

Northfield Township

Site Plan Review

Applicant: Damrath Group, LLC
143 CadyCentre #151
Northville, MI
248-880-2158

Project: Nowatzke Truck & Trailer, Inc. Fuel Center

Address: 6900 Whitmore Lake Road

Date: November 11, 2015

Request: Site Plan Amendment

Recommendation: **Denial**

PROJECT AND SITE DESCRIPTION

Zoning designation: GC, General Commercial
WLNT Overlay District (advisory)

Permitted Use: Automotive Service Station, including minor repair services, is a conditional use in this district. The applicant received a recommendation of Planning Commission approval for the conditional use request, and conditional use approval by the Township Board on September 23, 2014, with conditions.

The applicant is returning before the Planning Commission to amend a site plan approved on April 15, 2015. The application states the applicant's intent to:

1. Keep one of the four signs marked for removal on the approved plan set. Reason: Error on approved site plan.

It has been determined by staff that this item is not eligible for Planning Commission review, as the request does not meet the ordinance standards. Applicant is working with the Zoning Administrator and may appeal to the Zoning Board for a variance.

2. Eliminate the proposed 8' cedar screening fence between the subject property and its neighbor, Tractor Supply, and leave existing the chain link fence. Reason: Applicant claims the fence was requested to screen outdoor storage which has since been removed.

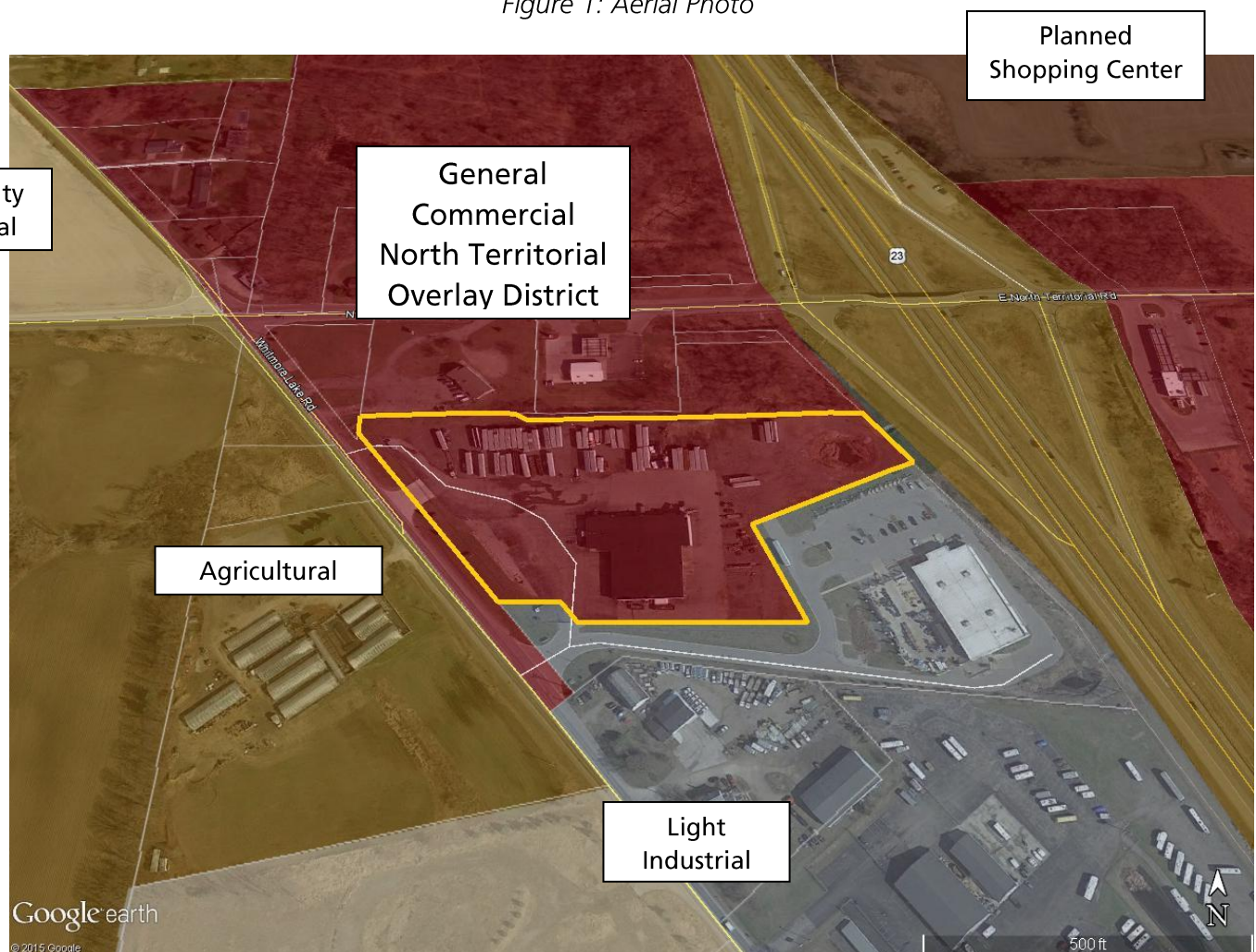
This request is the subject of this report.

