



Department of City Development
City Plan Commission
Redevelopment Authority of the City of Milwaukee
Neighborhood Improvement Development Corporation

Lafayette L. Crump
Commissioner

Sam Leichtling
Deputy Commissioner

Ald. Chambers, Jr.
2nd Ald. District

CITY PLAN COMMISSION ZONING REPORT

File Nos: [260029](#) (deviation from performance standards) &
[260030](#) (overall project approval)

Location: 5825 W. Hope Avenue; on the east side of N. 60th Street, south of W. Hope Avenue

Applicant/Owner: AFS Milwaukee, LLC (owner/applicant)

Current Zoning: Regional Business (RB2) and within a Development Incentive Zone (DIZ) Overlay known as the [Midtown Center](#)

Proposed Zoning: Deviation from Performance Standards and Overall Project Approval as it relates to the Midtown Center DIZ Overlay

Proposal: The property at 5825 W. Hope Avenue consists of a currently vacant building previously occupied by Walmart on the south side of W. Hope Avenue and a surface parking lot to the north of W. Hope Avenue. This site is within Midtown Center, which previously was occupied by the Capitol Court regional shopping mall. In 2000, the Common Council approved Tax Incremental District (TID) #42 known as Capitol Court/Midtown Center and the Midtown Center Development Incentive Zone (DIZ) Overlay in 2000 as a means to support the redevelopment of the former mall. The DIZ Overlay regulates uses and design standards for new construction and alterations within the boundary as a means to guide development in a manner that fosters an active and engaging retail center.

The subject property has been vacant since Walmart exited in January 2016. AFS Milwaukee, LLC purchased the site in June of 2022 and previously requested a deviation from the DIZ Overlay use list to permit self-service storage within the vacant Walmart building. That request was denied by the City Plan Commission because it was determined that the deviation criteria set forth by the Zoning Code were not met for reasons including that the only non-speculative use proposed for the site at that time was for self-service storage. Since then, the owner has partnered with several entities to compile a multi-component redevelopment plan for the entire site. An affordable residential development within the surface parking lot on the north side of W. Hope Ave., approved by the City Plan Commission on April 27, 2026 as [File No. 252155](#), is one component of the site's redevelopment.

The subject files relate to the land located on the south side of W. Hope Ave., and entail a deviation from the DIZ Overlay use list and the overall project approval for this portion of the site. The property owner, AFS Milwaukee, LLC, intends to repurpose the vacant building, including reserving approximately 51,000 sf within the north (front) portion of the building for community-serving uses and allowing a self-service storage facility and data processing, computer service, and computational research facility at the south approximately 108,000 sf portion. While specific tenants for the community-serving spaces are not yet secured, the uses are anticipated to be allowed per the DIZ Overlay, including a potential library branch. The two uses proposed for the south (rear) portion of the building require deviations from the DIZ Overlay use list.

Alterations are proposed to the building and adjacent land within the site, which are subject to the DIZ Overlay design standards. Once tenants are secured for the community-serving uses within the north portion of the building, and façade and site modifications for those tenants are known, a future file will be submitted for consideration by the City Plan Commission. It is anticipated that the W. Hope Ave. elevation will be modified to interact positively with the public realm with items such as additional glazing and patron entrances, as well as outdoor gathering spaces and seating areas. Pedestrian connections across W. Hope Ave. from the residential development to these uses will be coordinated as well. Minor building and site changes are needed for the two uses that are the subject of the deviation request and include a new entrance on the west side for the self-service storage office and potential additional overhead doors along the rear (south) building façade, as well as screening on the south side of the building. Site changes include enhancing the landscaping along the N. 60th St. frontage and the existing landscape islands within the parking area to the west of the building. As part of the future file relating to the community-serving uses, the currently vacant land on the east side of the building might become a parking lot to serve those uses.

The applicant notes that the overall proposed redevelopment, inclusive of all components described in this staff report, delivers significant community and economic benefits including job creation, blight reduction and enhanced aesthetics of the site, increased accessibility to several uses including those that serve the community, and the creation of 200 new affordable housing units within walking distance to critical services and commercial uses at a location that is served by public transportation.

**Alignment with DIZ
Design Standards:**

DCD staff have evaluated the applicant's proposal alongside the design standards established for this DIZ Overlay, and the table below outlines staff analysis. As noted above, future modifications to the building and site for the community-serving spaces will be submitted at a future date, once tenant needs are known. Minimal building and site changes are needed for the two uses that are subject to the deviation request. Those components, as well as anticipated future modifications as outlined in the official exhibits and this report, are consistent with the DIZ Overlay design standards.

