

PROJECT NARRATIVE

1126 North Ellsworth Road
Southwest Corner of Ellsworth Road and Brown Road
Mesa, Arizona



PZ 17041 - NARRATIVE

LAACO, LTD

Planning & Zoning Submittal: April 17, 2017

Zoning Case No. PLN2017-00081

DEVELOPMENT TEAM

Developer	LAACO, Ltd John Hathaway 431 W. Seventh Street Los Angeles, CA 90014 Phone: (213) 622-1254 Email: john.hathaway@laaco.net
Applicant/Representative	Withey Morris, PLC Adam Baugh / Kirste Kowalsky 2525 East Arizona Biltmore Circle, Suite A-212 Phoenix, AZ 85016 Phone: (602) 230-0600 Email: adam@witheymorris.com ; kirste@witheymorris.com
Land Planning Architect	Robert Kubicek Architects and Associates, Inc. Robert Kubicek / Michelle Hassler 2233 E. Thomas Road Phoenix, AZ 85016 Phone: (602) 955-3900 Email: rkubicek@rkaa.com ; mhassler@rkaa.com
Civil Engineer	Helix Engineering, LLC Steve Bowser 3240 E. Union Hills Drive, Suite 112 Phoenix, AZ 85050 Phone: (602) 535-1186 Email: sb@hxeng.com
Landscape Architect	T.J. McQueen & Associates Inc. Tim McQueen 8433 East Cholla Street, Suite 101 Scottsdale, Arizona 85260 Phone: (602) 265-0320 Email: timmcqueen@tjmla.net

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A. PROPERTY LOCATION

The subject site (the “Property”) is an approximate 4.8 gross/4.0 net acre triangular-shaped parcel located at the southwest corner of Ellsworth Road and Brown Road in Mesa, Arizona. The Property is comprised of one parcel and is identified as APN 218-07-001N. The Property is currently vacant and is immediately adjacent to the Signal Butte Floodway which is controlled by the Flood Control District of Maricopa County. See **Exhibit 1 –Context Aerial & Parcel Map**.

B. REQUEST OVERVIEW

The applicant, LAACO, Ltd. proposes to make a significant investment in this area with a new, 1-story (maximum 25-foot tall) air-conditioned self-storage facility which is designed to be compatible with existing buildings and uses in the surrounding area. The street frontage along Ellsworth Road will be substantially improved with a 15-foot wide landscape setback that includes native desert trees and shrubs. All four sides of the two (2) proposed storage buildings include a blend of integral color block, metal awning accents, stacked stone projections, stucco and storefront glass windows to further the pedestrian environment. Further, the building façade is broken up at regular intervals to create a more modern, high-end appearance that is similar to office developments.

Although site visibility may be a factor for traditional office and/or retail uses, self-storage is less dependent upon street visibility and this isolated parcel is ideal for a use such as this. Further, this property has significant challenges for any development including the unique shape/orientation of the triangular parcel and the fact that it takes on the historic water drainage from the northeast. The site is also impacted by the existing median on Ellsworth Road which restricts left-hand turn movements into the Property, thereby limiting its development potential.

The proposal as illustrated by the conceptual site plan demonstrates the ability to create a use that designs around these property hardships. Accordingly, LAACO Ltd. proposes a modern, climate-controlled self-storage facility. The storage of household items is a common need for many who are remodeling, relocating or going through life transitions. Similarly businesses require temporary space to store seasonal merchandise and excess inventory. Other self-storage facilities located in East Mesa are older, outdated, and farther away. They simply do not have the types of amenities this facility will offer residents and/or businesses, nor do they adequately serve this market area.

This development will provide a much-needed quality, self-storage facility for a currently underserved area. As designed, this well-conceived facility will serve as an amenity to area residents as well as business professionals, while providing diversity to the current mix of commercial uses in the area. The high quality nature of this facility will complement the mix of residential and commercial uses in the surrounding area. More important, because storage facilities have a very low number of daily trips, traffic generated by this use will be substantially lower than any other potential commercial use that may otherwise locate at this arterial intersection.

C. EXISTING ZONING & LAND USE

Existing Zoning

The Property is currently zoned RS-43 (formerly known as R1-43) subject to conditions the City approved in January 1999 under Zoning Case Z98-117. The Property has remained vacant since then although, much of the surrounding area has developed over time including the commercial property to the east which includes a Chevron gas station and commercial retail center (zoned Limited Commercial). The area immediately north of the site is a +/- 145-foot wide Signal Butte Floodway channel. On the opposite side of the channel is a professional medical office plaza (zoned Office Commercial). Further, single-family residential homes flank the remaining areas adjacent to the Property and the Signal Butte Floodway channel (zoned RS-6).

