



City of Richardson
City Council Meeting
Agenda Item Summary



City Council Meeting Date: Monday, October 26, 2009

Agenda Item: ZF 09-10 – Richardson Self Storage
1407 E. Belt Line Road

Staff Resource: John Webb, Director of Development Services *JW*

Summary: This is a request for a Special Permit for a self-service warehouse (secondary use). The requested Special Permit is subject to the approval of the CZO amendments proposed in ZF 09-09. The northern retail building at 1407 E. Belt Line Road contains 140-foot deep retail spaces which are too deep for traditional strip retail tenants. The applicant and property owner are proposing to convert the rear 70 feet of the building to a self-service warehouse (secondary use) which would leave 70-foot deep lease spaces at the front of the building. No changes would be made to the elevations facing Belt Line Rd and Plano Rd. One (1) property owner was present to speak in favor of the request and one (1) resident was present to inquire about signage locations. One (1) letter of correspondence in favor was received requesting that the hours of operation be limited from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Board/Commission Action: On October 6, 2009, the City Plan Commission recommended approval, by a vote of 7-0, with special conditions including a condition that the sign over the exit door on the north side of the building be moved over the entrance door of the facility. The attached building elevations (Exhibit "C") have been revised to meet the condition.

Action Proposed: The City Council may approve the request as presented, approve with conditions, or deny the request.



MEMO

DATE: October 26, 2009
TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council
FROM: John Webb, Director of Development Services
SUBJECT: Zoning File 09-10 – Richardson Self Storage

REQUEST

Gemini Richardson Square, L.P., is requesting a Special Permit for a self-service warehouse (secondary use) at 1407 E. Belt Line Road at the northeast corner of Belt Line Rd and Plano Rd. The requested Special Permit is subject to the approval of the CZO amendments proposed in ZF 09-09 which would add a definition for “self-service warehouse (secondary use) and adding “self-service warehouse (secondary use)” with special conditions as a permitted use to the Special Permit section.

BACKGROUND

The shopping center, which was constructed in 1975 and redeveloped in 2007, consists of three (3) buildings including an LA Fitness, a retail building along the eastern property line and a retail building along the northern property line. The northern retail building was not demolished at the time of redevelopment, but the exterior was updated. The depth of the retail spaces in the northern building are 140 feet, which according to the property owner are too deep for traditional strip center tenants. The applicant and property owner are proposing to convert the rear 70 feet of the building to self-service warehouse (secondary use) which would leave 70-foot deep lease spaces at the front of the building. The property is zoned C-M Commercial.

The individual storage units would be set up on tracks and would be modular to meet the needs of the renters. No changes will be made to the elevations facing Belt Line Rd and Plano Rd. The proposed changes to the northern elevation would include the addition of a ramp structure to serve the controlled-access entry/exit and the relocation of a dumpster to accommodate a loading/unloading area for trailers. The eastern elevation would be modified to include a door that leads to a proposed service corridor to serve the remaining retail spaces on the south side of the building.

Karl Crawley, Dante Massaro and Chris La Mack, representing Gemini Richardson Square, L.P., presented the request to the Plan Commission. One (1) property owner was present to speak in favor of the request and one (1) resident was present to inquire about signage location. One (1) letter of correspondence in favor was received requesting that the hours of operation be limited from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

PLAN COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

On October 6, 2009, the Plan Commission voted 7-0 to recommend approval of the request subject to the attached special conditions including a condition that the sign over the exit door on the north side of the building be moved to the entrance door of the facility. The attached building elevations (Exhibit “C”) have been revised to meet the condition.

SPECIAL CONDITIONS ZF 09-10

1. A Special Permit shall be issued for a self-service warehouse (secondary use) as defined in the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance and limited to the area shown on the attached concept plan and floor plan, marked as Exhibit “B-1” and Exhibit “B-2” and made a part thereof.
2. The self-service warehouse (secondary use) shall be constructed in substantial conformance with the attached concept plan (Exhibit “B-1”), floor plan (Exhibit “B-2” and elevations (Exhibit “C”).
3. The Special Permit shall require an extension to be approved by the City Council after a recommendation by the City Plan Commission on or before five (5) years after the date of issuance of the certificate of occupancy. If the extension is not requested, the Special Permit shall expire.

