



**DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

ACTION DATE: May 4, 2006

TO: Planning Commission

APPLICANT: Tom Gesler for Canwood Storage & Offices
657 Bristol Avenue
Simi Valley, CA 93065

CASE NO.: 05-ZOA-002

LOCATION: Citywide

REQUEST: Request for a recommendation of approval to the City Council to amend Zoning Ordinance Sections 9312, 9396 and 9654.6 to allow self storage facilities as a permitted use, subject to issuance of a Conditional Use Permit, within the BP-M-FC (Business Park–Manufacturing – Freeway Corridor Overlay) zone located north of Canwood Street, east of Clareton Drive and west of Derry Avenue.

**ENVIRONMENTAL
DETERMINATION:** Addendum to the General Plan Environmental Impact Report

RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends that the Planning Commission conduct a public hearing, provide direction to staff and continue the public hearing for preparation of the requested Zoning Ordinance Amendment, prior to making a recommendation to the City Council.

I. PROJECT BACKGROUND AND DESCRIPTION

In February of 2005, the City Council conducted a pre-screen review of a proposal to amend and expand the existing zoning ordinance regarding self-storage facilities. The purpose of the pre-screen review was for the City Council to provide non-binding comments and to help provide direction to the applicant as to whether he should proceed with the necessary legislative changes that would allow for his proposed use.

Chris Chigaridas of Canwood Storage, LLC, owns a 4.8-acre lot in the BP-M-FC (Business Park Manufacturing- Freeway Corridor) zone located at 28661 Canwood Street, west of the Dale Poe Industrial Park, west of Derry Avenue. Conceptual development plans presented to the City Council showed a self-storage facility with five separate buildings: two for personal storage, two for business storage, and one for covered RV and boat storage. Outdoor areas for larger RV and boat storage were also shown on the plans.

The zoning ordinance, as currently written, is quite restrictive regarding self-storage facilities. Self-storage facilities typically consist of structures that have storage units within them that are available to rent for the storage of household goods. They typically also store recreational vehicles and boats outdoors or within the storage structures and usually have a 24-hour caretaker's residence. The zoning ordinance allows for self-storage uses only in the Business Park – Manufacturing (BP-M) and Commercial Retail Service (CRS) zones, subject to a Conditional Use Permit, provided that they are conducted in an enclosed building and not located within 5,000 feet of another self-storage facility. Also, the Freeway Corridor (FC) overlay zone standards expressly prohibit self-storage facilities and yards. In order for the property owner to move forward with his proposed development, a zoning ordinance amendment would be necessary to allow storage facilities and yards in the FC Overlay zone, and to remove the criterion requiring a 5,000 foot separation between storage facilities.

There are currently two self-storage facilities in the City of Agoura Hills which are both considered non-conforming as they existed prior to City's incorporation. Both sites are in the FC overlay zone and are located less than 5,000 feet from each other. Conejo Valley U-Store-It is located on Agoura Road, east of Kanan Road in the CRS zone, and the Agoura Self Storage is located on Agoura Road, west of Kanan Road, in the BP-M zone. The attached exhibit shows the location of the two existing non-conforming self-storage facilities in the City and the proposed self-storage site.

The City Council considered that unlike the older, traditional self storage facilities, many new ones are designed to be more compatible with the surrounding uses and greater architectural quality is incorporated into the development. Some storage facilities incorporate office buildings which further help to blend with the surrounding uses. Also building walls rather than high perimeter walls are used to screen outdoor RV and boat storage and compatible architectural elements and styles are used to help the storage facility blend in with the area. Furthermore, the amount of traffic that would be generated from self storage facilities would be minimal and primarily on weekends. In addition, the development of a self-storage facility near residential communities would provide opportunity for the residents to more conveniently store household goods and recreational vehicles and boats.

The City Council also considered several disadvantages to allowing more self-storage facilities in the city. First, job creation and sales tax generation is minimal. Additionally, self-storage facilities usually require a large land area on a flat surface, and as such may require extensive grading that could lead to a development that significantly alters the natural terrain. Moreover, the large land area made available for the self-storage use could consume the City's vacant land inventory which could be used for more productive uses. Also, there could possibly be a change to the character of a commercial or business park area as residents would come into the area with RVs, boats and personal items to access the storage facility.

