



Item # 5  
MCPB  
7.29.04

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK & PLANNING COMMISSION

**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** July 22, 2004  
**TO:** Montgomery County Planning Board  
**VIA:** Richard Hawthorne, Chief *RCH*  
Michael Ma, Supervisor *Ma*  
Development Review Division  
**FROM:** Mary Beth O'Quinn *mb*  
Planning Department Staff  
(301) 495-1322



**REVIEW TYPE:** Site Plan Review  
**APPLYING FOR:** Approval of 147,660 square feet total space, including 143,910 square feet Self Storage Facility (88,596 FAR) and 3,750 square feet General Retail  
**PROJECT NAME:** ez Storage  
**CASE #:** 8-04032  
**REVIEW BASIS:** Site Plan required for the Commercial Revitalization Overlay Zone: for allowance of additional building height [§59-C-18.213(c)]  
**ZONE:** C-2 Zone; Takoma Park Commercial Revitalization Overlay Zone (CROZ)  
**LOCATION:** Holton Lane, 600 feet East of New Hampshire Avenue  
**MASTER PLAN:** Takoma Park  
**APPLICANT:** Siena Corporation  
**FILING DATE:** May 11, 2003  
**HEARING DATE:** July 29, 2004

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**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Approval of 147,660 square feet total space, including 143,910 square feet Self Storage Facility of which 88,596 constitutes above ground FAR and resident manager apartment, and 3,750 square feet is General Retail; and an allowance for additional building height per §59-C-18.213(c), subject to the following conditions:

1. Stormwater Management
  - a. Conditions of the City of Takoma Park, Maryland Stormwater Permit approval dated April 30, 2004;
  - b. Conditions of the Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services concept approval, dated May 6, 2004.
2. Environmental Planning

Condition of M-NCPPC Environmental Planning communication dated July 22, 2004, including:  
Reduce the amount of impervious surface and provide additional green space by elimination the two isolated parking spaces at the rear of the loading area.
3. Signature Set

Prior to signature approval of the site and landscape plans the following revisions must be made and/or information provided on the site plan, subject to staff review and approval:

  - a. Site Plan
    - i. Indicate per drawing note that PUE is not provided per staff recommendation:  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING BOARD, 8787 GEORGIA AVENUE, SILVER SPRING,  
MARYLAND 20910

- ii. Indicate a public use access easement for the sidewalk area(s) adjoining the Holton Lane right-of-way;
  - iii. Provide details for fencing, railings, or retaining walls and any signage; note the top and bottom elevations of all retaining walls; retaining walls to be constructed of masonry materials; fencing to be limited to 6'-8" at the site perimeter;
  - iv. Provide the development program inspection schedule.
- b. Landscape and Lighting Plans
- i. Provide two additional shade trees with ground cover plantings at the rear of the parking lot adjacent to the apartment patio;
  - ii. Provide street trees at 2.5 to 3-inch caliper at the time of installation;
  - iii. Provide evergreen hedge planting, 36-inches in height at the time of planting, between the trees proposed for the parking area perimeter; replace azaleas with rhododendron obtusum;
  - iv. Provide detail for street tree boxes and soil panel;
  - v. Provide detail and specifications for street lighting fixture approved by the Takoma Park Council and staff;
  - vi. Provide a photometric distribution lighting plan and summary chart showing average max/average min and minimum footcandle lighting levels; provide details for full cutoff fixtures at fixed horizontal angles; replace floodlights with horizontal cut-off fixtures.
- c. Architectural Plan(s)
- i. Provide plans for the retail stores showing entrances; provide elevations for the office façade, the retail storefronts, and the entrance steps showing materials and dimensions;
  - ii. Show additional windows or faux-windows on the east façade to activate the view toward the county line and increase the sense of security.
4. Site Plan Enforcement Agreement
- Submit a Site Plan Enforcement Agreement and Development Review Program for review and approval prior to approval of the signature set as follows:
- a. Development Program to include a phasing schedule as follows:
    - i. Landscaping and street trees associated with each parking lot and building shall be completed as construction of each facility is completed.
    - ii. Clearing and grading to correspond to the construction phasing, to minimize soil erosion;
    - iii. Coordination of each section of the development and roads;
    - iv. Phasing of dedications, stormwater management, sediment/erosion control, forestation, or other features;
  - b. No clearing or grading prior to M-NCPPC approval of signature set of plans.



## ISSUES OF SITE PLAN REVIEW

In the course of site plan review, staff and applicant reviewed the location of the building, parking, lighting, landscaping. Streetscape design was studied for efficient and safe pedestrian movement and for the opportunity to establish a commercial CBD-type standard for this underused area of Takoma Park that lies within the Revitalization Zone. Staff members of M-NCPPC and the City of Takoma Park engaged in sustained discussion with the applicant to achieve solutions to the questions concerning the streetscape elements.

1. Allowance for Additional Building Height §59-C-18.213(c)

Section 59-C-18.213(c)(1) of the Zoning Ordinance provides for additional allowable building height over the standard 30 feet, up to 42 feet for commercial development if the buildings are compatible with the neighborhood and consistent with the intent of the Master Plan.

**Applicant Position:** The applicant seeks Planning Board approval of additional allowable building height, up to 34 +/- feet (as defined by the Zoning Ordinance). The additional height will permit the construction of a three-story building with street front retail along Holton Street, offering greater leasing potential and broader tenant mix that may encourage revitalization to the CROZ district.

