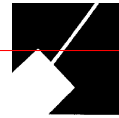


Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission  
Prince George's County Planning Department  
Development Review Division  
301-952-3470



Comment [COMMENT1]: WHEN INSERTING  
INFORMATION AT THE @ SIGN  
REMEMBER TO USE INDENT FOR SECOND  
LINE - NOT TAB. ALSO, IT WILL LOOK  
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## SPECIAL EXCEPTION 4373

### Alternative Compliance Application AC-00023

Application	General Data
Project Name  EZ Storage Silver Hill  Location  South side of Silver Hill Rd., approx. 320' west of Silver Park Dr.  Applicant/Address  Silver Hill Station Ltd. Partn. 12011 Guilford Rd., Suite 101 Annapolis Junction, Md. 20701	Date Accepted 12/14/99
	Planning Board Action Limit
	ZHE Hearing Date Not Scheduled
	Plan Acreage 3.6315 ACRES
	Zone C-M
	Dwelling Units
	Square Footage
	Planning Area 76A
	Council District 7
	Municipality N/A
	200-Scale Base Map 205SE4L

Purpose of Application	Notice Dates
Consolidated storage	Adjoining Property Owners 12/15/99 (CB-15-1998)
	Previous Parties of Record (CB-13-1997)
	Sign(s) Posted on Site
	Variance(s): Adjoining Property Owners

Staff Recommendation			Staff Reviewer	Jimi Jones
APPROVAL	APPROVAL WITH CONDITIONS	DISAPPROVAL	DISCUSSION	

		X	
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May 31, 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: Jimi Jones, Planning Coordinator

SUBJECT: **Special Exception Application No. 4373**  
**Alternative Compliance Application AC-00023**

REQUEST: **Consolidated Storage Facility**

RECOMMENDATION: **DENIAL of SE-4373**  
**DENIAL of AC-00023**

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**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.

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## FINDINGS:

- A. Location and Field Inspection: The subject property is located on the south side of Silver Hill Road, approximately 320 feet west of Silver Park Drive. The property is developed with a two story, 36,000 square foot building and accessory parking and loading areas. The topography of the front of the site is relatively level, although the rear of the site is lower than the front, allowing for access to the lower level units. Beyond the parking lot to the rear of the site, the topography ascends to the rear property line.
- B. History: The subject property was re-zoned from the C-1 to the C-M zone by the 1984 SMA for Subregion VII. Special exception SE-3942 was granted on April 19, 1990, for a food and beverage store. Special exception SE-4020 was granted in 1991 for the provision of a dry cleaner and laundromat.
- C. Master Plan Recommendation: The *Adopted and Approved Master Plan for Subregion VII* (1981) recommends Village Activity Center development.

The property is located within the area subject to the Adopted Master Plan and Endorsed Sectional Map Amendment (SMA) for the Heights and Vicinity. No change to the land use or zoning of the property is included in the plan or SMA. The District Council is anticipated to act on the plan and SMA in the summer of 2000, or in the fall if there are amendments, and a second public hearing is required.

- D. Request: The applicant wishes to construct a 114,878 square-foot consolidated storage facility. The proposed use will occupy the lower level (18,000 square feet) of advertising integrated shopping center. The applicant will also construct a five-story, 93,750 square-foot storage building proposed for the rear of the center. An accessory 920 square-foot manager's office and a two-bedroom manager's residence are also proposed. The applicant has also filed for Alternative Compliance to address landscaping required under Section 4.7 of the *Landscape Manual*.
- E. Neighborhood and Surrounding Uses: The property is surrounded by the following uses:

North: Across Silver Hill Road, is the Smithsonian Institution Museum Support Facility within the O-S Zone.

South: Hickory Hill garden apartments within the R-18 Zone and consolidated storage within the C-M Zone.

East: Hickory Hill garden apartments within the R-18 Zone.

West: Automobile sales and service within the C-M Zone.

