

CITY OF CENTRAL FALLS
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING +
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
ADMINISTRATIVE RECOMMENDATION
TO THE ZONING BOARD OF REVIEW



CASE 2016-12-22-1 (30 HIGGINSON AVENUE)



Summary

Application Type: Dimensional Variance

Address/AP/Ward: 30 Higginson Avenue
Assessor's Plat 9, Lot 206B
Ward 5

Applicant: Gordon R. Archibald, Inc. c/o Todd Ravenelle, 200 Main Street, Pawtucket, RI

Property Owner: Packaging and More, Inc.

Parcel Size: 109,664 square feet

Zoning: M-2

Project Description

The applicant is the civil engineer for Packaging and More, a Central-Falls based manufacturer. Packaging and More is expanding their facility to create greater efficiency in their operations. The area of the addition had been the location of some flash flooding. After substantial investigation, the Central Falls Department of Public Works cleared stormwater pipes in the area, reducing flooding problems. As part of their expansion, Packaging and More will be constructing a stormwater retention pond, which will further reduce the likelihood of flooding and protect their investment. Forty-eight parking spaces exist on the lot, as the property was once a supermarket. Since its conversion to industrial use, parking need has been significantly smaller. Packaging and More utilizes less than twenty spaces, as much of its facility is warehousing. The applicant therefore is requesting a Dimensional Variance to avoid constructing additional parking spaces (90 are required) and reduce the size of the addition or stormwater retention pond.

Discussion

The request for a dimensional variance is analyzed as follows:

Prior to approval of a dimensional variance, the Board is required to make positive findings on the following standards:

- (1) That the hardship from which the applicant seeks relief is due to the unique characteristics of the subject land or structure and not to general characteristics of the surrounding area; and not due to a physical or economic disability of the applicant;*

The required size of the building and number of loading bays to increase the efficiency of Packaging and More's operations and warrant this investment are 24,796 square feet and seven, respectively. Additionally, the size of the stormwater retention pond has been calculated by the engineer to minimize the likelihood of flooding at this location that would severely impact Packaging and More's operations.

- (2) That said hardship is not the result of any prior action of the applicant and does not result primarily from the desire of the applicant to realize greater financial gain.*

There is no evidence that the applicant's hardship is the result from prior action or the desire to realize greater financial gain as the limits of the site and largely warehousing operations of the property owner are the primary conditions creating hardship.

- (3) That the granting of the requested variance will not alter the general characteristic of the area or impair the intent or purpose of this zoning ordinance or the comprehensive plan for the city;*

The proposed addition is in line with the general characteristic of the area, which is primarily suburban-style manufacturing facilities.

The applicant's proposed plan conforms to all other regulations in the City's Zoning Ordinance. The purpose of the Zoning Ordinance includes "Promote the public health, safety, and general welfare (100A); Provide for a range of uses and intensities of use appropriate to the character of the city and reflecting current and expected future needs; (Section 100 B), and Provide for efficient review of development proposals, to clarify and expedite the zoning approval process (100 M)." As efficiencies have resulted in reduced demand for staff in manufacturing facilities, associated parking has also reduced. The intent of off-street parking requirements is to limit necessary on-street parking. The design of this facility is such that it would be hard to imagine a need for any more than forty-eight spaces.

The comprehensive plan of the city strives "[t]o promote orderly growth and development that recognizes the natural characteristics of the land, its suitability for use and the availability of existing and proposed public and/or private services or facilities" (State Goal 1). Additional relevant goals include "promote an economic climate which increases quality job opportunities and overall economic well-being of each municipality and the State" (State Goal 2), "Encourage small business development" (Municipal Goal 2-3), and "encourage the use of innovative development regulations and techniques that promote the development of land suitable for development while protecting our natural, cultural, historical and recreational resources and achieving a balanced pattern of land uses" (State Goal 6).

It is department opinion that this project is a fine example of careful attention to land characteristics and finds a balance between public and private services and facilities to develop additional suitable land while protecting nearby natural resources. This project will improve the operations of Packaging and More, a substantial small business operating in Central Falls.

(4) That the relief to be granted is the least relief necessary.

Approval of the proposed variance is the least relief necessary to fit the building program on the site without significant design or environmental sacrifices.

Recommendation

Based on the above discussion, staff believes that all standards have been met and recommends that the requested Dimensional Variance be granted.



Peter Friedrichs
Director of Planning and Economic Development