

May 10, 2000

**TECHNICAL STAFF REPORT:**

TO: The Prince George's County Planning Board  
The Prince George's County District Council

VIA: Arie Stouten, Zoning Supervisor

FROM: Elsabett Tesfaye, Senior Planner

SUBJECT: **Special Exception Application No. 4372**

REQUEST: **Consolidated Storage in the C-M Zone**

RECOMMENDATION: **DENIAL**

---

NOTE:

This application is on the agenda for the Planning Board to decide whether or not to schedule a public hearing. If the Planning Board decides to hear the application, it will be placed on a future agenda.

Any person may request the Planning Board to schedule a public hearing. The request may be made in writing prior to the agenda date or in person on the agenda date. All requests must specify the reasons for the public hearing. All parties will be notified of the Planning Board's decision.

You are encouraged to become a person of record in this application. The request must be made in writing and sent to the Office of the Zoning Hearing Examiner at the address indicated above. Questions about becoming a person of record should be directed to the Hearing Examiner at 301-952-3644. All other questions should be directed to the Development Review Division at 301-952-3280.

---

## FINDINGS:

- A. Location and Field Inspection: The property is located on the south side of Pennsbury Drive, between northbound and southbound Robert S Crain Highway (US 301). The property comprises a total of 9.45 acres of land and is improved with a 38,800-square-foot building, two smaller accessory buildings and accessory parking and loading areas. In addition, the property contains a stormwater management pond, a septic recovery area, a water well and four underground water storage tanks. The existing buildings are currently vacant. The property is irregularly-shaped and is characterized by topography that is generally level in the center and steeply sloped at its western edge. The property is zoned C-M and has approximately 1,024 feet of frontage on southbound Crain Highway, 718 feet of frontage on northbound Crain Highway, and 381 feet of frontage on Pennsbury Drive. The property is accessed via Pennsbury Drive.
- B. History: The property was developed with a lumber and hardware store in the early 1980s. The Bowie Branch of the Prince George's County Library was temporarily located there from 1997 to 1999. The building became vacant after the library moved out during the last week of August 1999. The 1991 Sectional Map Amendment for Bowie-Collington-Mitchellville and Vicinity retained the existing C-M Zone for the subject property.
- C. Master Plan Recommendation: The 1991 Master Plan for Bowie-Collington-Mitchellville and Vicinity recommends the property for service-commercial use.
- D. Request: The applicant proposes to construct a 1,070-unit consolidated storage facility. The facility will consist of three, one-story buildings of varying sizes with a total gross floor area of 137,718 square feet. The proposal also includes a recreational vehicle storage compound for 25 vehicles. The site plan provides for 43 on-site parking spaces.
- E. Neighborhood and Surrounding Uses: The neighborhood is generally defined by Pointer Ridge Drive to the north, northbound lanes of Crain Highway to the east, Central Avenue to the south and the Pennsylvania Railroad tracks to the west. The immediate area surrounding the site is characterized by a mixture of uses. A wooded parcel of land is located to the north of the property across Pennsbury Road, and a single-family detached dwelling is located to the south, also in the R-R Zone. To the east, across northbound US 301 are located a farm and business establishment (selling sheds) in the R-A and C-M Zones, respectively. To the west, northwest and southwest of the property across southbound US 301 are located the Pointer Ridge Plaza, single-family houses, townhouse developments and a service station in the C-S-C, R-T, R-R, R-M and C-M Zones.
- F. Specific Special Exception Requirements: **Section 27-344.01** sets forth the specific requirements:
  - (a) **Consolidated Storage may be permitted, subject to the following:**
    - (1) **The application shall be accompanied by:**
      - (A) **An impact statement explaining:**
        - (i) **The nature and scope of the operation.**

**(ii) The type and amount of traffic expected to be generated.**

**(B) A description (graphic and narrative) of the proposed architectural facade of the building.**

The applicant generally complies with these requirements. A statement of justification including an impact statement and a market study were submitted with the application. In addition, drawings of conceptual elevations for the proposed buildings have been submitted along with the site and landscape plans.

