



THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

January 15, 2004

MEMORANDUM – MANDATORY REFERRAL

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board
VIA: John A. Carter, Chief, Community-Based Planning Division *JAC*
William Barron, Eastern County Team Leader *WB*
FROM: *PW* Piera Weiss, Planner Coordinator
Community-Based Planning Division (301-495-4728)
SUBJECT: 1. Forest Conservation Plan for Mandatory Referral No. 03604-MVA-1,
Proposed Motor Vehicle Administration Branch Office – Industrial
Parkway, 400 feet east of the intersection of US 29 - Fairland Master
Plan.
2. Mandatory Referral No. 03604-MVA-1, Proposed Motor Vehicle
Administration Branch Office – Industrial Parkway, 400 feet east of the
intersection of US 29 – Fairland Master Plan.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Approval with the following comments to be
transmitted to the Motor Vehicle Administration
(MVA):

1. Approval of the Forest Conservation Plan.
2. Provide lead-in sidewalks to the site driveway intersection with Industrial Parkway in coordination with the Montgomery County Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPWT) and Department of Permitting Services (DPS), as shown on the Proposed Conceptual Landscape, Lighting and Sidewalk Plan dated November 20, 2003.
3. Provide bicycle racks on the site to accommodate bicycle traffic to the site in coordination with the DPWT, as stated in the November 19, 2003 White Oak MVA Traffic Study.
4. Provide bus shelters on Industrial Parkway at the transit stops near the proposed facility in coordination with the DPWT to accommodate those users who may use transit to travel to and from the proposed MVA facility.
5. Provide additional evergreen shrub plantings along the park property line.

PROJECT SUMMARY

The State of Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) proposes building a branch office in the Fairland Master Plan area. There are two branch offices in the suburban Washington area located in Gaithersburg and Beltsville. These two locations have experienced growth in use and a new branch office located geographically between the two is needed to relieve crowding.

MVA owns a six-acre parcel in the Montgomery Industrial Park located east of the intersection of US 29 and Industrial Parkway. MVA's Vehicle Emissions Inspection Program (VEIP) facility is located on a portion of the site. The MVA would like to build the branch office and driver's test course on the remaining acreage.

Subject Site

The site is located within the Montgomery Industrial Park, an industrial development created in the 1950s. The industrial park is part of a larger 400+ acre area identified in the Fairland Master Plan as the US 29/Cherry Hill Employment Area. The subject property is situated at the edge of the employment area and adjacent to Stonehedge Local Park.

All properties located east, west and north of the site are zoned I-1 and are within the US 29/Cherry Hill Road Employment Area Overlay Zone. Current uses are as follows: to the west is a vacant manufacturing company (previously a color printing facility); to the east are an office building, building contractor and a church. Opposite the site along Industrial Parkway are office buildings.

South of the site is Stonehedge Local Park (RE-2 Zone) and adjacent to the park is a residential community. The park contains a soccer field, basketball courts and a small play area. The adjacent residential community, zoned R-H or residential high-rise, contains 600 condominium and apartment units.

The park, recommended in the Fairland Master Plan, was built in 1999 on a strip of RE-2 zoned land that separated the RH zoning from the industrial zoning.

Description of Project

The property contains six acres. About one third of the property is the VEIP facility. There is a stormwater management facility on approximately one acre. The branch office is to be located to the rear of the stormwater management facility. The facility will have a dedicated driveway and there will be no vehicular circulation between the VEIP and the branch office. The building is one-story containing 15,000 square feet. There are 150 parking spaces and a test course for the driver's license test. The test course is located to the rear of the property.

The building is setback from the adjacent park approximately 60 feet. The parking and driveway are setback 17 feet from the park. These setbacks conform to the requirements of the underlying zone (I-1).¹

Site improvements include a sidewalk leading from the existing sidewalk along Industrial Parkway to the branch office building and a fence and landscaping at the rear of the property along the park boundary.

