

# *Platinum Storage Facility*

*Southeast corner of Litchfield Road and Van Buren Street*

*APN 500-08-074*

## ***Special Use Permit and Site Plan Narrative***

Submitted:

Planning and Zoning Commission Public Hearing:

Prepared June 4, 2020

by:



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ZONING & LAND USE LAW

**Platinum Storage Facility**  
**Southeast corner of Litchfield Road and Van Buren Street**  
**APN 500-08-074**

**Description of Request**

On behalf of our client, Liv Group (“Platinum Construction”), we are submitting this request for a Special Use Permit and companion Site Plan approval to allow a self-storage facility on an approximately 2.6-acre infill site located at the southeast corner of Litchfield Road and Van Buren Street, within an existing commercial shopping center. We recognize that we will need to petition council for a modification of the setback standard pursuant to Section 4-1-3.C of the zoning ordinance, to achieve our desired height, but we believe that request is justified under the circumstances and in this context.

On the southeast corner of existing mixed-use commercial center at Litchfield Road and Van Buren Street sits a large, vacant retail building (35,004 SF). The building was formerly a Goodwill store. Goodwill left the subject shopping center to go to the shopping center kitty-corner from this one, causing further turnover of tenants in this shopping center. Our proposal is to adaptively reuse this vacant building into a high-end self-storage facility. The developer of the proposed self-storage is the Platinum Construction, which has developed, operates and/or owns more than 30 storage facility sites in 8 states.

We are in a time when retail is struggling to fill big box stores, and this leads to vacancies and tenant turnover in these shopping centers. That is harmful to the ability to attract and retain other quality long-term tenants because such vacancies and turnover rates are bad for such business attraction. Because our use wouldn’t heavily rely on traffic generated by the other tenants in the center, it will be a stabilizing presence in the center. It will not be highly subject to the sometimes fickle nature of retail traffic (especially in the post-pandemic landscape).

The site is located within the Goodyear Commercial Park center, which was developed in 1976. Turnover of tenants has occurred over the years, but current tenants include Pawn 1st, Vineyard Church, Taco Bell, a laundromat, a locksmith, a nail salon, and others.

The site is zoned C-2, which allows for self-storage subject to a use permit. However, for the reasons stated below, we will be seeking a Special Use Permit to allow a modification in the setback standards. This request seeks to adaptively reuse the existing building to allow for a three story self-storage facility.

The self-storage component will be of premium design, consisting of approximately 105,012 square feet of storage area in a single, three-story building. All storage will be internal and climate controlled. Additionally, all loading and unloading will occur in an indoor, secure, and climate controlled area.

The building will also house a retail component available to the general public. This associated retail area will be +/- 1,000 square feet and will sell boxes, locks, packing tape, box cutters, box labels, bubble wrap, packing foam, moving blankets and other related accessories. Although we

expect self-storage customers to take advantage of this retail area, it is also available to others as well. This associated retail area will be located on the northeast portion of the building. The retail entrance will be visible and easily accessible from the internal shopping center, with convenient parking near the entrance.

Platinum Construction will own this facility. A survey of self-storage operations around the valley reveals that such operations come in varying degrees of quality and design. But Platinum Storage seeks to be at the top end of the self-storage market in this area by developing a class-A facility.

They will achieve this at the subject location by doing the following. First, they will internalize all storage to the interior of the building, where it will be climate controlled and secure.

Second, even the loading and unloading area will be internal to the building, meaning that even in the evening hours and during the Arizona summer, monsoon season, and otherwise difficult weather, customers will be able to load and unload in a safe, secure, and comfortable environment.

Finally, the building will incorporate attractive architectural design that is consistent with the existing center. This will not only help to give an uplift to the center, but it will further underscore the quality of the operation and storage areas to our customers.

## Project Location

As mentioned, the approximately 2.6-acre infill site is located at the southeast corner of Litchfield Road and Van Buren Street, within an existing commercial center. On the southeast corner of that center sits a large, vacant retail building (35,004 SF). The building was formerly a Goodwill store. The site is located within the Goodyear Commercial Park center, which was developed in 1976.