The statement of justification states that the nature and scope of the facility are to provide convenient, secure, attractive and modern storage facilities to County and area residents. The facility includes a 650-square-foot office and a residence for the manager consisting of approximately 1,850 square feet. The office and residence will be located within the building on the east side of the property. One of the proposed three buildings incorporates the existing main building which will be renovated and enlarged to a building with 46,590 square feet of gross floor area.

The proposed hours of operation for the self-storage units are Sunday through Saturday (seven days), 6.00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. The office hours are 9.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. The office is closed on five major holidays. A majority of the storage units are accessed via a series of corridors opening onto the interior-facing driveway. Security is provided through an alarm system, which combined with security cameras, monitors activity throughout the facility. Security codes are required to gain access to the building, gates and doors.

**(2) The subject property shall 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.**

The Transportation Planning Section has offered the following comments.

In terms of the trip generating capability of the proposed facility, staff generally refers to the Institute of Transportation Engineer's (ITE) *Trip Generation Manual, 6th Edition* for trip generation rates. The site plan represents three specific uses that traditionally have different trip rates. Those uses are:

■	consolidated storage	1,070 units
■	office	650 square feet
■	residential	1,850 square feet

The three uses will collectively generate 23 AM peak-hour trips and 34 PM peak-hour trips. The intersections of Pennsbury Drive with both the northbound and southbound lanes of US 301 are the closest intersections, both of which are unsignalized, that would be most affected by the

application. Because there are no recent traffic data available for the intersections, staff is not able to evaluate the existing levels-of-service, nor the impact of the traffic from the proposed development.

It is worth noting however, that the previous use of the property as a public library was generating **316** combined peak-hour trips to the intersections. Just prior to the use as a library, the property was being used as a home improvement/hardware store, with a trip generation of approximately **169** combined peak-hour trips. Based on the current C-M zoning, and assuming an F.A.R. of 0.4 (as recommended in the *Guidelines for the Analysis of the Traffic Impact of Development Proposals*), the subject property has the potential of generating up to **1,095** combined peak-hour trips.

Both the *Bowie-Collington-Mitchellville and Vicinity Master Plan*, as well as the *Subregion IV Master Plan*, recommend that US 301 be upgraded to a freeway (F-10) with an adjacent arterial road (A-61) serving as a service road. Within the vicinity of the subject property, the proposed A-61 will occupy the right-of-way that now contains the southbound lanes of US 301. The right-of-way for the existing northbound lanes of US 301 will be expanded and will be the location of the future F-10 freeway. As part of the future road network, there is a proposed ramp which will occupy a small triangular portion of the southwestern corner of the subject property. Based on the proposed site plan, it would appear that location of building #2 will not be in conflict with the future road location.

Given the absence of specific traffic data, staff cannot make any specific finding regarding the existing operation and future impact of the proposed development on the two adjacent intersections. Regarding the general health, safety and welfare of the community however, staff can reaffirm that the proposed development will generate fewer trips than the two prior uses on the site, and considerable less traffic than the most intense use that could be allowed based on the property's current zoning.

**(3) The use shall be appropriate, given the nature of development in the neighborhood.**

The location and operation of the proposed use is in harmony with the established commercial nature of the area. The proposed use is less intense than the previous two uses on the property in terms of traffic generation. Moreover, the proposal projects a superior architectural and aesthetic environment than that of the existing development on the property. With the topographical features of the property, the area and proposed methods of landscaping and screening, the adjacent areas will not be negatively impacted by the proposal. Given the nature of development in the neighborhood, the use is appropriate.

**(4) The District Council shall find that:**

**(A) There is a need for the public in the surrounding area;**

The applicant's market study determined that there is a demand for the proposed use. By memorandum dated March 13, 2000, Dr. Joseph Valenza, Information Center, agrees with the applicant's conclusion. He notes however, that there is another proposal for self-storage space (SE-4367) in the same market area and there is not enough support for both proposals.