Any development of this land-locked, infill property is challenged especially given the significant constraints that exist including: (1) the odd shape of this triangular parcel which impacts the building layout, vehicular circulation, parking and access; (2) the historical drainage flows which are conveyed through the site from the north which slope to the southwest, (3) the existing topography and grade changes of the Property which vary from +/- 1614 feet to 1626 feet, (4) the Property's limited street frontage and visibility along Ellsworth Road and (5) the existing raised median in Ellsworth Road which restricts left-hand turn movements into the Property, thereby limiting its development potential.

The benefits of the development proposal area follows:

- This gated, self-storage facility has a more contemporary theme to further the pedestrian scale along Ellsworth Road. The modern architecture and high-quality materials blends well with the surrounding context and mixture of uses in the area.
- This project represents a new breed of self-service storage facility. With highly stylized design and air-conditioned units, it is vastly superior to the antiquated facilities that have historically located in more intense areas.
- As the demand for residential and commercial storage has increased, so has the need for facilities that supply it. This project will add value to a long-standing vacant Property and will galvanize the community with an attractive and refreshing neighborhood-friendly service that has little impact on the area.
- The proposed use will not generate significant activity, light or noise. In fact, the proposed storage warehouse is an ideal use for this uniquely shaped remnant property that has direct access to an arterial roadway.
- The proposed building and enhanced landscaping will vastly improve the site's current blighted condition. Further, the building's orientation along the Signal Butte Floodway drainage channel serves as a noise mitigation technique and will buffer the noises generated from the high volume of traffic along Brown and Ellsworth Roads.
- This secure, climate controlled storage project will provide a valuable service to support the needs of area residents and commercial users.

Existing General Plan Land Use Designation

The proposed storage use is consistent with the existing General Plan land use designation for the Property and will provide meaningful services to support the immediate area. The Mesa 2040 General Plan designates the Property as part of a Neighborhoods Character Area, and more specifically calls for a transition between the neighborhood character type and a neighborhood village character type which allows for small commercial uses that serve the surrounding neighborhoods such as this proposal. The General Plan states that neighborhoods can contain nonresidential uses such as schools, parks, places of worship, and local serving businesses. Further, the total area devoted to local serving businesses (commercial and office activities) in one location is generally less than 15 acres and these businesses typically serve people within a mile radius of the area. The proposed service-orientated use and low-scale buildings as designed will blend and add to with the existing character of uses within this community. See **Exhibit 2 – Existing Zoning & General Plan Maps**.

D. PROPOSED ZONING & COMPLIANCE WITH LAND USE GOALS

Proposed Zoning: Limited Commercial (“LC”) with a Bonus Intensity Zone (“BIZ”) Overlay

In addition to the proposed Limited Commercial (“LC”) zoning, a Bonus Intensity Zone (“BIZ”) Overlay is also being requested in order to allow for a minor reduction of the required interior building setback that is adjacent to the Signal Butte Floodway channel and to allow shrubs in place of trees that may be required specifically within the new retention basin on the western portion of the property. The modifications to the proposed landscaping apply to this specific area only and stem from the input received from an adjacent property owner along the southern property line. In consideration of the owner’s northwestern view of Spook Hill being potentially obstructed by the planting of new tall trees, this deviation seeks to replace the trees from that area with shrubs that comply with the Desert Uplands plant species palette. The landscape plan demonstrates that all existing 18 cacti, are to be salvaged from the site and planted mainly in the retention area along with shrubs. This requested landscaping does not impact the visual nature of the project. This retention basin is interior to the site and not immediately visible from Ellsworth Road or adjacent properties especially given the expanse of Signal Butte Floodway channel which further insulates the Property.

In short, there are only two deviations from the underlying Limited Commercial zoning development standards being requested for this project. More importantly, this requested overlay is a result of positive interactions and the support of the adjacent Sonora Village homeowner’s association who represent the neighborhood located immediately to the south of the Property. This BIZ overlay will allow for the western building (‘Building B’) to serve as the perimeter wall thereby avoiding a “no-man’s land” between the wall and building along the western property line. This requested deviation will also allow for a substantial landscape building setback along the southern property perimeter shared with the existing residential neighborhood. An additional benefit for the adjacent neighborhood is that significant improvements will be made to the existing drainage conditions as a result of a large retention basin that is proposed along the western perimeter. As a result, water should no longer dump onto the adjacent residential property which has been a longstanding concern of the HOA.