**Community Position:** None

**City Position:** The City of Takoma Park supports the applicant's request for additional building height.

**Staff Recommendation:** Staff supports the applicant's request for additional building height as shown on the proposed drawing. The building as proposed, with retail storefronts, offers a much greater compatibility with the surrounding development and future commercial development, than would a building 30 feet in height without the retail opportunities.

3. Pedestrian Circulation and Streetscape

The existing site configuration, grading, and buildable area challenge the provision of a standard CBD streetscape along Holton Lane. Typical sidewalk width of 10-15 feet, with street trees within the right-of-way, that is, with tree panel along the curb and sidewalk set back, is not feasible for this site.

**Applicant Position:** The applicant proposes, per the City of Takoma Park Planning staff and MNCPPC staff, a sidewalk 5 feet in width, placed behind the brick-banded tree box panel that adjoins curb. Areas of the sidewalk will be located outside of the right-of-way, on the applicant's property.

**Community Position:** None.

**City Position:** The Planning Office for the City of Takoma Park has encouraged site-specific sidewalk placement in consideration of the applicant's development and to achieve the goals for the Commercial Revitalization Overlay Zone and to establish a streetscape standard for Holton Lane.

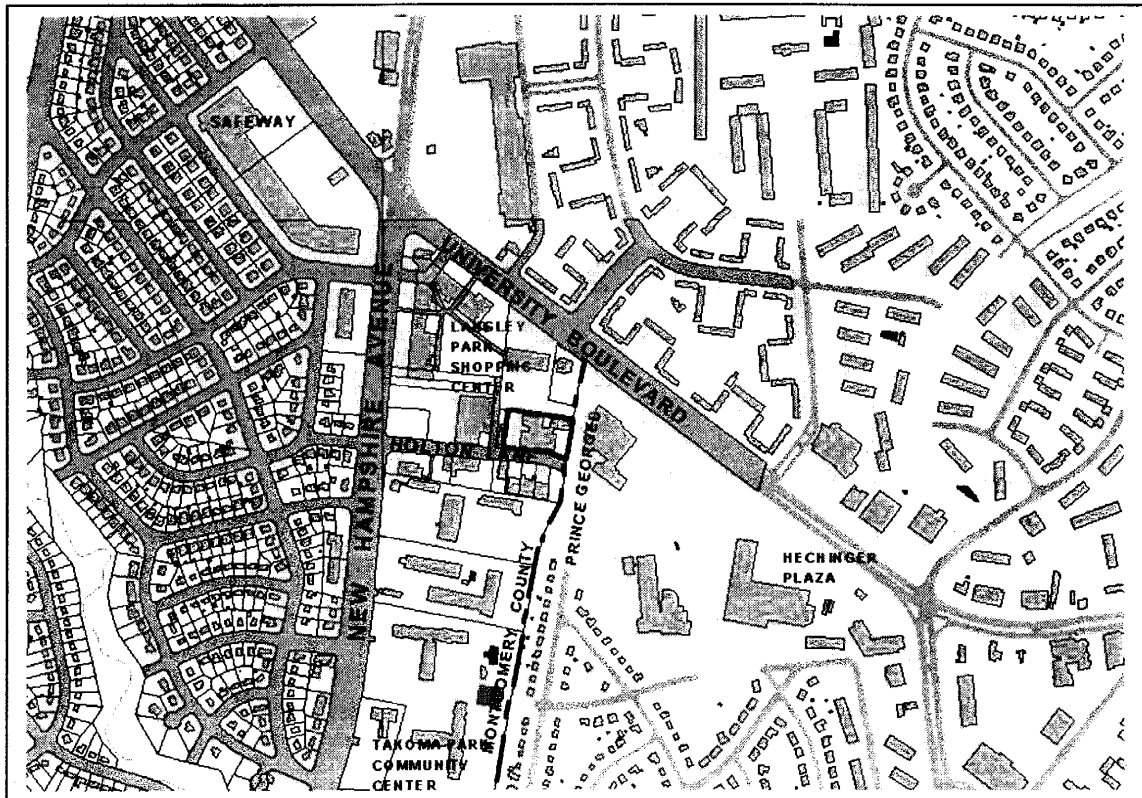
**Staff Recommendation:** Staff supports the sidewalk location as proposed, with a public use access easement, for the following reasons:

- The site's street frontage comprises a relatively short distance;
- Holton Lane is currently a dead-den street;
- The streetscape design, with lighting, street trees, and brick banding accommodates ADA-compliant pedestrian dimensions, and adequately negotiates the grade changes.

