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## Planner Report #1

DATE: May 1, 2019

TO: South Orange Planning Board

FROM: Greer Patras, AICP, PP

APPLICANT: Ridgewood Commons Group, LLC  
c/o John Wyciskala, Esq.

ATTORNEY: John Wyciskala, Esq.  
600 Parsippany Road, Suite 204  
Parsippany, NJ 07054

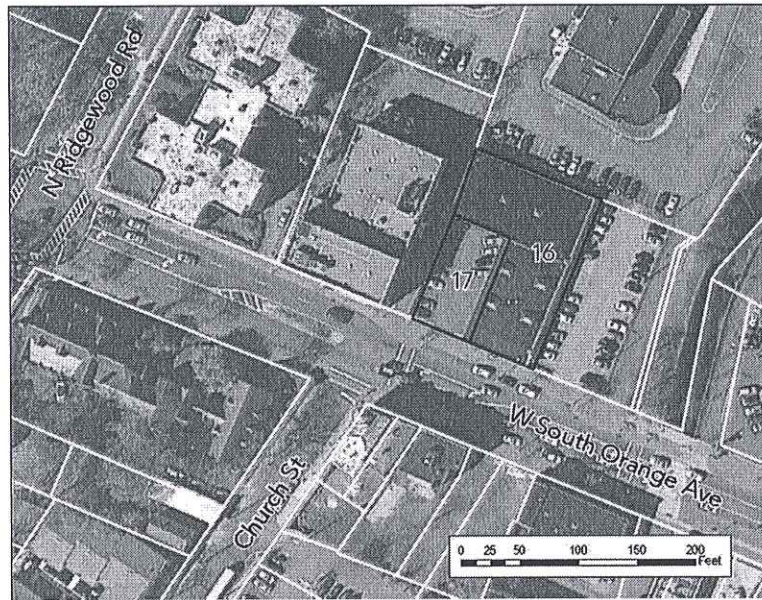
SUBJECT: **APPLICATION #268**  
**109 & 115 SOUTH ORANGE AVE WEST**  
**BLOCK 1904, LOTS 16 & 17**  
**PRELIMINARY AND FINAL SITE PLAN**

The purpose of this report is to provide the Planning Board with a guidance in its evaluation of Application #268, submitted by Ridgewood Commons Group, LLC. The Applicant proposes preliminary and final major site plan to demolish an existing commercial structure and construct a two-story child day-care center with parking. The following reports have been issued:

- March 1, 2019 – We issued Completeness Report #1 recommending that the application be deemed “Conditionally Complete,” pending review by the South Orange Design Review Board, given the unique building configuration and architecture of the proposed building.
- March 20, 2019 – We issued Design Review Board Memo #1 to the Design Review Board as requested, to provide a summary of the application, neighborhood context, and offer design comments.
- April 19, 2019 – The Design Review Board issued a Memorandum summarizing the architecture revisions made by the Applicant during the course of two DRB meetings and offering additional comments regarding the proposed design.

### I. EXISTING CONDITIONS

- A. **Neighborhood Context:** The Site is located South Orange Avenue West, near the intersection with Church Street. This downtown corridor contains a range of commercial and mixed-use buildings, in close proximity to the South Orange Train Station. The adjacent site to the rear contains the South Orange Middle School.
- B. **The Site:** The Site is a 17,160 SF property comprised of two lots:
1. Lot 16 is an existing 12,414 square foot flag-shaped lot containing a one-story commercial building, most recently used by Michelin Tire.
  2. Lot 17 is an existing 4,748 square foot blacktop parking lot.



C. **Zoning:** B-1 Business

D. **Traffic + Parking:** South Orange Avenue West/County Road 510 is a two-way major arterial road through downtown South Orange. Immediately in front of Lot 17 is an existing brick crosswalk connecting to the intersection at Church Street. The site has two existing curb cuts, one on each lot.

## II. PROJECT PROPOSAL

A. **Proposed Project:** The Applicant proposes to demolish the existing one-story commercial structure on Lot 16, consolidate the lots, and construct a two-story child day-care center and parking. The building has a 2,892 SF first floor and a 13,434 SF second floor. The larger second floor will cover approximately 80% of the site, with 24 ground-floor parking spaces underneath.

B. Subsequent to the Applicant's January 2019 submission, there have been revisions to the project based on conversation with the Design Committee Review. Below is a matrix table of the prior January 2019 submission and current April 2019 submission:

	Original 1/2019 Application	Revised 4/2019 Application
At-Grade Building	2,892 SF first floor level of the child care center space containing infant/toddler room area, office, bathroom, staircase, and an elevator.	Same as 1/2019 Proposal
At-Grade Parking	Asphalt surface parking (23 regular spaces and 1 handicap accessible space) almost entirely covered by the 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor, with some walled enclosures surrounding.	Engineering site plan proposes 24 parking spaces, while architectural site plan proposes 25 regular spots. Further clarification required as described in Section 4.C.6 of this report.