The overall mixed-use commercial center and subject site has two main street frontages—Litchfield Road and Van Buren Street—which provide direct access to the site. The overall site backs to two additional streets—La Mar Blvd and Las Palmas Drive but these two streets do



not provide direct access. The subject building is generally bounded by the commercial center's rear service area/drive aisle along the east and south, an existing pawn store business along the west, and parking and additional retail buildings along the north. The building on the subject site is separated from the residential subdivision to the east by a 50-foot wide street right-of-way and the center's service drive. To the south, beyond the building's 54-foot wide building setback exist a 50-foot wide right-of-way for La Mar Boulevard. Beyond La Mar Boulevard exists a 1 and 2-story professional office plaza.

### Use Characteristics

This facility will not be a 24-hour facility, and access will be controlled via security code. This Platinum Storage facility will have an on-site manager available 7 days a week, during normal business hours, to assist new customers with the renting of available storage units and all of the services described above. Existing customers can access the facility with their *unique* security code from 6am to 10pm, daily. This unique security code, along with our system of high-resolution security cameras, will allow us to track who entered the building, when they entered, and when they exited.

Office hours, which are staffed by the manager, will be approximately as follows:

- Monday - Friday: 9:00am to 6:00pm
- Saturday: 8:00am to 5:00pm
- Sunday: 11:00am to 3:00pm

These hours may shift by 30 minutes.

A manager walks the facility at the beginning and end of every day - with an eye for safety issues, security concerns, and any activity that does not conform to the lease agreement. The site's cleaning is a daily activity and provides for a clean, safe environment for tenants and guests. Furthermore, external security cameras will be installed at key locations to ensure property security.

### Special Use Permit – Section 1-3-4

#### ***1. Will be desirable or necessary to the public convenience or welfare;***

The proposed self-storage will be high-end, with all storage being internally accessed in a climate-controlled environment. This facility will assist other uses in the area because self-storage is a support use to office, single-family, and multi-family uses, among others, which rely on storage facilities.

#### ***2. Will be harmonious and compatible with other uses adjacent to and in the vicinity of the selected site or sites;***

This request seeks to adaptively reuse the existing vacant retail building (35,004 SF) into a three story self-storage facility. The property is zoned C-2, which allows for self-storage

facilities (with a use permit) as well as other commercial uses. The subject site is also surrounded by other commercial uses to the north and west.

Across Litchfield Road is an existing office development zoned C-2. Litchfield Road is a 5-lane, north-south paved arterial roadway with 2 lanes in each direction. Across Van Buren Street is an existing commercial development zoned PAD. Van Buren Street is a 5-lane, east-west paved arterial roadway with 2 lanes in each direction. The subject site is backs to two streets that separate the center from the existing residential to the east and the 1 and 2-story office uses to the south.

We see no compatibility issues with our use and the existing shopping center and/or the neighbors. Self-storage is a commercial use and the rest of the center is commercial. The building additions we are proposing would be in the same form and architecture as the existing center.

Because the use is fully internalized, our use doesn't raise some of the same questions that an outdoor facility might raise near single-family residential. In our experience with self-storage, neighbors like to ask about whether the facility will be 24-hours. Our facility will not be, as referenced earlier. It will also be equipped with digital cameras inside and out, entry/exit logs, and other security features to keep the facility secure and safe.

As part of our proposal, because we are making changes to the building, we will be improving the center parking lot by adding new landscaping. This will help to give a facelift to a shopping center that was developed before the City's current landscaping standards. We believe this will be very well received by the tenants and other owners of the center and the community. We are also proposing to add new landscaping to the neighborhood street to the east, which would locate trees behind our proposed building additions and the homes to the east.

Through the addition of our proposed Storage Facility we hope to not only revitalize the commercial center but also compliment the architectural character of the older center by blending and borrowing forms, materials, and colors in an effort to integrate the new and existing.

With the proposed design, architectural features and internal loading/unloading and indoor storage this request will be compatible with the existing surrounding area and uses.

