

July 30, 2009

MEMORANDUM

TO: Prince George's County Planning Board

VIA: Steve Adams, Acting Urban Design Supervisor

FROM: James Jordan, Urban Designer

SUBJECT: Detailed Site Plan, SP-99045
Devon Self Storage

The Urban Design staff has completed its review of Detailed Site Plan, SP-99045. The following evaluation and findings lead to a recommendation of Approval with conditions for the Detailed Site Plan as described in the Recommendation Section of this report. This report addresses the required findings for the Detailed Site Plan.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

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

1. The requirements of the Zoning Ordinance in the C-S-C Zone, including the requirements of the Prince George's County *Landscape Manual*.
2. The Approved Preliminary Plat of Subdivision, 4-99037.
3. The Subregion VII Master Plan / SMA (1981).
4. The requirements of the Prince George's County Woodland Conservation Ordinance.
5. Referrals.

FINDINGS

Based upon the analysis and evaluation of the subject Detailed Site Plan SP-99045, the staff recommends the following findings:

1. Location - The subject property is located in the southeast quadrant of the intersection of Allentown Road and Branch Avenue. The proposed subdivision is bounded to the north by the Allentown Road right-of-way; to the east by a historic property, Bells Methodist Church and Cemetery #76B-17; to the west the Branch Avenue right-of-way; and to the south by a Maryland State Highway stormwater management facility. The application includes the site plan, landscape plan, and architecture.
2. The Proposed Development - The subject application is for approval of 148,238 square feet of gross floor area for consolidated storage units, and 1860 square feet of office space on 7.29 acres. The plan does not provide living space for resident managers. The proposed consolidated storage facility includes nine separate buildings to be used for storage, one of which will include the office space. See Finding 10(f) for further discussion of living space for a resident manager.
3. Background - The Subregion VII Master Plan (1981) recommends retail commercial land use for the subject property. The Subregion VII Sectional Map Amendment (1984) rezoned the subject property from the C-1 and C-2 Zones to the C-S-C Zone. In a memorandum from the Community Planning Division (Irminger to Jordan), dated January 12, 2000, the issue was raised pertaining to screening from the Branch Avenue right-of-way. See Finding 10 for further discussion.
4. The Approved Preliminary Plat - The Preliminary Plat, 4-99037, was approved by the Planning Board on September 9, 1999 with 3 conditions (PGCPB No. 99-148). The overall lotting pattern, circulation pattern and access points shown on the site plan are in general conformance with the approved Preliminary Plat 4-99037. One (1) of the conditions of approval required specific action be taken or additional information be supplied at the time of Detailed Site Plan. Below is the specific condition warranting discussion pertaining to conformance to the approved Preliminary Plat:

1. The following notes shall be placed on the final plat:

- b. **“The Planning Board or its designee shall approve a Limited Detailed Site Plan for Parcel ‘E’, prior to the approval of permits for exterior alterations to existing structures or for demolition and reconstruction, which is visible from the Historic Bells Methodist Church cemetery, #76B-17. Review shall include the impact of the orientation, mass, height, materials, and design of the proposed development, including landscaping, on the environmental setting of the cemetery.”**

Comment : The subject site plan application is for the development of Parcel E. The applicant is proposing an alteration and renovation of the existing building on the site, which is in proximity to the historic property, and construction of an additional group of storage buildings between the Branch Avenue right-of-way and the existing structure. The subject application was referred to the Planning and Preservation Section and in a memorandum (Pearl to Jordan) dated January 20, 2000, the following comments were provided:

“The applicant has prepared a Limited Detailed Site Plan for Parcel E. It indicates that the existing building (the only building which fronts on the common boundary with the historic cemetery) will be renovated. The site plan shows the east elevation of this existing building, a plain, white, flat-roofed building, details of which will be painted

blue, gray and red; the height of the roof varies between 30 and 40 feet. Because of the height of the existing building, the proposed new buildings to the west will not be visible from the cemetery.