Standard	Midtown Center Area B (Standards Here)	Proposal
Uses	DIZ regulates uses (use list here)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permitted Uses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Proposed Library o Offices • Requested Deviation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indoor Self-Service Storage & Data Processing/Computer Services/Computational Research facility
Building Design	<p><i>Massing</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish hierarchy between building elements. For example, articulate entrances and building corners. • Maximum height of buildings is 50 feet. Entry features and tower elements integrated with the building may exceed 50 ft in height. <p><i>Facades</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Variety in each building design throughout Area B is encouraged • Front facades shall be oriented to North 56th St, extended to West Capitol Dr, North 60th St, and West Hope Ave extended, excluding outlots • Along N 56th St extended from a point 450 ft north of W Capitol Dr to W Hope St extended, building must have a storefront window system with vision glass at the first level. A sign band area and/or canopies with signage must be provided. • Along W Hope Ave extended, the front façade must be modulated with windows, articulated bays, and/or an arcade with columns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A – Existing Building • See proposed façade alterations for the Indoor Self-Service Storage & Data Processing/Computer Services/Computational Research facility component in exhibits. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Community-serving space alterations TBD and subject to future City Plan Commission approval.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building entrances shall be clearly identified and visible from streets and easily accessible and inviting to pedestrians • Blank, unarticulated walls facing streets are not permitted, except for service areas. Modulate facades visible from public with articulated bays, windows and openings, varying color and texture, and/or other architectural details that relate to the human scale 	
<p>Building Materials</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All storefronts visible from N 56th street extended, W Hope St extended, N 60th Street and W Capitol Dr must contain the most architecturally significant materials and fenestration. Significant building materials include decorative masonry and block, brick, cut stone, glass, architectural-finished metal cladding and architectural precast concrete panels. Exterior insulation and finish systems cannot be used on the base of the building up to 10 ft in height • Screen rooftop equipment that is visible at the pedestrian level and exceeds 8 cubic feet in area with materials and color that are compatible with the structure • Glazing on the first floor of commercial buildings and entrances must be transparent, vision glass. Low-E glass is permitted with no tinting. Opaque glazing cannot be substituted for vision glass where vision glass is required, but may be used in other areas as an architectural element if it is compatible with the overall design. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For the indoor self-service storage component, N/A – Existing Building • Future façade modifications for the community-serving tenant spaces will be subject to a future City Plan Commission approval

<p>Access, Parking, and Circulation</p>	<p><i>Driveways</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimize the number of curb cuts and widths of driveways • Align new driveways with driveways across street where possible <p><i>Pedestrian Accommodations</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide direct pedestrian connections between public sidewalks/bust tops and all building entrances • Provide secure areas for bicycle parking near entrances <p><i>Parking Areas</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locate parking areas to the rear of a building and/or mid-block instead of at corners where possible • Provide shared parking and service areas where possible • New public streets or private streets with public access easements must connect to the adjacent neighborhood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing parking lot to the west of the building will remain with minor modifications to support proposed community-serving uses. • East parking lot may be developed as a parking lot if required by community-serving tenants; parking lot and landscaping design will be completed per DIZ and City of Milwaukee zoning requirements, and is subject to future City Plan Commission approval.
<p>Landscaping</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In interior parking lot areas, provide curbed islands with landscaping to visually divide the lot, at a minimum 1 tree per every 15 spaces must be provided • N. 60th St. is Type 3 frontage; W. Hope extended is considered Type 1 frontage • Type 1: All of the street frontage must be occupied with buildings except for drive openings • Type 3: All of the street frontage must meet the minimum landscape 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West parking lot will remain as-is with landscaping within existing landscape islands to be updated and replaced as needed. • Landscaping within the new east parking lot will comply with the DIZ and Zoning Code landscaping standards (subject to future City Plan Commission approval). • Landscaping between N. 60th Street and the existing west parking lot will be updated to comply with the DIZ standards and landscaping zoning requirements, Type

	requires per the general provisions of the Code	<p>'A'. The surface parking lot will remain paved and designed as-is.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional plantings will be added along the modified north building frontage; determined and coordinated by tenant's improvement design.
Lighting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use lighting to enhance the architecture of the building as well as provide security and visual appeal • Lighting within parking areas must be designed and located to prevent glare onto adjoining properties • Lighting poles within parking areas may not exceed 25 ft in height. It is preferred that lighting poles along public right of ways are 12ft in height but may not exceed 18 ft in height. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing lighting for walkways and parking areas will remain in place and operational. • The new east parking lot will be illuminated in accordance with the DIZ standards and any applicable provisions of the Milwaukee Code of Ordinances. Lighting poles will not exceed 25' in height. Cut-off fixtures will be utilized. • Additional wall-pack lighting will be installed on the building to illuminate green spaces and enhance safety.
Site Improvements	<p><i>Amenities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Along the east side of North 56th Street extended from a point 450 feet north of West Capitol Dr to West Hope Ave extended, provide pedestrian seating and trash receptacles <p><i>Screening</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locate or screen dumpsters and service areas where they are not visible from the public street • Screen outdoor storage areas • Screen service and loading areas with wing walls or landscaping • Enclose and screen dumpsters and recycling units with a board on board or masonry enclosure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West parking lot will remain as-is. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o A small staff parking lot within the currently paved area will be created for library staff, along with small loading zone and trash enclosure for tenants. • The future new east parking lot will comply with the DIZ and Zoning Code landscaping standards and developed as required by the City of Milwaukee suite, subject to future City Plan Commission approval. • Engineered acoustic screen wall will be added along a portion of the south building façade adjacent to outdoor dry stack coolers.

