

MEMO

To: Scott Dadowski, Tarentum Council President
From: Tarentum Borough Planning Commission
Re: Tarena Conditional Use Recommendation
Date: January 10, 2022
Cc: Michael Nestico, Tarentum Borough Manager
Tarentum Borough Council and Mayor

On Wednesday, January 5, 2022, a Planning Commission public meeting was held to discuss a zoning application by Bridges & Company, Inc. for conditional use (industrial use) of the property located at 209 Lock St. (the former Tarena rolling skating rink property). Formal minutes of the meeting are attached to this memo.

After the public was dismissed, the Commission, along with the Borough Manager and Code Enforcement Officer discussed the application and formed the recommendation that follows. The Borough employees provided information on policy, protocols, and precedent, but the recommendation reflects the opinion of the Commission members.

While we would all prefer that the Tarena property be used for a more “active” business purpose that would provide for additional employees working and spending in the Borough, or provide services, goods, or recreational activities that would serve Tarentum Borough residents or bring people into the Borough, we found that the proposed use would not be inconsistent with that of other nearby properties or be a meaningful detriment to future development. Additionally, the proposed use and building improvements would be preferable to the current condition of the building or having another unused, deteriorating building in the Borough.

We were tasked with evaluating the request by the following general standards.

1. The use shall not endanger the public health, safety, morals, and general welfare in the location where proposed.
2. The use shall not deteriorate the environment or generate extraordinary nuisance conditions including but not limited to traffic congestion, noise, dust, smoke, glare, and vibration.
3. The use, as proposed, shall be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.
4. The character of the use shall be in general conformity and compatible with uses in the neighborhood in which it is proposed to be located.
5. The use shall not adversely affect the assessed valuation of abutting properties.

And specifically for Industrial Use in the Commercial Center (CC) District.

- A. Loading spaces required by this chapter shall be provided on site and out of any public right-of-way.
- B. Existing retail storefronts shall be preserved such that they may be utilized for future retail or use or ancillary retail use as related to the establishment.
- C. Noise or fumes associated with the production process shall not be discernible outside of the principal building.

- D. With the exception of loading and unloading in authorized spaces, no part of the production process, including storage of materials, shall occur outside of a completely enclosed building.

In all points, the proposed conditional use request and planned activities met these standards, but the Commission emphasizes general standard #4 and condition B under Industrial Use in Commercial Center.

While the proposed use and building improvements described by the applicant would “*be in general conformity and compatible with uses in the neighborhood in which it is proposed to be located*”, there is a concern that a growing number of generic, unidentified, non-public use buildings in the district could lead to a warehouse district feel in the Commercial Center District. This would be detrimental to future mixed-use business development. While the existing use might not be considered a “retail storefront”, maintaining and enhancing the Lock St. façade (as per B. above), so that it retains the appearance of a more traditional business facility (as opposed to a storage building) would alleviate that concern. Additionally, we would ask that the company name and logo be prominently displayed on the building façade in a manner consistent with Borough Code.

We therefore recommend that Tarentum Borough Council approve the conditional use request and give consideration to our suggestion that the building façade be retained/enhanced and that appropriate business identification signage be required. We would also ask that the Borough formally adopt similar façade requirements directly into the Zoning Ordinances for all buildings, not just those that may have been former retail storefronts.