### Neighborhood

The neighborhood for this application is the same as was accepted for SE-4020 for the dry cleaner and laundromat that is located within the existing shopping center, and is defined as follows:

North: Silver Hill Road (MD 458)  
Northeast: Suitland Parkway  
Southeast: Branch Avenue (MD 5) and Henson Creek  
Southwest: Saint Barnabas Road (MD 414)

The neighborhood is predominately developed with strip commercial centers and apartments. Adjacent to the subject property to the west is a similar use; a consolidated storage use with exterior access to individual units.

F. Specific Special Exception Requirements: Section 27-375 provides the following requirements for consolidated storage:

- (1) 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; and
      - (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.

Comment: The applicant has submitted the required information which is attached to this report. The proposed use includes a 1,250 unit, 114,878 square-foot storage facility in an existing integrated shopping center. A portion of the use (18,000 sq.ft.) will occupy the lower level of the shopping center. The applicant will also build a five-story, 93,750 square-foot storage facility onto the rear of the shopping center. A 920 square-foot office and 2,208 square-foot manager's residence will also be constructed.

- (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.**

Comment: The subject property has over 400 feet of frontage on and direct vehicular access to Silver Hill Road. The Transportation Planning Section, in a memo dated April 13, 2000, submits that the nearest critical intersection is MD 458 (Silver Hill Road) and MD414 ( St. Barnabas Road). This intersection operates at a level-of-service (LOS) A during the morning peak hour and LOS B during the evening peak hour. There are no issues of off-site transportation adequacy presented by this application.

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

Comment: The use is generally appropriate, given the nature of development in the neighborhood. A consolidated storage facility could serve the needs of adjacent multifamily development as well as existing commercial uses. As discussed later in this report, staff is concerned about the size and appearance of the proposed use.

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

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

Comment: Based on a review of the market study (Attachment B of attached statement of justification) by Joseph Valenza ( attached memo dated February 25, 2000), there is support for the proposed use in the surrounding area.

- (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.**

Comment: The Urban Design Section, in a memo dated May 18, 2000, submits the following analysis of the architectural facade of the proposed development:

- 1. The proposed architecture for the subject application was not provided by the applicant with the original submission, but was subsequently forwarded to the Urban Design Section for review with respect to the requirements of Section 27-375 of the Zoning Ordinance. The existing shopping center within which the

proposed consolidated storage building will be provided is primarily constructed of split-faced block masonry. The shopping center is linear in layout with repetitive vertical masonry piers spanned by horizontal storefront glazing at the front facade, both of which provide definition for the individual tenant spaces. The existing storefronts are single-story at the front facade, and are visible from Silver Hill Road. The applicant's statement of justification correctly indicates that there are a variety of architectural styles that comprise the surrounding buildings within the neighborhood. Given that the immediately surrounding buildings on which the proposed consolidated storage building will have a direct visual impact are the shopping center structure, an apartment building complex on adjacent property to the east and south, and an auto sales and service facility on adjacent property to the west, for the purposes of the subject application staff believes that review with respect to architectural compatibility should focus on the said properties to provide a contextual analysis of views from Silver Hill Road on the subject and adjoining properties.

- (2) The above-mentioned commercial properties that are adjacent to, or on, the subject property are all single-story structures. There is a consistent prevalent roofline throughout the commercial structures that front onto Silver Hill Road, and even St. Barnabas Road which is in proximity to the subject property. A visual characterization of layout and scale of the streetscape along both Silver Hill and St. Barnabas Roads, and specifically the subject and adjacent properties, is that generally all commercial properties are setback from the roadways with parking in front and are single-story with rooflines that vary from approximately 12 to 20 feet, with intervening multifamily residential properties whose structures range in height from 2-4 stories. Some residential properties front onto the roadways, while the remainder are setback as to provide a transition from the thoroughfares. The architectural elevations provided by the applicant show the proposed consolidated storage building height, the front elevation which will face Silver Hill Road, to be approximately 46 feet high. The scale of the proposed facility, in terms of height, is disproportionate to all of the immediately surrounding commercial entities and even those that are in the surrounding neighborhood. The site plan and elevations indicate a substantial difference in topography from the front of the subject property to its rear. The grade drop-off is such that the proposed facility could provide three levels and still have a roofline that is fairly consistent, in height, with the existing shopping center

structure and those of the structures in the surrounding neighborhood. Staff believes that this approach would be more compatible with that of the surrounding neighborhood and not pose a structure that would be a landmark, or dominate the entire streetscape. The proposed scale does not conform to the said requirements with respect to compatibility, and staff cannot recommend approval of the subject facility as shown.