ANALYSIS

The Master Plan

The 1997 Approved and Adopted Fairland Master Plan described the area surrounding the subject site as the US 29/Cherry Hill Employment Area containing approximately 400 acres. There are four distinct sections within the employment area: Montgomery Industrial Park, the WesTech Technology Park, Percontee Sand and Gravel and the decommissioned WSSC Site 2. This employment area is the largest concentration of non-residential zoning served by major highways in Eastern Montgomery County. Development over the years has resulted in a variety of industrial uses. The Master Plan recommended placing an overlay zone over the employment area to allow for diversification of uses so that the area could grow as an employment center rather than an industrial park.

The overlay zone eliminated undesirable heavy manufacturing uses and encouraged commercial development and other services appropriate to support an employment area. Recent approvals include a 40-acre commercial development (Orchard Center), a Marriott hotel; flex office space, state of the art WSSC water testing facility, and restaurants. After the decommissioning of the WSSC Regional Composting Facility, the Montgomery County Office of Economic Development and the WSSC formed a public-private partnership to develop the East County Tech Center, which will include high-tech office and lab space as well as support services, such as a technology training school and day care.

In addition to offices, other uses that predate the 1997 Master Plan include a car dealership, Fabricare Institute and Home Depot, a school bus facility, a postal service distribution facility and the SHA eastern county maintenance facility.

The proposed use, a full service MVA facility, is conveniently located for the eastern half of Montgomery County. The use is consistent with existing uses in the employment area and is not inconsistent with the intent of the overlay zone envisioned in the 1997 Master Plan.

¹ The overlay zone requires greater setbacks than the underlying zone if the overlay zone adjoins residentially zoned land recommended for residential uses and development in the Fairland Master Plan. The Fairland Master Plan recommends park use or public use on the adjoining RE-2 Zone, not residential uses, therefore, the development standards of the underlying zone area are applicable on the subject site. Sec 59 c-18.132 (b) (1) (A).

Transportation

Transportation Planning staff has concluded that the application meets the transportation-related requirements of the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO) test. For full discussion of staff review of the APF test, please see attached memorandum from the Transportation Planning Unit. Staff recommends that the following comments be incorporated as part of the Planning Board's comments to the MVA:

1. Provide lead in sidewalks to the site driveway intersection with Industrial Parkway in coordination with the Montgomery County Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPWT) and Department of Permitting Services (DPS), as shown on the Proposed Conceptual Landscape, Lighting and Sidewalk Plan dated November 20, 2003.
2. Provide bicycle racks on the site to accommodate bicycle traffic to the site in coordination with DPWT, as stated in the November 19, 2003 White Oak MVA Traffic Study.
3. Provide bus shelters on Industrial Parkway at the transit stops near the proposed facility in coordination with DPWT to accommodate those users who may use transit to travel to and from the proposed MVA facility.

Access to the site is proposed via a 24-foot wide driveway off Industrial Parkway, which will be separate from the access to the emissions testing facility. Industrial Parkway is currently built to Master Plan standards as a four-lane roadway with sidewalks on both sides. Its intersection with US 29 is a signalized T-type intersection where US 29 is a six lane divided highway.

Several Metrobus and Ride-on routes serve the area and have bus stops along Tech Road and Industrial Parkway. The routes are Z4, Z5, Z7 and Z17, and Ride-on Route 10. Since some of the MVA customers could potentially use public transit, staff requests that MVA consider providing bus shelters on Industrial Parkway at the transit stops near the proposed facility.

A Traffic Study was required for the facility per the Local Area Transportation Review (LATR) guidelines since the proposed facility was estimated to generate more than the 50 total peak-hour trips during the weekday morning (6:30 - 9:30 A.M.) and evening (4:00 - 7:00 P.M.) peak periods. In addition to the weekday analysis, an analysis of the Saturday operations of the facility was required because the facility will be open on Saturday.

