zoned I-1. In a memorandum (Osei to Whitmore) dated August 4, 1999, master plan issues pertaining to the subject application and the proposed development are raised. See Finding 4 for a detailed discussion of these issues.
4. The Approved Preliminary Plat: Preliminary Plat 4-87194 for Walker Mill Business Park was approved by the Planning Board on January 7, 1988 (PGCPB Res. No. 88-6). The overall lotting pattern, circulation pattern and access points shown on the site plan are in general conformance with the approved Preliminary Plat 4-87194. There were six conditions of approval on the preliminary plat, one of which pertains to requirements for Detailed Site Plan review. The preliminary plat condition which requires Detailed Site Plan review reads as follows:

3. **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 (N/SE) memorandum dated September 16, 1987.**

Comment: Embodied within the noted memorandum from the Area Planning Division, dated September 16, 1987, are proposed requirements for architectural compatibility and provisions for screening of the industrial properties for the purposes of maintaining the residential character of the surrounding properties. Upon approval of the master plan which set forth guidelines for development of the subject property, CR-147-1985, the District Council adopted language identical to that of the Area Planning memorandum in question that was specifically for the purposes of providing criteria for review of any proposed development within Walker Mill Business Park. The specific development criteria are as follows:

- (1) All projects within this property shall be subject to site plan review by the Prince George's County

Planning Board. The site plan shall contain a landscape plan.

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

(1) An effective 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.

(2) The internal organization of the site shall address the following:

1. minimizing the views of parking, loading, storage and service areas.

2. providing architectural elements 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.

1. 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 landscape signs in keeping with the scale of the buildings and the site shall be encouraged in lieu of building-mounted signs.

The proposed plan does include a landscape plan which will provide some screening of the truck storage area.

Architectural elevations have been submitted for review as part of this application. Staff believes that the east elevation should be revised to include a three-foot, four-inch(3'-4") high foundation of split-face block as shown on the north, west and south elevations. No 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 all requirements of the approved Preliminary Plat and CR-147-1985, staff is concerned that recent issues raised by said parties are not addressed in the current development proposal.

1. Section 4.4 of the *Landscape Manual* provides that screening can be accomplished through the implementation of any one of several recommended options, which are as follows:

- × **Six-foot-high sight-tight fence or wall**
- × **Six-foot-high berm**
- × **Six-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..

Section 4.2 of the *Landscape Manual* requires a 10-foot-wide Commercial and Industrial Landscape Strip for properties in commercial and industrial zones along areas adjacent to all public rights-of-way. The applicant has proposed a 10-foot-wide

landscape strip, comprised of one (1) shade tree and shrubs, along the property's frontage at the right-of-way of Prosperity Court. At this time the plan does not indicate any fencing along the street frontage. A six-foot-high chain-link fence is being proposed along the limit of disturbance line.

Although the proposed plan appears to satisfy the minimum requirements of Sections 4.2 and 4.4 of the *Landscape Manual* and Section 27-469(c)(1) of the Zoning Ordinance, staff does not believe that the proposed screening elements are adequate in terms of quantity or type, given the proposed use, and furthermore that the proposed elements will provide a sufficiently attractive screen from the adjacent right-of-way.

1. The subject property has a street frontage of approximately forty-five feet (45') with thirty feet (30') dedicated to ingress and egress, leaving approximately seven and one half (7.5) feet on either side for landscaping. The proposed landscaping at the property's frontage will not provide any immediate screening for the proposed truck storage area. The applicant has proposed landscaping adjacent to the truck storage area but the proposed shade and evergreen trees will not provide any immediate screening and even upon maturity will only provide seasonal screening. Staff believes that the width of the required Commercial and Industrial Landscape Strip as well as the proposed landscaped buffer strips located on the north, west and southern property lines 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 evergreen trees should be planted in the landscape strip with shrubs to add variety to the strip. It should be noted that this application also proposes a bio-retention area immediately inside the entrance which will help to soften the view of the proposed building.

Given the nature of the proposed use, a trucking operation, a variety of a trucks will be stored on site. These trucks will undoubtedly vary in size and height, increasing the possibility of their becoming visible from the right-of-way. 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 be planted with large stock evergreen trees and supplemental shrubs.

2. As previously stated, the subject plan proposes no fencing on the frontage of Prosperity Court, but a six-foot-high, chain-link fence is proposed on the perimeter limit of disturbance line on the subject property. Since this site has been deemed a trucking operation by Council Bill CB-13-2000 (defined as ■A business limited to truck storage, maintenance and repair only, with associated offices is permitted by right. . .•), staff believes that a solid fence should be shown on the plan.

The proposed fence should be solid, weather resistant, and low maintenance, 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, solid wood fence along the property frontage adjacent to the right-of-way for screening.

- c. The subject property is one of the few within the business park that requires a six-foot-high berm adjacent to Addison Road. The proposed berm does not incorporate the entire width of the property (69.43 feet) due to an existing easement adjacent to the northern property line. Staff has determined that the proposed berm and supplemental planting adjacent to the southeastern property line meet the intent of the condition in respect to the screening of Addison Road.