“The applicant proposes a 6-foot-high opaque board-on-board fence, to be erected on the common boundary line; the applicant also proposes the planting of a bufferyard of red maples inside the developing property. Because the area between the common boundary and the existing building is only 50 feet, the maximum width of the bufferyard proposed by the applicant is less than the required 40 feet (a 40-foot bufferyard is required by the *Landscape Manual* between Historic Sites and developing properties); therefore the applicant has applied for Alternative Compliance regarding the parking/loading space vis-a-vis the buffering requirements of this area of the common boundary.

“The applicant has shown his proposals for the building renovation and the buffering between the east elevation of the existing building and the common boundary with the Historic Site. The renovation of the existing building will have no adverse impact upon the view from the historic cemetery. Sheet 2 of 2 (Landscape and Lighting Details) shows the appearance of the proposed board-on-board fence which will shelter the view from the cemetery toward the larger storage building. The east face of this fence should have the appearance shown in the Landscape and Lighting Details, and should be stained a natural color, thus minimizing the impact of the commercial development upon the view from the cemetery. The proposed plantings to the west of this fence will soften the current visual impact of the commercial development. New plantings on the east side of this fence might also be considered, if feasible.

“Historic preservation staff has reviewed this site plan, and finds that the proposals for the existing building, including mass, height, materials and design of the renovations, will have no adverse impact upon the view from the historic cemetery.”

The applicant has satisfied the requirements of Condition 1 of the Preliminary Plat.

5. CB-45-1999 - Council Bill CB-45-1999 was adopted on July 27, 1999 and was enacted to take effect forty-five days thereafter. This bill was the enabling legislation that permitted the use of consolidated storage in the C-S-C Zone. The legislation provides for several requirements of any proposed consolidated storage in the C-S-C Zone, one of which is footnote 32 in the use table that requires the following:

Limited to the adaptive re-use of vacant or partially vacant property in former or existing shopping centers which are limited in their ability to modify or expand. The C-S-C parcels in the shopping center shall: (2) include not less than 10 or more than 15 acres;

The subject parcel, E, is 7.29 acres. The aggregate total of all of the parcels, D, E, and F, in the shopping center is 13.91 acres. Although the subject development parcel does not satisfy the total acreage requirement, staff believes that since the combined acreage of the shopping center does satisfy the criteria of footnote 32 then development of Parcel E for consolidated storage is permitted. Staff believes that the requirement that a shopping center be not less than 10 or more than 15 acres is a threshold requirement to ensure that the sum total of a shopping center's area be within these limits. For the purposes of finding conformance to footnote 32, and for the purposes of footnote 32 only, the total area of the shopping center is considered in the analysis of the subject property. The subject shopping center does meet the requirements of footnote 32.

- a. A consolidated storage use is required to have frontage on, and direct vehicular access to, an existing street with sufficient capacity to accommodate the type and amount of traffic expected to be generated by the use. Parcel F, which adjoins the subject parcel, E, has frontage on, and direct vehicular access to Allentown Road. As part of the subdivision approval, 4-99037, a permanent access easement was granted across Parcel F to Parcel E to allow for vehicular access from Allentown Road. The easement was recorded as part of the final plat, and thus vehicular access to an existing street is demonstrated.

The development proposal is in conformance with CB-45-1999.

6. The site development data is as follows:

DEVON SELF STORAGE
SP-99045

Zone C-S-C
Lot Area 7.29 acres
Use Consolidated Storage

Gross floor area
Consolidated Storage 146,378 sq. ft.
Office 1,860 sq. ft.
Total Gross Floor Area 148,238 sq. ft.