**(5) The exterior and architectural facade of the building shall be compatible with the prevailing architecture and appearance of other development in the surrounding neighborhood.**

The applicant indicated that the architectural style for the proposed storage facility will be aesthetically appealing and will be compatible with the prevailing architecture and appearance of other development in the surrounding neighborhood. The applicant's statement of justification describes details of architectural elements, materials, colors and design specification for the proposed facility as follows:

■Surrounding buildings within the neighborhood are constructed of a mixture of brick and siding, consisting of a variety of architectural masonry walls and piers, and panels of acrylic stucco-like exterior finish. This will be compatible, as the architectural style is not designed to look like the typical mini-warehouse building. Additionally, existing vegetation and grade variations will screen the majority of the facade facing the north and southbound lanes of US 301. The existing large bay warehouse structure will be maintained. Modifications will be made to enhance the existing facade.

■Although the self- storage component is effectively screened through architectural embellishment, the public is aware of the building's purpose thus reinforcing the viability of the business. Additionally, the design provides customers with maximum access to the structure, while effectively screening the exterior storage component typically found in self-storage facilities.

■During operating hours customers may enter the office from either the interior of the site and building or through an exterior entry door, which is accessible to the general public from the conveniently located parking area. Every effort has been made to ensure that the facility is completely accessible to customers and employees with disabilities.

■A two-bedroom apartment is provided for the use of the on-site managers, providing an added level of security at this facility. An outdoor patio area, screened with sound attenuating wood fencing, is provided for personal use of the managers.

■All exterior masonry is manufactured with integral waterproofing providing protection from the elements for the life of the building with minimal maintenance. Portions of existing building are climate controlled, incorporating insulation as required to comply with local and national energy codes.●

Staff finds that the exterior and architectural facades of the proposed buildings will be compatible with development in the surrounding area.

- (6) **Beginning June 23, 1988, 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 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).**
- (7) **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.**

No entrances to individual consolidated storage units will be visible from a street. Approximately 985 of the 1,070 units will be accessed internally, with the remaining 85 units accessed externally. All of the doors to the externally-accessed units will be oriented into the center of the property and a six-foot-high solid wall will screen the entrances from the residentially-zoned property to the south, creating a courtyard. Thus the visibility of the entrance to storage units will not be a concern in this case.

- (8) **Consolidated storage for which special exceptions were approved prior to the date reflected in paragraph 6, above, need not meet the provisions set forth in paragraphs 6 and 7, above.**

This exemption does not apply to the subject application.

- (b) **In addition to what is required by Section 27-296(c)(1)(B), the site plan shall show the topography of the subject lot and abutting lots (for a depth of at least fifty (50) feet).**

The proposed site plan complies with this requirement.

- G. **Parking Regulations: Pursuant to of the Zoning Ordinance and relative to this application, the total number of required parking spaces for a Consolidated Storage use is determined as follows:**

**One parking space for every 50 units having direct access only from within the building, plus four parking spaces for every 1,000 square feet of gross floor area (GFA) of office space.**

**Section 27-568 also requires two parking spaces for each dwelling unit within a building containing commercial or industrial uses. Moreover, four parking spaces for every 1,000 square feet of gross leasable area (GLA).**

The parking schedule on the site plan shows a total of 985 internally accessed units, one residential unit and 650 square feet of gross floor area of office space. A total of 25 spaces are required (20 spaces for storage units, 2 spaces for the residential unit and 3 spaces for the office use). Forty-three parking spaces, including two van spaces for the physically handicapped, are provided. However, the site plan needs to be revised to correct the inconsistency in the number of parking spaces in the parking schedule (38) and the number of parking spaces in the drawing (43). Moreover, ramps and depressed curb cuts provided to facilitate access from the parking spaces for the physically handicapped shall be labeled.

- H. **Loading Requirements: Section 27-582 of the Zoning Ordinance requires two loading spaces (per building) for consolidated storage comprising up to 10,000 square feet of GFA, plus one loading space for each additional 40,000 square feet of GFA (or fraction).**

Nine loading spaces are required and provided; all of the nine loading spaces are dimensioned at 12 feet wide by 45 feet long.

- I. **Landscape Manual Requirements:** The landscape plan meets the requirements of the *Landscape Manual*.

- J. **Zone Standards:** The site plan conforms to all other development standards of the C-M Zone.

