Project Location and Overview

Arcola Limited Partnership, Shops at Arcola Center,LLC and Evergreen Commerce Center L.P. (collectively, the "Applicant") seek approval of a special exception application to modify the sign regulations pursuant to Sections 5-1204(E), 6-1504, and 6-511(B) of the *Revised 1993 Loudoun County Zoning Ordinance* (the "Zoning Ordinance") in order to provide for a comprehensive sign plan for the Arcola Center property. Specifically, the Applicant proposes changes to Zoning Ordinance regulations governing the size, number, type, location, height, and illumination of signs permitted to be located on the Arcola Center property.

The Arcola Center property comprises approximately 469 acres (the "Property"). (See Exhibit A for a complete listing of the parcels that comprise the Property.) The Property is located north of John Mosby Highway (Route 50), west of Loudoun County Parkway (Route 606), on both sides of Evergreen Mills Road (Route 621) and east of Gum Spring Road (Route 659). The Property is located in the Dulles Community of the Suburban Policy area of Loudoun County (the "County") and in the Dulles Election District.

Since 1996, the Arcola Center property has been at the center of land use planning initiatives in the Dulles South planning area. ZMAP 1997-0004 and ZMAP 1998-0004 were approved by the County in the late 1990's for the development of light industrial and regional commercial center uses, respectively, for approximately 302 acres of the Property. In 2003, Buchanan Partners, on behalf of the Applicant, initiated a comprehensive replanning of an expanded area bounded generally by Evergreen Mills Road (Route 621) to the north, Loudoun County Parkway (Route 606) to the east, John Mosby Highway (Route 50) to the south and Gum Spring Road (Route 659) to the west. This initiative, coupled with other planning initiatives in the Route 50 corridor, was expanded by the Board of Supervisors in October 2004 with the creation of the Route 50 Task Force (the "Task Force"). According to the *Route 50 Task Force Final Report*, dated July 2005, *"[t]he goal of the Task Force was to identify issues and make recommendations that would help create an attractive gateway to Loudoun County. This gateway should recognize and strengthen the area's heritage and cultural resources, promote economic development and tourism and contain development, transportation and infrastructure improvements that are tailored to the unique and pressing needs of the area."*

The Arcola Center property is located in the area designated as Segment 3 in the Route 50 Task Force planning initiative. Numerous community meetings were held with property owners and stakeholders in Segment 3 between October 2004 and July 2005 to develop strategies that would address the Board's goal for the Task Force. The results of the Segment 3 meetings were included in the *Route 50 Task Force Final Report* (the "Final Report") that was presented to the Board of Supervisors in July 2005.

Subsequent to the completion of the Final Report, the Board of Supervisors approved an amendment to the *Revised General Plan* (CPAM 2005-0007) which, pursuant to the recommendations of the Final Report, amended the land use policies and map for the Property. With the adoption of the CPAM, the Property's planned land use designation was changed from Corridor Retail and Industrial uses to a modified Business Community use with a Destination Retail overlay. This change in planned land use provided the policy foundation for approval of subsequent land development applications for the Property (ZMAP 2005-0035, SPEX 2005-0045 and ZMAP 2006-0015)

that were filed to implement the adopted *Revised General Plan* policies and land use designations. These land use applications also included proffers and conditions of approval as to the use, mix, landscaping, transportation network, and design in order to implement the Route 50 Task Force and Revised General Plan recommendations.

ZMAP 2005-0035 and SPEX 2005-0045 provided for the development of The Shops at Arcola Center, a convenience store with gas pumps and a hotel. Both the convenience store with gas pumps and hotel have been included in the overall design for the Shops at Arcola Center. The Shops at Arcola Center is zoned Planned Development Regional Commercial Center (PD-CC-RC) and is planned as a Destination Retail Center. Larger destination retail tenants such as Lowe's, SuperTarget, TJMaxx, and Dick's Sporting Goods, are to be located at the Shops at Arcola Center, along with smaller in-line and freestanding retail and personal service tenants. As indicated above, Buchanan Partners has designed the Property in conformance with the recommendations of the Route 50 Task Force, revised planning policies, proffers and conditions of approval for the Property. This special exception application to modify certain provisions of the Zoning Ordinance sign regulations is yet another step in the implementation of the Route 50 Task Force and *Revised General Plan* recommendations for the Property.