Parking spaces required:

Storage
1 space per 50 units 12 spaces
(interior access units 584)
Office
4 spaces per 1000 sq. ft. of office space or
1 space per 250 sq. ft. 8 spaces
(1860 square feet of office)
Total 20 spaces

Parking spaces provided 20 spaces

Loading spaces required

2 spaces for first 10,000 sq. ft. plus 2 spaces
one (1) space per 40,000 sq. ft. thereafter 2 spaces
Total 4 spaces

Loading spaces provided 4 spaces

7. Conformance With the Requirements of the Zoning Ordinance in the C-S-C Zone, including the requirements of the Prince George's County *Landscape Manual* - The proposed plan is in general conformance with development regulations for the C-S-C Zone.

Section 4.7 of the *Landscape Manual*, Buffering Incompatible Uses, applies to the subject site. The applicant applied for Alternative Compliance, AC-0004, for screening

between the site and the adjacent property, Bells Methodist Church and Cemetery. The Alternative Compliance Committee recommended approval of the proposed landscape plans, and the Planning Director recommended approval to the Planning Board. The following is the recommendation of the Alternative Compliance Committee and the Planning Director:

BACKGROUND:

The property is zoned C-S-C, and is improved with an existing shopping center named Branch Allentown Plaza. A portion of the site, Parcel E, is to be used as consolidated storage. The applicant is proposing to renovate the existing building to house interior storage units. The applicant is also proposing to construct additional exterior storage units consisting of approximately 46,865 square feet. Those additional units which will face Branch Avenue, which triggers the need for the site to comply with Section 4.7, Buffering Incompatible Uses, along the eastern property line. The adjoining site is zoned residential and consists of an Historic Church and Cemetery, #76B-17.

REQUIRED: Section 4.7, Buffering Incompatible Uses, along eastern property line (Parcel E).

Length of Bufferyard:	719 feet along Parcel E
Building setback:	50 feet
Landscape yard:	40 feet
Plant materials @ 160 Pu's/100 LF:	575 plant units (includes a 50% reduction for a 6' high fence along the entire 719 feet of bufferyard).

PROVIDED:

Building setback:	51 feet	
Landscape yard:	30 feet	
Plant materials:		695 plant units

JUSTIFICATION OF RECOMMENDATION:

An existing drive-aisle along the eastern property line precludes the provision of a 40-foot-wide landscape yard. The applicant has provided a 6-foot-high opaque fence as well as 695 plant units, which equates to 20 percent more plant units provided than required. The site plan also provides 363 plant units along the northern property line, which are not required by the Landscape Manual, but will provide a better view from Branch Avenue. The southern property line consists of an existing State Highway Administration stormwater management facility. This property is zoned C-S-C and therefore, is considered to be a compatible use. The Committee is of the opinion that this alternative is equal to or better than the normal requirements set forth in Section 4.7 of the *Landscape Manual*.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Alternative Compliance Committee recommends approval of alternative compliance from Section 4.7 of the *Landscape Manual*

8. Conformance to the Requirements of the Woodland Conservation Ordinance - The site is not subject to the provisions of the Woodland Conservation Ordinance. Although the site is more than 40,000 square feet, it contains less than 10,000 square feet of woodland. A Tree Conservation Plan is not required.

There are no environmental impacts for the subject development proposal.

9. Transportation - The subject application was referred to the Transportation Planning Section and in a memorandum dated January 18, 2000 (Burton to Jordan), the following comments were provided:

“On September 9, 1999 the Prince George’s County Planning Board approved preliminary plat 4-99037 known as Branch Allentown Plaza. Based on PGCPB resolution # 99-148, the preliminary plat was approved with 3 conditions, including the following:

- “3. **Development within the subject property shall be limited to the retail buildings that currently exist on the site, or other uses that generate no more than 232 AM and 1,198 PM vehicle trips. Any development other than that identified above shall require an additional Preliminary Plat of Subdivision with a new determination of the adequacy of transportation facilities.**

“The subject site plan proposes a total of 154,936 square feet of self storage space. Using the Institute Of Transportation Engineer’s *Trip Generation Manual 6th. edition*, the daily trip generation rate for a self storage facility based on square footage variable is 0.15 and 0.26 trip per 1000 square feet during the AM and PM peak hours respectively. Applying the trip rates to the proposed square footage would yield 23 AM trips and 40 PM trips during the peak hours. Since the proposed trip yield is less than the threshold identified in the Planning Board’s resolution, the proposed application will not be subject to any further test of adequacy of transportation facilities.