- K. **Sign Regulations:** No sign is shown on the site plan. If the applicant intends to place a freestanding sign on the site, its location must be shown on the site plan prior to approval. All signs must meet the area, height and setback standards.

- L. **Subdivision:**

The Subdivision Section has indicated that the subject property is an unrecorded parcel that does not meet any exemption. Therefore, a subdivision plat is required.

- M. **Required Findings:**

**Section 27-317(a) of the Zoning Ordinance provides that a special exception may be approved if:**

- (1) The proposed use and site plan are in harmony with the purposes of this Subtitle.**

The fundamental purposes of the Zoning Ordinance, as found in Section 27-102, are to protect the health, safety and welfare of the public and promote compatible relationships between the various types of land uses. Chief among these purposes are:

Purpose No. 3 ●To promote the conservation, creation and expansion of communities that will be developed with adequate public facilities and services.

Purpose No. 6 ●To promote the most beneficial relationship between the uses of land and buildings and protect landowners from adverse impacts of adjoining development.

Purpose No. 11 ●To lessen the danger and congestion of traffic on the streets, and to insure the continued usefulness of all elements of the transportation system for their planned functions.

Due to the lack of available traffic data concerning the current operating capacity of the adjoining roadways, staff cannot fully evaluate the potential impact of the proposed development on the area's transportation network. Furthermore, staff cannot conclude that the applicant's proposal is in harmony with the above noted purposes which focus on the provision of adequate public facilities and the promotion of compatible and beneficial land use relationships.

**(2) The proposed use is in conformance with all the applicable requirements and regulations of this Subtitle.**

The proposed use does not conform to the requirement of Section 27-344.01(2). More specifically, the applicant has not met his burden of proof to demonstrate that sufficient capacity exists on the area roadways to accommodate the anticipated traffic from the proposed use.

**(3) The proposed use will not substantially impair the integrity of any validly approved Master Plan or Functional Master Plan, or in the absence of a Master Plan or Functional Master Plan, the General Plan.**

The proposed use is in accordance with the Bowie-Collington and Vicinity Master Plan in so far as the subject site is recommended in the Plan for ■service commercial• land use. In the Crain Highway Corridor Chapter, the master plan refers to the subject property and makes the following recommendation:

■The portion of the median south of the Pennsbury Drive crossover is developed with Lowe's Lumber and scattered dwellings. The remaining median areas that will not be required for highway right-of-way are shown for open space. The SMA retains the existing R-R zoning and downzones an underdeveloped 2.4-acre C-2 zoned property to the R-R Zone. Again, potential for special exception uses are recognized provided that access points to the existing southbound lanes and future service road are consolidated and minimized. The consolidation of these properties is encouraged to preclude the proliferation of individual and uncoordinated developments.●

The proposed site plan has consolidated access points to the site to the extent possible, as recommended by the Crain Highway Corridor Chapter.

- (4) The proposed use will not adversely affect the health, safety or welfare of residents or workers in the area.**
- (5) The proposed use will not be detrimental to the use or development of adjacent properties or the general neighborhood.**

Absent specific data to document the current operating capacity of the adjoining roadways, staff cannot conclude that the proposed facility will not adversely affect the health, safety or welfare of residents or workers in the area, nor that it will not be detrimental to the use or development of adjacent properties or the general neighborhood.

- (6) The proposed site plan is in conformance with an approved Tree Conservation Plan.**

A Tree Conservation Plan is not required because the proposed development will result in a cumulative disturbance of less than 5,000 square feet of woodland during the next five years, and it does not have a previously approved Tree Conservation Plan.

## **CONCLUSION**

Staff is not aware of any available public data assessing the current operating capacity of the adjoining roadways. In addition, the applicant has not provided the necessary documentation on this issue to prove his case. Instead, the applicant has chosen to rely upon the fact that the proposed use is a low traffic generator when compared to a variety of more intense permitted uses.

Although staff agrees with the applicant on the number of trips the proposed use will generate, this data alone falls short of meeting the requirement to prove the existence of adequate highway capacity. If not for this single issue, staff could have recommended approval, subject to conditions for minor site plan revisions. However, at this time, staff can only recommend DENIAL of SE-4372.