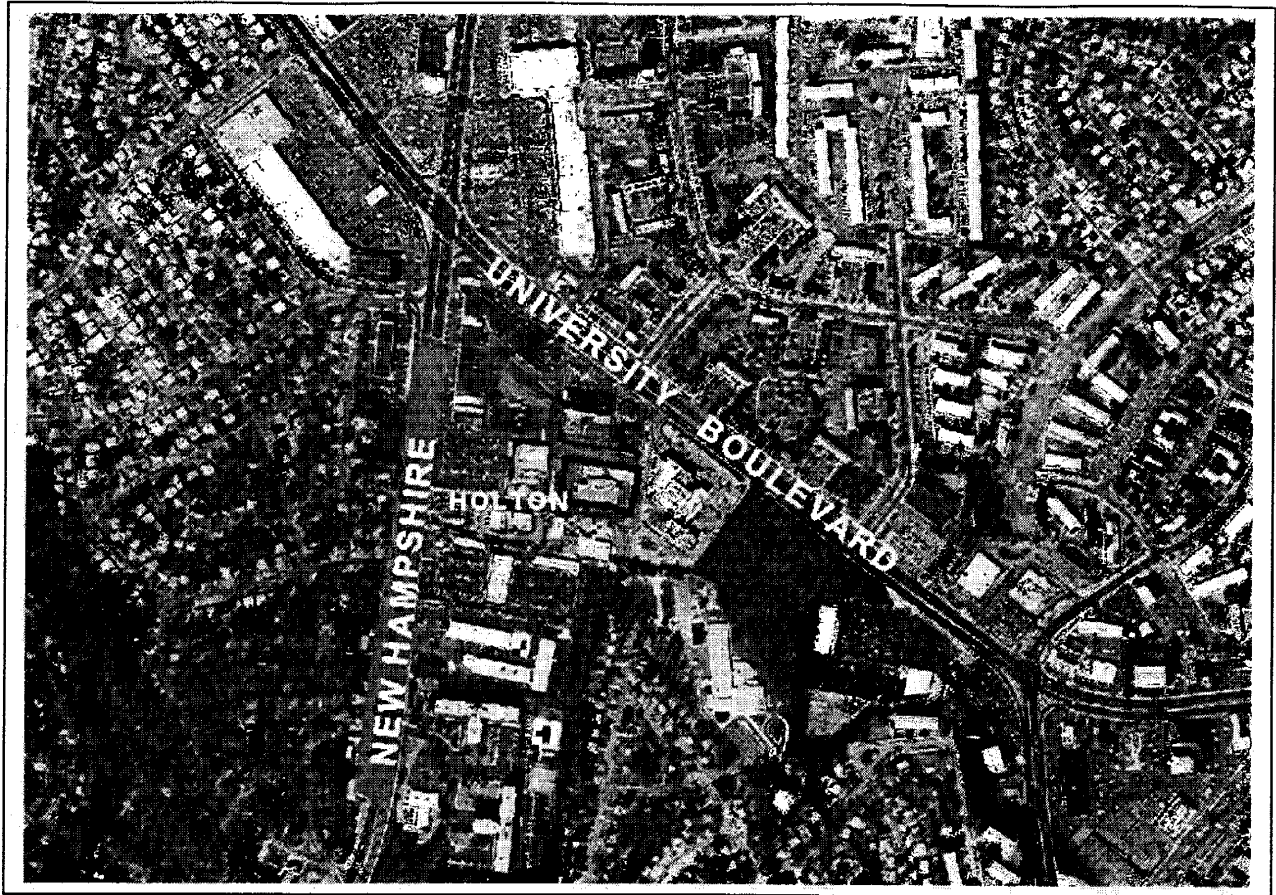
**PROJECT DESCRIPTION: Surrounding Vicinity**

The property is located on Holton Lane in Takoma Park, east of New Hampshire Avenue, adjoining the boundary of Prince Georges County (PG). The site lies approximately 600 feet east of New Hampshire Avenue and 1.25 miles north of Eastern Avenue, the boundary between the District of Columbia and Montgomery County. University Boulevard lies approximately 1,000 feet to the north, New Hampshire Avenue functions, northbound, as the formal gateway to Montgomery County for this eastern county area. The site zoning is designated as C-2 with the Commercial Revitalization Overlay Zone application. The site is bounded on the south by Holton Lane street frontage, on the east by the Prince Georges County line and the commercial uses of PG's C-1 zone; on the north, are commercial and institutional concerns that utilized access from University Boulevard.

Surrounding uses include the Langley Park Shopping Center to the north; Hechinger Plaza; Carole Highlands Elementary School and the Hillwood Manor subdivision are located to the east within PG County. Bright Light Baptist Church is located on the west side of New Hampshire Avenue; the Takoma Park Community Center lies to the south of the site. Holton Lane in its entirety is zoned commercial, and currently supports a variety of small businesses, including a Hallal store, auto repair, variety store, and a US Post Office. A pre-school with daycare center adjoins the site directly to the north.



*Vicinity Map showing Takoma Park, and New Hampshire Avenue, the gateway to Montgomery County. The Langley Park Shopping Center may be seen north of the site, adjoining University Boulevard.*



## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION: Site Description**

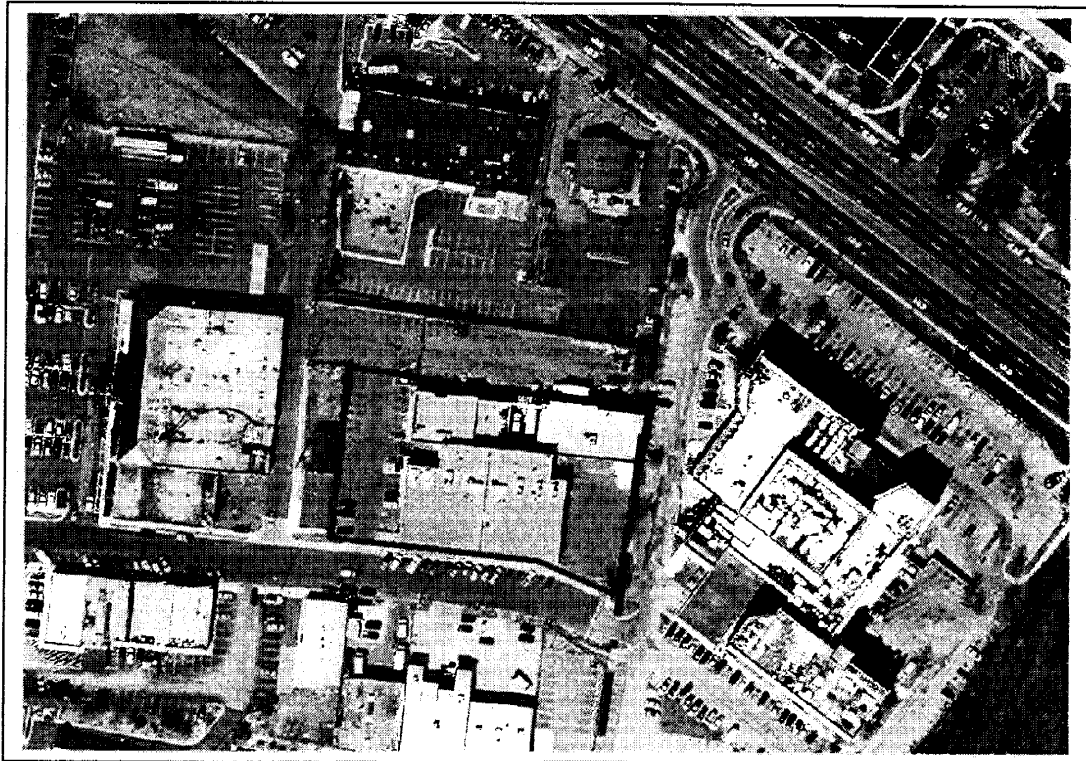
The subject site, roughly rectangular in shape, covers 1.65 acres of land area or 71,919 square feet with approximately 290-foot width at the street frontage on Holton Lane and 250 feet of lot depth. The entire lot is currently paved, resulting in a stark environment, in direct sun that is unrelieved by any vegetation. The only existing tree is a 12-inch deciduous variety in poor condition at the far southeast corner.

The site's natural topography has been starkly rendered by the paving of open areas, incorporated vis a vis the construction of the existing buildings: the grade elevations drop more than twenty feet from the Holton Lane street frontage around the vehicular driveway that encircles the group of four buildings, to the site's rear along the north property boundary. The north boundary is further demarcated by an 8-foot retaining wall that drops down to the adjoining parcel on the north. Retaining walls negotiate the large grade difference on the east as well.

The site is currently occupied by an assemblage of four structures:

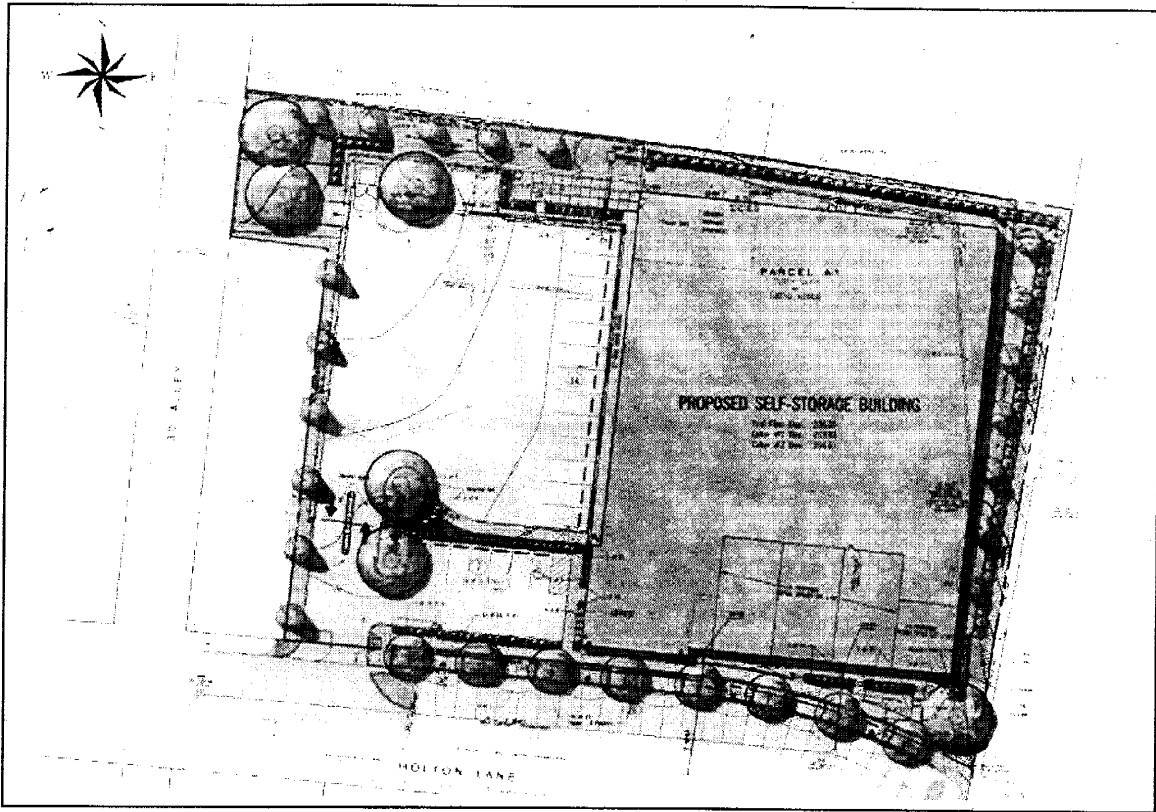
1. the major structure, a large 3-story masonry unit/brick warehouse with 160 foot of building facade facing Holton Lane;
2. three smaller structures to the rear of the major building (a block/brick warehouse used for offices, a covered garage, and a larger warehouse that adjoins the county line; the three structures effectively "take up the grade" of the lots, with rear entries that sit at significantly lower elevation than Holton Lane.

The warehouses are currently occupied by a variety store offering candy, party supplies, decorations, and entertainment goods.