<p>Signage</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Billboards (off premise signs) are not permitted • Pylon signs are not permitted • Up to 2 monument signs in Area B are permitted preferable at entrances to the project, but cannot exceed 10 feet in height. The height limit may be increased if signage is designed and integrated into a kiosk, building structure or bus shelter. Signage may also be integrated into masonry wall. • The overall area of each monument sign may not exceed 150 square feet in area on each side • At least one monument sign in this area must provide an overall development name and each sign may include up to 3 tenant names. It is preferred that each kiosk sign has up to 3 tenant names, may not exceed 6 tenant names. • Building Signage shall not exceed 3 feet in height or 100 square feet in area per business. • A single-use tenant larger than 10,000 square ft may have one front entrance, vestibule sign with individual letters that may not exceed 60 inches in height. All other proposed building signage not meeting the standards listed may be reviewed and approved administratively. • Internally illuminated box signs are not permitted unless they are recessed into the building and are an integral part of the building design. • Individual pin-set metal letters that are halo-lighted are the most 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No additional freestanding signage is anticipated. The existing Midtown signage to remain at site entry. • Building wall signs will be Type A and following the DIZ overlay standards with respect to size. Compliant building signage may be approved administratively. • Type B signage may be included if one of the community-serving tenants requires changeable messages, subject to future City Plan Commission approval. • All other sign types, including temporary signs, will follow the general provisions of the Zoning Code.
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	<p>desirable. Internally illuminated individual letters are acceptable if raceways are not visible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building signage may be approved administratively. 	
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Deviation Request:

Indoor self-service storage is a prohibited use in the Midtown Center DIZ as well as the base (Regional Business, RB2) zoning district. Additionally, the data processing, computer service, and computational research facility (a type of “indoor substation/distribution equipment” use as defined within the Zoning Code) requires a deviation from the DIZ Overlay use list.

Both the self-service storage use, which is proposed to occupy all or the majority of the south 108,000 sf portion of the building, and the data processing/computer services/computational research facility that would occupy up to 19,000 sf of the 108,000 self-service storage space are considered to be secondary uses to the other allowable uses and improvements within this overall site redevelopment.

Because the standalone self-service storage use would not meet the performance standards of the DIZ Overlay or be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, any approved occupancy and operation of the self-service storage use (and data processing/computer services/computational research facility within up to 19,000 sf of the self-service storage space) is contingent on the implementation of the two other project components outlined in the file (affordable housing on the north portion of the site and the community-serving uses within the north (front) section of the existing building). As such, commercial alterations and occupancy permits for the self-service storage facility use and the data processing/computer services/computational research facility use will not be issued by the Dept. of Neighborhood Services until the following items occur:

- 1.) The portion of the site where the housing development is proposed has been conveyed to the ownership group that will construct the CPC-approved housing development and construction permits have been applied for by Gorman & Company to the City of Milwaukee for residential construction; and
- 2.) There is a binding lease or lease option for the approximately 51,000 sf of leasable space facing W. Hope Avenue for community serving uses with the City of Milwaukee or other community serving entities that will activate the front-facing portion of the property or, in the event that community-serving entities are no longer interested in leasing the space, with retail functions that align with the Midtown Center performance standards.

The approval of the deviation for the self-service storage use and the data processing/computer services/computational research facility use within up to 19,000 sf of the self-service storage facility space, and resulting occupancy approvals shall be null and void, and require re-approval by the City Plan Commission if the applicant does not implement the project as described in this application or proposes a substantial change to the plan of operation, uses, or building designs approved with this application.

Self-Service Storage Use:

The self-service storage facility will have an office on the west side of the building. A new entrance and pedestrian walkway leading to it will be added under the existing canopy, and new storefront glass and a person door will be added. Vehicle entrances for interior loading and unloading are adjacent to the office and will utilize existing overhead doors that had previously been used by the Walmart as automotive bays. Vehicles will not be allowed within the general storage bay areas. Customers will utilize the indoor unloading zone or the existing access doors at the south of the building, which may be enlarged to 40" – 48" wide. Customer parking will be within the existing parking lot on the west side of the building, adjacent to the self-service storage use. Employee parking will be on the south side of the building beside an existing entrance. No outdoor storage will be permitted.