The applicant's parcel on Canwood Street is zoned BP-M. The BP-M zone is the most intensive zone in the City and allows industrial-type uses such as wholesale distribution facilities, light manufacturing and assembly, and auto repair. The City Council noted that the proposed use of a self-storage facility at a location adjacent to the Dale Poe industrial park could be considered to be in keeping with the immediate area in relation to the existing surrounding uses and the scale of existing development. The site is also not as visible from the freeway as other commercial properties and is convenient to the residential communities north of the freeway. In comparison, the BP-M zoned properties on the south side of the freeway, which are located west of Kanan Rd., consist of a more corporate environment, is more visible from the freeway, and is adjacent to Ladyface Mountain.

The City Council found it appropriate to consider expanding the ordinance regarding self-storage facilities with the following criteria:

- That new self-storage facilities be limited to the BP-M-FC zone on the north side of the freeway. This would generally encompass the areas on the north side of Canwood Street from near Derry to near Clareton and would include the Chigaridas site. Also, with this geographic limitation, the two existing non-conforming self-storage businesses would remain non-conforming.
- That self-storage facilities be subject to development, design, and performance standards. These could include provisions such as maximum percentage of site devoted to outdoor storage, screening and landscape requirements, amount of lot coverage, types of items that may be stored, etc.
- That self-storage facilities be subject to approval of a Conditional Use Permit. Additional development and operational features can be included in the CUP to further address neighborhood compatibility.
- That the applicant would be responsible for filing an application for any amendments to the Zoning Ordinance Amendment regarding self-storage facilities.

II. STAFF ANALYSIS

Based on direction given by the City Council, the applicant, Tom Gesler of Canwood Storage & Office, filed for a zoning ordinance amendment to allow self-storage facilities in the BP-M zone north of the 101 Freeway. The Planning Commission's role on this request is to provide a recommendation to the City Council on a draft ordinance prepared by staff which will allow for the proposed request. The applicant's particular development proposal for his property is not being considered as part of the zoning ordinance amendment application. Rather, his development application can be filed and reviewed after the zoning ordinance amendment is adopted by the City Council.

Typically for zoning ordinance amendment requests staff would prepare a draft ordinance for the Planning Commission to review in a public hearing, discuss the proposed language and provide a recommendation to the City Council regarding the adoption of the ordinance. In reviewing the applicant's particular request and the several land use related issues concerning self-storage facilities, staff is requesting direction from the Planning Commission concerning the development, design and performance provisions that the Planning Commission wishes included within the text of the ordinance. Upon receiving this direction, staff will incorporate the recommendations of the Commission into the text of the draft ordinance for review at a following Planning Commission meeting.

Based on direction given by the City Council during the pre-screen review for this request, the draft ordinance will include the requirement of a Conditional Use Permit for any new self-storage facility. Staff is seeking direction from the Planning Commission regarding the following issues to be included within the text of the draft ordinance.

1. Location

The City Council preferred that new self-storage facilities be located within the BP-M-FC zones on Canwood Street, near Derry Avenue and Clareton Drive. Staff is recommending that the boundaries be specifically north of Canwood Street, west of Derry Avenue and east of Clareton Drive. The BP-M-FC zones actually extend south of Canwood Street, adjacent to the 101 Freeway, but staff finds self-storage facilities to potentially be an incompatible use for the property given proximity of the freeway and the desired image of city as viewed from the freeway. The BP-M-FC zones also extend east of Derry Avenue and west of Clareton Drive, but the everyday use of self-storage facilities within these areas may be incompatible with neighboring residential uses and staff desires to retain the manufacturing and industrial opportunities that are within the existing business parks.

2. Uses

Self-storage facilities typically provide few employment opportunities and do not generate sales tax revenue. However, as the City Council noted, of the commercial zones within the city, the BP-M zone is the most appropriate in locating self-storage facilities. Self-storage facilities provide a needed service and the location of the BP-M zone north of the freeway allows for convenient access for the city residents. Also, self-storage facilities generate far less traffic during peak morning and afternoon commuting times than most commercial and industrial uses.

The Planning Commission has the discretion to recommend that a percentage of any new self-storage facility be allocated for specific uses. In order to retain local employment or sales tax opportunities the Commission could, for example, require that office or commercial space be provided on-site, perhaps 10% of the total building area. Also, uses incidental to self-storage, such as sale of boxes and packing materials, could be considered. Staff would note, however, that the sites to be made available for new self-storage facilities are not within the CRS (Commercial Retail Service) zone and employment within the BP-M zones is usually less than within other commercially zoned areas. It is also recommended that the Planning Commission determine whether to allow for business storage, in addition to personal self-storage, since staff is aware of the growing demand for that use as well. If it is determined to be appropriate, staff is requesting that the Planning Commission clarify what percentage of the facility could be designated for business storage.

