

REZ2019-00037, AIR PARK ASSOCIATES, L.P.

Industrial Rezoning Amendment Report
Ashland Magisterial District
PC Meeting Date: February 20, 2020



Overview

Amendment Request	Amend proffers approved with rezoning request C-13-94(c)
Current Zoning	M-2(c), Light Industrial District with conditions
Acreage	217.34 acres
Location	On the west line of Sliding Hill Road (State Route 656) approximately 1000 feet south of its intersection with Ashcake Road (State Route 657) and on the south line of Ashcake Road (State Route 657) approximately 800 feet west of its intersection with Sliding Hill Road (State Route 656)
GPINs	7798-44-0937, 7798-44-0663, 7798-44-2350, 7798-33-3765, 7798-34-2121, 7798-24-8382, 7798-24-6569, 7798-24-4811, 7798-25-1001, 7798-35-3160, 7798-35-4750, 7798-35-0225, 7798-25-6471, 7798-45-3554, 7798-54-5903, 7798-33-9427, 7798-43-4904, 7798-43-4481, 7798-43-8505, 7798-53-1614, 7798-35-1840
General Land Use Plan	Limited Industrial
Major Thoroughfare Plan	Sliding Hill Road – Minor Arterial (100’ right-of-way) Ashcake Road – Minor Collector (60’ right-of-way)
Suburban Service Area	Inside
Case Planner	Gretchen W. Biernot

Executive Summary

The subject property was rezoned to M-2(c), Light Industrial District with conditions, in 1995 with rezoning case, C-13-94(c), Air Park Associates. The proposed user of the subject property is a grocery distribution facility, a use permitted by-right within the M-1, Limited Industrial District (Section 26-163.20, Warehousing, storage, wholesaling and distribution) and therefore, also permitted in the M-2 district. However, the applicant is requesting to amend the previously approved proffers to bring the requirements more in line with today’s site development standards and to address transportation improvements, landscape buffers, light pole height, fencing requirements, and cemeteries. A companion Special Exception application (SE2020-00005) for an exception to building height requirements has also been submitted for consideration by the Board of Supervisors.

Staff Recommendation

APPROVAL subject to the submitted proffers, dated February 6, 2020.

Planning Analysis

Comprehensive Plan/ Compatibility with Surrounding Area

Beginning with the 1988 adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, Hanover County has planned the site for industrial use. The Land Use designation was changed from “Industrial” to “Limited Industrial” in the 1997 Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan describes Limited Industrial land use as follows:

“The Limited Industrial designated land use category is for business and industry that includes general light industry, transportation terminals, warehousing, and similar low-intensity uses and relatively free from offensive uses. Locations typically provide access to major thoroughfares. Higher standards are expected to mitigate impacts or complement the character of development in specified areas of the County. Certain commercial uses would be permitted, primarily for the service of employees in the district”.

The proposed use and zoning is compatible with the industrial land use classification for the area to the west of Sliding Hill Road, including the Hanover County Industrial Air Park. The site has frontage on Sliding Hill Road, which will provide convenient access to the Atlee-Elmont I-95 interchange. It should be noted that Sliding Hill Road is currently undergoing an expansion to widen the road to four travel lanes extending from New Ashcake Road to Atlee Station/Leadbetter Roads.

The subject property has been located within the Sliding Hill Road Economic Development Zone (EDZ) since the adoption of the 2002 Comprehensive Plan, and the Air Park Associates property was specifically identified as an economic opportunity site in the 2002 Plan and subsequent updates (see 2002 Comprehensive Plan map attached to this packet.) EDZ’s are areas targeted for economic development for the purposes of expanding the County’s tax base. The County invests in infrastructure in these areas to help attract quality companies and create employment opportunities. The proposed distribution facility will generate \$1.5 million in taxes each year for the County, and the applicant has indicated that the facility will bring 700 jobs to the area.

Conceptual Plan/ Elevations

The conceptual plan shows a 1,075,514 square foot office and warehouse building with a 205,650 square foot planned expansion. There are no specific plans for the future development area where up to 400,000 square feet of additional building space would be permitted. Truck parking and loading areas surround the building. Trucks will enter the site at the main entrance on Sliding Hill Road and pass through a security gate before entering the parking and loading area. A gated emergency site access is also located on Sliding Hill Road. The employee parking area, proposed on the northern portion of the site, contains a gated access for emergencies only. The employee vehicle entrance, located on the northwest corner of the site, leads to a driveway that connects to the employee parking area, more than 2,000 feet from the entrance. This long driveway was designed to prevent cars entering the site from backing up on Ashcake Road. A security fence surrounding the parking areas will be eight feet tall and chain link with barb wire.

