

County of Loudoun

Department of Planning

MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 13, 2010

TO: Sophia Fisher, Project Manager
Land Use Review

FROM: Pat Giglio, Planner, III
Community Planning

SUBJECT: SPEX 2009-0037 and SPEX 2009-0038 Discovery

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The applicant, Discovery Productions Group, Inc., is requesting two Special Exceptions to allow commercial office (television production) and communication and transmission uses on the subject property located at 45580 Terminal Drive in Sterling. The proposed Special Exception applications will permit the continued use of the subject property for commercial uses and would enable the construction of eight additional ground-mounted dish antennas and an associated 2,000 square foot building. The proposed Special Exception uses comply with the planned Business land use designation for the area and are in keeping with the office and light industrial development surrounding the subject property. Staff supports approval of the Special Exception applications with conditions.

BACKGROUND

The applicant, Discovery Productions Group, Inc., is requesting two Special Exceptions to allow commercial office (television production) and communication and transmission uses on the subject property. The 7.86 acre subject property is located north of Shaw Road (Route 636) and west of Terminal Drive, at 45580 Terminal Drive in Sterling. The subject property features a 54,846 square foot, single-story building used for television production and ten ground-mounted dish antennas of varying sizes used for the transmission of television content to satellites. The proposed Special Exception applications will permit the continued use of the subject property for commercial uses and would enable the construction of eight additional ground-mounted dish antennas and an associated 2,000 square foot building to provide the needed infrastructure for these additional antennas. The applicant proposes an enhanced landscape buffer on

the perimeter of the property adjoining Shaw Road to screen the proposed antennas from the surrounding properties, which include other flex-industrial and office uses.

The property is currently zoned PD-IP (Planned Development – Industrial Park) and governed under the provisions of the 1972 Zoning Ordinance. The 7.86 acre subject property was created in May 2007 when Lot 1 (4.18 acres) and Lot 56 (3.68) were combined by the applicant through a Boundary Line Adjustment (BLA). Lot 1, which features the existing single-story office building had been approved for commercial uses in 1986 via Commonwealth Center Special Exception (SPEX 1995-0050), however the Special Exception did not include Lot 56. Subsequently, in September 2007 after combining the lots the applicant requested and was granted site plan approval (STPR 2007-0022) for the construction of ground-mounted dish antennas on Parcel 56 by the County in error without receiving the appropriate legislative approval. “Commercial office” and “public utility-communication and transmission” uses are permitted within the PD-IP zoning district by Special Exception only. The proposed Special Exceptions will bring the existing and proposed uses on former Lot 56 and the entire subject property into compliance with the Zoning Ordinance and will permit the expansion of the communication and transmission uses on the property.

A site visit and review of County GIS records did not identify any environmental features on the subject site that would be impacted by the proposed construction. The subject site is located within the Ldn 60 1-mile airport noise contours for Dulles International Airport.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The property is located in the Sterling Community of the Suburban Policy area and is governed under the policies outlined in the Revised General Plan and Revised Countywide Transportation Plan (CTP) as well as the Eastern Loudoun Area Management Plan (ELAMP). Being the newer of the two plans, the Revised General Plan supersedes the ELAMP when there is a policy conflict between the two (Revised General Plan, Chapter 1, Relationship to Other County Planning Documents, text). The Revised General Plan designates this area for Business uses (Revised General Plan, Chapter 7, Planned Land Use Map). The property is also located within the Route 28 Tax District. The Business land use policies in Chapter 6 of the Revised General Plan were used to evaluate the application.

ANALYSIS

LAND USE

The Revised General Plan designates the subject site as suitable for Business uses and ELAMP designates the site as suitable for industrial/office uses (Revised General Plan, Chapter 7, Planned Land Use Map and ELAMP, Figure 5, Proposed Land Use Map). The Plan envisions that areas planned for Business land uses will develop as either a Regional Office or Light Industrial community (Revised General Plan, Chapter 6, Land Use Category-Business, text). Because the subject property is surrounded by existing flex-industrial developments, Sterling Industrial Park, Dulles North Corporate

Park and Commonwealth Center, which also have an underlying PD-IP zoning, this application is considered under the Light Industrial policies of the Revised General Plan. The intent of the Light Industrial policies, as set forth in the Plan, is to develop a community in which light industrial/flex uses are the predominant component. The policies also call for a maximum of 40% office, as a percentage of the total land area, in any one light industrial development (Revised General Plan, Chapter 6, Light-Industrial Use Policies, Policy 5).

The proposed Special Exception uses, commercial office (television production) and communication and transmission uses, comply with the planned Business land use designation for the area and are in keeping with the office and light industrial development surrounding the subject property. The proposed expansion of the communication and transmission facilities on the subject property while increasing the overall number of dish antennas will not significantly alter the character or design of the site. The applicant has provided an exhibit depicting the proposed landscaping, which appears to sufficiently buffer and screen the proposed dish antennas from the adjoining properties. Staff recommends that the applicant commit to the proposed landscaping as shown and commit to the long-term maintenance and care of the proposed vegetated buffers to ensure the facility is adequately screened.

Staff finds that the proposed Special Exception, commercial office (television production) and communication and transmission uses, on the subject property are in conformance with the Business land use policies of the Revised General Plan. Staff recommends that the applicant commit to the proposed landscaping as shown on exhibit B and commit to the long-term maintenance and care of the proposed vegetated buffers to ensure the facility is adequately screened. Staff supports approval of the applications with conditions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The proposed Special Exception uses, commercial office (television production) and communication and transmission uses, comply with the planned Business land use designation for the area and are in keeping with the office and light industrial development surrounding the subject property. Staff supports approval of the Special Exception applications with conditions to ensure that the facility is adequately screened and buffered.

cc: Julie Pastor, AICP, Planning Director
Cindy Keegan, AICP, Division Manager, Community Planning-via email