- (3) The applicant did not provide a color rendering of the proposed facility, but did indicate proposed exterior finish material color by note on the drawing. Also indicated are proposed colors for the exterior finish of the existing shopping center. As previously stated, the existing shopping center is split-faced block masonry, and is charcoal gray in color. The notes on the elevations provide that the existing shopping center structure's facades will be painted beige to match the beige split-faced block masonry proposed to be used as the main exterior finish material for the proposed facility. Split-faced block is a material that comes in a wide variety of factory-applied colors, with the specific intent that the material be exposed and that it not be altered by the application of an additional finish. Staff does not believe that the proposed painting of the existing shopping center structure is appropriate. The condition of the existing finish material on the shopping center is good, and furthermore the charcoal gray color provides a subtle appearance that does not dominate the streetscape. It appears as if the applicant is attempting to make the existing shopping center color compatible with the proposed facility, as opposed to making the proposed facility compatible with the shopping center. Staff cannot find that painting an existing split-faced block structure is appropriate under the given circumstances, it is the responsibility of the proposed facility to be compatible with the existing structure.

■The beige split-faced block proposed for the subject facility can be found to be compatible with the exterior finishes of the buildings at Suitland Federal Center on the opposite side of Silver Hill Road. The proposed blue-glazed block accent panels, stripe, and white split-faced block accent strip are not compatible with any of the immediately surrounding commercial entities. It appears that the accent bands, panels, and stripes are used for visual impact and recognition of the facility. These elements will be located at the upper levels of the facility, thus ensuring that the proposed structure will be the dominant commercial building along Silver Hill Road visible from all sides with the accent band, stripes, and panels



very likely at eye-level for some residents of the adjoining apartment complex whose units are on the upper floors. Views from the adjoining apartment complex onto the subject facility should be taken into consideration in terms of color and scale. Staff does not believe the use of brightly colored accent elements is appropriate, and when combined with the proposed scale of the facility staff cannot find that the requirement of compatibility with the surrounding neighborhood has been satisfied.

■For all of the above-stated reasons staff cannot find that the subject application has met the requirements of Section 27-375 of the Zoning Ordinance. It is recommended that the proposed facility be limited to a maximum of three levels from the grade at the rear of the subject property and that the proposed exterior finish materials be made to be compatible with that of the existing shopping center with respect to type and color.●

- (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).**

Comment: The site plan demonstrates compliance with this requirement.

- (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.**

Comment: The site plan demonstrates compliance with this requirement.

- (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.**

Comment: A special exception was not approved for this use prior to June 23, 1988. Topography of the property is shown on the site plan as required.

- (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).**

- G. Parking Regulations: According to the Permit Review Section memo (dated February 7, 2000), the total gross floor area of the fast-food restaurant should be included in the parking tabulation. Also, the 885 square feet of non-storage/non-patron area must be calculated at a rate of 1 space per 50 square feet, not 1 space per 150 square feet. The applicant must revise the parking schedule accordingly.
- H. Landscape Manual Requirements: Although the subject property was developed prior to the implementation of the *Landscape Manual*, construction of the proposed structures will necessitate that the site be in conformance with the requirements of the *Landscape Manual*.

Sections 4.2, Commercial and Industrial Landscape Strips, 4.3, Parking Lot Requirements, Section 4.4, Screening Requirements, and 4.7, Buffering Incompatible Uses are applicable to the subject plan. The proposed plan appears to satisfy the requirements of Section 4.2 along the frontage at Silver Hill Road, and the requirements of Section 4.4 in the parking compound. The requirements of Section 4.7 along the south and east property lines adjacent to the multifamily residential development have not been met. The applicant has filed for Alternative Compliance (AC-00023) to address the above-mentioned deficiencies.

