

STAFF ANALYSIS

STAFF PERSON: Rebecca Ragsdale, Planning Manager
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS: April 16, 2025
PROJECT: SE-2025-00006 Avon Court Industrial Avon Court Industrial
PARCEL IDs: 07700-00-00-008B0

Proposed special exception to waive the 15-foot stepback requirement in County Code § 18-4.20

PROPOSAL

The applicant requests a special exception to waive the minimum stepback required by County Code § 18-4.20. In industrial districts, the County Code requires that for each story that begins above 40 feet in height or for each story above the third story, whichever is less, the minimum stepback is 15 feet. However, County Code § 18-4.20(b)(3) allows the minimum 15-foot stepback to be reduced by special exception. No criteria are specified to grant the special exception.

The proposed building is 64'10" in height with four stories fronting along Avon Court. The applicant has proposed for the building to be set back 64' from Avon Court. Additionally, the finished floor elevation of the building is proposed to be lower than the elevation at the entrance of the site.

CHARACTER OF THE AREA

The property is approximately 6.78 acres in size and zoned Light Industrial (LI). Currently, final site plan SDP202300047 is under review, to construct a four-story building with a basement and a parking garage. The site is located at the end of Avon Court, which is within an industrial area accessed from Avon Street. The surrounding properties are all zoned LI. The subject property and surrounding area are designated Light Industrial in the Southern and Western Master Plan.

ANALYSIS OF SPECIAL EXCEPTION REQUEST

Under County Code § 18-33.9(A), factors, standards, criteria, and findings, however denominated in the applicable sections of the Zoning Ordinance, are to be considered in special exception applications. The Board of Supervisors does not need to make specific findings in order to approve this special exception.

A special exception may be considered under County Code § 18-4.20(b)(3), which provides:

The minimum 15-foot stepback may be reduced by special exception.

The waiver of the 15-foot stepback requirement may be achieved only through a special exception. In the absence of special exception factors, staff has evaluated this request based on the Neighborhood Model Principles of the Comprehensive Plan. The proposed use is consistent with the designation of Industrial in the Southern and Western Master Plan. Granting the step-back allows for greater use of an industrial property in the Development Area.

Analysis relative to the Comprehensive Plan:

Development Areas Objective 2: *Create a physical environment that supports healthy lifestyles through the application of the Neighborhood Model Principles.*

Pedestrian Orientation

Waiver of the 15-foot stepback would not disrupt pedestrians using Avon Court. The proposed building would be located roughly 64 feet away from the sidewalk along Avon Court at its closest point. This building setback exceeds the ten-foot minimum required and the design would allow pedestrians to have clear sight lines into and around the proposed development.

Buildings and Space for Human Scale

The proposed building would be a maximum height of four stories and located roughly 64 feet away from the sidewalk along Avon Court at its closest point. The County has found through review experience and special exception approval history, that a stepback at four-stories is not always needed with certain other design considerations on the site. The proposed setback and height would not create a canyon effect for pedestrians using the sidewalk along Avon Court. Based on the existing grades, the finished floor of the building would be approximately 12 feet below Avon Court at the northeast corner of the site. This elevation difference would help mitigate the overall height of the building in relationship to Avon Court.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on these findings, staff recommends approval of the special exception application to waive the 15-foot stepback.