Staff is also seeking direction from the Planning Commission on whether outdoor vehicle storage areas should be allowed and/or required for self-storage facilities. The zoning ordinance currently prohibits outdoor storage of vehicles, requiring instead that all storage be conducted within an enclosed building. Agoura Self Storage, located on Agoura Road, west of Kanan Road, accommodates vehicle storage, but is considered to be legal nonconforming since it was permitted by Los Angeles County prior to the City's incorporation.

Vehicle storage areas typically accommodate recreation vehicles, boats, and trailers. Outdoor storage in general is discouraged on commercial property unless appropriately screened. However, the City's property maintenance ordinance precludes recreation vehicles, boats and trailers from being stored in residential driveways and yards that are visible from the street. There are limited opportunities for city residents to park their oversized vehicles off-site. Thus, allowing for, or perhaps requiring such outdoor storage of oversized vehicles would meet a community need. If the Planning Commission agrees, the draft ordinance could include minimum and maximum sizes of the outdoor storage areas that are either based on a percentage of the size of the lot, or on a specific number of parking spaces. The Planning Commission also has the option of recommending that all

storage, regardless of the type (including oversized vehicles), be located entirely within enclosed buildings, as the zoning ordinance currently requires, or screened in some other fashion.

3. Parking

The Zoning Ordinance does not include a parking requirement for self-storage facilities. In such instances where a parking standard is not specified, staff would require the applicant to submit an independent parking study for review by the City Traffic Engineer who would provide his recommendation to the Planning Commission. Since a new ordinance will be written for self-storage facilities, staff recommends that an on-site parking requirement be established. With direction from the Planning Commission, staff could prepare an analysis of parking requirements from other cities and consultant with the City Traffic Engineer in determining an appropriate standard. The standard would be based the parking demands of self-storage facilities as well as on the types of ancillary uses the Planning Commission prefers to allow and/or require on the sites.

4. Design and Development Standards

The BP-M zone allows for development of buildings not to exceed 35 feet in height, nor 30% maximum building coverage. Minimum yard standards include 20 minimum front and rear yards and 70 combined side yards (15-foot minimum on any one side).

Some of the parcels within the BP-M zone, including the vacant parcels, are considered hillside lots in that their average topographic slope exceeds 10%. Development within such lots is subject to potentially stricter standards than the underlying zone in that a maximum floor/area ratio (FAR) would apply to the total size of the buildings, and a percentage of the property would be required to remain as undisturbed (non-graded) open space. The FAR and open space requirements vary, but are more stringent for steeper properties.

In considering the draft ordinance, the Planning Commission has the opportunity to consider applying additional or more restrictive development standards for self-storage facilities as a means for achieving greater compatibility with neighboring uses. Performance standards related to the operation of the facility would be more appropriately considered on a case-by-case basis through the Conditional Use Permit process. However, the development standards of the BP-M zone could be changed for development of self-storage facilities.

Staff acknowledges that architectural design of self-storage facilities has improved in recent decades. However, staff recommends that the Planning Commission consider amending the design criteria for self-storage uses to ensure greater neighborhood

compatibility. Specifically, it is recommended that such facilities be limited to two-stories in height, not to exceed 30 feet (rather than 35 feet), and that full roof elements be required for all buildings. Staff also recommends that the facilities include extensive screening through a combination of garden walls and landscaping on all sides of the property. Planning Commission may wish to provide specific screening criteria as they deem appropriate, including possible allowances in increased perimeter wall height and requiring special design treatment of perimeter walls.

The City's lighting design standards and guidelines call for minimal use of on-site lighting for commercial project. However, storage facilities typically include rather extensive exterior lighting for security purposes. A detailed lighting plan is required for submittal of a commercial development application, which would be reviewed by the Architectural Review Panel and Planning Commission for compliance with the City design standards and guidelines. The Planning Commission could recommend, though, incorporating specific exterior lighting standards specifically for self-storage facilities, such as prohibiting wall-mounted signs and restricting lighting in outdoor storage areas.

III. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The City Environmental Analyst has reviewed the request and determined that the proposed Zoning Ordinance Amendment will require the preparation of an addendum to the General Plan Environmental Impact Report and would not result in significant environmental impacts. The specific environmental document will be included for review with the draft ordinance.

IV. RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission conduct a public hearing, provide direction to staff and continue the public hearing to June 1, 2006 for preparation of the requested Zoning Ordinance Amendment, prior to making a recommendation to the City Council.

V. ATTACHMENTS

- Self-Storage Vicinity Map
- Map of Proposed Zoning Ordinance Amendment Boundaries

Case Planner: Doug Hooper, Assistant Director of Community Development