

**PLANNING COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT**

Date: October 16, 2024

To: Reno City Planning Commission

Subject: **Staff Report (For Possible Action): Case No. LDC24-00065 (Virginia Village Self Storage) – A request has been made for: 1) a conditional use permit to allow for: a) the development of a mini-warehouse facility adjacent to residentially zoned property; b) grading resulting in cuts greater than 20 feet in height and fills greater than 10 feet in height; c) hillside development; and d) disturbance of a major drainageway; and 2) an alternative equivalent compliance to deviate from specific building design and fencing standards. The ±8.93-acre project site is located on North Virginia Street, directly east of its intersection with Talus Way. The site is located within the General Commercial (GC) zoning district and has a Master Plan land use designation of Suburban Mixed-Use (SMU).**

From: Carter Williams, Associate Planner

Ward #: 4

Case No.: LDC24-00065 (Virginia Village Self Storage)

Applicant: Rob Fitzgerald, Northern Nevada Homes

APN: 003-340-16

Request:

1. **Conditional Use Permit:** To allow for: a) the development of a mini-warehouse facility adjacent to residentially zoned property; b) grading resulting in cuts greater than 20 feet in height and fills greater than 10 feet in height; c) hillside development; and d) disturbance of a major drainageway; and an
2. **Alternative Equivalent Compliance:** To deviate from specific building design and fencing standards.

Location: See Case Maps (**Exhibit A**)

Proposed Motion: Based upon compliance with the applicable findings, I move to approve the conditional use permit and alternative equivalent compliance, subject to conditions.

Summary: The ±8.93-acre project site is located on the east side of North Virginia Street, directly east of its intersection with Talus Way. The proposed development is a mini-warehouse facility that includes disturbance upon a major drainageway and includes fills greater than 10 feet in height. The development of the property also triggers requirements for hillside development and is located adjacent to residentially zoned property. The combination of these specific conditions requires a conditional use permit. In addition, the applicant has requested an alternative equivalent compliance to deviate from specific building design and fencing standards. Key issues analyzed in this report include: 1) compatibility with surrounding uses, 2) natural resource protection, 3) grading and hillside development, and 4) flood hazard mitigation. Staff recommends approval of the applications with the proposed conditions of approval.

Analysis: The applicant proposes the installation of ±216 prefabricated storage units in eleven clusters and six storage spaces for recreational vehicles on a site east of North Virginia Street (**Exhibit B**). The site is accessed from North Virginia Street by a single entry and exit point that crosses a major drainageway and wetland area. The major drainageway comprises the entire frontage of the site. To the east of the site is a railroad spur and the future Comstock Cottages residential subdivision. The project site has several environmental factors that restrict its use and development, justifying the appropriateness of the mini-warehouse use in the General Commercial (GC) zone.

Alternative Equivalent Compliance: The GC zone is a mixed-use district, which supports development that would normally benefit from enhanced architectural requirements and pedestrian-oriented design. However, the location of the drainageway and associated onsite wetlands push the developable area a minimum of 160 feet east of the edge of the roadway. The proposed buildings are prefabricated storage units (**Exhibit C**) that would not meet the minimum building articulation, ground floor interest, and building massing and form requirements for the GC zone. The applicant has requested an alternative equivalent compliance to allow for the construction of the units without meeting these specific requirements. Due to the conditions of the site, the lacking pedestrian nature of the corridor, and in the interest of prioritizing the visual prominence of the major drainageway, staff supports the request with added conditions to ensure that the proposed buildings blend more into the surrounding hillside environment.

Condition No. 6 requires that the structures are not painted in bright colors, are not constructed of reflective material, and are otherwise painted in neutral earth tones to blend with the surrounding environment. In addition, a minimum 6 foot tall solid wall with architectural relief shall be constructed outside of and between the major drainageway and proposed development. To discourage the construction of blank walls devoid of interest, the wall shall include architectural features (pilasters, changes in wall plane, stamped concrete, or some other architectural relief) to repeat at a minimum of every 15 feet along the entire face of the wall (**Condition No. 7**). To facilitate the construction of the screen wall, the applicant has requested an additional alternative

equivalent compliance that prevents a solid wall over four feet to be constructed abutting a major drainageway.

West of the wall, a minimum of one tree per 30 feet on-center shall be planted with a palette mix of 70% evergreen and 30% deciduous (**Condition No. 8**). Within 15 feet of the edge of the water surface elevation of the major drainageway, native and drought tolerant, or riparian vegetation, whichever is deemed most appropriate, shall be used where grading disturbance occurs (**Condition No. 9**).