	Original 1/2019 Application	Revised 4/2019 Application
Bicycle Parking	No bike rack	Applicant now proposes bicycle rack and 6' black aluminum ornamental fence around the parking, on the property line.
Second Story	13,435 SF of total space: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8,685 SF second level of the child care center space containing preschool classrooms, child play area, staff area, laundry, closet space, bathrooms, staircase, and an elevator.</li> <li>4,750 SF outdoor rooftop playground, in rear of second floor of building.</li> </ul>	13,434 SF of total space: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8,396 SF second level of the child care center space containing preschool classrooms, child play area, staff area, laundry, closet space, bathrooms, staircase, and an elevator.</li> <li>4,017 SF outdoor rooftop playground, in rear of second floor of building.</li> </ul>
Off-Site Improvements	Reconstruct front sidewalk with pavers and asphalt into the right-of-way, including off-site street improvements at the Church Street intersection.	Same as 1/2019 Proposal
Utility Improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relocate utility pole and place; New bollards, signage, landscaping, trash enclosure, line striping, and concrete sidewalks.</li> <li>Permanent wall-mounted, illuminated building signs and temporary 6' x 14' sign at front of property.</li> </ul>	Same as 1/2019 Proposal

C. **Bulk Chart:** Below is a table detailing bulk compliance within the B-1 Business zone:

Requirements	Required	Existing	Proposed <sup>1</sup>
Minimum Lot Area	6,000 SF	12,414 SF + 4,748 SF	17,160 SF
Minimum Lot Width	50'	60 SF + 50 SF	110'
Maximum Building Height	4 ST / 48'	2 ST / 20'	2 ST / 34'
Min. Front Yard Setback	0'	0'	0'
Min. Side Yard Setback	10'	0' (E)	10'
Min. Rear Yard Setback	0'	0'	5.6'
Max. Lot Coverage	N/A	100%	78.3%
Min. Parking Spaces	14 spaces	Not Provided	24 Spaces <sup>2</sup>
Min. Parking Setback	5'	Not Provided	0' (W)
Min. Loading Spaces	1 space	Not Provided	0 spaces (V)
Min. Parking Screening	Screening from ROW	Not Provided	None (W)
(E) Existing Condition (V) Variance (W) Waiver <sup>1</sup> The Applicant has confirmed that Lots 16 and 17 will be consolidated. <sup>2</sup> Using Engineer Site Plan. Architecture Plan is inconsistent.			

### **III. VARIANCE DISCUSSION**

#### **A. The Applicant requires the following "C" Bulk Variance Relief:**

##### **1. Section 185-177: Loading Spaces**

- Required: one
- Proposed: zero

#### **B. The Applicant requires the following Design Waiver Relief:**

##### **1. Section 185-113(c): Parking Setback**

- Required: 5'
- Proposed: 0' to east

##### **2. Section 185-113(o): Parking Screening**

- Required: parking must be screened from public roadway
- Proposed: full screening not provided

#### **C. The Standard for "C" Variance:**

##### **1. Hardship "C1" Variance Standard under N.J.S.A. 40:55(D)- 70(c)(1):**

- Exceptional narrowness, shallowness, or shape of the property, exceptional topographical conditions, and/or other exceptional situations;
- Based on this information, the strict application of the Ordinance would result in exceptional difficulties to, and undue hardships upon, the developer of such property;
- The conditions causing hardship are peculiar to the subject property, and do not apply generally to other properties in the same district;
- Other means to cure the deficiency (such as purchase or sale of property) do not exist, or are unreasonable or impracticable; and
- The variance requested is the reasonable minimum needed.

##### **2. Flexible "C2" Variance Standard under N.J.S.A. 40:55D-70(c)(2):**

- The justifications must relate to a specific piece of property;
- The purposes of the Municipal Land Use Law would be advanced by a deviation from the zoning ordinance requirement;
- The variance can be granted without substantial detriment to the public good;
- The community benefits of the deviation would substantially outweigh any detriment; and
- The variance will not substantially impair the intent and purpose of the zone plan and zoning ordinance.

### **IV. PLANNING COMMENTS**

We offer the following comments for the Boards review and consideration:

#### **A. General Comments**

1. The Applicant shall provide testimony regarding the use and operation of the proposed child care facility, as well as compliance with state licensing. Particular attention should be given to:

- i Hours of operation.
- i Capacity of students on-site.



- iii. Number of required staffing.
  - iv. Building configuration and any child-care facility requirements.
  - v. Site design relative to parking configuration, traffic circulation, and drop-off/pick-up procedure.
2. The Applicant proposes improvements that may encroach/impact adjacent lots and existing easements. Applicant shall provide testimony to all easements on the property and revise site plan indicating same.
  3. The applicant should discuss all proposed utilities and show all on the site plan and roof plan, with screening.
  4. Testimony should be provided regarding the trash enclosure, relative to setbacks, screening, and visibility from the right-of-way. We recommend that the gates be constructed of a visually solid, board-on-board vinyl fence to reduce maintenance compared to the proposed wood, and to better visually screen the contents.
  5. We defer to the Board Engineer regarding drainage, soil erosion and sediment control plan.