*Aerial photograph of the site and adjacent lots. The commercial corridor of University Boulevard can be seen at the upper right. Note the demarcation between Prince Georges County and Montgomery County. Holton Lane, at the county line is barricaded to prevent through traffic between the counties. The stark environment created by the large amount of paving will be alleviated by the streetscape proposed for the EZ storage plan.*

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION: Proposal



**Landscape plan showing the placement of the ezStorage building, streetscape, sidewalks, street parking, and general landscaping. Note the east property line, which is also the Montgomery County-Prince Georges County boundary.**

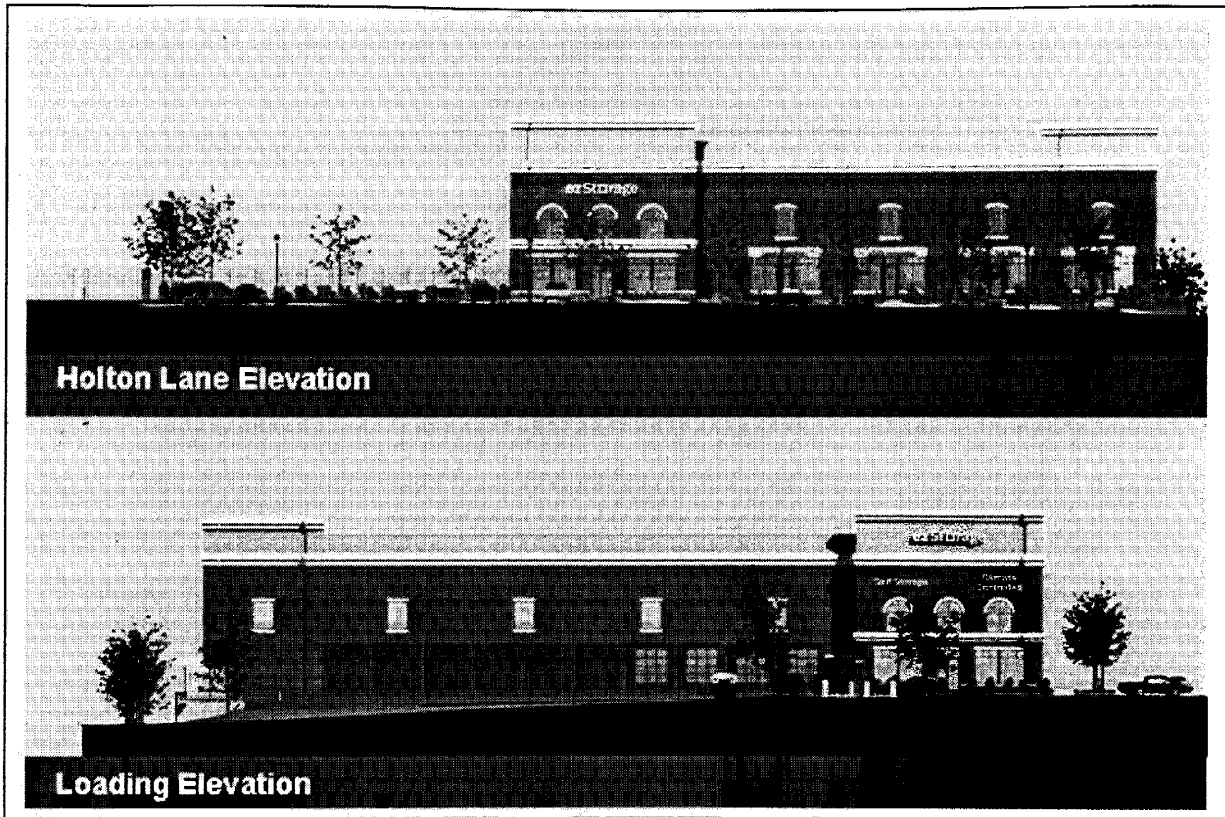
The ezStorage plan proposed a building of 147,660 square feet, of which 88,596 square feet are accommodated above grade on three floors. The building area of the three floors comprises 1.23 FAR. Included in this area will be 3,750 square feet of general retail space, accessible from Holton Lane and a residential apartment for the on-site manager. Two stories of underground storage space, or 59,064 square feet, will be constructed below grade.

The site plan and building architecture have been designed primarily following the established typology for self-storage facilities, that is, a monolithic massing, however, in this case with significant customized features: retail storefronts facing the public street, architectural façade treatment using stone-like materials and scaled articulation, double soldier coursed brick-banded sidewalks, tightly spaced street trees, special street light fixtures.

The building footprint occupies almost half of the site area, taking advantage of the steep grade differential of more than 20 feet from Holton Lane (elevation 220) to the site's rear lot line (elevation 198). The structure, shifted to the eastern half of the site, leaves the western half for vehicular access, surface parking and loading. This paved area accommodates a full-turning radius for trucks, an obligatory dimension within the site boundaries, due to the dead-end termination of Holton Lane that does not provide a cul-de-sac or hammerhead.

The design features a building with a primary business entrance for ezStorage, facing Holton Lane, and an additional three retail entrances along the street façade. The storefronts are intended to enhance retail activity along the street, and contribute to a better pedestrian environment. Terraced entrances to the retail spaces accommodate handicapped access and create an opportunity for attractive foundation plantings.