The Transportation Section concludes that the proposed site plan is deemed acceptable as required by Section 27-285 of the Prince George's County Code if the application is approved.

10. Urban Design - The Urban Design Staff has reviewed the subject plan and offers the following comments.

- a. The subject plan does not provide for any visual screening along the west property line, adjacent to the Branch Avenue exit to Allentown Road, or the south property line, adjacent to a State Highway Administration stormwater management pond. Staff believes that screening is either required and/or appropriate along both property lines, and the following discussion outlines staff’s concerns.

1. Section 27-375 (a)(7) states that 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. The west property line of the subject property abuts the Branch Avenue right-of-way. The proposed development plan provides for eight (8) freestanding storage buildings oriented perpendicular to, but in full view from, the Branch Avenue right-of-way. There is no topographical difference in grade between the Branch Avenue right-of-way and the subject property, and the subject property is essentially flat. All vehicular traffic along the Branch Avenue exit to Allentown Road will be able to see the entrances to the individual consolidated storage units for A thru G. Staff is equally concerned with the stability and permanence of any proposed fence or wall that would be provided in this location. The proposed fence should be weather resistant and maintenance free, with an architectural character that is appropriate for the proposed development. Therefore, it is recommended that the applicant provide a six-foot-high sight-tight continuous metal fence along the west property line for screening from the Branch Avenue right-of-way. Specifically, a steel fence system from Monumental Iron Works, either the Churchville or Easton style, or equal, would be appropriate.

1. The south property line is approximately 529 feet in length. Approximately 215 feet of the overall property line length is adjacent to an access drive for the loading area at the rear of the property. Section 4.4, Screening Requirements, of the Landscape Manual requires that lanes providing access to loading areas shall be screened from all adjacent public roads. During a site visit, staff observed that the access drive in question is visible from the Branch Avenue right-of-way, specifically vehicles traveling northbound on Branch Avenue. Screening is required in this location adjacent to the loading access drive. Approximately 245 feet of the overall property line length is adjacent to the area in which the freestanding storage buildings will be located. The rear facade of building H and a portion of the on-site vehicular network, access drives, will be visible from the Branch Avenue right-of-way. Although the entrances to the individual consolidated storage units will be oriented away from the south property line, staff believes that landscape buffering along the south property line is appropriate to visually soften the edge of the property adjacent to the freestanding storage units, provide some visual variety at the south property line, and as a provision to introduce some vertical breaks/relief in the long horizontal expanse of the freestanding storage units. Therefore, it is recommended that the site plan provide for landscape screening, a mixture of shade and evergreen trees, along the south property line prior to signature approval, quantities and species to be approved by Urban Design staff as designee of the Planning Board.
- b. As stated in the Alternative Compliance approval for the subject property, the applicant has provided a significant amount of landscaping along the north property line adjacent to Parcel F that is above and beyond what is required by the *Landscape Manual*. Subsequent to the Alternative Compliance Committee's recommendation for approval, and in light of staff's concern with the lack of screening provided along the south property line, the applicant has requested some flexibility in location of the proffered landscaping that is shown along the north property line. Specifically, since the proposed landscaping along the north

