

Planning & Real Estate Consultants

June 24, 2020

Zoning Board of Adjustment
City of Elizabeth
50 Winfield Scott Plaza
Elizabeth, NJ 07201

**RE: Proposed Redevelopment Project
703 & R 703-727 Spring Street and 729-763 Meadow Street**

Dear Members of the Zoning Board of Adjustment:

Spring Street Development Corp. (“SSDC”) is the owner or ground lessee of multiple adjoining parcels located on the southeast corner of the intersection of Spring Street (New Jersey State Highway Routes 1 and 9) and North Avenue East in the City of Elizabeth. The lots that comprise the Subject Property are designated as Block 8, Lots 1299.A and 1699.D on the City’s tax maps.

The Subject Property is currently located in two zoning districts. The portion of the site closest to Spring Street is located in the HC Highway Commercial District and the remainder of the site is in the MRC Manufacturing, Research, & Commercial District. The City of Elizabeth’s current Zoning Map, revised July 16, 2019, indicates the Subject Property is also in the “North Ave East/Spring Street/Woodruff Lane - Ward 5 Redevelopment Area.” However, a redevelopment plan has not yet been adopted for this redevelopment area.

SSDC’s intention is to redevelop the Subject Property with commercial uses appropriate for its location at a major intersection that is a gateway to the City. As a redevelopment plan is not yet in place to allow for this type of development, SSDC currently has an application pending before the Zoning Board of Adjustment seeking preliminary and final site plan approval, use variance approvals, and bulk variance and design waiver approvals to permit the temporary use of the property as a component of a logistics facility on a separate property. This use supports a nearby Amazon fulfillment center by providing parking areas for delivery vans and employees’ vehicles. This development proposes minimal improvements to the site, as it is not a long-term use of the site, although it would permit environmental capping and paving on the Subject Property in connection and compliance with a New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Administrative Consent Order.

To show its commitment to longer-term redevelopment of the property with commercial uses, SSDC will file a conceptual plan with the Planning Board. This major redevelopment project will greatly enhance the Subject Property and surrounding area by providing for significant upgrades in terms of aesthetics, circulation and stormwater management. It would also provide fiscal benefits to the municipality and State through creation of jobs as well as real estate and sales taxes. This consideration is significant given the current uncertainty in the real estate market and the budgetary constraints many municipalities are – or soon will be – facing.

However, redevelopment plans often foresee the reality that property may not be immediately ready or available for its long-term use by permitting “interim uses.” I am familiar with a number of examples of this concept in redevelopment plans from

municipalities throughout New Jersey including Asbury Park, Hoboken, Jersey City, Linden and Toms River. This type of temporary use allows for some use of one or more properties for uses, such as parking, up to a maximum amount of time. Utilizing this approach recognizes that there are often barriers to redevelopment that may hold up the long-term reuse of a property, but that there may opportunities to productively use a property in the short-term.

For example, the Liberty Harbor Redevelopment Plan in Jersey City includes the following language:

“Interim uses may be established, subject to site plan approval by the Planning Board. The developer/applicant must satisfactorily demonstrate, and the Planning Board must find that, such use will not have an adverse effect upon existing or contemplated development during the interim use period. Interim uses must receive Site Plan approval from the Planning Board. The Planning Board shall establish an interim use period of between one (1) year and three (3) years in duration, subject to the Planning Board’s discretion. Additional renewals of an interim use may be granted by the Planning Board, subject to the same interim period limitations specified above.”

The Route 1/9 and Stiles Street Redevelopment Plan in Linden includes more specificity as to interim uses:

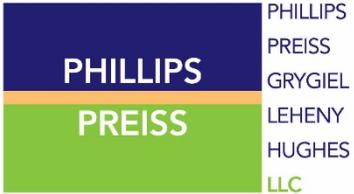
“The following shall be permitted interim uses in the Redevelopment Area. The duration during which such uses may remain in place shall be determined by the City of Linden Planning Board.

1. Surface parking facilities.
2. Any other use that will not encumber the property in any way as would hinder the ultimate development of the permanent permitted use.
3. Construction staging area.”

It is notable that the area that is the subject of the above redevelopment plan is also an existing industrial parcel located at an intersection on Routes 1 and 9 that is intended to be redeveloped for commercial uses.

In the case of the Subject Property, the use exists already and is very consistent with existing uses in the vicinity (including properties at 636 Division Street and 714-722 Division Street that were approved for vehicle parking in 2009 and 2013, respectively, by the Zoning Board of Adjustment), as well as those permitted in the zones in which the property is located. For example, any larger scale permitted use in either zone in which the site is situated would include large surface parking lots. The permitted uses in the MRC zone in particular also allows for uses including electrical and plumbing contracting which require parking for service vehicles as well as employees’ cars. Furthermore, the use currently under consideration by the Zoning Board of Adjustment is similar to the automotive sales use previously approved for the Subject Property.

In summary, I believe it would be reasonable to allow for the type of use that is the subject of SSDC’s current Zoning Board of Adjustment application for a specified period of time, with the understanding that a more attractive and valuable use will be developed in the coming years.



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I would be happy to answer any questions you may have regarding this information at the next Zoning Board of Adjustment hearing for pending application for the Subject Property.

Yours truly,

Paul Grygiel, AICP, PP
Principal