

STAFF ANALYSIS

PROJECT NUMBER

02-279-(5)

CASE NUMBER

Conditional Use Permit Case No. 02-279-(5)

Zone Change Case No. 02-279-(5)

Local Plan Amendment Case No. 02-279-(5)

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant is requesting approval of a Conditional Use Permit to authorize the construction, operation and maintenance of a storage, rental and repair facility, including a body shop, for a maximum of 1,500 vehicles to be used mainly for film productions. An existing house on the property would be used as a caretaker's residence.

In addition, the applicant is requesting a Local Plan Amendment to change the land use designation of the Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan from N-2 (Non Urban 2) to M (Industry) on 16.5 acres, and from HM (Hillside Management) to M on 11.5 acres. The applicant is also requesting a Zone Change to change the zone from A-1-1 (Light Agriculture – one acre minimum area) to M-1-DP (Light Manufacturing – Development Program) on the entire 28 acres.

DESCRIPTION OF SUBJECT PROPERTY

The subject property is located at 15840 Sierra Highway, within the unincorporated community of Forrest Park, in the Sand Canyon Zoned District. The irregular shaped parcel is 28 acres in size with level to steep topography. The site is currently developed with a single-family residence. Access to the subject property is from Sierra Highway to the north-west

ENTITLEMENT REQUESTED

The applicant is requesting the approval of a Conditional Use Permit, Zone Change and Local Plan Amendment to authorize the construction and operation of a vehicle storage, rental and repair facility, including a body shop, for a maximum of 1,500 vehicles.

EXISTING ZONING

Subject Property

Zoning on the subject property is A-1-1 (Light Agricultural – One Acre Minimum Area Required).

Surrounding Properties

Surrounding zoning consists of:

- A-1-1 to the north;
- A-1-1, A-1-10 to the south;
- A-1-1, C-3 to the east; and
- A-1-10 and A-1-2.5 to the west

EXISTING LAND USES

Subject Property

The subject property is currently developed with a single-family residence.

Surrounding Properties

Surrounding land uses consist of:

- Ranches and vacant land to the north;
- Vacant land and single-family residences to the south;
- Vacant land to the east; and
- Ranches to the west.

PREVIOUS CASES/ZONING HISTORY

There are no other zoning cases listed on the subject property.

LOCAL PLAN

Land Use Policy Map

The subject property is within the N-2 (Non Urban 2) and HM (Hillside Management) land use categories on the Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan (SCVAP) land use policy map. Currently 16.5 acres are designated N-2 and 11.5 acres HM. The applicant is requesting a local plan amendment to change the existing categories to M (Industry) on the entire 28-acre parcel.

Consistency Analysis

The SCVAP allows non-residential uses in non-urban and hillside management areas given that the application process involves a public hearing process and appropriate conditioning of the design of the project ensures that the negative impacts on adjacent land uses will be minimized. Non-residential uses include local and highway-oriented commercial and industrial uses to serve the needs of local residents and travelers. Staff does not perceive the storage, repair, and rental of vehicles for use in film productions, as is proposed in this case, to be a local serving use. The applicant has applied for a local plan amendment to Industry (M), which is designated for light, medium, and heavy industrial uses with service commercial. The SCVAP implies that the use be clean, visually attractive and non-polluting, with no offensive odors. Emphasis is placed on developing designated sites to industrial park standards. With appropriate design, this project can be found compatible with the Industrial land use designation.

SITE PLAN

General Description

The applicant's site plan depicts the existing single-family residence and barn and three (3) proposed new buildings of 15,000, 10,000, and 6,000 square feet respectively. No specific

uses are indicated for the buildings. The plan also depicts 778 proposed parking spaces. A flood hazard area bisects the subject property. Access to the site is shown from Sierra Highway to the northwest.

