

METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT - DECEMBER 7, 2016

Agenda Item No. 8

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CASE NO. C-86-16:	USE APPROVAL & VARIANCE	District: C/Jenkins
<u>Applicant:</u>	SOUTHERN STORAGE CENTERS	District: 4/Linn
<u>Owner:</u>	Brookshire Grocery Company	
<u>Location:</u>	4019 Fern Ave. (East side of Fern Ave., approx. 208' south of Gregg St.)	
<u>Existing Zoning:</u>	B-2-A	
<u>Request:</u>	Use Approval	
<u>Proposed Use:</u>	Climate Controlled Storage Facility	
<u>Proposed Variance:</u>	Rear Yard Setback	

DESCRIPTION:

The applicant is requesting a Use Approval for a climate controlled storage facility exceeding 20,000 sq. ft. and a variance in rear yard setback. In the B-2-A zoning district only, the MPC Board is granted the authority to approve a variance in the rear yard setback (Sec. 106-663). The proposal includes expanding an existing building (23,420 sq. ft.) by 66,554 sq. ft. to create a 89,974 sq. ft. storage facility on a 2.38 acre lot. The proposed height of the building is 25 feet (Maximum height in B-2-A district is 35 feet). The current structure, which is vacant, was formerly a Brookshire's Grocery Store.

Prior cases for this site include: approval of packaged wine sales (BAC-152-86) and approval for a snow cone stand (C-55-11).

The site is surrounded by commercial zoning to the north and south (B-2), residential zoning to the east and west (R-1D).

REMARKS:

At this time a site plan has not been formally submitted. The applicant has provided a conceptual plan (See *Exhibit A*) and conceptual elevations (See *Exhibit B*) that indicates the original structure will remain one story, and the proposed addition will be two stories, with a 10' wide landscape strip along Fern Avenue, as well as landscaping around the parking areas. **It is important to note that the conceptual plan and elevations are for informational purposes only, and there is no guarantee that it will be constructed exactly the way it is depicted on the submitted conceptual plan and elevation drawings.**

Per sec. 106-658, "wholesale, warehouse, storage, or distribution uses with a floor area not to exceed 20,000 sq. ft. per use" is allowed by right in this zoning district. Since storage is allowed as a use by right up to 20,000 sq. ft., what is being considered in this case is not the storage use. It is whether or not storage use exceeding 20,000 sq. ft. should be allowed. In order to assist the MPC Board in the evaluation of that decision, MPC staff analyzed the application on the specific size of the proposed use and its compatibility with the neighborhood in which it is located.

In order to evaluate a potential use of a property based on size, it's necessary to analyze and compare the proposed building footprint percentage with those in the surrounding area. The amount of space on the property that the footprint of the building covers is important to consider as this is one of the primary factors when assessing neighborhood compatibility. For example, building footprint percentages in downtown Shreveport can be as high as 100% in some cases. However, if a lot had a building footprint which covered 100% of the property in an area where building footprint percentages typically ranged from 20% to 40%, this would be highly incompatible at this location.

The proposed building footprint percentage of the subject site is 55%. By comparison, in the commercial area on Fern Avenue between College Lane and Slattery Boulevard, there are no existing commercial properties with building footprint percentages that high. The building footprint percentages range from 22% to 34%, with an average of 30%. In comparison to other sites zoned B-2-A, the applicant's proposal also exceeds all building footprint percentages.

From a city-wide perspective the highest concentration of properties zoned B-2-A, which are near S.H. 3132 and Bert Kouns Industrial Loop, on average have a building footprint percentage of 25%. The highest building footprint percentage found on a B-2-A zoned site was 40% at 8910 Linwood Avenue.

The applicant, Southern Storage, has 6 existing facilities throughout the Shreveport/Bossier area of Northwest Louisiana. For the two facilities that operate out of one building on a lot, both buildings, though comparable in size, took up a smaller percentage of the lot than what is proposed at the 4019 Fern Ave. site. South Bossier Storage Center is 53,771 sq. ft., covers 24% of its 5 acre lot (4915 Barksdale Blvd.), and the Mansfield Road Storage Center is 57,092 sq. ft., and covers 25% of its 5.12 acre lot (9301 Mansfield Rd.). Please note that building footprints are approximations only, based on the shape and area of each respective building. Photographs of these storage facilities have been provided for reference in your agenda packet (See *Exhibits C & D*).

This site is situated between the Highland Neighborhood, Broadmoor Neighborhood and Querbes City Park and Golf Course. While storage is an allowed use under the current zoning district, a storage facility of this size does not enhance the characteristics and ideals of both of these neighborhoods, nor the planned efforts to revitalize Querbes City Park and Golf Course. From a planning perspective, a storage facility of this magnitude is a sterile use, in that it will not have an active or viable presence in the neighborhood. In an area heavily invested in the history and art of Shreveport, a mixed-use development which strengthens the neighborhoods and creates more vibrancy in the area would be more appropriate. It should also be noted that this property will be zoned C-2 under the proposed UDC, therefore, if this case is approved, this site will be nonconforming because the recommended C-2 would not allow for any storage facilities. Likewise the exterior façade design of the building and the level of landscaping provided will be important compatibility factors that the MPC Staff will emphasize once the applicant submits a site plan application.

Per sec. 106-658, the applicant can legally convert 20,000 sq. ft. of the existing former Brookshire's building to storage use without any type of approval from the MPC Board of Directors. It is only because of the applicant's request to exceed 20,000 sq. ft. that this application is in front of the MPC Board. Due to the existing commercial footprints in the area which range from 22% to 34%, a building footprint of 55% is not compatible at this location. A building footprint percentage of 34% on this specific lot would be the largest footprint capacity that would still be harmonious with the surrounding commercial properties located on Fern Avenue. Please see *Exhibit E* in your agenda packet for a 34% building footprint rendering provided by MPC Staff.

The applicant is also requesting a variance in rear yard setback. Per sec. 106-663, the required rear yard is 25 feet unless a lesser dimension is approved by the MPC Board. There is an existing rear yard setback of 23'9" and has been in place since the original Brookshire's was constructed.

As mentioned previously, the applicant will need to submit a detailed site plan including façade elevations and a landscaping plan for review and approval by the Executive Director prior to the issuance of any permits.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the variance request in rear yard setback, and a Use Approval for a storage facility in excess of 20,000 sq. ft. of floor area with a maximum building footprint percentage of 34% (35,263 sq. ft. building footprint) as an alternative to the applicant's request for 55% (56,697 sq. ft. building footprint) as originally proposed. This recommendation includes a stipulation that the applicant submit a formal site plan for the review and approval by the Executive Director prior to the issuance of any permits.

The information stated herein is the result of discussion by a staff review team. The Board members will use all information made available to them in making their decision. A Planning Commission approval is a use approval only. The applicant is still responsible for complying with all other applicable Zoning Ordinance requirements and obtaining all necessary permits and approvals from other departments or agencies. This shall include, but not be limited to the requirements of the Zoning Administrator, building permits, liquor licenses, the parish health unit, and Certificates of Occupancy.