

December 20, 2018
Revised April 9, 2020

Middlesex Borough Planning Board
1200 Mountain Avenue
Middlesex, NJ 08846

Attn: Karen Wick, Planning Board Clerk

Re: Application No. P2018-02
First Planning Review
Layla Transportation and Trailing, Inc.
930 Lincoln Boulevard
Block 249, Lots 1 and 2
Commercial/Light Manufacturing/Wholesale District (CLW)

Dear Board Members:

We are in receipt of the above-referenced development application, which seeks site plan approval to construct a bus repair maintenance and storage business.

The site plan was prepared by Amertech Engineering, Inc. and is revised through 2/12/20. The plans consist of the following sheets:

- Cover Sheet
- Existing Conditions Plan
- Site Plan and Details
- Landscaping and Lighting Plan
- Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Plan
- Soil Erosion & Sediment Control Notes and Details

We have also reviewed architectural plans prepared by Amrarch Design Studio, dated 2/24/20.

1. Description of Site.

The subject property consists of an existing 155,384 square foot (3.56-acre) tract comprised of 2 separate lots. Block 249, Lot 1 is a rectangular shaped parcel that contains an existing 1 and a half story frame building that has historically maintained an access connection with adjoining Block 249, Lot 2. Both properties have historically been under common ownership. Block 249, Lot 1 historically contained a large industrial building, which we believe to have been occupied by Borden Chemical and has since been demolished approximately 30 +/- years ago. Various at grade remains, i.e., largely concrete, remain on the site. The site is identified on the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protections (NJDEP) known contaminated site list. The site is located outside of a flood hazard area and appears to be devoid of wetlands. The tract is gently sloping. Adjacent to the

rail line, the site adjoins other nonresidential uses and wetlands to the northeast. Residential uses are located on the opposite side of Lincoln Boulevard.

2. Description of the Proposed Development and Compliance with Borough Development Regulations.

- a. The applicant identifies the proposed use as a bus vehicle maintenance and storage business with associated office space. The CLW district specifically identifies public utility activities of an industrial character, such as bus repair and maintenance yards, storage facilities, depots and stations as principal permitted uses.
- b. As outlined below, the proposal meets all the core Borough of Middlesex Schedule of Area, Yard and Building Requirements for the CLW with the exception of one preexisting nonconforming front yard setback condition, where the applicant has requested variance relief.

Table 1 – Compliance with Area and Yard Requirements

Standard - CLW District	Required	Existing	Provided	Compliance
Minimum Lot Area (sq. ft.)	20,000	155,384	155,384	C
Minimum Lot Width (ft.)	100	776.92	776.92	C
Minimum Lot Depth (ft.)	100	200	200	C
Minimum Front Yard (ft.)	15	9.02	9.02	ENC
Side Yard (one) (ft.)	5	25.94	25.94	C
Side Yard (both) (ft.)	20	>20	>20	C
Rear Yard (ft.)	0 (abutting railroad)	33.03	33.03	C
Maximum Height (sty./ft.)	3/35	<35	<35	C
Building Coverage (%)	50	8.27	8.27	C
Impervious Coverage (%)	95	26.45	87.71	C

Key:
 C – Complies
 DNC – Does Not Comply (variance required)
 ENC – Existing Nonconformance
 TBD – To Be Determined

- c. Note on variances. We note that Section 420-55.D-2 requires a 30-foot buffer within the side and rear yards adjacent to residentially zoned or residential properties. While residential properties are located across Lincoln Boulevard, they do not adjoin the rear or side yards of the subject property. For this reason, it is our interpretation of the ordinance that this provision does not apply. However, we do believe that greater sensitivity to the area is warranted along Lincoln Boulevard to better screen and harmonize the use with the area.
- d. Section 420-63 D. indicates that where an outside off-street parking area for four or more vehicles, or a loading and unloading area, abuts a residential zone or a lot which was developed for residential use prior to initiation of the nonresidential use on the subject property, a buffer strip, in accordance with applicable buffer requirements of this chapter, shall be provided

between the parking area and the adjoining property. Said buffer shall be a minimum of six feet in height at the time of planting. **At the February 12, 2020 Land Use Board meeting it was determined that a six-foot high fence with green "privacy hedge slats" would be installed along the property frontage. The plan detail notes that a "green synthetic fabric privacy screen" will be installed. The goal is to use a consistent screening product throughout the Borough. The detail should be revised to specify the exact product that is proposed. Moreover, it should be clarified as whether the entire fence will be green vinyl coated or just the gate area. Additional notes shall be added to the site plan.**