This development proposal as described in more detail below will transform a challenged infill site into a productive use and complies with the goals and stated purpose of the BIZ overlay. The project incorporates high-quality materials to create efficiencies associated with sustainable development

practices and will promote pedestrian activity along Ellsworth Road. The project reflects superior design elements as follows:

- Varied, high-quality, regionally-appropriate building materials that highlight building massing and detailing especially for building facades facing Ellsworth Road;
- Architecture that is low-scale and designed to achieve an office-type appearance in response to the existing character of the area;
- Site design, architecture and landscaping features are programmed for this challenged infill Property so as to benefit adjacent neighborhoods and promote energy/water conservation;
- Exceeds development standards of the Limited Commercial district, including the building height, lot coverage, landscaped building setbacks (except for northern property line), parking requirements and lighting.

The development of this infill vacant parcel will bring about positive physical changes to improve the visual environment along Ellsworth Road and will address the drainage issues that the adjacent residential community to the south has experienced for years. The project's architectural design and development standards further the City's long-term land use goals for this Property in order to draw upon the identity of the surrounding area. The development complies with the existing land use goals and also exceeds the proposed underlying Limited Commercial zoning with a Bonus Intensity Zone Overlay in the following manner:

Neighborhood Village Form and Guidelines:	Proposed Mini-Storage Project Standards:
Building heights generally one to three stories; respecting adjacent residential	Maximum Building Height of 1-story/25-feet which is 5-feet less than the 30-feet allowed by the Limited Commercial zoning district.
Lot coverage generally not more than 60 percent	Maximum Lot Coverage of 46%
Parking is often between the building and street, but in redevelopment and new development the building is encouraged to be closer to the street with parking to the side and rear.	Given the low-impact nature of use, it does not generate a significant amount of traffic and there is only a limited amount of parking required for the proposed use. Therefore, there is no 'sea of parking' between the building and Ellsworth Road.
Convenient, safe, and attractive pedestrian connections from the adjoining neighborhoods and transit.	A new 6-foot wide detached sidewalk will be installed along the perimeter of the project to connect the existing pedestrian routes along Ellsworth Road.
Attractive landscaping of public right-of-way with street trees and other plantings to enhance the character and identity of the center.	A mix of 1 gallon and 5 gallon shrubs along with a mix of 24-inch box trees consisting of Blue Palo Verde, Ironwood, Desert Willow and Mesquite trees are proposed.
Lighting and signage appropriate in scale and intensity for locations near residential uses.	Lighting is limited to 8-feet for building lights, 14-feet for lights under loading canopies and 15-feet tall light poles near the parking area.
Buildings placed in proximity and orientation to each other to help create a sense of place, energize streets, and improve pedestrian circulation to the center.	The intended layout for this gated, storage facility seeks to push the buildings towards the western perimeter adjacent to the Signal Butte Floodway channel in order to create a significant landscaped buffer of 20-feet wide by 561-feet along the southern property line which is shared with a single-family neighborhood. Further, all pedestrian and

	vehicular access will not create cut-through movements through adjacent residential but will instead provide safe routes along the existing 4-lane arterial roadway (Ellsworth Road).
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Desert Uplands Area

The property falls within the designated Desert Uplands Planning Area, where natural topographical and geological conditions constrain development. These constraints are recognized in the Desert Uplands Development Standards, which the City adopted in 1999 to ensure protection of the natural qualities of the area, as well as to protect new development against naturally hazardous conditions. The landscape plan demonstrates that all existing 18 cacti, are to be salvaged from the site and planted mainly in the retention area along with shrubs. As part of the request, a native plant preservation plan will be reviewed in conformance with the adopted standards to ensure that any potential wildlife and plant communities be preserved and protected as part of the project.

E. PERMITTED USES

This rezoning request seeks Limited Commercial (LC) zoning with a Bonus Intensity Zone (BIZ) Overlay District in order to permit the proposed mini-storage facility as illustrated by the conceptual site plan. See **Exhibit 3 – Conceptual Site Plan**.

F. DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL & DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

The development proposal for this gated storage facility is comprised of two (2) single story buildings which will be designed with enhanced architectural elements in order to achieve a superior appearance. The overall development will offer approximately +/- 79,395 square-feet of storage space with a 700 square-foot office at the southern end of the Property. The majority of the facility will be climate-controlled however there are some drive-up units that are provided for easy access. At this time, there is no intent to provide a manager's quarters/residence. The larger building ('Building A') is thoughtfully situated in the middle of the Property approximately 60-feet from the property line adjacent to a 4-lane arterial roadway (Ellsworth Road). The second building ('Building B') flanks the northern property line that is shared with the Signal Butte Floodway drainage channel and facilities and serves as a perimeter wall for the Property. A defined entry is also proposed near the entry plaza of the building along Ellsworth Road. Key-pads provided for customers are also provided near the sliding gates that access the interior storage units. Key-pads are accessible from the driver's side window as they pull up to the gate. Given the low-intensity nature of the use, there are rarely two cars exiting/entering at the same time, and therefore, traffic conflicts are not anticipated. Additionally, it is expected that most users will enter the site from the northern driveway of the site, and exit to the southern driveway which also helps limit conflicts.

The overall design concept represents an "up-to-date" contemporary architectural expression with a blend of upgraded textures, colors and building materials which are usually reserved for office developments. A theme of blended forms and integrated materials with soft natural earth tone colors provides a relaxed and informal elegance. Due to the undulating grade changes of the Property, there will be steps in the roof/parapet heights of 'Building A' which will provide visual interest and detail in the roofline. Additionally, a decorative building entry feature with storefront-type architecture and window systems will be located on the east end of the building to provide a sense of arrival from Ellsworth Road. The overall building design

also incorporates functional elements, including areas for natural lighting, shaded loading zones, window shading techniques, and state-of-the-art security/access control systems. Additional interest is provided in the color block scheme providing a contemporary color palette that represents the Southwest design theme that enhances and complements the area. The main colors of the building will consist of earth tone browns, warm tans, contrasting white accents and southwestern red. Shapes, colors, textures and materials that will be consistent and aesthetically compatible with the neighboring architecture and landscape design.

The proposed development is a Class-A, climate controlled, indoor self-storage facility and its design, height and orientation have been carefully considered for this area. The proposal will serve as a transition between the more intense uses to the north and east and the residential uses to the south. The landscape buffers and building setbacks ensure an appropriate transition between uses. The building has been located with its largest landscape setbacks along the east and south sides of the Property that face Ellsworth Road and the neighborhood. A limited parking area with (13) stalls are primarily located interior to the site. This use requires only a minimal amount of employee and guest parking, which greatly differs from standard commercial and/or office developments with require larger parking fields. Customers of this facility will be alsoable to pull directly into the interior of the site and temporarily park under the shaded loading areas along the northern/western portions of the building. The project achieves high-performance design principles that are compatible with the surrounding area.

Development & Other Performance Standards

The proposal includes the following development standards as illustrated by the conceptual site plan:

Total Building Area:	+/- 79,395 sq.ft.
Maximum Building Height:	1-story, 25-feet
Maximum Lot Coverage:	46%
Total Parking Provided:	13 spaces, including 2 ADA spaces (exceeds requirement of 6 spaces)
Building Setbacks:	North: 0-feet (Building 'B' serves as perimeter wall) East /Ellsworth Road: 69-feet West: 125-feet South: 51-feet

The proposal shall be designed with four-sided architecture to enhance the views of adjacent property owners, residents, customers, and users of the facility as illustrated by the conceptual building elevations. The enhanced landscaping especially along Ellsworth Road will aid in transitioning uses from the building into the pedestrian experience. Design elements have been carefully chosen to further the relationship between the building and the surrounding environment and shall conform to with standards as indicated below and as demonstrated by the building elevations. See **Exhibit 4 – Building Elevations**

Building Articulation: The visual impact of a building depends on its relationship between its height, length and width including such features as a prominent entry, windows, neutral colors and quality building materials. Building wall articulation shall be required with appropriate details and elements to recognize the pedestrian scale environment. A minimum

of two of the below acceptable modes of articulation shall be included per building facade:

- Changes in the horizontal wall plane
- Changes in the vertical wall plane
- Variation in the roof lines and form
- Use of vertical elements on or in front of expansive blank walls
- Use of pronounced wall plane offsets
- Use of vertical accents and focal points
- Change in the use of materials or color to provide a clear distinction between roof, body and base of building
- Changes in predominant material use
- Other form of building facade articulation as approved by the Planning Department.