**3. *Is in conformance with the adopted General Plan and any adopted Area Plans;***

This proposal does not seek to modify the existing General Plan designation, nor does it seek to modify the property's existing C-2 zoning. The City's General Plan land use map identifies this site as "Neighborhood", which "include a wide range of densities and housing products, public and community facilities such as schools and places of worship, and commercial uses at appropriate intensities and locations."

This Neighborhood designation must be considered holistically within the large area. Of course no single project can realistically be all of these different uses. But when consideration is given to the surrounding area, this project fits well within a fabric of neighborhoods, retail, and office uses.

**4. *Will not be detrimental to surrounding properties or persons in the area by demonstrating that:***

***a. The proposed use will not adversely impact on the circulation system of the adjacent neighborhood;***

As mentioned, the overall mixed-use commercial center already exists and has two main street frontages, Litchfield Road and Van Buren Street, which provide direct access to the site. The overall site backs to two additional streets, La Mar Blvd and Las Palmas Drive, but these two streets do not provide direct access.

Access to the site will be from either 3 driveways on Litchfield Road or 2 driveways on Van Buren Street. Adequate access to/from the site will be provided from both streets. Both streets are arterial streets.

On-site circulation is designed to allow customers to enter the site via Litchfield Road and Van Buren Street, travel to the office, on-site parking area, or the internal loading/unloading area entrance near the office. Once finished the customer would exit the internal loading/unloading area and circulating either to north to Van Buren Street or west toward Litchfield Road. Pedestrian sidewalks within the commercial center already exist. The two access points and the on-site circulation are all designed to minimize, if not eliminate, vehicular and pedestrian conflicts on-site and with the surrounding area.

Platinum Storage facilities generate very little traffic and are very quiet, given that all the activity occurs inside the facility. It is the nature of self-storage that clients do not regularly access their units. Furthermore, unlike commercial, office or residential uses, self-storage uses do not contribute in any significant way to peak hour movements. Based on data from other Platinum Storage locations, it is anticipated the daily number of customer visits to the subject site will be minimal.

This request will create very little, if any, pedestrian traffic.

***b. The proposed use will not generate excessive noise or light generated from within the site;***

Self-storage is a quiet use in general, but when you internalize the storage and loading/unloading operations, like Platinum is doing here, it's a very quiet and low activity use.

These storage type facilities provide very little noise impacts. Customers typically come to

the facility to pick up or drop off items for storage. They do not spend large amount of time at these facilities. Again, this use is a low impact use that provides far less impact than other uses that could be developed on this site with the existing C-2 zoning.

All proposed lighting will be design to provide security while provide a safe environment for its customers. All lighting will comply with the City's Code requirements

***c. The proposed use will not be excessive in scale or height in relationship to surrounding properties;***

The C-2 zoning district permits a maximum building height of 56-feet, but when a building is adjacent to a residential use or zoning district, the maximum height is additional constrained by the setback. As mentioned, the footprint of the existing building would remain. This request seeks to vertically integrate storage floors vertically into the existing building. The existing building is 24'-3" to top of parapet. This request seeks to extend the majority of the building to a height of 35'-6" to the top of the parapet. The single parapet over the entrance is proposed at 40' to provide architectural interest to the building front. There are three architectural parapets along the south side of the building and two along the east side of the building that will also be 40'. The additional height for parapet provides visual interest and breaks up the horizontal planes of these elevations. This height would allow three stories of storage.

Originally, we had proposed to raise the building to four stories. However, after talking to two adjacent neighbors about the project, we decided to change the design to three stories. Those neighbors were supportive of efforts to stabilize the center with a good tenant and eliminate the current building vacancy. They seemed to understand our need to add height to the building to make it pencil, but were not excited about the prospect of four stories. Based on that feedback, we are reducing the request down to three stories.

We have also enhanced the architecture of the east building façade for the benefit of the neighbors. And we are proposing to plant a row of trees on the east side of the building (adjacent to the roadway) to further soften the eastern façade. We are not proposing any windows or doors for that side. In the end, we believe the impact on the neighbors to the east will be minor. This is particularly true based on the distance between our proposed building and the neighbors' houses to the east. The intervening public street does provide adequate setbacks between the two.