- d. Walker Mill Business Park is a subdivision of 43 buildable lots. Of the 43 lots, 3 lots have received Detailed Site Plan approval and 5 were developed and in operation prior to the requirement of Detailed Site Plan review for the subdivision. Four of the remaining lots are currently under review, including the subject application. Staff has observed an array of frontage treatments within the business park that include chain link, stockade and board-on-board fencing. Typically, the lots are submitted for review on an individual basis. Generally, the proposed lots have not shared any common frontage, thus coordination between the treatments of screening at the right-of-way frontages has not occurred with any uniformity. Currently, two of the four lots submitted for development share a common property line and right-of-way frontage. Staff believes that as more development proposals within the subdivision are submitted, the likelihood of common property lines and right-of-way frontages increase, availing the opportunity for a comprehensive design approach for the required screening treatment at the street right-of-way. Given the concerns stated by the community with respect to the need for a comprehensive design approach for the entire subdivision that will require uniform treatment of all of the lot frontages and provide an upscale business park appearance, staff believes that the aforementioned conditions will provide development in the subdivision that addresses the interests of all parties and meets the requirements of all regulatory documents.
5. The applicant has not indicated on the plans that a dumpster is to be located on the site. The applicant verbally indicated that a dumpster is to be utilized on the site. The applicant should revise the plans to indicate the location of the dumpster with the appropriate screening if necessary.
6. Development criteria for SP-99018 are as follows:

Zone	I-1
Gross Area	2.19 acres
Maximum Building Height	18 feet
Total Square Footage (Phase I)	3,672 sq. ft.
Total Square Footage (Phase II)	1,128 sq. ft.
Total Square Footage	4,800 sq. ft.
Total Parking Spaces Required	12 spaces
Total Parking Spaces Provided	12 spaces
Loading Spaces Required	1 space
Loading Spaces Provided	1 space

The site has been determined to be a trucking operation that allows for the repair of trucks other than those owned by the owner of the facility. Therefore, the site is subject to Part 11, Section 27-568, of the Zoning Ordinance, which requires parking to be calculated as follows: 1 space for every 250 square feet of office space and 3 spaces per bay. The parking schedule should be modified to reflect the correct calculations on the site and landscape plans.

7. Conformance to the Woodland Conservation Ordinance: The subject plan was referred to the Environmental Planning Section and in a memorandum dated August 2, 1999 (Metzger to Whitmore), the following comments were provided:
 - The applicant seeks an approval for a vehicle maintenance facility. The proposed activity is exempt from the County Woodland Conservation and Tree Preservation Ordinance based on Exemption Letter (E/27/99) dated May 10, 1999.
 - There is no significant environmental impact that is associated with the proposal at this time. A review of the Business Park Methane Evaluation Study shows indiscernible concentrations of methane presence in the area. Technically, the subject site plan is in reasonable conformance with all environmental conditions. •

The subject application results in a cumulative disturbance of less than 5,000 square feet of woodland during the next five (5) years and does not have a previously approved Tree Conservation Plan. A letter of exemption dated May 5, 1999, has been obtained by the applicant. The subject application is in conformance with the approved conditions of Preliminary Plan 4-87194, and no significant environmental impact is associated with the development proposal.
8. Conformance with the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance in the I-1 Zone, including the Requirements of the Prince George's County *Landscape Manual*: The Detailed Site Plan is in conformance with the regulations governing development in the I-1 Zone.

Sections 4.2, Commercial and Industrial Landscape Strip Requirements, and 4.3, Parking Lot Requirements, apply to the subject site. The landscape plans are in full conformance with the requirements of the *Landscape Manual*, except that the *Landscape Manual* states that all shade trees should be 2 - to 3 inches in caliper. The planting schedules should be corrected to reflect this requirement.
9. The Detailed Site Plan was referred to all applicable agencies and divisions; no significant issues were identified.
10. The subject property has an approved Stormwater Management Concept Plan (CSD # 998005900), which was approved on May 4, 1999.
11. The subject application was referred to the City of District Heights and the Town of Capitol Heights. No response was received from either jurisdiction as of the date of the writing of this staff report.
12. With the addition of the proposed conditions, the Detailed Site Plan represents 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 on the foregoing evaluation, analysis, and findings of this report, the Urban Design staff recommends that the Planning Board adopt the findings of this report and APPROVE the Detailed Site Plan SP-99018 for Walker Mill Business Park, Lot 7A, subject to the following conditions:

1. Prior to certificate approval, the following modifications or revisions shall be made to the Detailed Site Plan, or the following information shall be provided:
 - a. Provide details for signage for approval by the Planning Board's designee: method of attachment/mounting to structure, cross sections, materials, overall dimensions and lettering sizes, total square footage, and colors.
 - b. Revise the architectural elevations to include three feet, four inches (3' 4") of split-face-block on the east elevation. Provide notes for all materials and colors on the architectural elevations.
 - c. Modify the plans to indicate the correct square footage for the proposed buildings.
 - d. Revise the plans to indicate the location of the dumpster and appropriate landscaping, to be approved by the Planning Board's designee.
 - e. The parking schedule shall be revised in accordance with Section 27-568 of the Zoning Ordinance.
 - f. Provide a continuous six-foot-high, sight-tight wood fence with a sliding gate (solid wood fence in accordance with details shown on Attachment ■A●) along property lines which have frontage on any vehicular right-of-way within the subdivision.
 - g. Provide 12 feet of commercial/industrial landscaped strip along property lines which have frontage on any vehicular right-of-way. Plant materials provided within the landscaped strip shall be evergreen trees planted 10 feet on center, or other acceptable planting arrangement utilizing the same quantity of trees which is approved by the Planning Board or the Urban Design staff as designee of the Planning Board. White pines shall constitute no more than 20 percent of the trees in this landscaped strip.
 - h. Provide cross-sections through the subject site to demonstrate that no area of outdoor truck storage will be visible from any adjacent right-of-way.