3. Adjust the truck path exiting the site. Reason: To increase the distance between path and non-paved trailer parking area.

This change is subject to engineering review. Applicant is working with OHM Advisors to complete it administratively.

These are the only items for which the amended site plan has been reviewed at this time. It is assumed that all other conditions represented on the site plan approved April 15, 2015 remain unchanged and that these conditions remain binding on the applicant.

Figure 1: Aerial Photo



MASTER PLAN CONSIDERATIONS

Future Land Use Designation: Mixed Use

<i>Most Compatible Land Uses:</i>	Neighborhood commercial Service Office Multiple-family residential “Any use which requires the need for outdoor storage is not compatible with the Mixed Use designation as described”
<i>Sub-Area:</i>	Central (4)
<i>Development Strategies:</i>	Allow for appropriate commercial and industrial uses adjacent to US-23 and along N. Territorial between Whitmore Lake and Nollar Roads Develop non-motorized transportation to connect parks, Township facilities, and adjacent communities through an interconnected system of trails along major roads
<i>Design Guidelines:</i>	Carefully site entrance drives and subdivision entrances Promote shared drives and parking areas Screen parking with knee walls, decorative fences, and landscaping Encourage the provision of community design features with pedestrian amenities such as plazas or community gathering spaces

DIMENSIONAL STANDARDS

The proposed changes do not alter the dimensions of the project. Therefore, compliance with the dimensional standards of the GC district as noted in the review associated with the April 15 approval is assumed to remain intact.

Items to be addressed

None

NATURAL FEATURES AND RESOURCES

The proposed changes do not affect the site’s natural features or resources. Therefore, compliance with the environmental standards of the GC district as noted in the review associated with the April 15 approval is assumed to remain intact.

Items to be addressed

None

BUILDING LOCATION AND SITE ARRANGEMENT

The proposed changes do not affect the site's building location or site arrangement, as the proposed road relocation is addressed under Circulation. Therefore, compliance with the site standards of the GC district as noted in the review associated with the April 15 approval is assumed to remain intact.

Items to be addressed

None

PARKING AND LOADING

The proposed changes do not affect the site's parking requirements. Therefore, compliance with the parking standards of the GC district as noted in the review associated with the April 15 approval is assumed to remain intact.

Items to be addressed

None

SITE ACCESS AND CIRCULATION

The proposed alteration to an approved vehicular route is subject to engineering review.

Items to be addressed

- ☐ *Receive administrative approval for the proposed alteration to the approved vehicular route.*

LANDSCAPING

A separate landscape plan is required to demonstrate that existing landscape material meets current standards. A signed and sealed landscape plan dated 5-15-2015 has been provided as part of the submitted plan set.

Sheet C-200 of the previous approved site plan (4-15-2015) shows approximately 543 linear feet of chain link fence (328 LF at the south property line and 213 LF at the east property line) to be replaced with an 8' high cedar fence. Sheet C-100 of the resubmitted site plan (12-16-2015), Demolition and Erosion Control, shows but does not call out the existing chain link fence on the southwest corner of the site. Sheet C-200 of the resubmitted site plan calls out the fence and notes "new landscaping – see sheet L-100" at this location. Sheet L-100 of the provided plan set is dated 5-15-15, and shows faintly, but does not call out, the chain link fence at the southwest corner. The applicant has confirmed via email that the intent is to retain the chain link fence.

There is also some confusion regarding the planting plan on Sheet L-100. The version included with the Planning Commission's packet for 4-15-2015, the previous approval, is dated 12-15-2014. However, the staff report accompanying that submittal references three completed changes which are not shown on

that sheet (addition of 5 Armstrong Maple along Whitmore Lake Road; addition of native plantings in detention basin; 4 spruce trees along US-23).