COMPLIANCE WITH APPLICABLE ZONING STANDARDS

As the applicant is requesting a change of zone from A-1-1 to M-1-DP, the proposed storage, rental and repair facility shall comply with the following required development standards of the County Code as follows:

- Pursuant to Code Section 22.40.070 an applicant seeking a conditional use permit to develop property in a zone with the –DP suffix shall in addition to the requirements of Part 1 of Chapter 22.56 of Title 22 (Conditional Use Permit requirements), submit a proposed development program. Such development program shall consist of:

- A. A plot plan showing the location of all proposed structures, the alteration or demolition of any existing structures, and development features, including grading, yards, walls, walks, landscaping, height, bulk and arrangement of buildings and structures, signs, the color and appearance of buildings and structures, and other features as may be needed to make the development attractive, adequately buffered from adjacent more restrictive uses, and in keeping with the character of the surrounding area;
- B. A progress schedule, which shall include all phases of development and indicate the sequence and time period within which the improvements described will be made.

The applicant would need to submit a revised site plan depicting all items listed in “A” above. The current site plan does not depict walls, walks, landscaping, height, bulk, color of structures, or any signage. A progress schedule would also be required prior to final approval per item “B”.

- Any property used for the outside storage or display of raw materials, equipment or finished products shall comply with the requirements of Part 7 of Chapter 22.52.

Part 7 of Chapter 22.52 requires all outside storage or display open to view from the exterior boundary of the lot or parcel of land upon which it is conducted shall be enclosed by a solid wall or fence as set forth in Part 7.

Said Code Section exempts automobiles held for rental or sales from this requirement.

- Vehicle storage and parking shall be provided as required by Part 11 of Chapter 22.52. Part 11 of Chapter 22 requires one parking space for each vehicle used directly in conducting of such use. In addition, not less than one automobile parking space for each two persons employed or intended to be employed on the shift having the largest number of employees, or each 500 square feet of floor area of the building used for such use, whichever is larger. If the use is considered a

warehouse, one parking space shall be provided for each 1,000 square feet of floor area.

Per Code Section 22.52.1060 D., where parking facilities are located adjacent to the front lot line, a solid masonry wall not less than 30 inches nor more than 42 inches in height, shall be established parallel to and not nearer than five feet to the front lot line except that the wall required shall not be nearer to the front line than the abutting required front or side yard of property in a residential or agricultural zone for a distance of 50 feet from the common boundary line, and for Side and Rear Yards: Where parking facilities are located on land adjoining a residential or agricultural zone, a solid masonry wall not less than five feet nor more than six feet in height shall be established along the side and rear lot lines adjoining said zones. The director may approve substitution of a decorative fence or wall, or landscaped berm where, in his opinion, such fence wall or landscaped berm will adequately comply with the intent of this section pursuant to the provisions of Part 12 of Chapter 22.56 (Director's Review Procedures).

The proposed use, storage, preparation and rental of vehicles to the movie industry, which mainly uses natural outdoor terrain as a parking area, is not defined in this section. The applicant's site plan depicts 778 parking spaces. If the use is considered warehousing, and since all rental vehicles are delivered by the applicant, 31 parking spaces would be designated for employees (based on 31,000 square feet total floor area). An additional two spaces would be designated to the residence. The applicant would also need to provide, and depict on a revised site plan, adequate parking space for car carriers and trucks used for delivering rented vehicles. The applicant has not indicated the number of vehicles used for the operation of the business.

The applicant's site plan does not show any walls or fencing along the front, rear, or side yards. A revised site plan depicting all walls and fences, as well as truck parking, would need to be submitted.

- Per Code Section 22.52.630 all required fences or walls which are open to view from any street or highway, or any area in a residential, agricultural or commercial zone, shall be provided with at least one square foot of landscaping for each linear foot of such frontage.

The applicant's site plan does not show any proposed landscaping. A revised site plan depicting such would need to be submitted.

- Signs shall comply with the requirements of Part 10 of Chapter 22.52.

The applicant has not provided any sign plans with this request. The applicant will be required to submit sign plans to the Director of Planning for approval depicting any proposed signs on the subject property prior to approval of this request subject to M-1 zone limitation unless modified by the Commission with this conditional use permit.

- In addition, Section 22.52.640 of the County Code requires that all portions of outside storage and display areas have adequate grading and drainage and shall be continuously maintained.