property line is not required by the *Landscape Manual*, and furthermore given that its existence was not deemed as contributory to the required bufferyard between the historic church and the subject property along the east property line, but more as a positive and contributing element to the development of the overall site, it is the applicant's contention that the purposes of the proffered landscaping along the north property line might be better served if some of the landscaping was allowed to be moved from the north property line and provided along the south property line to address the issues raised in Finding 10 (a)(2). Staff concurs with this approach, and does believe that the purposes of the landscaping will be much better served along the south property line, in that a portion of the landscaping, some shade and ornamental trees, would remain along the north property line to fulfill the intent of providing some definition to the northern boundary of the subject parcel, while providing visual screening, evergreens, shrubs, and some shade trees, in its appropriate location along the south property line. It is recommended that a portion of the landscaping, evergreens, shrubs, and some shade trees, along the north property line, approved in Alternative Compliance AC-0004, be relocated to the south property line for visual screening prior to signature approval, with the quantities, species, and locations to be approved by the Urban Design staff as a designee of the Planning Board.

- c. Alternative Compliance was required specifically for buffering along the east property line adjacent to the historic church property. After the recommendation of approval for AC-0004, which entailed the provision of a six-foot-high sight-tight board-on-board fence and the required number of plant units plus an additional 20 percent, it was found that there is a significant amount of mature vegetation on the subject property along the east property and within the proposed bufferyard that was not identified on the plans as contributing to the bufferyard requirement. Staff believes that removal of this vegetation to provide the approved landscaping will only reduce the natural screening that exists along the property line, and will in the near future provide a buffer that is significantly less than that which would be achieved by dispersing new plantings among the existing vegetation where necessary to provide a bufferyard equal to that approved by AC-00004 in terms of plant units. In light of the need for visual screening along the south property line, it is recommended that credit be given for the existing plant units along the east property line to count toward the total number of plant units approved by the Alternative Compliance Committee, and furthermore that the surplus plant units shown on the plan that can be replaced by existing plant units be relocated to the south property line to provide the necessary visual screening prior to certificate approval. Acceptability of the existing plant material along the east property line, and the location, quantities, and species of the plantings along the south property line, shall be approved by the Urban Design staff as designee of the Planning Board.

- c. The applicant has stated that construction of the freestanding storage units, buildings A-H, will be based on the market demand. Initially, building J will undergo interior and exterior renovation to accommodate its opening and use, and the construction of the other buildings will occur subsequent to that as the need arises for additional storage units. Staff is concerned as to what will be the trigger mechanism to provide for the implementation of all of the perimeter screening elements at the property lines. The provision of all perimeter screening elements should coincide with the initial construction in, and occupation of, building A. Therefore, it is recommended

that all proposed/required perimeter bufferyard/screening elements at all property lines be provided and completed prior to the issuance of the first certificate of occupancy.

The applicant has also provided for a minimal amount of landscaping adjacent to the end of each freestanding unit facing Branch Avenue. It is recommended that the landscaping proposed at the end of each individual unit be provided and completed prior to the issuance of the certificate of occupancy for the building which it is adjacent to.

- c. A six-foot-high sight-tight board-on-board wood fence will be provided along the east property line as part of the required bufferyard between the property and the adjacent historic church, Bells Methodist Church and Cemetery. As noted in Finding 4 of this report, the Planning and Preservation Section acknowledged the provision of the wood fence along the property line, and noted that it was an appropriate treatment for this sensitive area adjacent to the cemetery. Furthermore, in the memorandum from the Planning and Preservation Section it was recommended that a finished side of the fence should face the cemetery, and that the fence should not be painted but stained a natural color. Staff concurs, and would note that a board-on-board fence is required to be finished on both sides.
- c. Subsequent to the submission of the site plan application the applicant has stated that it is their intent to provide on-site living quarters for one (1) resident manager. The living quarters for the manager will be located in the existing building, J, in proximity or adjacent to the office space on the first floor. Staff does not object to this revision, as it is typical and appropriate for a consolidated storage use. It is recommended that the applicant revise the submitted floor plan sheet for Building J to indicate the living space location, and the general notes to indicate the residential use, its requirements for parking, and any reduction in the total number of interior storage units prior to signature approval.
- c. The applicant has submitted architectural elevations which provide for building signage to be located on the west and south facades. Specific detail pertaining to the sign size and method of anchorage to the facade must be provided. The applicant has also proposed an entrance feature composed of masonry piers with aluminum pickets between the piers. The proposed entrance feature is appropriate, but at no time should any signage be mounted on the aluminum pickets nor on the masonry piers throughout the development. Furthermore, no banners or additional signage should be located on any of the building facades, nor on the six-foot-high metal fence recommended to run along the west property line at any time.
- c. Architectural elevations provided for the freestanding storage units, buildings A-H, only show one elevation and do not supply the necessary information to evaluate the units. It is recommended that the applicant provide typical elevations of all sides of the freestanding units with materials and color schemes noted prior to signature approval.