The Alternative Compliance Committee reviewed application AC-00023 and, in a memo dated May 25, 2000, made the following comments:

■Alternative Compliance is requested for Section 4.7 of the *Landscape Manual*.

#### ■BACKGROUND

■The property is located on the south side of Silver Hill Road, approximately 320 feet west of its intersection with Silver Park Drive. The use of the property is currently identified as an integrated shopping center, with retail uses at the front of the building. The existing single structure on the site appears as a one story building from Silver Hill Road, however, the grade at the rear of the building dips to expose a two-story structure. The applicant is currently seeking approval of a Special Exception to build a five-story-high, 132,605 square-foot consolidated storage facility. The new structure is located behind, and will be attached to, the existing structure on the site. The lower level of the existing structure is planned to be converted to consolidated storage units. The existing retail uses at the front of the building will remain. The surrounding uses include a three story multifamily apartment complex to the east and south, another consolidated storage facility to the west, and an auto repair facility to the west of the subject property.

#### ■Bufferyard, Section 4.7, Eastern and Southern Property Line

#### ■REQUIRED:

Length of Bufferyard	629 feet
Landscaped Yard	30 feet
Building Setback	40 feet
Fence or Wall	Yes
Plant Materials (160PUs/100 LF)	1007/2=504 Plant Units

■PROVIDED:

Landscaped Yard	10 feet minimum to 20 feet
Building Setback	25 feet for the existing building 54 feet for the proposed building 1 for the 8-foot-high fence 1 for the 10-foot-high retaining wall (max.)
Plant Materials	725 Plant Units

■JUSTIFICATION OF RECOMMENDATION

■Section 4.7, Buffering Incompatible Uses requires a minimum 50-foot building setback and a 40-foot landscape bufferyard when an integrated shopping center is adjacent to multifamily dwellings. The existing site conditions include a driveway located 10 feet off of the east property line and an existing parking compound located along the south side of the property. At its closest point, the existing parking compound is approximately 36 feet from the south property line. The multifamily dwellings are located approximately 10 feet from the south property line.

■The proposed five-story building does not encroach into the 50-foot building restriction line. However, a retaining wall is proposed 15 feet from the south property line, and one foot from the east property line, adjacent to the multifamily project. The retaining wall extends 320 feet parallel to the south property line and wraps along the east property line for 60 feet. The retaining wall is a maximum of 10 feet high. An eight-foot-high fence is proposed at the top of the retaining wall. The retaining wall does not meet the 50-foot building setback required by the Landscape Manual or the setbacks required by the Zoning Ordinance. The Zoning Ordinance requires setbacks of 34.9 feet from the south property line and 21.9 from the east property line. A variance from the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance is required.

■A parking compound is proposed to be located 20 feet from the south property line. The effective bufferyard along that property line is 15 feet wide because of the proposed retaining and fence which creates a combined height of 18 feet. Even the applicant's justification statement recognizes the effective bufferyard as 15 feet. Any plant materials proposed below the retaining wall should not contribute to the quantities of plant material within the bufferyard due to the 18-foot-high fence and wall combination and due to the compacted fill associated with the foundation of the wall, the curb and gutter and the parking compound. A break down of the quantities of plant material required and provided along the southern boundary clarifies the issue. The required plant materials are 255 plant unit. If the shade trees proposed on the low side of the retaining wall are not counted, the plant unit provided in the 15-foot area is

■Although more plant materials have been provided than what is required, the Committee finds that the reduction in the width of the bufferyard along the south property line is unacceptable. The massing and scale of the proposed 5 story building will have a definite impact on the existing multifamily development to the south. Additionally, the staff has a serious concern for the survivability of the quantity of plant material being placed into the restricted areas above and below the retaining wall. At the very least, the setback requirements of the Zoning Ordinance should be adhered to along the south property line in regard to the retaining wall. Along the east property line the setback issue is not as great because the multifamily buildings are off-set from that property line and because the narrowest portion of the proposed building is parallel to the east property line. Therefore, the Committee is of the opinion that the Alternative Compliance proposal is not equal to or better than the normal compliance to the requirements of the *Landscape Manual*.