The Department of Regional Planning's initial study indicates that the subject property is bisected by a Flood Hazard Area and is located within a 100-year Flood Area. The applicant shall comply with all requirements of the drainage concept, which was conceptually approved on May 13, 2003 to the satisfaction of the Department of Public Works.

BURDEN OF PROOF

Conditional Use Permit Burden of Proof

Per section 22.56.040 of the zoning code, the applicant shall substantiate to the satisfaction of the Planning Commission, the following facts:

1. That the requested use at the location proposed will not:
 - A. Adversely affect the health, peace, comfort or welfare or persons residing or working in the surrounding area, or
 - B. Be materially detrimental to the use, enjoyment or valuation of property of other persons located in the vicinity of the site, or
 - C. Jeopardize, endanger or otherwise constitute a menace to the public health, safety or general welfare.
2. That the proposed site is adequately served:
 - A. By highways or streets of sufficient width and improved as necessary to carry the kind and quantity of traffic such use would generate, and
 - B. By other public or private service facilities as are required.

The applicant's responses are provided as an attachment to this report.

Zone Change Burden of Proof

Pursuant to Los Angeles County Code Section 22.16.110, the applicant must meet the burden of proof requirements for a zone change.

1. Modified conditions warrant a revision in the zoning plan as it pertains to the area or district under consideration because:
2. A need for the proposed zone classification exists within such area or district because:
3. The particular property under consideration is a proper location for said zone classification within such area of district because:
4. Placement of the proposed zone at such location will be in the interest of public health, safety and general welfare, and in conformity with good zoning practice because:

The applicant's responses are provided as an attachment to this report.

Local Plan Amendment Burden of Proof

A need for the proposed Local Plan Amendment exists because:

1. The particular amendment proposed is appropriate and proper;
2. Modified conditions warrant a revision to the County of Los Angeles Local Plan;
3. Approval of the proposed Local Plan Amendment will be in the interest of public health, safety, and general welfare and in conformity with good planning practices.

The applicant's responses are provided as an attachment to this report.

ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTATION

An Initial Study was prepared on this project in compliance with CEQA guidelines. The Initial Study identified possible visual, traffic and geotechnical impacts. Detailed liquefaction analyses must be conducted and approved by the Department of Public Works before issuance of grading/building permits. Access to the subject site from a major highway might create hazardous traffic conditions. The applicant would be required to limit truck traffic during weekday peak travel hours. A landscape plan would need to be submitted, reviewed and approved by the Department of Regional Planning staff biologist to mitigate visual impacts. It was determined that with the appropriate mitigation measures this project will not exceed the established threshold criteria for any environmental factor, and as a result, will not have a significant effect on the physical environment. A Mitigated Negative Declaration is recommended as the appropriate environmental document for this project.

Note: After completion of the draft Mitigated Negative Declaration the applicant informed staff they are planning to operate a body shop in conjunction with this project. Additional analysis and consultation with the Air Quality Management District is therefore necessary. Presently this review is not complete. Should the Commission decide to act in favor of this application, a continuation of this case would be necessary until such review is completed.

COUNTY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works

Comments from the Department of Public Works dated June 26, 2003 have been included as an attachment to this document.

County of Los Angeles Fire Department

Comments from the Fire Department dated March 4, 2003, have been included as an attachment to this document.

OTHER AGENCY COMMENTS

The City of Santa Clarita has submitted a comment letter dated July 31, 2003. The letter has been included as an attachment to this document. The City recommends a condition requiring decorative fencing and increased landscaping along Sierra Highway to screen the project from public view.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Staff has received four letters in opposition to this project. All writers are residents of the area and indicate that this is an inappropriate area for this type of business. The letters are included as an attachment to this report.

STAFF EVALUATION

The applicant is requesting a Conditional Use Permit to allow the operation of an automobile storage, rental, repair and body shop pursuant to the requirements of County Code Section 22.40.050 (Development Program).