Tenant storage access will be limited to 6 am – 10 pm, 7 days per week, and will be staffed by the on-site management office during that time. High-definition cameras will be utilized to monitor the site, and tenant-specific access codes will be used for the entrances.

Data Processing/Computer Services/Computational Research Facility Use:

The data processing/computer services/computational research facility [a type of "indoor substation/distribution equipment" use as defined within the Zoning Code] will occupy up to 19,000 sf of the 108,000-sf rear portion of the building, and will support advanced computational modeling, data processing, and research applications serving industries such as healthcare, engineering, scientific modeling and other computational research activities. The application narrative indicates this facility will use servers and high-performance computing equipment to process large amounts of data, run simulations, train or test models, and support research that would otherwise take significant time. Research areas could include healthcare modeling and medical research support, imaging analysis, engineering simulations, financial modeling, or university/institutional research workloads. The research is computational in nature, meaning the activity is performed through computers, software, and data processing. The use does not involve manufacturing processes, hazardous chemical handling, industrial emissions, or material processing activities.

The proposed facility would operate with an approximate 7 MW IT load, with a total maximum project utility capacity of 10 MW. The facility would utilize a fully closed-loop system with dry coolers, resulting in a daily water consumption of 5 gallons or less under normal operations. The system does not discharge water into municipal sewer systems and does not create process wastewater streams.

Below is a table from the applicant’s exhibit that outlines the equipment associated with the computational research facility. Generators to provide back-up power in the event that power goes out will be located within the building at the far south side. Critical-grade silencers will be utilized with the generators, which will be tested once per month. Dry coolers relating to the closed-loop cooling system will be located on the outside of the south façade of the building and will be enclosed by an engineered acoustic screening system. All noise relating to this use is subject to the City of Milwaukee’s Code of Ordinances, and specifically Ch. 80-64 relating to noise levels at the property line.

EQUIPMENT:	NOTES:
GPU Servers / Racks	Contained within building, no noise pollution outside of building
Inrow CDUs	Contained within building, no noise pollution outside of building
Liquid Cooling Pumps	Contained within building, no noise pollution outside of building
UPS Systems	Contained within building, no noise pollution outside of building
Switchgear / Electrical Gear	Contained within building, no noise pollution outside of building
Pump Room	Contained within building, no noise pollution outside of building
Generators	Contained within building, no noise pollution outside of building
Generator Exhaust Silencers	Utilize critical-grade silencers, tested once a month
Transformers	Low-Frequency
Dry Coolers	Utilize Engineered acoustic screening system
Rooftop / Exterior HVAC	Typical commercial rooftop units, existing & new equipment

The facility will be staffed 24-hours per day, 7 days per week with approximately 15 technical and support positions (2-3 employees per shift), including computational researchers, data technicians, network specialists, systems engineers, facility operators, and maintenance personnel. Per the applicant, typical activity levels are expected to consist primarily of employee vehicle traffic, equipment monitoring, and routine facility operations.

The Zoning Code outlines four criteria that the applicant must demonstrate are met when requesting a deviation from an overlay’s performance standards. The applicant’s full responses to these criteria are available in the Deviation Narrative exhibit in the file. Below is an overview of the applicant’s responses and staff’s analysis of whether the proposal meets the required criteria are provided below.