Compatibility With Surrounding Uses: To the north and south of the site are vacant parcels that are zoned GC and Industrial (I). To the west of the site, across North Virginia Street, there is an existing condominium development that is heavily screened from the roadway with dense vegetation. The principal area of focus for visual impacts to surrounding uses would be on the emergent residential development to the east. There is a significant elevation change from the top of the residential development and the proposed self-storage facility based on the included sight line analysis (**Exhibit D**). Normally, the development of a commercial use adjacent to a residentially zoned property would require the construction of a masonry wall but the sight line analysis demonstrates that this wall would be largely defeated and serve no functional purpose. In lieu of a wall, staff recommends **Condition No. 10** that would require two offset rows of trees be planted on the top slope abutting the Union Pacific Railroad easement, with one tree spaced every 30 feet on-center in each row with a palette mix of 70% evergreen and 30% deciduous (**Exhibit E**).

Customer access to the facility is proposed between the hours of 6:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m., which is within the standard business operating timeframe in RMC. The mini-warehouse use is not anticipated to have a significant impact on the noise levels in the area. **Condition No. 5** is recommended to mitigate any construction related impacts by limiting hours of construction activity. With the above conditions and standard residential adjacency measures in code, staff finds that the proposed use is compatible with the surrounding uses.

Major Drainageway: RMC and the Reimagine Reno Master Plan prioritize the protection of major drainageways and other hydrological resources. Standards have been adopted to ensure both natural and disturbed drainageways are preserved, that safety of people and property is protected, and that sensitive corridors are enhanced and improved to maintain the quality of life and ecological balance of the community. The proposed project includes grading within 15 feet of the edge of the major drainageway and has a minor impact on the drainageway itself. As a strict application of a no-build area within 15 feet of the edge of the drainageway would result in a significant reduction in developable area (**Exhibit F**), staff is supportive of the minimal disturbance to the drainageway with the following conditions; **Condition No. 11** requires that grading be limited to the grading plans submitted with the application materials. **Condition No.**

12 requires that the existing riprap on the utility corridor be treated to be color-consistent with the site and backfilled with dirt, allowing revegetation in accordance with the plant palette and restoration requirements in RMC section 18.04.104(f). All new disturbance shall follow the same restoration and maintenance requirements of the drainageway protection section within RMC.

Flood Hazard Mitigation: The disturbance proposed within the major drainageway includes some fill that will impact the hydrology of the adjacent property. The applicant is currently in the process of working with the adjacent property owner to establish a drainage easement (**Exhibit G**) to allow for the increase in the water surface elevation for the ±0.88 acre property (Parcel No. 003-340-17). Staff recommends **Condition No. 13** that requires a drainage easement and all appropriate legal instruments to allow for the increase in water surface elevation associated with the major drainageway be recorded on the adjacent property prior to issuance of a building permit. An updated hydrological analysis shall also be provided that demonstrates that there is no adverse impact from stormwater upon adjacent properties.

Wetlands: The major drainageway includes designated wetlands (open water, open water and vegetation, and palustrine emergent wetlands). These wetland areas were confirmed and delineated through the standard jurisdictional delineation process by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in the development of the utility corridor. RMC has a no-net-loss standard for wetland disturbance and vegetation, soil testing criteria, and other restoration standards that are required with the disturbance of the major drainageway to support the conservation of this sensitive hydrological resource. Staff recommends **Condition No. 14** that prohibits any grading disturbance within the delineated wetland areas.

Site Grading and Hillside Development: This application triggers a major site plan review for hillside development and fills greater than 10 feet in height. The steepest slopes are in the center and the southeast of the site (**Exhibit H**). The finished grading generally follows the elevation of North Virginia Street and creates a bench for the development. It is anticipated that the proposed landscaping, screening, and building treatment(s) will support in blending the development with the stepped gradient established by the railroad corridor and the incoming residential development.

Development subject to the hillside development ordinance is required to include a minimum amount of protected open space. The applicant has demonstrated that the undisturbed and formal landscaping proposed within and adjacent to the major drainageway satisfies this requirement. **Condition No. 15** clarifies that the required protected open space, pursuant to the hillside development ordinance, cannot be satisfied using open space within the Union Pacific Railroad easement.

Public Safety: As storage facilities have the potential to attract theft related crimes, the Reno Police Department often suggests camera systems to be provided onsite, as well as lighting to improve

natural surveillance. **Condition No. 16** requires that a security plan be submitted to the satisfaction of the Zoning Administrator, Code Enforcement, and the Reno Police Department. This security plan shall include the installation of security cameras around the site, describe measures to prohibit access to unauthorized individuals, and potentially include the installation of additional lighting.

Traffic and Access: The project is expected to generate 47 average daily trips (ADT) with the majority outside of morning or evening peak hours. The property has a single access point from North Virginia Street which is a four-lane roadway with a two-way left-turn lane for access to the site. An entry and access study was submitted with this application that concluded that the low peak hour volumes do not warrant additional traffic control improvements or a deceleration lane at the point of access.