#### **B. Architecture**

1. The Applicant shall provide testimony to all building façade materials, colors, and overall details of design, relative to the site and surrounding character. Specifically, Applicant shall discuss changes incorporated to the project as a result of their Design Review Committee meeting.
2. The entire ground level building façade, approximately 110' wide, is flat, without much articulation. We recommend horizontal and/or vertical building setbacks, even as minimal as a foot or two, at prominent locations, such as a front door, to give the building some depth and character.  
  
Where further articulations or building setbacks are not possible, the Applicant could consider art walls or landscape elements in a narrow planting bed or on a vertical garden to break up the façade.
3. A door to a mechanical room is located on the front façade. We recommend this be relocated.
4. The Applicant shall revise the architecture plans to show rooftop plan depicting specifications to any mounted mechanical equipment and utilities. Applicant shall specify how rooftop equipment will be screened via parapets or other mechanisms.

#### **C. Parking + Circulation Comments**

1. The Applicant should provide testimony regarding the overall parking and circulation plan. All of the variances and waivers associated with this application relate to the parking location and screening, and lack of a loading space. The design, site traffic, and circulation of the dead-end drive should be discussed.
2. We offer concern regarding access to the parallel spaces. The engineer should demonstrate this movement, especially during high-traffic times. If the Board approves this application and these spaces, we recommend that they be designated as "employee only" to reduce turnover and access issues.
3. We offer concern regarding the back-out of the space at the furthest northeast

corner, which is adjacent to the property line, where 5' backout area is typical.

4. The Applicant shall provide testimony to timing and mechanism in coordination to loading access and deliveries. In particular, the Applicant shall provide testimony to loading/bus/waste management truck circulation, specifically focusing on turn-around radii and proposed "back up area" on site plan.
5. The Applicant shall provide testimony regarding waste management and removal, the frequency of waste removal, and the method of waste removal (i.e. truck type).
6. The engineer's site plan portrays 23 regular parking spots and 1 ADA-van accessible parking spot (24 parking spots total), while the architect site plan portrays 25 regular parking spots. We believe this was an error on the architect plan due to not properly labeling striping and ADA parking. Applicant shall confirm and correct the following inconsistencies between the engineer and architect site plan:
  - i ADA van accessible space with proper striping labeled.
  - ii Striping area east of the proposed trash enclosure.
7. The Applicant proposes off-site improvements along South Orange Avenue West, which includes removing the existing brick paver crosswalk immediately in front of Lot 17 and relocating the crosswalk closer to the Church Street intersection. Applicant shall provide testimony to the construction sequence and pedestrian/vehicular safety during time of construction. Applicant should consult same with the County Engineer.

#### **D. Lighting + Landscaping**

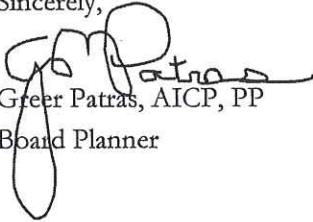
1. The Applicant shall testify to the level of illumination generated by all site and building lighting, particularly focusing on compliance with Section 185-116 of the Village Ordinance.
2. The lighting plan does not show any building mounted fixtures on the front or side facades. Details should be provided, including fixture information and footcandle levels.
3. We recommend a color temperature at or less than 4000°K, and that all lights be turned off within 1 hour of business closing to reduce off-site impacts. We recommend that any lights that are required for security purposes overnight use a motion-sensor.
4. The Applicant shall testify to the landscape screening along the perimeter of the property and maintenance. Additionally, Applicant should testify to the consideration of planting shade tree(s).
5. The plan has expansive areas of mulch. These should be filled in with additional shrubs and a low maintenance groundcover.
6. The spacing of the boxwood should be reduced to 2.5' on center to create a hedge screen.
7. Minimum planting height of the evergreens along the rear edge should be 5 to 6'; 4' is proposed.
8. Particular attention should be given to the landscaping at the side frontage. Additional plants and varieties should be considered.

## V. DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

- A. **Application Form**, filed January 31, 2019 and resubmitted April 18, 2019.
- B. **Cover Letter** consisting of two (2) pages written by John Wyciskala, Esq.
- C. **Preliminary and Final Site Plan**, consisting of twelve (12) pages, signed and sealed by Gerard Gesario, P.E. of Jarmel Kizel on January 3, 2019 and revised April 16, 2019.
- D. **Architectural Drawings**, consisting of four (4) pages, signed and sealed by Mathew Jarmel, AIA of Jarmel Kizel on January 24, 2019 and revised April 16, 2019.
- E. **Topographic Survey**, consisting of one (1) page, prepared by David J. Von Steenburg, P.L.S. on February 5, 2017.
- F. **Architectural Renderings**, consisting of three (3) pages, prepared Jarmel Kizel Architecture, received April 18, 2019.
- G. **Traffic Impact Study**, consisting of thirty-eight (38) pages signed by Charles Olivo, P.E. and Matthew Seckler, P.E. of Stonefield Engineering on April 12, 2019.

If you have any further questions regarding this application, please feel free to contact our office.

Sincerely,



Greer Patras, AICP, PP  
Board Planner