Matters For Consideration: Revised 1993 Zoning Ordinance Section 6-1310

The Comprehensive Sign Plan (CSP) for Arcola Center is intended to provide a framework for all signage in the Arcola Center project, beginning with sign regulations for community identification entrance signs for the overall project as well as a complete hierarchy of signage for The Shops at Arcola Center. The CSP has been designed to "brand" the overall Arcola Center community such that anyone traveling to, or though, Arcola Center will be easily guided to their destination. Finally, once approved, the Arcola Center CSP will serve as the sole regulatory document used by the Property Owner and County staff in evaluating and approving sign permit applications for tenants and uses in Arcola Center.

The Arcola Center Comparative Sign Matrix (Exhibit B) details all requested modifications and compares the proposed regulations to existing regulations. The Comprehensive Sign Plan (Exhibits C and D) provides the general conditions, design and detailed descriptions of each sign type proposed to be permitted in this first phase of the signage program for Arcola Center.

Section 6-1310 of the *Revised 1993 Loudoun County Zoning Ordinance* outlines various factors for consideration in the review of a sign modification request. The following is an analysis of the applicable factors in relation to the proposed modification requests for the Property.

(A) Whether the proposed special exception is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

The Property is located in the Dulles Community of the Suburban Policy Area of the County. As indicated above, the Board of Supervisors amended the policies of the *Revised General Plan* for this area of the Dulles Community in response to recommendations made by the Route 50 Task Force. The Arcola Center CSP has been designed to further the goals and objectives established in the *Revised General Plan* for this "Gateway" area of Loudoun County. The materials, color palette, number, size, height, location, and lighting have all been designed to create a high quality sign program for the Property that will set a high quality visual image of both the Property and the Dulles Community in Loudoun County.

(B) Whether the proposed special exception will adequately provide for safety from fire hazards and have effective measures of fire control.

Not Applicable.

(C) Whether the level and impact of any noise emanating from the site, including that generated by the proposed use, negatively impacts the uses in the immediate area.

Not Applicable.

(D) Whether the glare or light that may be generated by the proposed use negatively impacts uses in the immediate area. (Sections 5-611 & 6-1310)

Guidelines for lighting signs are included in the Design Guidelines for Arcola Center and the Comprehensive Sign Plan. Illumination shall not spill upward or reflect or cast glare onto adjacent properties or roadways.

(E) Whether the proposed use is compatible with other existing or proposed uses in the neighborhood, and adjacent parcels.

The proposed sign plan is compatible with and furthers the goals of the Route 50 Task Force and the *Revised General Plan* to provide a unified graphic scheme for signage, a mix of materials and colors that compliment the historic nature of the Route 50 area and a high degree of design that will extend the "Gateway" theme for the Route 50 area.

(F) Whether sufficient existing or proposed landscaping, screening and buffering on the site and in the neighborhood to adequately screen surrounding uses.

The Applicant has submitted a detailed landscaping plan to the County with The Shops at Arcola Center site plan. This landscape plan has been coordinated with the proposed signage plans so that the landscaping will both work with and enhance the signage designs for the Property. For example, the shopping center entrance feature signs have been designed to integrate the monument signs with the pedestrian network and the landscape designs.

Additionally, the Applicant has provided more detailed landscape plans for the Primary and Secondary Shopping Center Entrance Signs along Dulles South Parkway. See "Dulles South Parkway Entrance Signs and Landscaping Elevations for Arcola Center," prepared by Lewis Scully Gionet, dated March 2008.