Deviation Criteria	Applicant Response & Staff Analysis
The purpose of the overlay zone has been met.	<p>Applicant Response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The addition of housing [north part of site] and community-facing storefronts at the northern part of the building embrace the requirements of the overlay and are supplemented by the modern self-storage facility and data processing/computer services/computational research facility. • All of the main street frontage will be animated with allowable uses and provide community-focused services.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses subject to the deviation occur only at the rear portion of the building, away from the street frontage. • All components of the uses subject to the deviation request will occur indoors with minimal noise impact that will comply with the MCO Noise Ordinance. • Existing traffic pattern at Midtown Center will not be hindered by these uses and there will be sufficient space in the rear of the building for unloading zones so that no vehicles will extend onto the public roadways. <p>Staff Analysis: The purpose of the overlay is to guide development (use and design standards) in a way that fosters an active and engaging shopping center, as directed by the TID project plan. Collectively, the applicant team’s multi-component site redevelopment plan, inclusive of the affordable housing, community-serving uses, and the two uses that are the subject of the deviation request and are secondary to the housing and community-serving uses meet this goal. All active uses are oriented towards W. Hope Ave., with the more passive uses subject to the deviation request located at the rear of the site, away from the public realm. The two uses proposed via the deviation for the rear of the former Walmart facility would facilitate the redevelopment of the large former surface parking lot with new housing opportunities, and activate the frontage of the facility with new community serving uses, both of which advance the purpose of the overlay. Staff find this criterion met.</p>
<p>The deviation improves the aesthetics of the site.</p>	<p>Applicant Response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North portion of the building facing W. Hope Ave. will be comprised of community-serving uses and will be enhanced to suit those uses in compliance with the DIZ design standards. • Utilization of the existing building provides the opportunity to reimagine the experience along W. Hope Ave. and creates a vibrant community within its vacant parking lot. • Space previously occupied by the Walmart garden center (adjacent to community-serving space) will be redesigned, likely as a reading garden and library terrace. Enhanced landscaping and additional green space will replace the currently paved environment. • Plan to include the two uses subject to the deviation request are practical uses of the remaining space at the rear of the site and provides a solution to a community need given the lack of secure indoor self-service storage in the area.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location was highlighted as an opportunity for the data processing/computer services/computational research facility due to the access to space, power and technicians to operate the facility. <p>Staff Analysis: Collectively, the multi-component site redevelopment plan improves the aesthetics of the subject site. The (previously approved) affordable housing development on the north side of W. Hope Ave. entails two buildings fronting the street with a generously sized play space that will be available to the community. This over-sized surface parking lot was made available for conversion to more active housing uses via the proposed redevelopment plan for the former Walmart facility, which will not require the large surface parking lot associated with the former Walmart use. On the south side of W. Hope Ave., it is anticipated that the north façade of the building will be significantly enhanced within the community-serving uses and outdoor gathering and seating areas are possible between the building and public sidewalk, creating a vibrant and engaging presence along W. Hope Ave. Minimal exterior changes are required for the two uses that are subject to this deviation. Staff find this criterion met.</p>
<p>If applicable, the deviation addresses one or more unique site factors that make the application of the standard impractical.</p>	<p>Applicant Response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building has been vacant since 2016. Owner has made significant effort to secure a tenant for the building but had no prospects in over 2 years. The size of the building (160,000 sf) makes leasing to a single tenant difficult. • Mixed-use residential/community center/storage + data processing/computer services/computational research facility approach allows for uses which will greatly improve the success of the project. • Using rear area for the two uses subject to the deviation request allows the space to maximize potential, preserves the Hope Ave. frontage for a new community engagement area, and allows construction of affordable housing. • Remaining rear-facing space provides safe access for vehicles to enter the storage facility. Remaining parking lot space and potential future parking lot space on the east side of the building can serve the community-serving uses. • The rear portion of the building faces the back of the Pick N’ Save grocery store, Planet Fitness, and other retail spaces. <p>Staff Analysis: Staff acknowledges that repurposing a former “big box” building with a single tenant is challenging in the shifting retail climate, and the</p>

	<p>successful reuse of a building of this size typically includes multiple occupants and re-allocation of interior spaces and external parking areas (or conversion to less active uses that may not align with the Midtown DIZ goals). Under the current proposal, the frontage of the building is most impactful space within the building as it relates the public realm and overall Midtown Center activity, and is reserved for community-serving uses that will provide the neighborhood and larger community with access to active and engaging uses that will complement the remainder of the Midtown Center. The proposed use of the rear of the building by more passive uses that are subject to the deviation request, are situated away from the public realm will allow this multi-component site redevelopment plan to be viable, including allowing the former oversized parking lot to be repurposed for housing. Staff find this criterion met.</p>
<p>The deviation is consistent with the comprehensive plan.</p>	<p>Applicant Response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To advance the goals of the Comprehensive Plan to activate Midtown Center and overall surrounding community, the additions of the affordable housing and community center will instantly bring vibrancy to the area and establish uses that do not currently exist. • We are requesting the indoor storage and data processing/computer services/computational research facility to be added as permitted uses within a portion of the building. <p>Staff Analysis:</p> <p>The property is located in the West Side Area Plan boundaries, which was adopted in December 2009 after extensive public input. The Plan establishes policies for commercial land uses (p. 58-59), and recommendations for the “Midtown Center District” (p. 88 & 94), and establishes recommendations for catalytic projects, including the “Midtown Gateway Area” (p. 109-112) and redevelopment opportunities for “Midtown Center” (p. 132-133). At the time of the Plan’s adoption, the property was actively used by Walmart, so future uses for the property were not contemplated.</p> <p>The Plan directs that further development and redevelopment at Midtown Center is a balanced mix of uses including retail, office, institutional, and residential. The Plan directs infill and other redevelopment opportunities be compatible with and contribute to the existing retail mix. Further, a minor modification amendment to the Plan was approved by the Common Council in 2018 reinforced that the Midtown Center District should continue to emphasize a mix of retail, office and residential uses. The applicants' multi-component redevelopment plans for self-Service storage, data processing/computer services/computational research facility, community-serving uses, and the CPC approved multi-family housing, are consistent with the West Side Area Plan.</p>

