

JSA CIVIL

Engineering | Planning | Management

RECEIVED
12/19/22
COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT
P22-129
P22-130

December 13, 2022

City of Ellensburg
Community Development Department
501 N Anderson Road
Ellensburg, WA 98926

Transmitted via email to: comdev@ci.ellensburg.wa.us

Re: Ellensburg, WA Distribution Center
Height Variance Narrative

City of Ellensburg Staff,

Please accept this height variance request narrative for the proposed Ellensburg, WA WinCo Foods Distribution Center project located on Kittitas County TPNs 17-18-03040-0003, 17-18-02033-0012, 17-18-11020-0025, 17-18-11020-0026, and 17-18-11020-0006. The project site is located west of Anderson Road and east of Interstate 90 and has historically been used for hay farming and hay storage by the Anderson Hay & Grain Company.

Proposed Development

This project proposes construction of a new grocery distribution center facility on +/- 108.24 acres in the City of Ellensburg, Washington. The distribution center will include a new +/- 1,116,220 sq. ft. grocery distribution warehouse, +/- 47,894 sq. ft. truck returns warehouse, +/- 800 sq. ft. driver waiting building, and +/- 377 sq. ft. check-in building. The distribution warehouse will include segregated storage of dry goods, frozen foods, and refrigerated foods for distribution to WinCo Foods stores throughout the Pacific Northwest. Goods stored within the facility will be sorted and conveyed by a mechanized warehouse automation system. Additional site improvements include an on-site truck refueling area, tractor-trailer and auto parking areas, interior drive aisles, stormwater facilities, and underground utilities to serve the proposed development.

Zoning Regulations

The project site is currently zoned I-L; Industrial – Light by the City of Ellensburg (City). Based on Table 15.320.040. of the City's Land Development Code, and the geographic location and surrounding land uses, the following criteria apply in the I-L Zone:

Standard*	I-L
Minimum Lot Area	None
Density, minimum (ECC 15.320.050)	NA
Density, maximum (ECC 15.320.050)	NA
Maximum building height	35 feet
Minimum front yard	10 feet
Garage front yard setback	22 feet
Minimum rear yard	None
Minimum side yard	None

*criteria shown for I-L zone only

The project has been designed to comply with City setback requirements in the I-L zone. The distribution center warehouse building will need a height variance to permit a proposed building height in excess of the 35-foot maximum allowed under City Code. (The distribution center warehouse does not qualify for height exceptions provided in ECC 15.320.060.) The distribution center warehouse will include portions of the building at a maximum height of 115 feet. The architectural design plans for the distribution center building include varied roof heights to provide clearance for interior equipment, operating systems, and framing to provide adequate roof pitch and snow load capacity.

Building Height Design Alternatives

Design alternatives to reduce the building and roof height were reviewed but proved to be infeasible. Options such as increasing the building footprint, adjusting the ratios of on-site parking areas and drive aisles, and/or constructing below-grade freight handling facilities were explored; however, due to site constraints from existing conditions, these methods were determined to be infeasible. The project site contains critical areas (wetlands and streams) which require protective on-site buffers and restrictive setbacks, thereby reducing the available development envelope and available area for storage and treatment of site-generated storm runoff. Reducing the on-site parking and drive aisle areas to accommodate a larger building footprint would limit capacity and volume of the distribution facility, rendering the project operationally unsuccessful. Below-grade facilities are also infeasible due to groundwater depths at the site, which prohibit installation of electronically automated handling systems and warehousing equipment under damp or wet conditions. The building has been designed to utilize the lowest roof heights practicable for installation, use, and maintenance of the distribution systems proposed by the facility.