(G) Whether the proposed special exception will result in the preservation of any topographic or physical, natural, scenic, archaeological or historic feature of significant importance.

The location of some of the community identification entrance signs have been selected so as to preserve existing tree stands to the maximum extent possible.

(H) Whether the proposed special exception will damage existing animal habitat, vegetation, water quality (including groundwater) or air quality.

Installation of the proposed signs will not damage animal habitat, vegetation, water quality or air quality.

(I) Whether the proposed special exception at the specified location will contribute to or promote the welfare or convenience of the public.

The CSP has been designed to create a unified sign program that will utilize a recognizable branding of design and colors that will assist patrons to find and conveniently navigate the Property. The size, type and location of the various signs have been carefully designed to assist the traveler to easily locate and read the signage while traveling both by vehicle or foot.

As indicated above, the Property is designated as a Destination Retail Overlay in the *Revised General Plan*. Consistent with other Destination Retail areas of the County (such as Dulles Town Center and Dulles 28 Centre), signage for the larger tenants has been designed to be proportionate in size to the building. This scaling of signage will make it easier, and safer, for the traveling public when trying to locate their destination.

(J) Whether the traffic expected to be generated by the proposed use will be adequately and safely served by roads, pedestrian connections and other transportation services.

The Property will be served by a network of local collector, major collector and regional roadways. Much of the planned road network in the vicinity of and/or on the Property will be constructed by the Applicant as development of the Property progresses. As shown in the CSP, signage has been designed to facilitate travel to and through the Property.

(K) Whether, in the case of existing structures proposed to be converted to uses requiring a special exception, the structures meet all code requirements of Loudoun County.

Not Applicable.

(L) Whether the proposed special exception will be served adequately by essential public facilities and services.

All facilities and services required to support freestanding and building mounted signs will be provided to the Property.

(M) The effect of the proposed special exception on groundwater supply.

Not Applicable.

(N) Whether the proposed use will affect the structural capacity of the soils.

Not Applicable.

(O) Whether the proposed use will negatively impact orderly and safe road development and transportation.

The proposed CSP will facilitate safe and orderly travel to and through the Property.

(P) Whether the proposed special exception use will provide desirable employment and enlarge the tax base by encouraging economic development activities consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

Not Applicable.

(Q) Whether the proposed special exception considers the needs of agriculture, industry, and businesses in future growth.

Not Applicable.

(R) Whether adequate on and off-site infrastructure is available.

Not Applicable.

(S) Any anticipated odors which may be generated by the uses on site, and which may negatively impact adjacent uses.

Not Applicable.

(T) Whether the proposed special exception uses sufficient measure to mitigate the impact of construction traffic on existing neighborhoods and school areas.

Not Applicable.

Planning Commission Issues Regarding Comprehensive Sign Plans

The following criteria are based on the guidelines discussed by the Planning Commission in March 1999 to assist in the evaluation of comprehensive sign plans.

Criterion 1:
Will the number, location and size of signs proposed adequately help people find what they need without difficulty or confusion: (are the signs visible to the driving public and located and sized to enable the public to make turns in a timely manner? Identify the criteria used to make this assessment, such as sign industry standards, etc. Is the modification the least amount needed to meet these criteria?)

The proposed sign plan will accomplish this objective. The signs have been designed to industry standards in order to provide the optimal number, location, size of lettering, lighting required, etc. to both inform and direct patrons to and around the Property.

Criterion 2:
Will the proposed signage have an adverse impact on the visual character of an area or provide an overload of graphic messages or displays in the environment of Loudoun County.

The CSP has been carefully designed to enhance the visual experience of the visitor to and patron of the Property. The Applicant extensively participated in the Route 50 Task Force and worked with both stakeholders and design experts to create a new "Gateway" image for the Route 50 area of the County. The Applicant has incorporated the Route 50 recommendations in the CSP to extend the "Gateway" design concepts well beyond just the Route 50 frontage of the Property but to the entire Property. This commitment to the Route 50 design concepts will establish a benchmark for other projects in the Dulles Community to follow.