Utilities: The property is served by City of Reno sanitary sewer and storm drain and is located within the Truckee Meadows Water Authority service area. An existing overhead utility line runs along the northwest portion of the property. Due to the length of the property frontage, the development of this site will require that this overhead line be relocated underground outside of the major drainageway. This serves to improve the major drainageway as a utility pole is currently located within it.

Master Plan Conformance: The subject site has a Master Plan land use designation of Suburban Mixed-Use (SMU) and is located in a Foothill Neighborhood along a Suburban Corridor per the Structure Plan Framework of the Reno Master Plan. As proposed the project is in conformance with the SMU Master Plan land use designation, and the following applicable Master Plan goals and policies:

- 1.5A: Quality of Life
- 7.1D: Environmentally-Sensitive Areas
- 7.1E: Hydrologic Resources
- 7.1F: Major Drainageways
- 7.2C: Open Space Criteria
- 7.7B: Tree Installation, Retention, and Replacement
- C-SC.14: Relationship to Adjacent Neighborhoods
- SD.1: Natural Features

Public and Stakeholder Engagement: No concerns were identified from the external agency comments that were received for this application. The applicant gave a presentation to the Ward 4 Neighborhood Advisory Board (NAB) meeting on July 18, 2024, and concerns were raised regarding traffic impacts and lighting impacts. The traffic impacts were addressed previously in this report and standard code requires dark sky light technology. A courtesy notice was sent out to surrounding property owners upon initial submission of the project. No comments were received

by the time of the writing of this staff report. Any future comments will be forwarded to the Planning Commission as they are received.

Recommended Conditions of Approval: All conditions shall be met to the satisfaction of Development Services Department staff, unless otherwise noted.

1. The project shall comply with all applicable City codes, plans, reports, materials, etc., as submitted. In the event of a conflict between said plans, reports, materials and City codes, City codes in effect at the time the application is submitted, shall prevail.
2. The owner or developer shall apply for a building permit for the entire project within 18 months of the date of approval of the conditional use permit review application and maintain the validity of that permit, or the conditional use permit and alternative equivalent compliance approval shall be null and void.
3. Prior to the issuance of any building permit or business license, the applicant shall attach a copy of the final approval letter. The approval letter shall accompany a narrative that describes how the requested permit or license addresses each of the approved conditions of approval.
4. The applicant, developer, builder, property owner, or business proprietor, as applicable, shall continuously maintain a copy of this approval letter on the project site during the construction and operation of the project/business. The project approval letter shall be posted or made readily available upon demand by City staff.
5. Hours of construction, including grading, shall be limited to between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, and between 8:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. on Saturday. There shall be no construction on Sundays. This condition shall not apply to dust control or storm water management operations. A note to this effect shall be placed on the title sheet of all building permit plan sets. A sign with the approved construction hours shall be posted on site for the full duration of construction activity. If the construction hours need to be varied for the pouring of concrete slabs, interior construction hours or other modifications, a plan detailing the construction operations and provisions to minimize impacts on nearby residential areas shall be submitted and approved to the satisfaction of Administrator.
6. Prior to the issuance of a building permit, plans shall be approved demonstrating proposed buildings are neutral earthtone in color to blend with the surrounding environment. Highly reflective or brightly colored building and roof materials are prohibited for use on buildings.

7. Prior to the issuance of a permit for site improvements, plans shall be approved for the construction of a six-foot-tall solid wall located along the west side of the developed area abutting the major drainageway that screens the entire length of the development from North Virginia Street. The wall shall incorporate articulation features, such as pilasters, changes in wall plane offset, stamped concrete, or other forms of architectural relief, that repeats at least every 15 feet along the entire length of the wall.
8. Prior to the issuance of a permit for site improvements, plans shall be approved for the installation of one tree every 30 feet on-center west of the proposed wall with a species palette mix of 70% evergreen and 30% deciduous.
9. Prior to issuance of any permit, including grading, plans shall be approved that demonstrate vegetation restoration occurs according to RMC Section 18.04.104(f) and native and drought tolerant, or riparian vegetation, whichever is deemed most appropriate, shall be used where grading disturbance occurs within 15 feet of the edge of the water surface elevation of the major drainageway.
10. Prior to issuance of a permit for site improvements, plans shall be approved for the installation of two offset rows of trees be planted on the top slope abutting the Union Pacific railroad easement, with one tree spaced every 30 feet on-center in each row (resulting in a tree every 15 feet) with a palette mix of 70% evergreen and 30% deciduous.
11. Prior to the issuance of any permit, including grading, the applicant shall have plans approved that demonstrate that the major drainageway is only disturbed in accordance with the grading plans provided with the application materials. Disturbance and protection of the major drainageway on the site shall be in accordance with RMC Section 18.04.104.
12. Prior to issuance of any permit, including grading, plans shall be approved that demonstrates existing riprap on the downslopes abutting the site access will be backfilled with dirt and revegetated in accordance with the plant palette and restoration requirements in the RMC section 18.04.104(f). All proposed riprap that will be exposed and used for mechanical slope stabilization shall be treated to be color-consistent with the site.
13. Prior to the issuance of any permit, including grading, a drainage easement shall be recorded on adjacent properties impacted by any increase in the 100-year water surface elevation associated with the major drainageway. The proposed design shall meet all applicable requirements in the Truckee Meadows Regional Drainage Manual, Reno Municipal Code, and the Public Works Design Manual. The