The trip generation estimates for the facility were based on customer and employee projections, and a customer service area analysis performed by the MVA. The data for this analysis was developed using information collected at the existing full-service and Express MVA facilities in Gaithersburg, Beltsville and Columbia. Based on this data, staff estimated that the proposed MVA facility would generate 158 and 100 peak-hour

trips during the respective weekday morning and evening peak periods, and 166 peak hour trips during the Saturday midday peak period.

Analysis of the Critical Land Volume (CLV) indicates that the CLV values at the study intersections do not exceed the Fairland White Oak Congestion standard, 1,550, and, therefore, the proposed facility satisfies the LATR test.

The proposed MVA facility is located within the Fairland White Oak policy area, which has remaining transportation staging ceiling capacity for 3,900 additional jobs as of December 31, 2003, and therefore the mandatory referral passes the Policy Area Transportation Review test as well.

Environment

Environmental Planning Staff recommends approval of the plan.

Environmental Guidelines - There are no stream valley or other environmental buffers on this site. The site is not within a Primary Management Area or Special Protection Area.

Stormwater Management - Stormwater Management for this state funded project is administered by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE). No detailed stormwater management design has been submitted or approved. Preliminary analysis suggests that to fulfill state requirements, the existing sand filter will be expanded for additional quality measures and the outlet structure will be replaced to impound channel protection volume. A stormwater detention basin from the existing development will remain.

Forest Conservation Law - A Natural Resource Inventory/Forest Stand Delineation (NRI/FSD) has been approved for this site. There are no specimen trees and a Tree Save Plan is not required.

A Forest Conservation Plan that fulfills the Forest Conservation Law has been submitted. The Forest Conservation Plan is listed on the Planning Board's agenda as a separate item prior to this item. Staff is recommending approval of the Forest Conservation Plan.

Other Comments

The applicant submitted the mandatory referral to the Development Review Committee (DRC) for additional comments. There were no comments from County agencies. Staff recommended that a suitable buffer be provided between the park and asphalt edge of the subject property and that appropriate fencing should also be provided to prevent conflicts between users of the park and the MVA facilities. The applicant has included plantings and a fence on the landscape plan. Staff believes that the proposed buffer, composed of deciduous trees only spaced 40 feet apart, needs to be enhanced with shrub plantings, preferably evergreen.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The applicant held a meeting on May 22, 2003, with representatives of the surrounding community including members of the State Delegation. (See minutes). A number of issues were raised at the meeting including: concerns that the industrial park already contains a number of uses the community believes are undesirable; questioning the need for a branch office located so close to the Beltsville office that is underutilized (according to some members of the community) and there were requests for more data regarding the projected utilization of the site.

The MVA prepared a short summary regarding utilization of the existing branch office and proposed branch office (see attachments). Based on the analysis, the MVA believes that over-utilization will likely occur at the existing facilities. Funding has been provided to add more capacity in the service area and the MVA believes that the proposed location will be able to service anticipated growth.

Planning staff notified local citizens association, adjoining and confronting property owners, and other interested parties on December 18, 2003, that a mandatory referral application had been submitted. No comments have been received to date.

CONCLUSION

Based on the staff analysis of environmental and transportation requirements, and the land use recommendations of the Master Plan, staff concludes that the proposed use is consistent with the Master Plan, meets the requirements of the APFO and Forest Conservation Law, is in conformance with the Environmental Guidelines. The applicant has provided buffer and fencing as requested by Park Planning. Staff recommends approval of the mandatory referral and that the comments by Transportation Planning staff regarding lead-in sidewalk, bicycle racks, and bus shelters and the request for additional plantings along the buffer be transmitted to the MVA.

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Attachments:

1. Vicinity Map
2. Zoning Map
3. Proposed Conceptual Landscape and Lighting Plan
4. MVA's White Oak Customer Service Analysis
5. Environmental Planning Memorandum - Forest Conservation Plan (circle pages 1-9)
6. Transportation Planning Memorandum
7. Park Planning Memorandum
8. Notification List
9. Public Notice
10. Minutes from May 2003 Community Meeting