In addition to the Conditional Use Permit, the applicant has requested a change of zone from A-1-1 to M-1-DP and a Local Plan Amendment to change the current Non Urban 2 land use designation to Industry on the entire 28-acre subject property.

The applicant, Premier Studios, maintains a fleet of cars and trucks used in television shows, commercials, motion picture productions as well as other media. Their facility would also provide for paint, body, mechanical, upholstery, electrical, graphics and complete fabrication of vehicles at this site. According to the applicant, vehicles are delivered to the clients by a car carrier. Operating hours, as indicated by the applicant, would be from 8:00 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday. The applicant would employ ten employees, all working one shift.

The applicant is requesting to store a maximum of 1,500 vehicles at this site. The applicant's site plan currently shows 778 parking spaces, of which 31 would be reserved for employee vehicles. A surplus of 722 vehicles would need to be stored elsewhere on the subject property, which does not seem feasible per the currently submitted site plan.

The applicant has not provided elevations or specific information on height, bulk and specific usage of the three proposed buildings, other than location and square footage. A pamphlet depicting pre-manufactured industrial buildings has been provided to staff, but without any commitment to specific design (see attached). As the proposed square footage for these buildings is 15,000, 10,000 and 6,000 square feet respectively and the building footprint is roughly 1,800 square feet per building, staff is concluding that all three buildings would have to be multi-level.

Staff has visited the site and found that an approximately six-foot high fence has been erected around the entire subject property, preventing any visibility from Sierra Highway onto the property. Fences and walls within a required front yard set back shall not exceed a height of three and one-half feet per County Code Section 22.48.160. The local Building and Safety office has not issued any permits for this fence.

While the application also includes an automobile body shop, the proposed body shop is not indicated on the site plan. The applicant must provide a revised site plan with this facility depicted.

The prevailing use within the surrounding area is predominately rural and agricultural. The nearest parcel with zoning that could accommodate this type of use is approximately 1.5 miles away. Furthermore, the proposed use is neither local-serving nor highway oriented and the land use patterns in this area have remained relatively stable. Staff is of the opinion that the proposed change of zone would introduce an incompatible use in the area resulting in a "spot zoning" configuration.

In addition, this area has encountered problems with the illegal parking of trucks and recreational vehicles. The proposed use could exacerbate this problem.

A Mitigated Negative Declaration was originally prepared for the project with visual, traffic and geotechnical impacts identified. The applicant did not include the auto body shop in the application until later in the review process. With a consultation of the Air Quality Management District pending, the environmental analysis is not complete at this time.

Finally, little attention has been devoted to effectively buffering the site and complying with other requirements of Los Angeles County Code; Revised plans will have to be submitted before this project could be considered for approval. The project also warrants further clarification regarding employee parking, the storage of automobiles, depiction of the body shop, landscaping, and other features crucial in project design. For these reasons, staff is not inclined to recommend this request for approval. If the Commission determines that this request warrants further consideration, staff recommends that the Commission take testimony and continue this matter until all outstanding issues mentioned above have been addressed by the applicant.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Prior to making a decision on this case, Staff recommends the Planning Commission consider the facts, analysis and correspondence contained in this report along with the oral testimony and/or written comments received during the public hearing.

Staff recommends the Commission also consider the following:

- Whether the burden of proof for the change of zone, local plan amendment and conditional use permit have been met.
- Whether the proposed impacts on the visual and rural character of the area will be effectively mitigated

Denial

The following recommendation is made prior to the public hearing and is subject to change based upon testimony and/or documentary evidence presented at the public hearing.

Staff recommends **DENIAL** of Conditional Use Permit, Zone Change and Local Plan Amendment No. 02-279-(5).

SUGGESTED MOTION

I move that the Regional Planning Commission indicate its intent to deny Conditional Use Permit, Zone Change and Local Plan Amendment 02-279-(5) and instruct staff to prepare the appropriate findings.

Attachments:

Copy of Thomas Guide Map
GIS-Net Aerial Photograph
Environmental Documentation
Burdens of Proof
Correspondence
Site Plan

RJF:MBM
8/11/2003