	<p>Specific the Midtown Center District, relevant polices and recommendations in the Plan include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continue to implement a balanced mix of uses with both regional and local market appeal. - Encourage the integration of office, institutional, and residential uses throughout the Midtown Center development. - Extend Midtown Center’s “Town Square” approach to unifying all businesses on the triangle. Add pedestrian connections and infill buildings where feasible. - Over time, make the entire Midtown Triangle district a walkable “retail village” with amenities similar to Old Orchard in Chicago or Bayshore in Glendale. - Continue to recruit businesses for infill and other redevelopment opportunities that contribute to the existing retail mix. Add amenities and public art that enhance the district. - Install enhanced landscaping and streetscaping along the rights-of way of all corridors surrounding and intersecting Midtown Center. <p>Furthermore, the Plan sets this overall <i>Commercial Land Use</i> strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For greyfield uses, former big box stores and shopping centers, encourage similar or compatible uses to go into vacant space. Where the market will no longer support a retail use or a similar use cannot be reinstated, consider office or business services that support the commercial focus of the district or commercial corridor. If the principal use is converted to office or business services, retain street level storefronts (open and transparent, not shuttered). <p>Standalone Self-Service Storage on its own would not complement the mix of retail and commercial uses in Midtown, but the applicant is proposing to reuse the rear of the building for self-service storage and a data processing/computer services/computational research facility, with plans to create active community-serving uses at the front of the building. This mix of uses, in this configuration, furthers the recommendations in the West Side Area Plan to create a vibrant and walkable “Town Square.” The community-serving uses along Hope Avenue and the multi-family infill development will bring more people to Midtown, activating the spaces and strengthening the shopping district. The applicant is also improving the landscaping along the west side of the building.</p> <p>DCD is currently updating the West Side Area Plan, which was originally adopted by the Common Council in 2009, and is part of the City’s Comprehensive Plan. The planning process kicked off in late 2024. Anticipated adoption is by the end of 2026. Public engagement is an integral component of updating the Area Plan and developing draft recommendations. To date, DCD has gathered public input</p>
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	<p>through two community-wide public meetings (in-person and virtual formats), convened three community advisory committee meetings, attended numerous community events, and conducted online surveys. At the last community meeting in March 2026, DCD staff presented draft recommendations, including for the Midtown Shopping Center. A final community meeting is anticipated before adoption.</p> <p>During the area planning process, Midtown Shopping Center has been identified as a catalytic site, meaning that future redevelopment can have a transformative effect on the larger neighborhood and Plan Area. The draft concept for Midtown Shopping Center identifies opportunities for infill development, adaptive reuse, and commercial rehabilitation. A key draft recommendation is to encourage a wider range of uses, particularly residential, community-serving, and civic uses, to enliven the area and support the existing commercial uses. Additionally, draft recommendations identify site improvements, such as enhanced transit shelters, public gathering spaces, and improved pedestrian connections within the site.</p> <p>In conclusion, due to the comprehensive multi-component set of uses in this redevelopment plan, the applicant's proposed deviation is consistent with the policies and recommendations in the West Side Area Plan, and staff find this criterion met.</p>
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**Community
Engagement
& Feedback:**

These files were previously scheduled for consideration at the May 18, 2026 City Plan Commission meeting. After receiving a large number of questions and letters of concerns related to the proposal, the hearing on the item was removed from the agenda to allow for additional community meetings and for the applicant to present additional information.

Subsequently, Alderman Mark Chambers scheduled 3 community meetings:

1. June 10, 2026 – 5825 W. Hope Ave. (5:30 – 7:00 pm). Approximately 100 people attended this meeting.
2. June 18, 2026 – 5825 W. Hope Ave. (5:30 – 7:00 pm). Approximately 100 people attended this meeting, which included a revised format based on feedback from the first meeting.
3. Upcoming: June 27, 2026 – Virtual via GoTo Webinar.

At the time this staff report was drafted, approximately 297 emails have been submitted to the record. Of those, approximately 15 are from duplicate senders and 16 are requests to provide testimony at the CPC hearing. 2 are in support, and the remaining are in opposition to the proposed data processing/computer

service/computational research facility use. 290 of these emails were received prior to the first public meeting that was hosted by Alderman Chambers.