We are also proposing materials that complement the surrounding area with stucco and stone veneers—all inspired by desert-scape earth-tones. Through the use of our material we have pulled from the surrounding architecture in terms of quality, colors, and texture. This can be seen in our stone veneer and stucco color choices which incorporates muted tones of browns, greys, and beiges.

Additionally to further mediate the added height, we intend to provide additional landscaping along both the east and south property line. No landscaping currently exists along the site's eastern property line and very minimal landscaping exists along the south property line.

Through the use of these features, we hope to harmoniously mix our proposed self-storage facility with the existing features, materials, and colors of the commercial center. The relatively minor increase in building height will fit seamlessly into the existing mixed-use commercial center and surrounding area.

Conceptual elevations are included with this submittal.

***d. That the hours of operation will not adversely impact the adjacent properties or surrounding area;***

This facility will not be a 24-hour facility, and access will be controlled via security code. This Platinum Storage facility will have an on-site manager available 7 days a week, during normal business hours, to assist new customers with the renting of available storage units and all of the services described above in the Use Characteristic section of this narrative.

Existing customers can access the facility with their *unique* security code from 6am to 10pm, daily. This unique security code, along with our system of high-resolution security cameras, will allow us to track who entered the building, when they entered, and when they exited.

Office hours, which are staffed by the manager, will be approximately as follows:

- Monday - Friday: 9:00am to 6:00pm
- Saturday: 8:00am to 5:00pm
- Sunday: 11:00am to 3:00pm

These hours may shift by 30 minutes.

***e. That the parcel size is sufficient adequate to provide adequate buffers or mitigation measures to surrounding properties;***

The overall center size is not increasing nor is the existing buildings footprint. There is more than sufficient parking for this use within the existing center. The parcel already provides sufficient separation from the existing residential subdivision (Litchfield Manor zoned R1-7) and the existing office plaza to the south. A 6-foot high block wall exists along the south and east property lines.

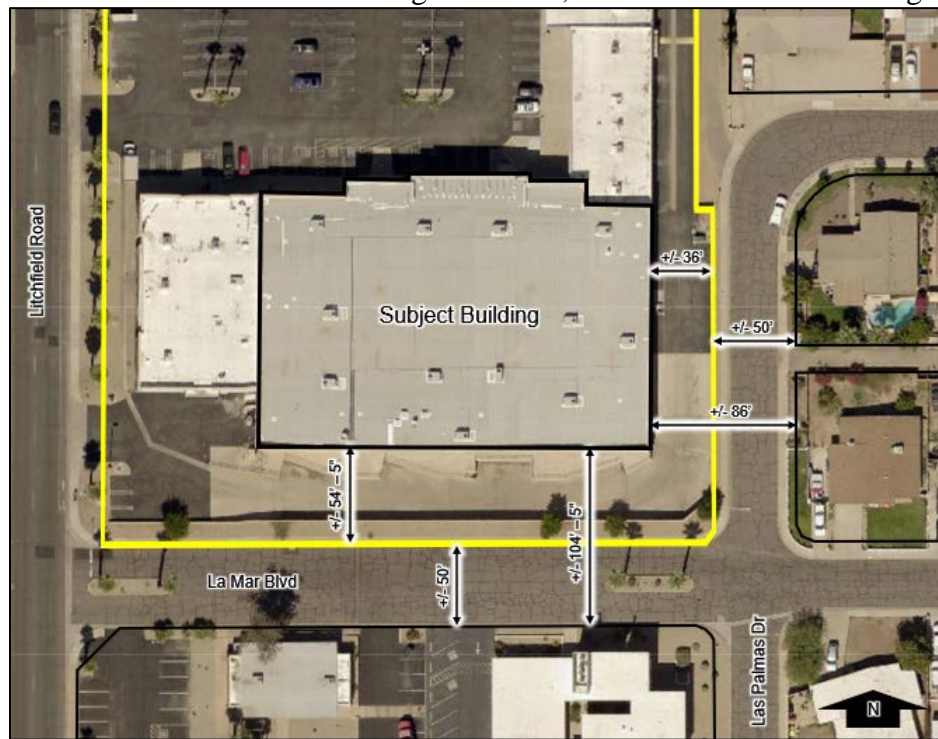
The existing building is setback 36-feet from the east property. Las Palmas Drive, a 50-foot wide street, exists immediately to the east property line. Las Palmas Drive and the center's service aisle separate the subject building from the closest residential property line. When consideration is given to the existing building setback of 36-feet, Las Palmas Drive 50-foot wide right-of-way, the closest residential property line to the east of our subject site is 86-feet.