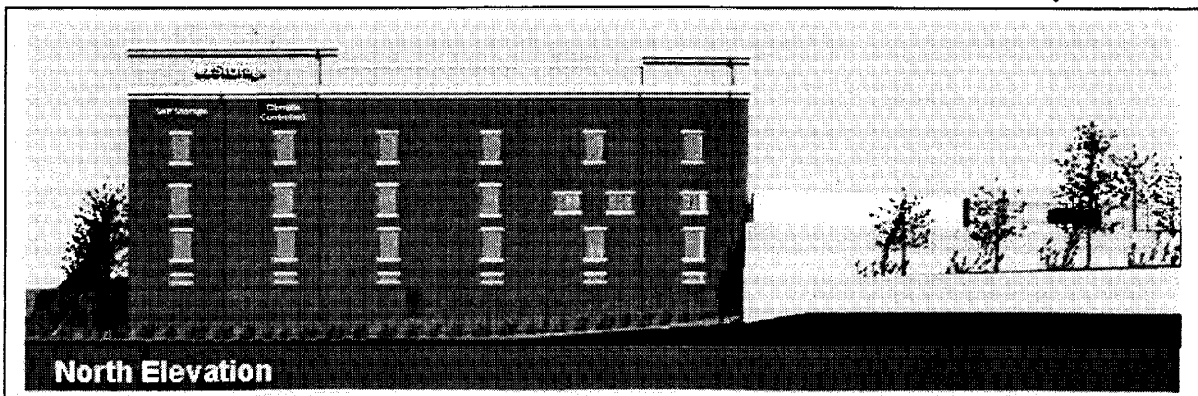


**The Holton Lane elevation featuring special streetscape: White Oak street trees, tightly spaced, double soldier course brick banding, and special street lights. The storefronts provide a human scale that is articulated with its cornice and retail windows.**

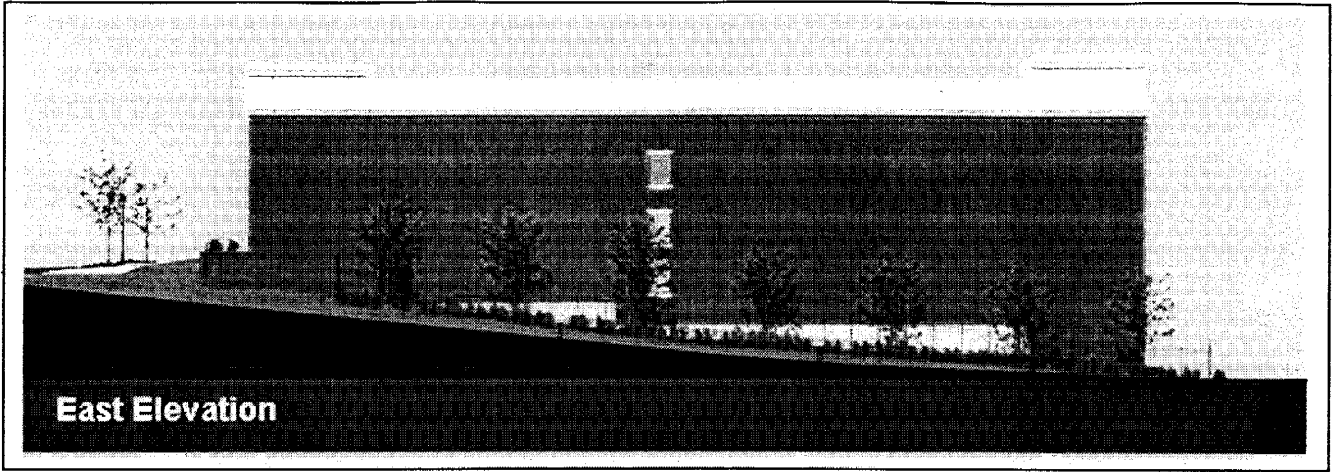
The public sidewalk will be enhanced with brick-banded tree boxes, which support White Oak shade trees and ground cover. The spacing and dimensions for the sidewalk are tight, owing to roadway right-of-way dedication prior to the sector master plan designation. Nevertheless, the proposal achieves a safe, adequate, ADA-compliant pedestrian route, with optimal streetscape, through its location that lies partially within the Holton Lane right-of-way and partially within the lot itself.

Parking is provided in three separate areas: a small 7-space surface area for ezStorage business customers is provided close to the street entrance; the larger parking surface at the rear will accommodate loading and storage delivery, with truck-size turning capacity; retail customer parking will be provided as on-street parking, arranged as head-in spaces along Holton Lane. The storage parking adequately separates vehicular and pedestrian traffic, while providing screening from street views with hedges and shade trees. The area for street parking will be significantly enhanced by the CBD-type streetscape proposed.

**The north façade, visible from University Boulevard.**







The storage building as seen from the Prince Georges County commercial area. Staff recommends the enhancement of the east façade to encourage a more activated street, and to enhance the sense of security to pedestrians and customers.



Perspective rendering from the southeast depicting the Holton Lane retail storefronts, special streetscape, with brick handed paving, White Oak street trees, and specialty globe lighting.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION: Prior Approvals**

The Takoma Park City Council passed Resolution #2004-37 in support of the ezStorage Development Proposal July 12, 2004.

The parcel is currently recorded as Parcel A-1, "Hanley's Addition to Langley Park," WWW 80, Plat 23, Liber 8616, Folio 232.