- e. It appears that at a minimum the following design waivers continue to be required:
 - 1. 248-17.B.(12)(b) – For not demonstrating that adequate lighting levels have been provided.
 - 2. 248-17 B.(23)(a) and (b) – For not paving the off-street parking lots and drive aisles to Borough code requirements.
 - 3. 248-17.B.(24) – For not curbing the parking area.

3. Planning Considerations

a. General.

- 1. The applicant should provide operational testimony about the business indicating the anticipated number of employees, hours of operation, number of shifts and, the type of vehicles and equipment to be stored at the site. **Testimony has been provided. Item addressed.**
- 2. The applicant should discuss with the Board the history of the subject property, any past/present environmental contamination and/or any current environmental remediation actions. We note that the property is identified as a known contaminated site on the NJDEP listing. **Testimony has been provided. Item addressed.**

b. Circulation and Parking.

- 1. Section 248-C of the borough's land development code specifies different parking requirements for vehicle repair, warehouse and office space. We note that the applicant is interpretation the automobile repair and service station parking requirement to require bus parking. We do not necessarily agree with this interpretation. A parking deviation may be required. Furthermore, there appears to be more office space on the floor plan than depicted on the parking table. All floor areas shall be verified. This issue should be discussed with the Board. **Item addressed.**
- 2. Section 248-17.B.21 of the Borough's Land Development ordinance indicates that no off-street parking or loading area shall be used for the sale, repair, dismantling or servicing of any vehicle, equipment, materials or supplies. Testimony shall be provided by the applicant. **Testimony has been provided indicating that all mechanical work will be conducted inside the building.**
- 3. The applicant shall provide testimony as to the frequency of vehicular trips in and out of the site. **Testimony has been provided.**

4. The applicant shall indicate how the proposed crush stone will not be tracked onto the public roadway. **Issue has been addressed by the Board Engineer.**
5. While we understand that the subject property is an existing developed site, the proposed condition of the parking fields with without directional arrows and paving is less than ideal. **Continuing comment.**

c. Landscaping/Fencing.

1. The existing streetscape and site have historically been poorly maintained. Section 420-63 D. indicates that where an outside off-street parking area for four or more vehicles, or a loading and unloading area, abuts a residential zone or a lot which was developed for residential use prior to initiation of the nonresidential use on the subject property, a buffer strip, in accordance with applicable buffer requirements of this chapter, shall be provided between the parking area and the adjoining property. Said buffer shall be a minimum of six feet in height at the time of planting. Additional plantings are required to meet code requirements. **The applicant proposes a combination of plantings and the opaque fence (hedge slats) along the property frontage.**
2. As the Board is aware, the subject property is located across the street from residential homes. Section 420-63 (Zoning) requires that all yard areas not occupied by parking areas shall be graded and planted with grass seed or sod and such shrubbery and trees as determined by the Board. Accordingly, non-compliance from Board requirements would require bulk variance relief as this requirement is located within the Zoning code. While we understand that landscape material exists along the frontage today, additional landscape material should be incorporated into the site. It is our recommendation that additional screening and landscaping be placed within the streetscape area. **Additional landscape material has been added since this report was first written.**
3. In the context of this application, we believe that the largest concentration of landscaping should be within the front yard area, while additional site plantings are welcome. The following is recommended:
 - a. Clarify changes to the right-of-way area. At a minimum, it is recommended that this area be cleaned up with new top soil and grass be added.
 - b. It is recommended that street trees be added at a spacing of 40-50 feet (where room exists).
 - c. The bus parking spaces should be screened from the right-of-way.