Criterion 3:
Does the proposed signage treat similar types of signs consistently?

Yes. See the full CSP (Exhibit C) for complete details. The Applicant proposes to provide signage based on smaller increments of tenant space in order to provide more specific criteria for smaller tenants.

Criterion 4:
Are the proposed signs subordinate to the structures and land use functions they reference and are they accessory components of an overall composition of architectural elements?

The signs in the CSP have been design in concert with the architecture for The Shops at Arcola Center and, as such, are subordinate to the proposed architecture and design for the project.

Criterion 5:
Does the proposed signage encourage the general attractiveness, historic quality, and unique character of Loudoun County, and protect property values?

One of the overriding design concerns for the Arcola Center property during the Route 50 Task Force discussions was the preservation of the unique historic attributes found on the Property and in the surrounding Dulles Community. One of the best examples of remaining pre-Civil War slave quarters in Loudoun County is located on the Property. In addition, the Arcola United Methodist Church which dates back to the late 1700's is located adjacent to the Property. Elements of the vernacular architecture associated with these significant historic resources have been incorporated in the architecture proposed for The Shops at Arcola Center. By extension, choice of finishes and colors for the signs proposed in the CSP have been selected to compliment these unique features of the Property.

Criterion 6:
Does the proposed signage represent a comprehensive sign plan that is coordinated/unified, in terms of design, lighting, materials, colors, landscaping, etc. that reflects unique character of the planned development?

The proposed CSP addresses each of these design elements in detail and provides a coordinated program that compliments the architectural theme of Arcola Center.

Criterion 7:
Does the site have unusual characteristics such as topography, size configuration and the like which would warrant a modification?

The proposed CSP will ensure that all signage installed on the Property will be coordinated and will provide desirable continuity throughout the project. Signage has been designed to work with changes in elevation of the various areas of the Property.

Arcola Center is one of the few areas designated by the county as a regional Destination Retail area. It is bounded by two regional roadways (Route 50 and Loudoun County Parkway) which will provide access to The Shops at Arcola Center. The Shops at Arcola Center is planned to include several destination retail tenants including Lowe's, SuperTarget, etc. The size of the signs for these regional destination uses have been scaled in relation to the size of the buildings thereby creating more readable signs. This accommodation to scale of signs is necessary in order to provide a safer business environment for the patrons to the Property.

Criterion 8:
Is the proposed sign plan in conformance with the policies of the County's Comprehensive plan?

The proposed CSP supports the goals and policies of the Revised General Plan by: (i) providing an attractive, coordinated and unified signage program that will enhance both the Property and the Dulles Community; and (ii) providing safe and efficient movement of both pedestrian and vehicular traffic.

Summary

This Comprehensive Sign Plan has been designed to provide a framework for the overall signage program for Arcola Center. Specific details are currently included for the community identification entrance signs and the hierarchy of signs needed for The Shops at Arcola Center. As other sections of the Arcola Center project are developed and architecture and detailed site layouts are determined, amendments to this CSP will be submitted to the County for review and approval.

This CSP application has been developed to not only implement the policies found in the *Revised General Plan* but the spirit of the Route 50 Task Force initiative as well. Much work has been accomplished over the past several years to set the stage for a higher level of design and development on the Arcola Center Property and in the Dulles Community. This application exemplifies the Applicant's commitment to these efforts and demonstrates that the proposed modifications not only meet, but exceed, the public purpose of providing signage for the Property. The elements proposed in the CSP go well beyond the existing zoning regulations to provide a well coordinated and integrated signage program for Arcola Center that is consistent with the architectural scale of the buildings and is appropriate for the large scale, regional Destination Retail uses planned to be developed on the Property.