Materials:

Approved exterior wall colors and materials shall include the following list, unless otherwise approved by the Planning Department:

- Concrete masonry unit (provided that surfaces are integrally colored, painted, stained or have attractive exposed aggregate which must be approved as to color and texture)
- Stucco or plaster
- Glass
- Metal panel and/or trim projections
- Metals (polished and rusted)
- Storefront glass systems
- Perforated and corrugated rusted metal panels
- Painted steel canopies
- Metal cladding and reveals

Sustainable Practices

This project is planned as a sustainable development within the community. Energy efficiency in design and long-term operation along with thermal comfort in building and site design provide a better self-storage atmosphere for customers, employees, property owners and residents.

- This Project shall adopt the latest energy and building codes that encourage the use of construction, roofing materials and paving surfaces with solar reflectance values which minimize heat island effects.
- Native desert vegetation with decomposed granite shall be planted in order to conserve water consumption.
- The project shall preserve existing mature trees to the extent the tree is deemed salvageable by the landscape consultant.

- Public building entries, loading areas and delineated pedestrian pathways shall be shaded with the use of building/architectural overhang elements and/or landscaping techniques.
- The Project shall reduce the heat island effect by using light colored roofs to provide a minimum roof SRI (Solar Reflectance Index).
- Low flow fixtures shall be used to reduce water consumption.

Landscape Standards

The development shall be in conformance with the table below as illustrated by the Conceptual Landscape Plan which provides for a range of plant species in order to complement the adjacent properties. Landscape materials within the site and along the perimeter will include a variety of vibrant and dense low-water use vegetation in the following manner:

<u>Landscape Standards</u>	<u>Proposed Standards</u>
Minimum Setback along Ellsworth Road	15-feet
Minimum Interior Setbacks	North: 0-feet South: 20-feet
Perimeter Streetscape Planting Sizes (along Ellsworth Road)	25% trees shall be 36" box or larger 50% trees shall be 24" box or larger No trees less than 15 gallon 50% shrubs shall be 5 gallon or larger No shrubs less than 1 gallon
	2 tree per 25-feet of street frontage
Shrubs	Min. six (6) shrubs per 25-feet of street frontage
Parking Lot Area Planting Sizes	
	Min. 10% (Interior parking surface area (exclusive of perimeter landscaping and all required setbacks))
Trees	25% trees shall be 36" box or larger 50% trees shall be 24" box or larger No trees less than 15 gallon
Shrubs	50% shrubs shall be 5 gallon or larger No shrubs less than 1 gallon

The landscape design along Ellsworth Road will be consistent with the City's Ordinance and Design Guidelines. Interior to the site and just east of the retention basin area proposed along the western perimeter of the site, a 6-foot tall wrought iron fence with pedestrian gates will secure the retention basin. Further, this interior fence will continue north and connect into 'Building B' which will serve as a perimeter wall along the northern boundary.

Vehicular Access & Parking

Vehicular access to the property is provided by (2) 40-foot wide right-in/right-out only driveways at the northern and southern ends of the Property which lead storage owners to a sliding gate with key pads. Loading canopies along the northern and western portions of 'Building A' provide a shaded area for owners to load/unload their items.

It is well recognized that self-service storage facilities generates significantly less vehicle trips per day/week than is typically estimated by the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE). As a result, the number of parking spaces, which are proportionally needed for this type of use, are much less than typical commercial uses. One fundamental reason is that these storage units are used for long-term purposes with few daily trips.

Parking spaces shall be a minimum dimension of nine and one-half (9 1/2) feet by eighteen (18) feet. Further, the required parking standard for the proposed use shall be 4 spaces plus 2 for the manager's office which is more than sufficient to meet the parking demands for this +/- 503 storage unit facility. The parking for the project is primarily located along the eastern side of the building in order to provide the most efficient use of the site. Additionally, because of its close proximity to the parking area, the landscaping provided in the along the streetscape softens the visual character of the development.

Lighting

Exterior lighting shall comply with the Mesa Zoning Ordinance and as illustrated by the provided photometric plan.

Signs

All signage shall comply with the Mesa Zoning Ordinance.

Phasing

This project shall be developed in one phase.