

PRINCIPAL POINTS OF PLANNING STATEMENT
Hudson Mall – Self-Storage Facility
701 Route 440

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The applicant has filed a development application for “d”(1) use variance and preliminary and final site approval for the Hudson Mall site located at 701 Route 440, identified on tax records as Block 16001, Lots 4 and 5 (the “project site”), the project site is located in the Waterfront Planned Development (WPD) zoning district.

The applicant proposes to renovate the existing Hudson Mall site, inclusive of façade, interior, and parking improvements. The middle section of the Hudson Mall building will be renovated into four new tenant spaces, including a self-storage facility, which is not a principal permitted use in the WPD zoning district. The space proposed for self-storage, which was formerly occupied by a movie theater, is now and has been vacant space since September 2018, not used for any purpose and giving the public the impression of an “abandoned” or “distressed” property. The applicant’s intent is to reenergize this section of the mall as space for a distinctly reasonable and viable commercial use.

There are no changes proposed to the principal building, with setbacks and coverage remaining as is. Although the number of parking spaces is being reduced from 554 to 525, the project site meets the minimum parking requirements.

The applicant requests a “d”(1) use variance to permit a self-storage facility at the project site.

A self-storage facility at the project site is particularly suited for the following reasons:

- Low-intensity use: generates less traffic than most commercial uses permitted at project site.
- Storage of personal goods, nothing related to more intense commercial operations.
- Offers self-storage opportunities for residents, particularly multi-family unit residents that may not have available storage space.
- Not a pass-by use: users plan visits and spend short amount of time at facility.
- Does not generate nuisances such as excess noise, emissions, etc.
- Able to be integrated into existing mall building without expanded building footprint.
- Generates minimal parking demand, much less than commercial uses occupying similar floor area.

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- Introduces a use that is consistent with the broad range of commercial uses that are in demand with the public and that can be accommodated in the existing building footprint.

The requested “d”(1) use variance and site plan application furthers the following purposes of zoning:

- a. To encourage municipal action to guide the appropriate use or development of all lands in this State, in a manner which will promote the public health, safety, morals, and general welfare. The self-storage facility would introduce a use to the mall that generates less traffic than other commercial uses can operate in concert with other commercial uses at the mall,
- g. To provide sufficient space in appropriate locations for a variety of agricultural, residential, recreational, commercial and industrial uses and open space, both public and private, according to their respective environmental requirements in order to meet the needs of all New Jersey citizens. Self-storage is a use in demand to provide space for storage needs of area residents and contributes to a broad range of commercial uses available at the site.
- i. To promote a desirable visual environment through creative development techniques and good civic design and arrangement. The proposed improvements will refresh both the exterior and interior of the site, enhancing the Hudson Mall by improving its aesthetic features and broadening the range of uses at the site.

The requested “d”(1) use variance for a self-storage facility addresses the negative criteria:

- No substantial detriment to the public good.
 - The self-storage use adds to the range of commercial services available to the public, enhancing the long term viability of the mall.
 - The self-storage use is low-intensity in that it does not produce more traffic than other permitted uses, nor does it result in nuisance issues related to noise, emissions, etc.
 - The location allows for efficient operations, i.e. loading areas at the rear of the site away from view of most mall customers, integrated into the existing mall building.
 - The self-storage use will occupy a space that has been vacant since September 2018 and reenergize this section of the mall with a viable and reasonable commercial use.

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- No substantial detriment to the zone plan and zoning ordinance. The self-storage facility is substantially consistent with the findings of the Updated Land Use Element:
 - Pg. 133 Land Use Plan: “Given their size and scale of operations, it is prudent for the City to work with owners of large-format retail properties to plan for their short and long-term future, to ensure that these areas continue to thrive as active, community-serving uses...” Self-storage use provides options for community residents in need of storage space.
 - Pg. 134: “Mall areas and areas with a concentration of big box stores provide entertainment and leisure options, shopping, and a variety of services in one place for people who typically don’t shop online. These areas are within easy access via public and private transportation, to a majority of the City’s population and also provide entry level jobs.” The proposed self-storage use is located in a facility with multiple uses and accessible via public and private transportation.
 - Pg. 135: “Future development must include successful management of the short-term viability of large-format retail centers that address tenant requirements and commitments and long-term leasehold obligations as well as broadening the range of retail and service uses permitted that keep the large-format centers viable. Furthermore, the retail tenants of these shopping centers will undoubtedly play a substantial role in serving residential developments such as Bayfront and other developments along Route 440 that will be coming online in the next few years.” The self-storage use addresses the short-term needs for retail centers to remain viable and providing long-term services for future residents in residential developments coming online. In addition, the proposed self-storage space was formerly occupied by a movie theater and has been vacant since September 2018, not used for any purpose and giving the public the impression of an “abandoned” or “distressed” property. The proposed self-storage use broadens the range of uses to keep the mall viable.
 - Pg. 137: “As outlined above, site modifications to establish connections that were once severed and extend street vitality through programming can provide contemporary and experiential retail environments. Large retail centers can succeed by offering a wider range of retail and service uses, some that may not be permitted under current zoning regulations or provisions of applicable redevelopment plans. For the short- to medium-term viability of the larger retail centers, greater flexibility, in uses in concert with aesthetic improvements, should be encouraged.”

These principal points of planning outline the reasons to support approval of the requested “d”(1) use variance and preliminary and final site plan application.

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