Among the most commonly cited concerns with the proposal were:

- 1.) Energy needs for the facility and potential strain on the power grid;
- 2.) Water usage at the facility;
- 3.) Noise and air quality impacts;
- 4.) Limited number of jobs associated with the uses;
- 5.) Compatibility with surrounding uses/neighborhoods; and
- 6.) Other desired uses being more impactful for the community.

Adjacent Land Use:

Sites to the north, east, and south are zoned RB2, consisting of a daycare, warehouse, food bank, grocery store, and other commercial establishments. Residential properties, zoned RT2, RS6, and RM1, are located to the west of the subject site.

Consistency with Area Plan:

One of the required criteria for a deviation from the DIZ performance standards is finding that the proposal is consistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan. The proposal is consistent with the West Side Area Plan and a detailed analysis is provided above within the deviation section of the staff report.

Previous City Plan Action:

4/27/2026 – City Plan Commission approved plans for a new multi-family residential development located on a portion of 5825 West Hope Avenue, on the east side of North 60th Street, north of West Hope Avenue, relative to the Midtown Center Development Incentive Zone (DIZ) overlay established by Section 295-91.0044 of the former Milwaukee Code, in the 2nd Aldermanic District. (FN [252155](#)).

9/25/2023 – City Plan Commission heard a resolution approving changes to the site and existing building previously occupied by Walmart located at 5825 West Hope Avenue, on the east side of North 60th Street, north of West Capitol Drive, relative to the Midtown Center Development Incentive Zone (DIZ) overlay. The commission moved to place the resolution on file, based on criteria not being met. (FN [221407](#)).

9/25/2023 – City Plan Commission heard a resolution approving the request for a deviation from the performance standards established by the Midtown Center Development Incentive Zone (DIZ) overlay to allow an indoor self-storage facility as a permitted use within a portion of the former Walmart building at 5825 West Hope Avenue. The commission moved to place the resolution on file. (FN [221406](#)).

Previous Common Council Action:

None.

Recommendation:

This pending proposal would facilitate a multi-use, comprehensive development of a former big-box retail facility and add housing and community uses that would

contribute to the vitality and activation of the Midtown Center, consistent with the goals of the Midtown DIZ.

Community input and letters received to date have raised a number of concerns with the proposal and potential for negative neighborhood impacts, which are mitigated through the overall plan and the proposed conditions of approval.

Notably:

- There is existing power infrastructure in place and available to serve the 10MW max utility load of the facility.
- The facility would utilize a closed loop cooling system, resulting in water use estimated to be 5 gallons or less per day.
- The proposed conditions of approval are designed to strictly control any noise or air quality impacts associated with the use as described in more detail below.
 - The back-up generators would be inside, in the rear of the existing building.
 - The dry coolers would be installed outside at the rear of the existing facility, within the former truck dock bay in the larger service area that serves the other co-located uses on the west end of the Midtown Center. This area will include an engineered acoustic screening system to limit noise for compliance with the Milwaukee Code of Ordinances.
 - This area is approximately 485 feet from residences on the west side of N. 60th St., and approximately 450 feet from the new housing development located in the former Walmart parking lot area.
- Many of the letters in opposition to the proposal referenced a goal of bringing housing opportunities and community serving/civic uses to the neighborhood, which are both significant components of this multi-use redevelopment that would be facilitated by this pending proposal. This is a breakdown of the use of the entire former Walmart site:
 - Housing & public play area – *41% of the site*
 - Surrounding site (parking, circulation, landscaping) – *35% of the site*
 - Proposed self-service storage – *14% of the site*
 - Proposed community serving space – *5% of the site*
 - Proposed Milwaukee Public Library – *3% of the site*
 - Proposed data processing / computer service / computational research facility – *3% of the site*

City ordinances establish four criteria that must be met in order for CPC to approve

a deviation request from adopted DIZ Overlay standards.

File No. 260029: Staff review of the proposal to deviate from the DIZ use list for the two uses outlined in this report (indoor self-service storage and data processing/computer services/computational research facility) indicates that the four criteria have been met based on the fact that this request is part of the multi-component site development plan and conditions are placed on both uses that are subject to the deviation request with respect to limiting permit issuance for the self-service storage use and data processing/computer services/computational research facility use as outlined in the deviation request section of this report to ensure that these uses are secondary to the allowable uses that meet the intent of the DIZ Overlay and limiting the size of data processing/computer services/computational research facility within the rear portion of the building. Therefore, staff recommends conditional approval of the applicant's request to deviation from the performance standards of the Midtown Center DIZ Overlay to permit an indoor self-service storage facility and data processing/computer services/computational research facility as described in the official exhibits and this report. (File No. 260029):

