

October 9, 2020

City of Linden Planning Board
City Hall
301 North Wood Avenue
Linden, NJ 07036

Attn: Dorothy Kotowski, Planning Board Secretary

Re: Linden Development, LLC – SP#1133-20
Starbucks
Site Plan and Bulk Variances
Block 469, Lot 38.05 – PCD Zone
1016 West Edgar Road

Dear Chairman and Board Members:

We are in receipt of the above-referenced application, which seeks amended preliminary and final site plan approval together with bulk variance relief to construct a 2,300/2331 square-foot Starbucks restaurant within an existing commercial property that is currently developing with a Wal-Mart store, a hotel, retail shops, restaurants and a health club. In connection with the above-referenced application, we have reviewed the plans and supporting documentation filed by Linden Development, LLC. The site plan was prepared by Dynamic Engineering and are dated 9/11/20. The plans consist of the following sheets:

- Cover Sheet
- Aerial Map
- Demolition Plan
- Overall Site Plan
- Site Plan
- Grading Plan
- Drainage & Utility Plan
- Landscape Plan
- Lighting Plan
- Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Plan
- Soil Erosion Notes & Details
- Construction Details
- Vehicle Circulation Plan
- Topographic Survey (Dated 11/1/19)

Architectural drawings were prepared by Winter Architects and are dated 7/13/20. The drawings consist of the following sheets:

- Architectural Site Plan
- Site Plan Details
- Trash Enclosure Plan and Details
- Floor Plan
- Exterior Elevations
- Exterior Elevations

3. Description of the Development and Compliance with City Development Regulations

Based upon our review of the applicant's plans and supporting documentation, an evaluation of the site and adjacent area, and analysis of the City's Land Development and Zoning ordinance, we offer the following for the Board's consideration. While the principal building conforms to the City's Area, Yard and Bulk requirements, bulk variance relief is required for parking setbacks and design criteria associated with the drive-through design.

4. Planning Considerations

a. General.

1. The City's code in Section 31-4.2 does not allow more than one principal use on a nonresidential lot except where specifically permitted by the zone regulations or associated with a commercial or industrial center. The proposed restaurant utilizing common customer parking and managed as a unit complies with these requirements. The intent is for commercial uses to be designed with unifying elements, while still allowing for individual branding.
2. The applicant shall correct the building square footage discrepancies between the site and architectural plans.

b. Off-street parking and circulation.

1. Parking. Sheet C-103 provides a table identifying compliance with the City's off-street parking requirements. We note that 16 spaces are required and 16 spaces are provided.
2. Section 31-19.8 Restaurants, Drive-Ins and Restaurants, Fast Food was revised in 2016 to require that drive-through lanes shall be separated from parking areas and circulation aisles with a 3 to 5-foot landscaped island which is located and designed in a manner that provides safe ingress and egress to and from the drive-through. The applicant does not comply with this requirement. A variance is required.
3. Section 31-31-27.17 requires off-street parking areas to be 3-feet from the side and rear property line and 5-feet from the front property line. Variance relief is required as the parking areas are less than 3-feet to the side lines. This section of the ordinance has routinely been interpreted to include the entire parking area and not just the parking spaces to provide separation and landscape materials between properties. In this regard, there is little to no separation of pavement with the Taco Bell property. We ask the Board Traffic Engineer to comment on the ability to reduce the widths of driveways to provide for this separation or other options proposed by the applicant.
4. The applicant shall clarify the southeast corner of the Taco Bell property, which appears to have a driveway opening that could traverse the subject property, if there was no curb on the subject property.

5. Sight triangles. While it appears that all landscaping has been designed in a manner that will not restrict sight lines to internal driveways, testimony shall be provided demonstrating that landscape plan was designed as such.
6. Outdoor dining area. The applicant shall clarify how the outdoor dining area is delineated. It is recommended that a decorative fence be installed around the outdoor dining area, which is depicted on the conceptual architectural plans. This information should be added to the site plan.

c. Landscape/Lighting/Retaining Walls.

1. Landscape. The applicant proposes a landscape plan that includes a mix of trees, shrubs and grasses. The following is recommended:
 - i. Plant taller growing trees (possibly virburnum) and low growing trees adjacent to the outdoor dining area to provide greater separation with the interior drive-aisle.
 - ii. Plant a tree at the northwest planting bed of the site.
 - iii. Provide the 3-feet of separation and plant shrubs on each side of the property.
2. Lighting. We take no exception to the lighting plan. A consistent light pole design should be incorporated into all the pad-style sites. Testimony should be provided in this regard.

d. Architecture/Floor Plans/Signs

1. Building design. The applicant proposes to clad the building with a combination of brick, EIFS and wood. A metal canopy and fabric awnings are proposed. It is unclear whether a brick veneer or full brick is proposed. Testimony shall be provided as to the design elements that adhere to Section 31-11.3., which requires that architecture should provide a coherent design theme throughout the development, using rooflines, building materials, entrance locations and massing of buildings to provide a compatible visual relationship between the various buildings and uses.
2. Monument/freestanding sign. No information or details have been provided regarding the monument sign along the property frontage. It is our understanding that the monument signs were approved during the Phase I portion of the application. Testimony shall be provided at the hearing regarding whether any changes are proposed.
3. Building mounted signs. According to the applicant's Zoning Table, sign variance relief is being requested to allow for individually mounted letters for wall signs on the non-street-facing building sides. It does not appear that this variance is necessary.

4. Building mounted signs (2). It appears that the size and location of all building-mounted signage adheres to ordinance requirements.

- e. Garbage/Refuse.
 1. The applicant shall clarify their intent as to how they propose to clad the trash enclosure. The plan detail shows several options. From a planning perspective, the trash enclosure should be clad with the primary building material and color. In this case, brick would be the most ideal.

Should you have any questions, please contact us.

Very truly yours,



Paul N. Ricci, AICP, PP
Planning Consultant

CC: Tony Rinaldo, Esq., Planning Board Attorney (via e-mail)
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