

Franklin Township

Somerset County, New Jersey



DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ZONING
Planning – Zoning – Affordable Housing
Planning Board – Zoning Board of Adjustment

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Planning Board

FROM: Mark Healey, PP/ AICP
Director of Planning/ Senior Zoning Officer

DATE: August 12, 2021

RE: *SAFStor Real Estate Co., LLC - Preliminary and Final Major Site Plan – 471 Elizabeth Avenue - Block 507.14 Lot 65.01 (PLN-21-00010)*

As requested, I have reviewed the following documents relative to the above referenced preliminary and final site plan application:

- 25-sheet set of site plans, prepared by Dynamic Engineering, dated 5/19/21
- 4-sheet set of architectural plans, prepared by David Bryce Architect, dated 5/11/21
- ALTA/ NSPS Land Title Survey, prepared by Control Point Associates, Inc, last revised 3/24/21

SITE DESCRIPTION

The 4.816-acre property is located on the easterly side of Elizabeth Avenue, several hundred feet south of its intersection with New Brunswick Road/ School House Road. The site is located within the Township's Business and Industry (B-I) zone¹.

The northerly portion of the site is developed with a residence and several accessory buildings in the northern portion of the site. The southerly portion of the site is essentially undeveloped. Wetlands areas (and associated buffers) exist in the southerly portion of the site and in the far northeast corner of the site. Figure 1 shows the relative proximity of residences to the subject site.

The Somerset Run age-restricted development, located with the Senior Citizen Village (SCV) zoning district, adjoins the site to the north and east. To the south of the site is a Township-preserved parcel.

¹ Previously located in the M-1 (Light Manufacturing) zone.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant seeks approval for:

- construction of a 3-story self-storage facility with a 35,067 square foot footprint with 104,700 total square feet

Associated site modifications include one (1) two-way curb cut on Elizabeth Avenue, 21 parking spaces, on-site septic and public water, and other site modifications include associated grading, utility extensions, and site lighting and landscaping.

The proposal requires Preliminary and Final Site Plan from the Township Planning Board. No variances are requested.

REVIEW COMMENTS

1. Consistent with Schedule 6 the site plan proposes a 50-foot buffer where the site adjoins a residential district (i.e., along the northern and easterly property lines). The site plan proposes to preserve existing vegetation along these property lines as well as supplemental landscaping consisting of double- and triple-staggered rows of large evergreen trees (which significantly exceed the minimum size required²) as well as several deciduous trees.

It is noted, however, that Schedule 6 requires placement of a solid 6-foot high fence in such buffer areas. It is recommended that the Board discuss whether such a fence should be installed or whether relief from that requirement would be appropriate considering the nature of the proposed buffer as described above (and as reflected on the plan).

2. The site plan complies with Schedule 6 which requires 1 tree for every 2,000 square feet of paved area (18 trees required – 145 trees of qualifying size are proposed on the plan). Further, in my opinion, the site plan complies with §112-33.6.B which indicates that there should be an emphasis on providing a portion of the required landscaping within the interior of the site in the form of landscape islands (i.e., not solely around the perimeter of the site).
3. The site plan complies with footnote #16 of Schedule 2 which requires a building setback of 100 feet where adjoining a residential district (i.e., required along the northern and easterly property lines) with setbacks of 117.4 and 144.5 feet, respectively.
4. Schedule 6 requires 1 tree for each 5-foot length of side and/or rear yard area abutting a residential zone (930 feet / 5 = 186 trees required). The site plan cites 189 trees (39 existing; 150 proposed trees). Further, the proposed holly may count if greater than 6 feet in height at planting.

² The proposed Japanese cedar are 14-16 feet at planting and the proposed Green Giant Arborvitae are 10-12 feet in height, where 6-foot trees are required. The holly should be revised to be at least 2.5" caliper or 6-feet in height, in order to comply.

5. The site plan complies with the tree replacement requirements of Chapter 222 (79 replacement trees required – 145 trees of qualifying size are proposed on the plan).
6. In my opinion, the site plan complies with §112-33.6.A which indicates that the front yard should be attractively landscaped. Roughly one-half of the site frontage would consist of existing vegetation to remain, while the remainder (with the exception of the access driveway and an emergency access) would be landscaped.
7. In my opinion, the site plan complies with §112-33.6.D. which indicates that the side(s) of the building facing and visible from adjoining roadway(s) should be designed and finished in an attractive manner and should present architecturally as the front of the building.
8. The applicant should present testimony addressing §112-33.6.E, F and G which address: screening of mechanical equipment; sidewalks along the site frontage; bicycle parking; electric vehicle charging stations; and appropriate accommodation for pick-up/drop-off area(s).
9. The Zoning Table on Sheet C-301 should reflect the correct proposed height of the building (34' 2").
10. Development of the site would be subject to payment of non-residential development (COAH) fees equal to 2.5% of the increase in equalized assessed value.

Figure 1: Site Location



Figure 2: Site and Surrounding Area