Sheet L-100, received with this submittal and dated 5-15-15, shows the changes noted above and lists an intermediary revision on 3-10-2015. In addition to the cited changes, 4 Cleveland Pear have been removed from the landscape plan in the same area as the chain link fence that is now proposed to remain; no comment about this change appears in the previous staff report.

The Planning Commission has some discretion with regard to landscape requirements. §36-722 (m) states:

“The planning commission may require more or larger landscaped areas, or more plant materials, or any combination thereof, than required in this section, if, as a result of the commission's findings, the nature or concept of the proposed development, relation to existing natural features, or relation to neighboring properties indicate a need for such additional landscaping.”

Although the previous review cites the zoning district as simply GC, the approval of the site plan on April 15, 2015 postdates the adoption of the Whitmore Lake / North Territorial Overlay District on January 13, 2015 (Northfield Township website). For this reason, it is recommended that the Planning Commission consider the purpose and desired character of this district when exercising its discretion.

The Planning Commission also has discretion with regard to approval of any amendment to an approved site plan. Because this approval is negotiated as a package, that package represents the standard against which the request shall be measured—not solely the ordinance as written. In the applicant’s request for this amendment, he suggests that conditions have fundamentally changed on the site, stating that the fence was requested by the Zoning Administrator to screen outside equipment and that these items have since been removed from the exterior yard. It is up to the members of the Planning Commission to decide if this statement constitutes a sufficient change in site conditions to alter its agreed-upon requirements. Because the applicant specifically cited the Zoning Administrator’s position in his request, and with the permission of the Zoning Administrator, this report includes the following correspondence between the Zoning Administrator to the Applicant via email:

Applicant, 11-24-2015:

The next item: the fence:

When you were here and we walked out back, you said I had to get the material outside in the building or put a security fence up. JD Damrath and I didn't communicate this well, because he instead added a new fence on the site plan, while I was arranging everything outside to be moved inside to the two bays. I want the fence eliminated from the project since I complied with your original instructions on moving the items inside.

Zoning Administrator, 11-29-2015:

As for the fence; I agree that most of the outside storage that was there when I inspected before going to planning commission has been moved from along the drive to tractor supply, but it appears that area now has all the trailers that used be along the fence on the north side. If I was a planning commissioner, I would want the fence there not because the ordinance officer said you

needed it, but because the storage you have out there now is not any more attractive than the previous junk, and the odds are the old junk will end up back out there in the future. But that is their call.

Items to be addressed

- ☐ Provide Landscape Plan Revision dated 3-15-2015

LIGHTING

The proposed changes do not affect the site's lighting. Therefore, compliance with the lighting standards of the GC district as noted in the review associated with the April 15 approval is assumed to remain intact.

Items to be addressed

None

SIGNS

Six signs are listed on Sheet C-100, Demolition and Erosion. Four signs oriented toward the interior of the site are shown as To Be Removed. One sign oriented toward the interior of the site and one sign oriented toward US-23 are shown as existing features to remain.

The proposed site plan on Sheet C-200 includes a new sign facing Whitmore Lake Road and references Sheet C-504. The new proposed sign meets area (80 sf) and height (15 ft) standards as shown on Sheet AG-100.

The two retained signs are also depicted on the proposed site plan, but no details have been provided. §36-793(3) states:

"One freestanding identification sign may be erected for an individual lot, or group of lots developed as one lot, when not provided for by subsections (a)(4) and (a)(5) of this section, following, and shall not exceed 36 square feet in area for offices and eighty (80) square feet in area for other uses. If the lot fronts on more than one street, the total permitted sign area may be divided among two or more such signs, provided, however, that the maximum permitted sign area shall not be exceeded."

Under this Section, the two existing signs must be removed in order to allow the new sign. If the applicant wishes to retain either of the two existing signs instead of installing the new sign, details must be provided to determine compliance.

Items to be addressed

- ☐ Reduce proposed signage to one sign that meets the dimensional standards of §36-793

FLOOR PLAN AND ELEVATIONS

The proposed changes do not affect the site's floor plan or elevations. Therefore, compliance with these standards as noted in the review associated with the April 15 approval is assumed to remain intact.

Items to be addressed

None

VARIANCES

None required.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommend that the Planning Commission move to **deny** the applicant's request to amend the site plan approved April 15, 2015 to remove a proposed 8' screening fence on the southeast corner of the site. The fence will remain required.

Findings:

The proposed plan does not provide sufficient justification for removal of the fence from the approved site plan.

The Applicant shall work with the Engineer to secure administrative approval for the proposed alteration to the approved vehicular route.

The Applicant shall comply with all applicable provisions of the Township Sign Ordinance.