**DRAFT - EXCERPT
CITY OF RICHARDSON
CITY PLAN COMMISSION MINUTES – OCTOBER 6, 2009**

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Zoning File 09-10: A request by Karl Crawley, representing Gemini Richardson Square, L.P., for a Special Permit for a self-service warehouse (secondary use) at 1407 E. Belt Line Road; northeast corner of Belt Line Road and Plano Road. This request is subject to the approval of the CZO amendment requested in Zoning File 09-09.

Mr. Shacklett advised that the applicant was requesting a Special Permit for a self-service warehouse at the northeast corner of Belt Line and Plano Roads. He noted that the proposed site was originally constructed in 1975, and in 2007 the site was renovated adding a 45,000 square foot building for LA Fitness and a retail building along the eastern property line. The other building on the site, the northern retail building, is from the original construction in 1975 with only a slight change to the façade. At a depth of 140 feet, this building is twice as deep as the eastern retail building and use to accommodate retailers such as Tom Thumb Grocery or Hancock Fabrics; however, in the current economic climate, there does not seem to be a need for such a large space.

Mr. Shacklett stated that the applicant was proposing to take half of the 140 square foot space and convert it into a self-service warehouse using a modular system. In addition, he outlined some of the changes to the exterior of the building noting there would be a ramp added for ease of access in addition to controlled entrance and exits.

Mr. Shacklett indicated that staff had received one letter of support from the owner of adjacent apartment complex asking that the hours of operation change from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., to 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Commissioner Bright asked about the space available for parking and unloading, and Mr. Shacklett replied there would be 50-55 feet for a larger trucks and/or trailers with parking on the other side of the loading ramp.

Commissioner Henderson wanted to know about the location, placement, and size of the storage units, the service corridor, and the maximum number of storage units.

Mr. Shacklett stated that the maximum number of units allowed as shown on the concept layout is 178, and the maximum size of a unit would be 500 square feet. He added the service corridor is 5-1/2 feet wide.

Commissioner Jessen asked if doors would be allowed between the individual units, or is access limited to the doors off the internal hallways.

Mr. Shacklett replied that in item “f” of the special conditions, all units would be accessed from internal hallways only.

Commissioner Henderson asked if one of the other retail businesses in the building were to go out of business, could the self-storage warehouse expand into that area and not exceed the definitions described in Zoning File 09-09.

Mr. Shacklett said they could, but would first have to ask for an amendment to the Special Permit and they could not exceed 50% of the building area.

Chairman Gantt opened the public hearing.

Mr. Karl Crawley, 900 Jackson Street, Suite 640, Dallas, Texas, 75202, representing Gemini Richardson Square LP, gave a brief history of the plan to develop the self-service storage idea for the property and introduced the other members of the Gemini development team.

Mr. Dante Massaro, 16740 Birkdale Commons Parkway, Huntersville, NC, 28078, representing Gemini Real Estate Advisors, advised that the center was purchased in 2006 with the intention of developing a space for LA Fitness, demolishing and reconstructing an adjoining building, and possibly getting a big box tenant for the remaining building.

Mr. Massaro noted that Gemini also owns the Goodyear and Chase buildings; however, they are in the process of selling the Goodyear building to the current tenant. He added that 10 million dollars has been spent in redeveloping the center, and they have spoken to a number of big box tenants in attempts to fill the empty retail space, but because of the economic situation they had to seek other avenues and thanked the staff for helping to come up with a creative idea.

Commissioner Frederick thanked Mr. Massaro and his group on the redevelopment of the center and investing in the City of Richardson.

Commissioner DePuy commended Mr. Massaro on the Community Revitalization Award received in 2008 and asked how long it would take to lease the self-storage units.

Mr. Massaro replied that although this was their one of their first ventures into self-service storage units, they had extensive experience in leasing all types of retail including hotels, a new self-storage facility in North Carolina and 4 million square feet of retail space in 11 states. He noted that they currently have on-site management for the retail center and these individuals will be available to potential customers for the self-service storage units.

Commissioner Hand acknowledged that commercial leasing was going through a difficult time, but wanted to know what was the long-term goal or plan for the retail center; would there always be self-storage units or a return to retail based businesses.

Mr. Massaro replied that when the center was redeveloped in 2006, they thought they knew what the goal was; however, they over-estimated the ability to get the big box tenant in the 26,000 square foot portion. He did indicate that the portion of the center facing N. Plano Road was too valuable for anything but retail, and five years from now self-storage may not make sense and the market for retailers could return, or if the market does not rebound, the storage units could be a good long-term use.