To the south is an office complex (Katsur Dental & Orthodontics of Arizona) that is shown as R1-7 in the City's zoning map. However, we understand from talking to staff that this is believed to be an error and the zoning should be listed as C-2. The existing building is setback 54'-5" from the south property line. Las Palmas Drive, a 50-foot wide street, exists

immediately to the east property line. La Mar Blvd. and the center's service aisle separate the subject building from the closest office property line. When consideration is given to the existing building setback of 54'-5", La Mar Boulevard 50-foot wide right-of-way, the closest office property to the south of our subject site is 104'-5".

No landscaping currently exists along the site's eastern property line and very minimal landscaping exists along the south property line. To further mediate buffers, we intend to provide additional landscaping along both the east and south property lines as long as there are no conflict with utilizes. When consideration is given to the large existing building setback, the adjacent streets, the new proposed landscaping and the existing 6-foot high walls there is sufficient buffering to the adjacent properties.

We recognize that we will need to petition council for a modification of the setback standard pursuant to Section 4-1-3.C of the zoning ordinance, to achieve our desired height.



***f. That the proposed use is consistent with the development character or architecture of the adjacent properties.***

The subject site is a building within a mixed-use commercial area, which has otherwise been developed for decades. The property is zoned C-2 which allows self-storage facilities as well as other commercial uses. The subject site is within a mixed-use commercial center and surrounded by other commercial uses to the north and west. This request seeks to adaptively reuse the existing vacant retail building (35,004 SF) into a three story self-storage facility that will provide stability for this location.

This request will undoubtedly have a *positive* impact on current and future surrounding land use and zoning patterns. The subject property is true infill and reuse of an existing building. The design of the building follows the Ordinance's intent and is compatible with the surrounding area. The building design creates architectural focal points to break up the plane of the building and to enhance the design aesthetic. Each side of the building has architectural interest, with different materials and design. The architectural design celebrates the surrounding architecture by blending and borrowing forms, materials, and colors in an effort to integrate the new and existing. Our proposed architectural style is much like the surrounding architecture. Overall, our design aesthetics for this project root from the immediate-surrounding area, as well as the desert-based architectural style used in the valley generally.

As for the use, most self-storage centers consist of storage fields with externally accessed storage units. While these types of facilities have improved over the years, what Platinum Storage is proposing at this location is in a special class. Not only is all the storage internal to the building and climate controlled, but the loading and unloading is also done indoors and climate controlled. Combine this with the low trip generation and the elevated design of the building, and we have no doubt this will be a great addition to the area.

## Phasing

The self-storage facility will be developed in one phase and will occur depending upon timing of the City approvals. The improvements will be designed and constructed in accordance with the City's review and requirements.

## Conclusion

As noted, this facility provides very little impact on the City services, utilities, adjacent roadways and sanitation demands. The material in this application demonstrates that this request meets the findings required for a special use permit and site plan approval. Additionally, the requested special use permit with site plan described herein are modest and will not cause adverse impacts on the surrounding area, but will in fact benefit the area and its residents. We will continue to work with the neighbors to the east, but we believe by reducing the height from four stories to three, by enhancing the architecture of the east side, by ensuring no windows exist on the east side, and by adding landscaping along the street, we have mitigated well the additional height we are proposing. Additionally, the intervening street provides additional spacing between the building and the neighbors' properties.

This is an ideal location for neighborhood storage facility that is fully consistent with the area. This request provide a needed facility to this area and infills a property that is not only vacant now, but could sit vacant for many years given the state of retail.

We therefore seek approval of this special use permit with site plan. Thank you for your consideration.

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