1. Commercial alteration and occupancy permits for the self-service storage and data processing/computer services/computational research facility uses will not be issued by the Department of Neighborhood Services until the following items occur:
 - a. The portion of the site where the housing development is proposed has been conveyed to the ownership group that will construct the City Plan Commission-approved housing development and construction permits have been applied for by Gorman & Company to the City of Milwaukee for residential construction; and
 - b. There is a binding lease or lease option for the approximately 51,000 sf of leasable space facing W. Hope Ave. for community-serving uses with the City of Milwaukee or other community serving entities that will activate the front-facing portion of the property or, in the event that the community-serving entities are no longer interested in leasing the space, with retail functions that align with the Midtown Center performance standards.
2. That the use is developed consistent with the plans in Exhibit A. Specifically, the data processing/computer services/computer research use shall occupy no greater floor space than 19,000 square feet.
3. That the proposed data processing use shall not exceed 10 megawatts of power during peak demand, measured over any 15-minute interval.
4. That generator equipment shall not be used for primary power generation or non-emergency operation, including non-emergency continuous or discretionary operations. Generators shall be used only during electrical outages, legally required emergency-response situations, and routine maintenance and testing.

5. That a schedule for routine maintenance and testing of generators, and made available to the public upon request. Routine maintenance and testing of generators shall be limited to weekdays between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., except in the case of emergencies or where otherwise required by law or applicable safety standards.

6. That, prior to the issuance of permits, the applicant shall provide an acoustical report demonstrating compliance with MCO Chapter 80 Subchapter 2 (Noise Control). The submittal shall include:
 - a. An acoustical report prepared and sealed by a Wisconsin-licensed Professional Engineer demonstrating compliance with MCO Chapter 80 Subchapter 2, including any other relevant assumptions, sound data, measurement methodology, and mitigation measures, as well as any related drawings, specifications, and calculations. Said report shall include any and all impulse noises, continuous noise, and low frequency noise, as well as an assessment of noise levels during usage of generators.
 - b. A list of all proposed significant Facility sound sources, including sound sources to be located both inside and outside of the building;
 - c. A schedule of operations for each proposed significant Facility sound source indicating the days of the week, times of day, and durations proposed for operation for each sound source;
 - d. A site plan layout which identifies the location of all proposed significant Facility sound sources and any proposed noise mitigation measures;
 - e. Manufacturer design specifications of all proposed significant Facility sound sources detailing the design sound power levels and octave band sound levels from each sound source;
 - f. Manufacturer design specifications of all noise mitigation measures being proposed for the Facility;
 - g. The results of an ambient pre-construction sound survey conducted at Facility property line locations in each direction showing the existing sound levels at these locations during both daytime and nighttime periods; and
 - h. The results of computer noise modeling conducted to demonstrate that the predicted sound levels during a worst-case Facility operating scenario will comply with the applicable noise limitations contained in 80-64(1)-(3) at the property line of all adjacent properties during both daytime and nighttime periods.

7. That the applicant shall conduct a post-construction sound survey within 90 days of Facility startup at the same locations and times used for the pre-construction sound survey to demonstrate compliance with MCO Chapter 80, Subchapter 2. If the survey demonstrates noncompliance, the applicant shall implement corrective measures and submit a revised survey demonstrating

compliance within a time frame approved by the Commissioner of
Neighborhood Services.

8. That, prior to issuance of any permits, if a natural gas or diesel generator is proposed, documentation prepared and sealed by Wisconsin-licensed Professional Engineer shall be submitted to the Department of Neighborhood Services Development Center demonstrating compliance with the Tier 4 technical specifications found in 40 CFR Part 1039.
9. That the proposed new HVAC equipment, generator, and other mechanical equipment shall be located only within the approved area shown in Exhibit A, unless it is demonstrated that relocation is necessary to achieve compliance with noise controls in MCO Chapter 80 Subchapter 2, as evidenced in the report required by condition 5 and reviewed and approved by the Commissioner of Neighborhood Services. An increase in size of the generator shall not be permitted.
10. That the use shall comply with the applicable Energy Benchmarking standards and reporting requirements of S. 200-62-2.
11. That cooling systems serving the data processing use shall not use evaporative cooling.
12. That a contact name and phone number be provided to the Department of City Development prior to occupancy. The contact name and phone number must also be available to all interested parties, including but not limited to, the Alderman of the District, and the Department of Neighborhood Services. The phone number must be available 24 hours a day.

File No. 260030: The proposed modifications to the building and site to support the two uses that are subject to the deviation request comply with the design requirements of the DIZ Overlay. It is anticipated that future modifications to the balance of the building and site will also be compliant and will significantly improve the public-facing realm along W. Hope Ave. Therefore, staff recommends approval of the request to make site and building modifications at 5825 W. Hope Ave. (File No. 260030).