11. The subject property has an approved Stormwater Management Concept Plan (CSD # 988004040), which was approved on July 6, 1999. Upon initial referral of the subject

application to the Department of Environmental Resources it was found, as reported in a referral response dated January 7, 2000, that the plan was not consistent with the approved stormwater management concept. Subsequent to the referral, the applicant revised the plans and was granted a new stormwater management concept approval on February 4, 2000.

12. The subject application was referred to all applicable agencies and divisions; no significant issues were identified. The Permit Review Division provided several comments pertaining to additional information being provided on the plans. Conditions 1a-c of the Recommendation Section of this report address the Permit Review concerns.
13. This 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 upon the foregoing analysis the Urban Design staff recommends that the Planning Board adopt the findings of this report and APPROVE SP-99045 and Alternative Compliance AC-0004 subject to the following conditions:

1. Prior to certificate approval, the following revisions shall be made to the Detailed Site Plan or the specified information shall be supplied:
 - a. Provide dimensions for all drive aisles and driveway entrances.
 - b. Provide dimensions for all existing structures.
 - c. Identify the 6,638 square feet of other use indicated in note 10.
 - d. Provide a continuous six-foot-high sight-tight metal fence along the west property line adjacent to the Branch Avenue right-of-way. Specifically, a steel fence system from Monumental Iron Works, either the Churchville or Easton style, or equal.
 - e. Reduce the quantity of plant units provided along the north property line. Quantity, type and species to be determined by the applicant and the Urban Design staff as designee of the Planning Board.
 - e. Provide existing field condition drawing along the east property line to demonstrate existing vegetation, size, species, and location, that is within the proposed bufferyard adjacent to the Bells Methodist Church and Cemetery. Acceptability of the existing plant materials for retention will be determined by the Urban Design staff as designee of the Planning Board.
 - e. Provide a combination of buffering/screening, evergreens, shrubs, and shade trees, along the south property line. Planting units proposed along the south property line shall be relocated from the landscape yards at the north and east property lines. Quantity, size, type, and location will be approved by the Urban Design staff as designee of the Planning Board.
 - e. Provide a note on the plan indicating that the wood board-on-board fence along the east property line will not be painted, but stained

a natural color on its eastern face oriented toward Bells Methodist Church Cemetery

- e. Revise the interior plan for building J to provide living quarters for a resident manager. Furthermore, revise all applicable notes and the site plan to reflect additional parking required/provided and a reduction in storage units.
- e. Provide sign details for the building signs.
- k. Provide architectural elevations for the freestanding consolidated storage units, buildings A-H with materials and color schemes noted.
- 2. Prior to DER issuing the first certificate of occupancy, all proposed/required perimeter bufferyard/screening elements at all property lines shall be provided and completed.
- 2. Prior to the issuance by DER of each individual certificate of occupancy for the freestanding storage units, buildings A-H, the landscaping provided at the end of each unit shall be provided and completed.
- 2. Banners and additional temporary signage shall be prohibited from any of the building facades, the masonry and aluminum picket fencing, and the six-foot-high metal fence along the west property line.