**ANALYSIS: Development Standards**

<b>Project Name</b>		<b><u>ez Storage, Takoma Park</u></b>	
<b>Site Plan 8-03032</b>		<b>C-2 and CROZ Zone</b>	
<i>Site Plan review required in the CROZ for Takoma Park [59-C-18.213c]</i>			
<b>PROJECT DATA TABLE</b>			
<b><u>Development Standard</u></b>	<b><u>C-2 Zone</u></b>	<b><u>CROZ</u></b>	<b><u>Proposed</u></b>
	<b>Permitted or Required</b>		
Gross Lot Area (ac)	N/A	N/A	1.65 acres (71,919 sf)
Net Lot Area (previous dedication)	N/A	N/A	1.65 acres (71,919 sf)
Building Area - total	N/A	N/A	147,660 sf
Building Area – above ground (FAR)	107,878 sf	N/A	88,596 sf
Retail Space	N/A	N/A	3,750 sf
Green Space %	10% (7,192 sf)		28% (20,000 sf)
Floor Area Ratio	1.50 FAR		1.23 FAR
Building Height: 3 stories	42 feet max	30 feet <sup>1</sup>	34 +/- feet
<b><u>Building Setbacks (ft)</u></b>			
Front street	10 feet	**	10 feet
Side (adjacent to C-2)	0 feet	**	10 feet
Side (adjacent to C-1)	0 feet	**	15 feet (approx)
Rear	0 feet	**	15 feet
<b><u>Parking</u></b>			
Self Storage	6 spaces		7 spaces <sup>3</sup>
Storage Loading	N/A		14 spaces <sup>3</sup>
Retail (5 spaces/1,000 sf): Holton Lane	19 spaces		26 spaces <sup>3</sup>
<p><i>1 - §59-C-18.213(c) The Planning Board may allow additional building height up to 42 feet in commercial development if the Board finds that the buildings are compatible with the neighborhood and consistent with the intent of the master plan.</i></p> <p><i>2 - §59-C-18.213(a)(2) The Planning Board may reduce building setbacks to accomplish master plan objectives.</i></p> <p><i>3 - §59-C-18.213 The Planning Board may waive the requirement for number of parking spaces if such waiver will accomplish the goals of the master plan.</i></p>			

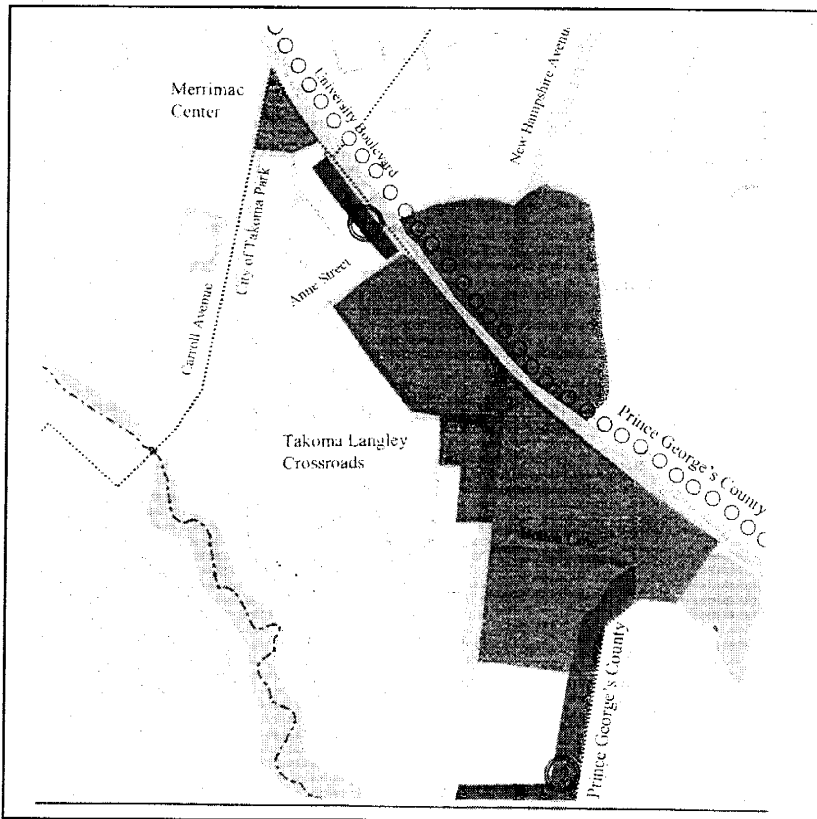
**ANALYSIS: Conformance to Master Plan**

A major theme of the Takoma Park Master Plan (2000) is the revitalization of commercial centers, including improvements in this area of the Maryland Gateway Eastern and New Hampshire Avenues Center. To support revitalization, the Plan recommended and the County Council adopted a new Commercial Revitalization Overlay Zone (CROZ), whose purpose is to:

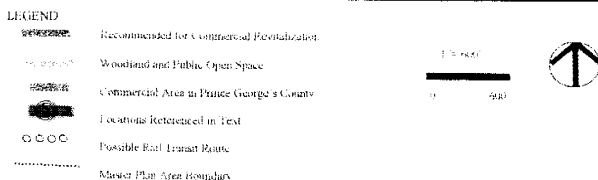
- Foster economic vitality and attractive community character in areas needing revitalization;
- Promote an enhanced pedestrian environment and an improved circulation system to pedestrians and bicycles as well as motor vehicles;
- Ensure consistency with the master plan vision for specific existing commercial areas; and
- Provide for the combination of residential with commercial uses.

A major theme of the Master Plan is the revitalization of commercial centers. Holton Lane lies within the Takoma-Langley Crossroads commercial center. The Master Plan does not address this particular property directly, but several recommended elements of design for the CROZ are suitably pertinent to this proposal. The subject proposal for ezStorage achieves the intent of the Master Plan and the CROZ by:

- Inclusion of street-oriented retail space on Holton Lane: by ensuring a minimum amount of commercial use on the this site, the plan will help realized the economic goals of the Master Plan;
- Provision for flexibility of development standards, such as building height: by allowing for more commercial development, and retail use, better design will be achieved that encourages pedestrian use and the accommodation of landscaping and street trees.