Vice Chair Hammond asked if there would be a problem with using both motion detection and video surveillance as part of the security system.

Mr. Massaro stated that the only problem might be a cost issue, but suggested Mr. LaMack might be better able to answer the question.

Mr. Chris LaMack, 16740 Birkdale Commons Parkway, Huntersville, NC, 28078, reported that as owners of the center, they came to the decision to propose self-service storage after looking at many other possibilities, and thanked the Commission and staff for the flexibility. He added that they had come up with a good way to handle all the concerns of management and security, yet keep the retail frontage on the south side of the building while locating the self-service storage facility on the back of the center facing the north wall.

Mr. LaMack noted that the issues regarding fire separation and sprinklers are clearly spelled out in the state building codes, and the Building Inspection Department will review when drawings are presented. Regarding the interior, he stated that a modular system with metal walls would be installed that allows flexibility in providing the desired sized space for the customers, and the ability to convert back to retail in the future. In addition, for security purposes wire mesh would be added to the top of the modules to prevent someone crawling over into the next unit and allow the sprinkler system to be effective.

Vice Chair Hammond noticed that there is an exit only on one side of the building and wondered if video cameras would be a way to record possible unwanted entry. Also, once the units are leased, he wanted to know if there would be someone on-site monitoring the units.

Mr. LaMack stated that video cameras would be used at the facility and an alarm system could be installed on the exit door. Regarding the monitoring of the units, there will be a lease with every tenant that sets guidelines on what can and cannot be done, as well as inspection of the units as they are cleared out.

Commissioner DePuy asked once the space is converted to storage units and is leased, will that increase the possibility of getting a tenant in the southern portion of the building.

Mr. LaMack responded that although commercial leasing has been slow, the smaller properties seem to be where the activity is happening.

Commissioner Bright asked how access to the east side door would be controlled.

Mr. LaMack indicated that it would be an exit only door with no outside handle so it could open only from inside the building.

Commissioner Henderson noted that at first he did not have a very favorable position on the storage warehouse; however, he changed his mind after hearing that the units are modular and could be easily taken down and would support the item.

Mr. Jack Winfield, Winfield Jewelry, 129 N. Plano Road, Richardson, Texas, reported that after listening to the explanation of the proposed self-service storage warehouse he no longer had any objections, which had been stated in the public hearing portion of Zoning File 09-09.

Mr. Pat Maher, 1802 Tulane Drive, Richardson, Texas, 75081, stated that he was neither in favor nor against the item, but wanted to confirm the placement of the sign on the north side of building; would a monument sign be added; and were the existing tenants in favor of the proposed change.

Mr. Crawley replied that there is an existing monument sign on Plano Road and no changes will be made to that sign. Also, the sign on the east side of the building will direct potential customers to the back of the building and the existing tenants are in favor of the proposal.

Chairman Gantt noted that a letter had been received from the apartment property stating the owner was in favor of the proposal, but asked for a change in the operating hours from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Mr. Crawley did not object to that change, but would rather have the 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. time.

Commissioner Henderson wanted to know how the property would be advertised, and if one of the front retail businesses were to be occupied as an office for the storage warehouse, would that space change the 50% rule.

Mr. LaMack stated that advertising would be done via the internet and newspaper and he did not think they would occupy one of the retail spaces. Mr. Chavez advised that if the office was part of the warehouse as opposed to a retail business selling boxes, etc., then it would come under the 50% rule and the applicant would have to request an amendment to the Special Permit.

Chairman Gantt and Vice Chair Hammond were in favor of the proposed operating hours of 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Commissioner Jessen expressed appreciation for the applicant's efforts in improving the area and felt the Commission should support the proposal.

Commissioner Frederick asked staff if one of the retail businesses in the building rented space in the storage warehouse, would that be considered operating a business out of the storage warehouse. Mr. Chavez replied no, the storage warehouse would primarily be used for off-site storage of merchandise and documents.

Chairman Gantt suggested the applicant change the elevations to reflect the sign on the north side of the building prior to submittal to the City Council.

Motion: Commissioner Hand moved to recommend approval of Agenda Item 3 as presented with a change to the location of the sign on the north elevation; second by Commissioner Henderson. Motion passed 7-0.