

## **Argo Family Storage and Atlas Response to Questions Posed During the Public Comment Period.**

**Questions submitted appear in bold, with the applicant's answers below.**

### **1. Does the local demand for self-storage facilities outweigh the need for wetlands?**

Impacts to wetlands are regulated at both state and federal levels. The wetlands on the storage facility site are not connected through other regulated waters to a "traditionally navigable waterway", and are therefore considered to be "isolated wetlands". Impacts to isolated wetlands are not currently regulated by the federal government, but do fall under the State of Indiana's Isolated Wetland Program.

The wetland proposed for impacts falls under Class II in Indiana's regulatory program categorization system. Indiana's State Regulated Wetland rule defines a Class II wetland as "an isolated wetland that supports moderate habitat or hydrological functions, including an isolated wetland that is dominated by native species but is generally without the presence of or habitat for rare, threatened, or endangered species." In general, Class II wetlands provide moderate levels of the functions typically provided by wetlands, in particular in this case habitat functions. This small (roughly 1 acre) wetland has been surrounded by roads, agricultural and industrial land use.

In order to obtain permits, applicants must demonstrate that wetland impacts have been avoided to the extent possible, and that unavoidable impacts have been minimized. Access to the site from other than N County Line Road was not possible. The isolated wetland stretches across the entire width of the portion of the property immediately adjacent to N County Line Road. The driveway crossing was placed over an old crossing used to allow agricultural equipment access to the farm fields located behind the wetlands, essentially placing the new driveway in an already impacted area. The crossing was designed to impact the minimum wetland area to achieve the crossing. Wetland impacts for this project total just under 0.1 acre. Further mitigation was provided in the form of an 18 inch diameter culvert which will allow water to pass between the two undisturbed portions of the remaining wetland.

Finally, Indiana rules require compensatory mitigation for impacts to Class II wetlands. Applicants are required to provide compensatory mitigation at a ratio of 1.5:1 for impacts to non-forested wetlands, and 2:1 for forested impacts.

In summary, the proposed impacts will occur to a small portion of a small, isolated wetland. The functions and wetland acreage impacted will be replaced through participation in the state-sanctioned wetland banking program.

### **2. What is the demand for self-storage facilities in Indiana, Marion County, and/or Hancock County?**

Demand for storage units is high locally and nationwide, and will likely increase over the coming years. This is due to projected increases in housing costs limiting the availability of storage space within the home as more and more people turn to smaller, more affordable homes or apartments.

The shift to working from home that grew during the recent pandemic has led to a decluttering and downsizing movement. This trend continues to build and people and families are continuing to seek outside storage in order to maintain a minimalist or low clutter home.

Demand for RV and parking spaces is particularly high. The Covid-19 pandemic led to a skyrocketing demand for RVs, as well as boats, dirt bikes, and other recreational vehicles as people opted to spend more time outside. As a result, many people are forced to give up significant garage and driveway space to store their new vehicles and are now looking for affordable storage alternatives.

Finally, the surrounding area is also growing significantly, with several new neighborhoods and new homes being built very close by. The increasing number of new residents will likely significantly increase demand for self-storage in the area.

### **3. Does this storage facility differ from the ones that are already present?**

The facility will be built with significantly more low-cost, outdoor gravel parking than can be found anywhere nearby, offering an ample amount of space and many affordable options for RVs, Cars, boats, etc.

The facility will offer a higher number of large 200 sq. ft.+ units which have limited availability elsewhere. Families with the need to store many large items indoors may be able to save significantly if able to combine to 1 large unit rather than renting 2 smaller ones elsewhere.

The facility is distant from most other storage facilities, particularly large ones, and is directly across from Winding Ridge, a very large neighborhood. It would also be the closest facility for the Winding Ridge golf course and elementary school. In this location, the new facility would give a large number of local residents much easier access to storage closer to their homes.

The storage facility will be locally owned and run almost exclusively by the owners. As a result, it will be able to offer significantly cheaper rates than its larger competitors.

### **4. Are the present storage facilities at capacity?**

While storage facilities are rarely completely full due to constantly changing occupancy, many of the facilities in the area have reported limited availability and high capacity for a while now.

Due to the nature of self-storage, different people require different sized units or parking spaces. Frequently, storage facilities in the area will run out of a particularly sized unit or space and the person will have to rent much farther away or be forced to pay for more space than they need.

Large RV spaces and large-area units in particular are difficult to find in the immediate area. This facility addresses those needs.

**5. What is the feasibility of connecting to the road through the existing development (True Brands warehouse facility) that abuts the eastern property line?**

Successful storage facility must offer secure storage for customer's goods. Storage sites are generally fenced, and access is through a single, gated and locked point. Sharing access with or providing access through an unsecured area does not achieve the security goal.

The True Brands facility is an active shipping warehouse whose entryway and paved lots are constantly being used by many heavy shipping trucks. It would be incredibly inconvenient if not dangerous to have a stream of cars and RVs constantly moving through the area. True Brands would almost certainly not agree to allow this entrance because of this disruption.

There is no other location to place the storm water drainage pond (which blocks the eastern half of the site) as the site drains eastwards and the only available outlet for overflow water is on the eastern side. The True Brands facility's own drainage pond blocks the majority of the eastern side of the property making it potentially infeasible to even build a proper entryway there.

Having a completely obscure entrance hidden entirely within the parking lot of an unrelated business would make it incredibly hard and inconvenient to find and use the facility.