



Self-Storage Development Case Study: SurePoint Addresses Zoning and Design Mandates in Pearland, TX

The approvals process can be an obstacle during any self-storage development, and that proved to be the case for this Extra Space facility in Pearland, Texas, built by SurePoint Storage. Get insights to this project from the architect's point of view and how they might apply to your own endeavors.

By Jeffrey S. Dallenbach and Cheryl L. Cole | Nov 24, 2019

The complexity of the entitlement process in relation to a self-storage project is always a tremendous concern for the developer and architect. On the seventh of 13

facilities we've worked on with SurePoint Storage—this one in Pearland, Texas—the company wanted a location near “Main and Main,” at the intersection of two highly trafficked thoroughfares. In any municipality, this makes it more difficult to obtain development approvals.

As we began to analyze sites and review the area, we realized self-storage wouldn't be approved by the city council if it was on Broadway, so we had to turn our search to arterial streets at the center of town that crossed it. Ultimately, the developer chose an incredibly long and narrow site on Kirby Drive, one block off Broadway and near a high school. Being within the Kirby Corridor Overlay District, it required an extensive review and approval process.

Zoning Requirements

The goal was to change the zoning from “residential general business” to allow self-storage with a conditional-use permit. The school district was one of the first hurdles, as officials were concerned about potential traffic problems related to school arrival and departure times. We worked with the district and city to complete a traffic study, which showed the minimal impact self-storage would have on the vicinity. Now, the district was in favor of our use.

We designed the site so the drive aisle traversed only one side and the back of the structure, which meant we had to apply for a variance to put the primary entry closer to an adjacent property, which was a fire station. We put it near an existing street light and cross-thoroughfare curb cut, which allowed site access from both directions on Kirby Drive. This also helped create an aspect of traffic control in relation to timing with the street, which could be controlled by the city.

From there, we dove into all the building-design requirements with which we had to comply. Site planning wasn't completely approved at this point, so we dove into more architectural civil engineering and landscape design to meet the city's goals for the project.

The design spanned the length of more than four football fields, with the drive aisle along the back of the building and extensive landscaping along the street frontage, which was close to 800 feet. The building itself was 465 feet long!

To help secure the variance for the new entry, we created a park-like pad at the opposite end of the property, flanked by a combination of existing trees and new landscaping. Tree preservation was one aspect of this buffer, but a requirement for mature, 3- to 4-inch caliper trees and 60 percent evergreens was also added to our project scope. Guidelines required that 15 percent of our total site be landscaped. A sidewalk running along the entire site and landscaping along the visible street-side were also required.

In addition, the back-of-the-house drop-off and loading functions were supplemented with continuous parallel parking along the building's entire length. Working with the fire marshal, we widened the rear drive aisle to allow for a continuous fire lane along the entire property, invisible from the main thoroughfare.

After designing the site to meet these various parameters, we dealt with the functional need to reroute a storm-drainage system that crossed Kirby Drive and cut through the very center of the self-storage building. We had the civil engineer work with the city and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, and ultimately got approval to relocate the drainage around the building. At last, we had a site that worked for all governing entities!

Design Specifics

For its design, this project faced corridor-overlay guidelines with exterior mandates rivaling that of a college campus or medical facility. While most self-storage designs relate primarily to function, we had to meet extreme material and fenestration requirements that dramatically affected the overall cost to build.

First, the entire building was required to be 100 percent masonry in an earthtone color scheme. The guidelines also entailed horizontal “push and pull” of the façade

every 25 feet along the entire 465-foot length, supplemented by vertical articulation, also in 25-foot increments. We incorporated a combination of split-faced concrete block with fields of stucco to create a rhythm of materials and texture. Stucco could comprise only 30 percent of the façade, however, and there was a 25 percent glazing guideline to help create a “streetscape” for the community. The combination of the stucco with the rockface look of concrete masonry and glazing resulted in a dynamic look.



Since roll-up doors weren't allowed to be visible on our primary façade, we created a cube tower at the office, with roll-up doors visible behind the glass, to be the focal point. This was supplemented with shading devices to assist with energy savings, and huge expanses of glazing were added at multiple spots along the length of the building. These show functioning corridors and doors, which reduced the overall rentable space but have marketing appeal.

The Cost of Meeting Requirements

There were other requirements to meet for the city and county, including windstorm guidelines from the Texas Department of Insurance. To satisfy these, we incorporated additional structure, roof-design parameters and inspection requisites.

Together, the cost of the reduced rentable area, windstorm design and other severe requirements mandated a second review of the pro forma to determine if the property was still financially feasible. The development team determined it was. After numerous phone calls and meetings with the planning commission and zoning

committee, we received recommendation for the project to proceed to a vote. We got our acceptance by a narrow margin, and we could move forward!

In the end, diligent work through extreme entitlement and design requirements led to successful approval for the Pearland project. Not only does the property function well, it creates a desired streetscape along a main thoroughfare that meets the parameters of many and is rivaled by few.

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