Variance Criteria

1. The variance is necessary because of the unique size, shape, topography, or location of the subject property:
 - a. *Site constraints are present due to the existing on-site wetlands, buffers, and groundwater depths. These constraints render design alternatives such as a larger building footprint to reduce roof height and/or below-grade construction of the facility infeasible.*
2. The strict enforcement of the provisions of this title creates an unnecessary hardship to the property owner:
 - a. *Strict enforcement would create an unnecessary hardship because the property could not accommodate the proposed distribution center use without a building to include freight handling and automated storage equipment, refrigerated/frozen storage facilities, and the electronic monitoring and management systems necessary for operation.*
3. The subject property is deprived, by provisions of this title, of rights and privileges enjoyed by other properties in the vicinity and under an identical zone, however, the existence of similar nonconforming uses of neighboring lands, structures, or buildings in the same zone shall not be considered grounds for the issuance of a variance:
 - a. *Previous building height variances have been approved for the Kittitas County Transfer Station and Continental Cold projects, which are conforming uses within the City's Light Industrial zone. Specifically, the Kittitas County Transfer Station received a 15 ft. variance for an overall building height of 50 ft., and the Continental Cold project obtained a 20 ft.*

- variance for an overall building height of 55 ft. There are no known buildings exceeding a 35-foot maximum height on neighboring parcels.*
4. The need for the variance is not the result of deliberate actions of the applicant or property owner, including any past owner of the same property:
 - a. *There were no deliberate actions by the applicant or property owner resulting in the need for a variance. Site constraints are present from existing on-site wetlands, critical area buffers, and groundwater depths which have resulted in the need for an increased building height to meet the demand of the distribution facility. Design alternatives such as expanding the building footprint and reducing the proposed building height are infeasible due to existing site conditions.*
 5. The variance is compatible with the comprehensive plan:
 - a. *The Future Land Use Map within the City's comprehensive plan identifies the majority of the site as Heavy Industrial and the remainder as Light Industrial. Regional distribution centers and their accessory uses are permitted uses within the City's Light and Heavy Industrial zoning designations. Based on Table 15.320.040. of the Ellensburg Land Development Code, there are no building height maximums within the I-H – Heavy Industrial zone. Therefore, the proposed project is compatible with future land use projections in the comprehensive plan.*
 6. The variance does not create a health or safety hazard:
 - a. *The variance will not create a health or safety hazard. The roof areas proposed are the minimum heights necessary to allow safe operation and maintenance of the distribution systems proposed within the structure and to provide structural framing suitable for snow and wind loads within the geographic location of the project.*
 7. The granting of the variance will not be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to:
 - a. The property or improvements in the vicinity, or
 - b. The zone in which the subject property is located:
 - a. *The granting of the variance will not be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to property owners within the immediate vicinity because it will not restrict current or future uses on neighboring properties. The tallest portions of the warehouse building will be constructed generally at the center of the site and the building is not anticipated to impact light run-on to adjacent properties. Impacts to the potential use of solar energy or other uses requiring natural light exposure are not anticipated.*

The proposed regional distribution center use is a permitted use within the current I-L zoning designation of the site; a special and/or conditional use permit will not be required.
 8. The variance does not relieve an applicant from:
 - a. Any of the procedural or administrative provisions of this title, or
 - b. Any standard or provision that specifically states that no variance from such standard or provision is permitted, or
 - c. Use or building restrictions, or
 - d. Any provisions of the critical areas development standards except as provided in Division VI:

- a. The project will comply with the procedural and administrative provisions of title 15.250.050 including but not limited to standards and provisions, use or building restrictions, and critical areas development standards.*
9. The variance from setback or height requirements does not infringe upon or interfere with easement or covenant rights or responsibilities:
 - a. The variance from height requirements will not infringe upon or interfere with any known easements or covenant rights or responsibilities.*
10. The variance does not allow the establishment of a use that is not otherwise permitted in the zone in which the proposal is located:
 - a. The height variance will not establish a use that is not otherwise permitted within the site's I-L zoning designation. No special or conditional uses are proposed by the project; a regional distribution center is a permitted use within the I-L zone under title 15.310.040. Nonresidential uses.*
11. The variance is the minimum necessary to grant relief to the applicant:
 - a. The height variance requested to allow a final building height of 115-feet above finished grade is based on the distribution facility's functionality requirements and is the minimum necessary to grant relief to the applicant. No additional variances or exceptions from City Code are included with this request.*

Site Plan Requirements

A site plan, architectural floor plans, and conceptual building elevations have been prepared and are enclosed for review.

Please contact me directly with any questions or comments at brandon.johnson@jsa-civil.com.

Respectfully,



Brandon Johnson, PE
Principal
JSA Civil, LLC