applicant shall provide an updated hydrological analysis demonstrating that there are no adverse stormwater impacts to adjacent properties

14. Prior to issuance of any permit, including grading, plans shall be approved demonstrating that no project grading will impact delineated wetland areas.
15. Prior to the issuance of any permit, including grading, an exhibit shall be submitted noting the required protected open space area pursuant to the hillside development ordinance. This requirement cannot be satisfied using open space within the Union Pacific railroad easement.
16. Prior to the issuance of a business license, a security plan shall be approved by the Zoning Administrator, the Code Enforcement Department, and the Reno Police Department, and all measures in that plan shall be implemented through any required building permits. This plan shall include the installation of security cameras around the site, describe measures to prohibit access to unauthorized individuals, and potentially include the installation of additional lighting deemed necessary for public safety and natural surveillance.

Findings:

General Review Criteria and Considerations: The decision-making body shall review all development applications for compliance with the applicable general review criteria stated below.

- (1) Consistency with the Reno Master Plan: The proposed development shall be consistent with the Reno Master Plan. The decision-making authority:
 - a. Shall weigh competing plan goals, policies, and strategies; and
 - b. May approve an application that provides a public benefit even if the development is contrary to some of the goals, policies, or strategies in the Reno Master Plan.
- (2) Compliance with Title 18: The proposed development shall comply with all applicable standards in this Title, unless the standard is lawfully modified or varied. Compliance with these standards is applied at the level of detail required for the subject submittal.
- (3) Mitigates Traffic Impacts: The project mitigates traffic impacts based on applicable standards of the City of Reno and the Regional Transportation Commission.
- (4) Provides Safe Environment: The project provides a safe environment for pedestrians and people on bicycles.

- (5) Rational Phasing Plan. If the application involves phases, each phase of the proposed development contains all of the required streets, utilities, landscaping, open space, and other improvements that are required to serve or otherwise accompany the completed phases of the project, and shall not depend on subsequent phases for those improvements.

Conditional Use Permit: In addition to meeting the criteria in Section 18.08.304(e), *Approval Criteria Applicable to all Applications*, the following findings shall be made prior to granting a conditional use permit:

- (1) The proposed location of the use is in accordance with the objectives of this Title and the purpose of the zoning district in which the site is located;
- (2) The proposed land use and project design is compatible with surrounding development;
- (3) The proposed land use and project design is consistent with applicable development standards;
- (4) Public services and facilities are available to serve the project, or will be provided with development;
- (5) The characteristics of the use as proposed and as may be conditioned are reasonably compatible with the types of use permitted in the surrounding area; and
- (6) The granting of the conditional use permit will not be materially detrimental to the public health, safety, or welfare. The factors to be considered in evaluating this application shall include:
 - a. Property damage or nuisance resulting from noise, smoke, odor, dust, vibration, or illumination; and
 - b. Any hazard to persons and property.

Alternative Equivalent Compliance: In addition to meeting the criteria in Section 18.08.304(e), *Approval Criteria Applicable to all Applications*, the following findings shall be made prior to granting alternative equivalent compliance pursuant to RMC 18.08.803(d):

- (1) Achieves the intent of the subject standard to the same or better degree than the subject standard;
- (2) Advances the goals and policies of this Title to the same or better degree than the subject standard;

- (3) Results in benefits to the community that are equivalent to or exceed benefits associated with the subject standard;
- (4) Imposes no greater impacts on adjacent properties than would occur through compliance with the specific requirements of this Title; and
- (5) Is not be materially detrimental to the public health, safety, or welfare.

Attachments:

Exhibit A – Case Maps

Exhibit B – Site Plan

Exhibit C – Building Elevations

Exhibit D – Sight Line Analysis

Exhibit E – Landscape Plan

Exhibit F – Alternative Developable Area

Exhibit G – Adjacent Property Drainage Easement

Exhibit H – Slope and Fill Maps