It is our understanding that the Board approved the existing landscape plan at the prior hearing.

- d. Introduce more landscape material along the property frontage and place additional clusters of materials adjacent to residential properties. **It is our understanding that the Board approved the existing landscape plan at the prior hearing.**
4. The applicant shall clarify existing and proposed site fencing. Details for chain-link fence and fence gates are shown on the plans, however, notes indicate that solid gates would be installed.

Fencing for the site should be discussed with the Board. **Item addressed with the exception to clarify the slat detail.**

d. Architectural/Lighting/Trash.

1. No changes are proposed to the exterior of the buildings. The applicant should provide pictures and discuss the condition of these buildings with the Board. **We received renderings under separate cover. Images on Sheet A-01 depict a red brick front, and white painted sides and rear. The proposed renderings now show the building to have an orange hue and beige or so trim for all building faces. It is unclear whether the applicant proposes to paint the building or to clad it with a new material. Existing and proposed materials/work should be identified on the elevations.**
2. A deviation is required for not adhering to the Borough's lighting requirements for parking lots. **Continuing comment.**
3. The applicant should indicate how trash will be handled on site. **Testimony was provided at the hearing.**
4. The applicant shall indicate their intent regarding signage.

Should you have any questions, please contact us.

Very truly yours,



Paul N. Ricci, AICP, P.P.
Planning Consultant

cc: William Robertson, Esq., Planning Board Attorney (via e-mail)
Robert Bucco, P.E., Planning Board Engineer (via e-mail)
Barrie Palumbo, Zoning Officer (via e-mail)
Thomas Kelso, Esq.
Sharif Aly, PE

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loading and unloading area, abuts a residential zone or a lot which was developed for residential use prior to initiation of the nonresidential use on the subject property, a buffer strip, in accordance with applicable buffer requirements of this chapter, shall be provided between the parking area and the adjoining property. Said buffer shall be a minimum of six feet in height at the time of planting.

- e. It appears that a six-foot-high buffer along the front property line between the CLW and R-60B districts is required. The applicant shall provide the buffer or alternatively seek variance relief.
- f. It appears that at a minimum the following design waivers are required:
 - 1. 248-17.B.(12)(b) – For not demonstrating that adequate lighting levels have been provided.
 - 2. 248-17 B.(23)(a) and (b) – For not paving the off-street parking lots and drive aisles to Borough code requirements.
 - 3. 248-17.B.(24) – For not curbing the parking area.

4. Planning Considerations

a. General.

- 1. The applicant should provide operational testimony about the business indicating the anticipated number of employees, hours of operation, number of shifts and, the type of vehicles and equipment to be stored at the site.
- 2. The applicant should discuss with the Board the history of the subject property, any past/present environmental contamination and/or any current environmental remediation actions. We note that the property is identified as a known contaminated site on the NJDEP listing.

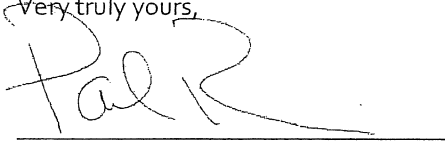
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- 2. Section 248-17.B.21 of the Borough's Land Development ordinance indicates that no off-street parking or loading area shall be used for the sale, repair, dismantling or servicing of any vehicle, equipment, materials or supplies. Testimony shall be provided by the applicant.
- 3. The applicant shall confirm the size of the employee parking spaces and the need for visitor parking. We note that a large reception room is on the floor plan.
- 4. The applicant shall provide testimony as to the frequency of vehicular trips in and out of the site.
- 5. The applicant shall indicate how the proposed crush stone will not be tracked onto the public roadway.

ricciplanning

Should you have any questions, please contact us.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Ricci", written over a horizontal line.

Paul N. Ricci, AICP, P.P.
Planning Consultant

cc: Kelly Carey, Esq., Planning Board Attorney (via e-mail)
Robert Bucco, P.E., Planning Board Engineer (via e-mail)
Barrie Palumbo, Zoning Officer (via e-mail)
Thomas Kelso, Esq.
Sharif Aly, PE