The proposed site plan provides Holton Lane with visible improvements by replacing an unsightly parking area and warehouses with attractive stone-type building facades that, in scale and orientation, will encourage pedestrian retail activity. The project will create an attractive, substantial presence that will establish a recognized standard for the future revitalization commercial development on Holton Lane. The project will also provide economic development for the City of Takoma Park. [See also *Memorandum* from Community Based Planning, attached.]



**FINDINGS: For Site Plan Review § 59-D-3.4**

1. *The Site Plan is consistent with an approved development plan or a project plan for the optional method of development if required.*

Not applicable.

2. *The Site Plan meets all of the requirements of the zone in which it is located.*

See Project Data Table, page 9.

3. *The location of the building and structures, the open spaces, the landscaping, recreation facilities, and the pedestrian and vehicular circulation systems are adequate, safe and efficient.*

- a. Buildings

The buildings location is adequate, safe and maximally efficient. [See Proposal Description, page 7.] The building is well sited to utilize the natural topography to greatest advantage and to provide safe and efficient access to vehicles and pedestrians. The building design offers its future occupants significant flexibility for a variety of architectural programs and the opportunity to achieve a new standard for pedestrian-scale storefront retail within the CROZ.

- b. Open Spaces

The open spaces are treated sensitively with respect to repairing and improving the dearth of landscaping of the existing site. The primary open space will be the parking area on the west portion of the site, intended to serve the customers who will use this area for delivery and loading. Although the open space on the site remains in approximately the same form as its existing configuration, the proposal at hand promises to improve extensively the quality of the open space with respect to landscaping and materials.

Currently, the site supports only one 12-inch caliper tree in poor condition. The proposal for ezStorage includes attractive vegetation that is well spaced to provide an adequate coverage during its interim years, prior to maturity.

- c. Landscaping and Lighting

Landscaping and lighting proposed represent a substantial improvement for this neglected commercial area of Takoma Park. The proposal features eight tightly-spaced White Oak street trees planted in brick-banded tree boxes with lirioppe ground cover—a CBD-style streetscape, that will also include special street lighting, as well. The building façade, offering an entrance terrace that negotiates the change in grade while providing adequate handicapped access, accommodates foundation plantings of junipers, shamrock holly, and lirioppe at the terrace base.

The proposal features hedge screening for parking visible from Holton Lane, maple trees along the site's rear parking area, with hornbeams at the adjoining property on the east. Firethorn, planted in a tightly spaced row along the east and rear of the property will provide an attractive green cover and offer a deterrent to trespassers. The patio space for the resident manager's apartment will be planted with arborvitae and shamrock holly. Staff recommends two additional shade trees to be planted near the patio area, to reduce impervious area slightly more, and provide additional shade for the recreational use of the resident.

Lighting provided consists of ground lighting at the pedestrian walkways and building mounted floodlights along the facades. Staff recommends final review of lighting at signature set, and the use of horizontally mounted fixtures with cut-off shields.

d. Vehicular and Pedestrian Circulation

The vehicular traffic entrance and connection to the parking is adequate and safe. The carefully considered layout achieves the separation of conflicting uses (pedestrian/vehicular). The vehicular entrance from Holton provide adequate turning radius for truck use while maintaining a pedestrian scale with attractive plantings at the street front.

The pedestrian circulation system provides adequate safety and efficiency. The plan's proposed streetscape, including street trees, brick accent paving, planted tree boxes, and special street lighting, promises to enhance the pedestrian experience and significantly increase the safety and efficiency of this block for this development and others.

4. *Each structure and use is compatible with other uses and other Site Plans and with existing and proposed adjacent development.*

The proposed design for the Holton Lane ezStorage establishes a new streetscape standard for the new and future development. Additionally, the stone-like building materials proposed and the architectural detailing, intended to enhance the pedestrian-friendly character sets a desirable standard for other future development within this revitalization zone. The building form, although massive from its functional requirements is skillfully handled in its facades and exterior details, allowing maximum compatibility for its contextual role. The placement of the building permits efficient use of all building levels and convenient customer access to the storefront retail business housed within the structure. The proposal fulfills the goals of the Master Plan and sets the standard for future development in this area of Takoma Park.

The activity associated with the proposed residential uses will not cause any negative effect on the surrounding institutional and commercial uses.

5. *The Site Plan meets all applicable requirements of Chapter 22A regarding forest conservation.*

The site is exempt from Forest Conservation.

**FINDINGS: For Site Plan Review § 59-C-18.215 (CROZ)**

a. *The Site Plan is consistent with the recommendation in the applicable master or sector plan for the area.*

See *Conformance to Master Plan*, page 9.

b. *The Site Plan meets all of the purposes and requirements of this overlay zone as well as applicable requirements of the underlying zone;*

The Site Plan meets the purposes and requirements of the Commercialization and Revitalization Overlay Zone and the purposes and requirements of the C-2 Zone. The building size and functional design, in conjunction with the mixed uses proposed, will “foster economic vitality and attractive community character and ensure consistency with the master plan” in providing “continued commercial use and low-intensity residential or office space as an appropriate land use.” See also *Project Data Table*, 9.

- c. *Each structure and use is compatible with other uses and other site plans and with existing and proposed adjacent development.*

See discussion on compatibility under *Findings for Site Plan #4*, on this page 11, above.