Buffers are provided around the perimeter of the site. The plan shows a 50-foot buffer along Ashcake Road and a 25-foot buffer along Sliding Hill Road. These buffers must meet both the thoroughfare buffer and screening requirements of the Zoning Ordinance. It should be noted that the proffers accepted with rezoning case, C-13-94(c), only require a 25-foot buffer along a significant portion of Ashcake Road. As such, the draft proffers submitted for this application increase the buffer width for a majority of the frontage to 50 feet.

The screen plantings will be installed on the inside of the buffer. In addition to the buffer along Sliding Hill Road, the applicant has proffered to maintain a variable width natural area, creating an additional buffer area of existing mature trees that is approximately 300 feet to 700 feet in width. An exhibit is included in this packet that provides a cross section of these buffers for each road. The remaining buffers around the property consist of 25-foot natural buffers adjacent to A-1 zoned vacant land and where adjoining residential properties, 20-foot to 40-foot buffers required by the Zoning Ordinance.

Elevations have been submitted for consideration. The white metal paneled warehouse building is shown to be approximately 45 feet tall with “penthouse” areas containing refrigerated units that are 57 feet tall. A Special Exception has been submitted to allow an exception to the 45 foot height requirement of the M-2 district. The current architectural proffers permit use of brick and metal curtain wall systems. The elevations appear to meet those architectural requirements.

Transportation

A traffic impact analysis (TIA) was submitted with the application to evaluate the project’s impact to the existing road network and to identify needed transportation improvements. The TIA has been evaluated by both VDOT and the County’s traffic consultant. The TIA indicates that the project will generate a total 2,864 vehicle trips per day (3,165 vehicle trips with the maximum development of the site), which include employee passenger vehicles and trucks. (For clarification, two trips are generated by vehicles traveling in and out of the site.) The morning peak hour will generate 249 vehicle trips (275 trips with future development). The evening peak hour will generate 263 trips (285 trips with future development), which is approximately 85% fewer vehicles than permitted under the current zoning. With the four lane improvements to Sliding Hill Road from New Ashcake Road to its intersection with Atlee Station Road/Leadbetter Road, the existing zoning permits 1,815 trips in the PM Peak Hour.

Wegmans’ own studies show significantly lower traffic generation based on their similar Pennsylvania distribution center. The Pennsylvania site generates 151 vehicle trips in the morning peak hour and 227 trips in the evening peak hour. The site generates approximately 430 truck trips per day. Truck traffic is spread throughout the day with only 39 truck trips in the morning peak hour, 87 of the truck trips in the evening peak hour, and an average of 18 truck trips per hour.

Based on the TIA, the applicant has proffered road improvements and right-of-way dedication to accommodate the anticipated traffic of the proposed distribution facility. The proffers include the construction of a left-turn and right-turn lane at the main site entrance on Sliding Hill Road, conducting a signal justification study at the intersection of Sliding Hill and New Ashcake Roads, a payment of up to \$500,000 for the intersection improvements, and the construction of the Sliding Hill Road realignment if the County undertakes the responsibility for the intersection improvements. If the

applicant installs the traffic signal at Sliding Hill and New Ashcake Roads, the applicant will be dedicating the right-of-way for the future realignment of Sliding Hill Road.

Historical Commission

The Historical Commission reviewed this application at their January 21, 2020, meeting. At the time of the original rezoning, the historic site, Merry Oaks Tavern, was suspected of being located on the subject property. Prior to submittal of this application, two archaeological studies, were conducted to determine whether Merry Oaks Tavern was located on the property. The first study (DHR file number HN-108) was conducted in 1996 and funded by the Hanover Branch of the Association for Preservation of Virginia Antiquities. The second study (DHR file number HN-109) was conducted in 2002 and funded by Hanover County. Both studies found no evidence of the historic site on the property. The Commission determined that the proposed development should not have significant impacts to nearby historic resources.

Community Meeting

The applicant held a community meeting on February 6, 2020. Issues raised at the meeting included the following:

- *Traffic, especially truck traffic*

The applicant has proffered to address traffic by installing turn lanes, paying for a traffic signal at New Ashcake and Sliding Hill Roads, and dedicating right-of-way to allow for the realignment of Sliding Hill Road. The applicant also indicated that their truck drivers are screened to ensure safety, and trucks are monitored by GPS.

- *Availability of access through a proposed Ashcake Road connector road to Lewistown Road*

The Major Thoroughfare Plan within the Comprehensive Plan shows a proposed road that connects New Ashcake Road to Lewistown Road. Neither the applicant nor the County has control over properties that are within the proposed alignment of this proposed connector road, and therefore this road will not be an option at this time for vehicles traveling to and from the subject property.

- *Prohibit through trucks on New Ashcake Road*

A locality may apply for the Through-Truck Restriction Program through VDOT to prohibit through trucks on primary or secondary roads.