#### ■RECOMMENDATION

■The Alternative Compliance Committee recommends denial of alternative compliance pursuant to Section 4.7 of the *Landscape Manual*, along the eastern and southern property line.

- I. Zone Standards: Section 27-447 restricts fences or walls to a maximum height of six feet. This section requires that fences or walls over six feet high meet the minimum setback requirements for main buildings. The site plan indicates a proposed eight-foot-high sight-tight fence with masonry piers/retaining wall along the southern property line. The total height of the fence and retaining wall is 18 feet. Based on the setback requirements of Section 27-462(b), setbacks of 34.9 feet and 21.9 feet are required along the southern and eastern property lines respectively. The proposed fence is 15 feet from the southern property line and one foot from the eastern property line. Variances of 19.9 and 20.9 feet are therefore, required.
- J. Sign Regulations: The facade drawings submitted by the applicant indicate that signage will be either attached or painted on the building. The facades, which were submitted in black and white, do not indicate the size of the building-mounted signs. Staff believes the size and colors of the signs are an important element in reviewing the building for compatibility. The applicant will be required to submit a colored sign plan with dimensions of all signage.
- K. 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.**

Comment: The proposed use and site plan are not in harmony with the purposes of the Zoning Ordinance. The purposes of the Zoning Ordinance generally seek to protect and promote the health, safety, morals, comfort, convenience and welfare of the present and future inhabitants of the County. Based on the comments of the Urban

Design staff, we believe the proposed structure is not compatible with existing development. The colors and size of the building and failure to meet minimum *Landscape Manual* requirements are of particular concern.

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

Comment: The proposed use is not in conformance with all the applicable requirements and regulations of this Subtitle. Variances from setback requirements are needed for the proposed fence and retaining wall, the landscape plan does not meet the requirements of the *Landscape Manual* and the architectural facades do not demonstrate compatibility with existing development.

- (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 Map Plan, the General Plan.**

Comment: The proposed use will not substantially impair the integrity of the *Adopted and Approved Master Plan for Subregion VII* (1981). The property was rezoned to the C-M Zone via Amendment No. 8 of the sectional map amendment. The proposed use is a service-commercial use that reflects the purposes of the C-M Zone.

The property is located within the area subject to the Adopted Master Plan and Endorsed Sectional Map Amendment (SMA) for the Heights and Vicinity. No change to the land use or zoning of the property is included in the plan or SMA. The District Council is anticipated to consider the plan and SMA in the summer of 2000, or in the fall, if there are amendments and a second public hearing is required.

- (4) **The proposed use will not adversely affect the health, safety or welfare of residents or workers in the area.**

Comment: The proposed use will not adversely affect the health, safety or welfare of residents or workers in the area. The proposed consolidated storage facility will provide a secure premises at which residents or workers in the area will have the opportunity to safely store items. Further, the level of activity associated with the consolidated storage use is much lower in terms of frequency of patron arrivals and departures, and the use produces negligible noise and fumes when compared to other uses allowed in the C-M zone.

- (5) **The proposed use will not be detrimental to the use or development of adjacent properties or the general neighborhood.**

Comment: The proposed use may be detrimental to the use or development of adjacent properties or the general neighborhood. The proposed five-story storage facility would dominate the facade of this commercial area. The size and colors also suggest that the use, as proposed is not compatible with existing development, which does not exceed three stories in height.

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

Comment: The site is exempt from the Prince Georges County Woodland Conservation and Tree Preservation Ordinance as less than 10,000 square feet of woodland are to be removed and because no Tree Conservation Plan has been approved for the site.

## **CONCLUSION:**

Staff's main concern is with the size of the structure and colors of the building, which are not appropriate given the scale of adjacent development. We also note that the landscape plan does not demonstrate compliance with the *Landscape Manual*. The applicant should reduce the height of the building and provide color facade drawings that include the dimensions of proposed signs. A variance is also required for the fence along the southern property line. These deficiencies are significant and suggest that the appropriate recommendation for this application is DENIAL.