- *Diesel truck environmental impacts*

The applicant indicated that most of the trucks at the proposed facility will have particulate filters installed, as required by the federal government for new trucks.

- *Noise from a 24-hour facility*

Refrigeration units will be enclosed and therefore are not expected to generate excessive noise. No trucks will be permitted to idle upon entering the property. The back-up warning signal from trucks is a federal requirement. All noise generated from the site must meet County noise ordinance requirements.

- *Removal of graves if found*

A Phase I cultural resource study was conducted on the property, which found no evidence of graves. If graves are found as the property is developed, the applicant has proffered to remove the graves in accordance with the Department of Historic Resources requirements.

- *Insufficient buffer along Ashcake Road*

A 50-foot buffer is proposed along Ashcake Road that must meet both the thoroughfare buffer and screening requirements of the Zoning Ordinance. The screen will consist of evergreen plantings that provide a continuous visual screen of the property. A majority of the buffer is twice as wide as required by the current proffers.

- *Impacts to the historic Brown Grove community*

In addition to the buffers and screening to be provided along Ashcake Road and adjoining properties, the truck entrance was located on Sliding Hill Road to limit the truck traffic along Ashcake Road. Only employees will be permitted to use the entrance on Ashcake Road.

In addition to these aforementioned concerns, residents attending the community meeting expressed concerns about impacts to property values and questioned the applicant on the site selection process and why other sites were not considered that are not adjacent to residential neighborhoods. Staff will rely on the applicant to address additional questions regarding the site selection process should they arise during the public hearing.

Agency Analysis

There were no substantive comments from any of the reviewing agencies other than standard site plan technical comments.

Proffers

The applicant submitted the following proffers, dated February 6, 2020:

1. Conceptual Plan. Accept. The applicant has proffered to develop the property in substantial conformity with the conceptual plan. Staff would note that there is a conflict on the plan between the right-of-way to be dedicated for the proposed Sliding Hill realignment and the right-of-way to be dedicated along Sliding Hill Road. This conflict should be clarified prior to the Planning Commission meeting.

2. Architectural Treatment. Accept. All buildings constructed on the property will be consistent with the elevations provided.
3. Protective Covenants. No comment. Protective covenants will be recorded to control the development, architectural compatibility, and maintenance of the property.
4. Signs. Accept. The applicant has proffered that all freestanding signs will be monument type signs that are either internally lit or lighted with downward directional lighting. The use of a monument sign will further limit visual clutter as seen from the public right of way.
5. Parking. Accept. The applicant has proffered to meet all the parking lot landscaping requirements for passenger vehicles, which are otherwise not required in the M-2 district.
6. Screening, Thoroughfare Buffers, and No Build Areas. Accept. The buffers proposed around the perimeter of the site improve upon the previous proffers approved with the original rezoning application. Buffers along both Sliding Hill and Ashcake Roads must meet both thoroughfare buffer and screening requirements of the Zoning Ordinances. In addition, a variable width natural area will be maintained along Sliding Hill Road behind the buffer and screen plantings.
7. Utility Lines Underground. Accept. New utility lines will be buried underground or placed along rear property lines. This proffer is unchanged from the 1994 original rezoning case.
8. Use Restrictions. Accept. A list of uses considered inappropriate at this site within the M-2 district will not be permitted. No changes have been made to this proffer from the original rezoning case.
9. Right-of-way Dedication. Accept. Right-of-way will be dedicated along each road in accordance with the Major Thoroughfare Plan. An additional area of right-of-way will be dedicated for the purpose of realigning Sliding Hill Road to improve an existing curve, as shown on the conceptual plan.
10. Road Improvements. Accept. The applicant has proffered to prepare a signal justification study at the intersection of Sliding Hill Road and New Ashcake Road and to construct the necessary traffic improvements at this intersection not to exceed \$500,000 in costs. If the County takes responsibility for completing these intersection improvements, the applicant will then make a \$500,000 cash contribution for these improvements and complete the Sliding Hill Road realignment improvements shown on the conceptual plan. In addition, right and left turn lanes will be constructed at the main entrance to the site, if warranted by VDOT.
11. Cemetery Removal or Relocation. Accept. The cultural resources study conducted by the applicant found no graves on site. However, should any graves be discovered during the development of the property, the applicant has proffered to remove the graves in accordance with the Department of Historic Resources requirements.

Outstanding Issues

As previously noted in this report, the applicant should clarify the conflict on the conceptual plan between the right-of-way dedication along Sliding Hill Road and area to be dedicated for the realignment.

GJWB/

Attachments

- Maps (land use, vicinity, zoning, aerial)
- Historical Commission Recommendation
- Approved Proffers
- Traffic Study
- Application Materials
- Agency Review Comments
- Citizen Correspondence
- Proffers /Conceptual Plan